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ABSTRACT

In this dissertation, *American Indian Representation and Self-Representation in Rhetoric and Literature*, I examine both positive and negative representations of American Indians in the genres of poetry, fiction, comics, and film, and how these representations have positive effects, such as contributing to cultural renewal and accurate self-representation, or negative effects, such as perpetuating systemic oppression. Specifically, language and images deploy power that may be wielded for very diverse purposes, and this dissertation highlights historical moments that exhibit how that power has been utilized, particularly regarding representations of Indigenous peoples in the United States. I argue that American Indians historically have been exploitatively represented and characterized in the world at large, particularly in the United States, but more importantly, that American Indians have begun to wrest control of how they are represented and that they continue to work against negative representations by establishing agency through language and rhetoric to provide accurate and positive representations of themselves. In its contribution to Literary and Cultural Studies, specifically Native American Literature, this project discusses critical and creative work by Native authors such the 1491s, Sherman Alexie, Paula Gunn Allen, Scott Andrews, Vine Deloria, Jr., Jill Doerfler, Geary Hobson, LeAnne Howe, Daniel Heath Justice, Thomas King, Scott Richard Lyons, Joshua Nelson, Louis Owens, Chanette Romero, Kimberly Roppolo, Michael Sheyashe, ire'ne lara silva, Gerald Vizenor, Daniel Wildcat, Craig Womack, and Zitkala Ša.

**INTRODUCTION: NATIVE STORIES: AMERICAN INDIAN
REPRESENTATION AND SELF-REPRESENTATION IN RHETORIC AND
LITERATURE**

This dissertation, *Native Stories: American Indian Representation and Self-Representation in Rhetoric and Literature*, argues that representation of American Indians¹ in literature and rhetoric has been employed for racist and subversive aims and that self-representation by Native peoples in literature and rhetoric better serves Native individuals and communities. Furthermore, the more widespread an understanding of Native American literature, the more likely are we as United States citizens to eradicate essentializing stereotypes and harmful policies and practices. The fields of Native American Literature and Native American Studies have never been more robust as is evidenced by the abundance of high quality output by Indigenous authors and the exciting scholarly work featured in graduate programs across the country and in national conferences, such as the annual meetings of the Native American Literary Symposium and the Native American and Indigenous Studies Association. Yet, I am amazed at how often I meet someone outside of the field who is not aware of some of the most prolific and award-winning Native authors. The more Native authors represent

¹I use the following terms in this dissertation to generally describe Indigenous peoples of North America: *Native*, *Native American*, *American Indian*, *Indigenous*, *Native*, *Indian*. Specific tribal affiliations are mentioned by name. I use the term *Chicano/a* to describe Indigenous peoples of Mexican-American descent.

themselves in fiction, poetry, film, etc., the closer we can get as a country to dispelling long-held falsehoods and well-protected lies.

Positionality and Structure

As a non-Native ally, I feel it is important that I explicitly state my positionality with regard to studying and analyzing American Indian literature. When I first began work toward my PhD in English, the first course I took was *Native American Poetry* taught by Professor Geary Hobson. This was my first exposure to Native American Literature. The next semester I took *Native American Fiction* with Professor Alan Velie and my interests and curiosities only deepened. These courses were immediately followed by *Cherokee Literature* and a Puterbaugh course devoted to the oeuvre of Sherman Alexie, both courses taught by Professor Joshua Nelson. My passion for the literatures and cultures of Native American peoples continued to grow. I grew up a rural, working-class, Southern Baptist white kid from small town Oklahoma. Growing up in central Oklahoma in the 1970s and 1980s, I felt like I was growing up in the center of a state that was in the center of a country that was in the center of the world, in terms of economic, technological, scientific, and political power. Yet, like many kids in Oklahoma, I could not help but feel like I was growing up in the middle of nowhere. Despite the geography, I certainly did not feel like any of us in Oklahoma were central to anything real. This paradox informed how I made meaning of the world. Each of the matters treated in this dissertation contain some element of this paradox, or at least incongruity: Noble Savage, White Indian, Kill the Indian/Save the Man, comedy about tragedy, etc. Growing up, I knew Indian people, but I did not know their struggles as different from my own, did not recognize my own privilege in that all of us, no matter

our backgrounds, which did not seem to contrast sharply, seemed to be all in the same socioeconomic boat. I knew Indian people, but I did not know their literatures, their histories. As an adult, I spent the first ten years of my professional life working as a high school English teacher in Alaska with Native students and colleagues, but I knew very little about their stories, their truths.

Prior to taking Native American Literature courses at the University of Oklahoma, I had no idea that Native American literature, as a field, even existed beyond cosmology mythologies and orature. I have since learned Native American literature is an exciting and vibrant field that has pragmatic value beyond the aesthetic. Of course, I always understood the value of literature in helping us to understand the world around us, but I never imagined that it could have such an immediate impact on the everyday lives of entire cultures of people. I use literary analysis as a vehicle for thinking about and understanding the world. And in this dissertation, I use literary analysis to understand Indigenous representation of self. I do not intend to speak on behalf of any person or group other than myself in this dissertation. This dissertation is not my explanation of Indigenous ways of being in the world, but my attempt to recognize how Indians have been represented in literature and rhetoric by the non-Indigenous Other, but also, and most significantly, by the strong Native voices whose intentions are to represent themselves.

The structure of this dissertation may seem a bit disjointed, but I understand the examples of Indigenous representation that appear throughout the following chapters as specific representative moments, the bulk of which are contemporary examples because I think the fields of Native American Literature and Native American Studies are

currently at their most robust. As a student of postmodernism, I have often said that I am interested in things that don't make sense. To elaborate further, I have always been interested in paradox and fractured meanings, assembling disparate concepts or notions that resist a grand narrative and create new meaning. I am a fan of collage, and I use these representative historical and literary moments in this dissertation to reflect a cross-section of the types of representations that have occurred and are occurring. By using these moments, my goal is to create a common thread of representation and to explicate how that has been used for ill or good, ultimately concluding in what I characterize as positive representations. This is not to say that negative representations no longer persist, or that they are not pervasive, but it is important to recognize the positive output that has continued to occur and is beginning to find its way into mainstream American culture. There is neither time nor space within the scope of this dissertation to explore a fraction of the examples of contemporary positive Native representation in literature. For example, though the medium is addressed here in this dissertation in terms of negative stereotypes, contemporary comics are beginning to grow in positive portrayals of Indians by Indigenous artists. Native film is another medium that is incredibly vibrant. As a collage, this dissertation quilts together moments in time that reflect Indigenous representation and self-representation in literature and rhetoric moving forward chronologically.

Chapter Overview

In Chapter One, I consider Romantic representations of the American Indian through a Native theoretical critical lens, namely that of Gerald Vizenor and Scott Richard Lyons, with the intent to provide an understanding of how perceptions of

American Indians beginning in the Romantic period have persisted in various forms to present day and how these perceptions might be dissolved as American Indians seek national and rhetorical sovereignty. Specifically, in the first part of this chapter, I confront the stereotype of the Noble Savage. This oxymoronic pejorative has more to do with racism and political agenda than any philosophy or characteristics of any peoples. The stereotype of the Noble Savage insinuates that there are qualities inherent in the American Indian that make him pure because he is untouched by the negatives that accompany Western civilization, such as greed and ambition, but also simultaneously make him unfit for civilization. We hear echoes of this sentiment, though slightly giving Native Americans enough merit to assimilate, in the slogan of the Carlisle Indian School, “Kill the Indian, Save the Man.” In the second half of this chapter, I examine the rhetoric surrounding the Carlisle Indian School and its destructive aims and deleterious effects. As correctives, I propose Sherman Alexie’s cosmopolitanism, Scott Richard Lyons’ rhetorical sovereignty, and highlight the resistance rhetorics and achievements of Carlisle Indian students themselves.

Chapter Two begins by extending the discussion of American representation as we see how the American Indian appears in Cold War era comics and is diminished to an integral, though bygone, component of American identity. In the Cold War Era comic series, *White Indian*, we see the now all-too-familiar White Savior trope enacted not only within the confines of the comic narrative itself, but also as a prescriptive for American national identity, again echoing appropriating the perceived “noble” aspects of Native Americans while enacting annihilation of the American Indian. The chapter concludes by examining the subversive comedy of an online comedy sketch troupe, the

1491s, that turns those same representations on their heads. The chapter further discusses the work of the 1491s in their Represent Series that gives Native students a platform and voice in which to represent themselves.

In Chapter Three, I examine how the contemporary literature of Native authors, such as Geary Hobson, ire'ne lara silva, and Craig Womack, employ mythic realism and transcultural experiences as a vehicle toward cultural renewal and away from debilitating stereotypes. This chapter spends a great deal of time exploring silva's short story collection, *flesh to bone*, and how it incorporates ancient stories with contemporary settings. LeAnne Howe's tribalogy is the theoretical lens I used to incorporate the genre of mythic realism in *flesh to bone* in understanding the agency created in Indigenous self-representation. The chapter concludes with tribalogy again at work with transculturation in Geary Hobson's short story collection, *Plain of Jars*, which features a protagonist who is Cherokee/Quapaw, but also a United States Marine, and Craig Womack's novel, *Drowning in Fire*, which navigates the waters of a Creek/Cherokee protagonist growing up queer in rural Oklahoma.

The crux of this project is to explore these incongruities and to understand how and why American Indians have been exploitatively represented in the world, but more importantly, how American Indians represent themselves and have overcome negative representations. American Indian self-representation is not only important in response to political and cultural opposition, but also figures quite prominently as an affirmation of cultural integrity and community prosperity.

1. FROM NOBLE SAVAGE TO AMERICAN SOVEREIGN: ROMANTIC REPRESENTATIONS AND RHETORICAL RESPONSES OF AMERICAN INDIANS

1.1 Terminology and the Problem of the Noble Savage Stereotype

Recently, a colleague of mine facetiously remarked that she thought she would begin her expansive historiography project with the lines, *Since the beginning of time...* Her remark, though in jest, addresses the fact that when examining history or working on a project with a historical focus, for example, it can sometimes be difficult to pinpoint an exact moment or period with which to begin and perhaps even end. Even if one is writing about a specific event in history, such as the French Revolution, one might be interested in making causal connections among variables leading to the Revolution, the Revolution itself, or even how the world was changed in its aftermath. Although I am tempted to begin my study in 1492, the year of first recorded contact between Europeans and Native Americans, I have narrowed my timeframe for this chapter to the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries. This is a particularly important time in British and American history, specifically regarding the social upheaval and change for Britons post-French Revolution and post-American Revolution, and the ways in which Native Americans figure into the writings of the Romantics, such as William Wordsworth and Felicia Hemans. In this chapter, I draw on the work of Kate Flint and Tim Fulford in understanding the American Indian from the Romantic viewpoint. This viewpoint is vital in that it represents new ideas about British and American nationalism as the expanse of the Atlantic began to shrink. As Britons

increasingly find their way to America and Indians find their way to Britain, new ideas and thoughts begin to emerge in ways that would not have been possible prior to the French Revolution. The Romantics find in the American Indian a “return to nature” (Fairchild 1). In his 1927 work *The Noble Savage*, Hoxie Neale Fairchild, “an avowed enemy of the Noble Savage myth and an outspoken critic of Rousseau’s influence on Romantic thought,” defines the Noble Savage as “any free and wild being who draws directly from nature virtues which raise doubts as to the value of civilization” (Ellingson 3, 2). Fairchild further asserts that “the romanticist interprets savage practices in terms of his own ideals: he can put almost anything vaguely simple, balladlike and emotional into the mouth of an Indian” (443-4). Thus, there is not really any consideration among the Romantics of the Indian as a full-fledged human being, but merely as exemplary of a simplistic connection with nature.

Since contact, Europeans have often subjected American Indians to an exoticization of the Other. Anishinaabe author, scholar, and critic Gerald Vizenor introduces terms that may prove useful in understanding the lens through which American Indians were perceived in the Romantic period and beyond, and how American Indians can respond to those perceptions today. The first of these terms is *manifest manners* (Vizenor vii). Vizenor defines *manifest manners* as “the course of dominance, the racialist notions and misnomers sustained in archives and lexicons as ‘authentic’ representations of Indian cultures [that] court the destinies of monotheism, cultural determinism, objectivism, and the structural conceits of savagism and civilization” (vii). In other words, manifest manners tend to lock the Indian into a fixed place in history as representative of some essential quality of humanity. Furthermore,

these “structural conceits” enact a dichotomy in which the Indian is banished to antiquity and can no longer exist in the dynamic world as anything other than an artifact from a defunct and static existence. Within this essentializing and racist discourse, the American Indian can move neither forward nor back in time and space; he simply is what he is. In addition to being a troubling way of understanding humanity, this viewpoint is politically and culturally devastating to the American Indian. Vizenor defines a second term, *survivance*, as “an active sense of presence, the continuance of native stories” and goes on to describe “survivance stories [as] renunciations of dominance, tragedy, and victimry” (vii). Survivance is more than survival. *Survivance* is a portmanteau of *survival* and *resistance*. Survivance is the escape from the limitations and restrictions of manifest manners to the proliferation of the American Indian defining the terms and limits of her own individual, tribal, and rhetorical sovereignty. Survivance allows the American Indian to speak for himself without being locked into a specific time and place, either through essentialism or erasure.

Fulford has provided extensive scholarship in understanding the American Indian from the Romantic perspective, but missing from his exhaustive studies is an examination of Romantic representations of the American Indian through the critical lens of Native theory. To this end, I will employ these concepts provided by Vizenor. My intent here is to complement Fulford’s work and to provide an understanding of how perceptions of American Indians beginning in the Romantic period have persisted in various forms to present day and how these perceptions might be dissolved as American Indians seek national and rhetorical sovereignty.

1.2 Romantic Representations of the Noble Savage in Selected Works by William Wordsworth and Felicia Hemans

There is a tendency in travel and military writing of the Romantic period to exoticize Native Americans as noble savages, more a part of the flora and fauna of the New World and less as fellow human beings. Fairchild contends that “[t]he Noble Savage idea results from the fusion of three elements: the observation of explorers; various classical and medieval contentions; the deductions of philosophers and men of letters” (2). I will focus my attention here on Fairchild’s third point in providing some explication of the Romantic perception of the American Indian. Jean Jacques Rousseau is often invoked as creating the idea of the Noble Savage² to describe the inherent goodness in man prior to the corruption of civilized society. As poets like Wordsworth were drawn to the therapeutic and redemptive qualities of nature while simultaneously being repulsed by dissatisfaction with the British ruling classes, the American Indian represented an idealized form of human existence. Fulford writes that:

it was while natural historians were solidifying their racial stereotypes that literary writers, working from the same travel texts, created fictional Indians of complexity and troubling power...They changed stereotypical savages into ambiguous heroes, although they found themselves beset by doubts as they did so. (101-2)

² Ter Ellingson, in *The Myth of the Noble Savage*, finds the assertion that Rousseau is responsible for the concept of the Noble Savage to be erroneous. Ellingson insists that it is a concept borne of out of a racist platform by polygenist John Crawford to the following end: “The myth of the Noble Savage, if we examine it closely, is constructed so as to assert the existence of what it purports to critique, the existence of a belief in the absurd juxtaposition of the incomparable attributes of nobility and savagery. By projecting the absurdity of the construction itself onto a figure such as Rousseau, selected as the emblematic representation of more serious ideas (and their advocates) that are the real targets of the attack, the myth operates by oblique and obfuscatory symbolic manipulations to attain its intended purpose, the creation of a self-authenticating, and self-perpetuating rhetorical program for the promotion of racial superiority and dominance” (297).

There is a contradiction, however, in this Romantic view of American Indians in that they are seen simultaneously as exemplars of human virtue yet lacking the civilized personhood of British society. Fulford argues that:

For Wordsworth in 1798 to live at one with nature was to feel it mark the flesh. It was to acquire the unfettered body and liberated soul of a savage, and that savage was depicted as an American Indian, his nakedness revealing his unafraid communion with his own – and nature’s – physical power. (153)

This contradiction is resolved by relegating American Indians to the past as a vanishing race. Flint traces the trope of the dying Indian back to Joseph Wharton’s 1756 poem, “The Dying Indian” (29). The myth of the vanishing Indian gains momentum in Romantic literature and extends well beyond into American literature, evidenced in the work of authors like James Fenimore Cooper and Washington Irving.

Wordsworth publishes *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798 to get poetry in the hands of all people, and not just the elite. Therefore, he writes about more “common” subjects that might appeal to a broader audience, focusing on the inherent goodness in people untainted by societal demands. I would like to consider three of Wordsworth’s poems here to examine the poet’s specific views of the American Indian: “The Complaint of a Forsaken Indian Woman,” “Ruth,” and “The Mad Mother.” The poet chooses as his subject matter in “The Complaint of a Forsaken Indian Woman,” an Indian woman who cannot continue her journey with her tribe and is, therefore, according to tribal custom (no specific tribe is mentioned), left behind. Wordsworth creates a spectacular image of this woman dying alone beneath the Northern Lights as snow falls upon her body, extinguishing both her literal fire and her spirit, an apt metaphor for the vanishing race.

The Indian woman's repeated lines, "Before I see another day, / Oh let my body die away!" (Wordsworth 108-110), indicate that the woman is prepared for death, though she regrets not having one last moment with her child. She laments:

My child! They gave thee to another,
A woman who was not thy mother.
When from my arms my babe they took,
On me how strangely did he look!
Through his whole body something ran,
A most strange something did I see;
As if he strove to be a man,
That he might pull the sledge for me. (Wordsworth 109)

If we can see this "forsaken Indian woman" as a metaphor for the vanishing race, we might also see this child who continues to move forward to become a man, in a departure of what it means to be Indian for his mother. We can see this departure from the past when she says:

I should not feel the pain of dying,
could I with thee a message send
Too soon, my friends, you went away
For I had many things to say. (Wordsworth 110)

This indicates that the woman's knowledge (her *message*) will be forgotten, dying with her as she is left behind. This image here directly simultaneously represents a oneness with nature endorsed by the Romantics, but also reflects the type of victimry that Vizenor resists. Although clearly the subject of this poem has not fallen victim to a literal colonial oppressor, she still lay dying in the snow and is forsaken. This is the type of image that Vizenor would cite as characteristic of manifest manners, and indeed representative of what he calls the "invented Indian" (vii).

Fulford believes that these types of images begin to be prevalent with romantic writers for two reasons. He writes that:

First the newspaper stories and captivity narratives that told of American war were both exciting and disturbing: they made dramatic material for a story and also focused the moral debate about the propriety of colonial ventures. Second, there was by the 1780s a perception that the British ruling classes were becoming effete and self-indulgent, forgetting the chivalric virtues, by which, supposedly, they justified their monopoly of power. (102)

The Romantic Indian thus problematizes the static symbol of the Noble Savage. The Romantic Indian is complicated by the stereotypes that the Indian is both courageous and noble, but also bloodthirsty, dangerous, and wild.

In “Ruth,” we can see these stereotypes at work. Perhaps in an attempt to appropriate perceived Native virtues while avoiding the “wildness” of the Indian, Wordsworth does not include any Indians in this poem. We do, however, encounter a “lovely Youth” whose beauty Wordsworth describes in a natural way by saying that “the panther in the wilderness/ was not so fair as he” (180). The young man is not Indian as he first appears but British, and has spent time among the Indians fighting wars. He has returned home to England with regalia, such as “feathers from the Cherokees” and stories of the Indians (Wordsworth 179). The young man and Ruth are happily married, but then their relationship turns sour as his disposition changes because he:

through savage lands
had roam'd about with vagrant bands
of Indians in the West...
his genius and his moral frame
were thus impaired. (Wordsworth 184)

Ultimately the young man deserts Ruth and she spends the remainder of her days as a desperate, perhaps insane, beggar. Her only remaining hope is that “For thee a funeral bell shall ring/ And all the congregation sing/ A Christian psalm for thee” (Wordsworth 188). Fulford argues that Wordsworth, as evidenced by the desolate and destructive tone in “Ruth,” “came to see Indian ‘wildness’ as being dangerously destructive of the emotional and moral structures that he defined as being naturally British” (170). Again, we may recognize the Noble Savage understood as perpetually separate, according to manifest manners and the dichotomy of savagism and civilization, because for it to be otherwise only produces ill effect for the “savage” and the “civilized.”

In another of his poems, “The Mad Mother,” Wordsworth continues the theme of the abandoned female protagonist and touches again on the madness experienced by a woman whose husband has abandoned her. It is not clear whether the protagonist is Indian or British. She speaks English but has dark features and is well versed in the ways of nature. She knows how to “build an Indian bower” and she knows “the earth-nuts fit for food” (Wordsworth 84, 86). The poem remains deliberately ambiguous throughout. The narrative voice of the poem is a mother speaking to her infant son regarding their history together and their future. The title of the poem indicates that the mother is insane, and several passages in the poem support that assertion. For example, she explains to him:

A fire was once within my brain;
And in my head a dull, dull pain;
And fiendish faces one, two, three,
Hung at my breasts, and pulled at me. (Wordsworth 84)

In the next stanza she then explains that after a moment of joy, she awakened to see her son. It is not clear what happened to the “fiendish faces,” but now his nursing seems to provide the remedy for her previous ailment:

Suck, little babe, oh suck again!
It cools my blood; it cools my brain;
Thy lips I feel them, baby! They
Draw from my heart the pain away. (Wordsworth 84)

Wordsworth is potentially suggesting here that the abandoned woman has lost her mind but that she finds solace, and a replacement for her husband, in caring for her child. This is explicit in the lines, “Thy father cares not for my breast/ ‘Tis thine, sweet baby, there to rest” (Wordsworth 85). However, due to the ambiguity of the poem, those same passages might be read as an intense love between mother and child. The mother exclaims that her son “saves for me my precious soul;/ Then happy lie, for blest am I;/ Without me my sweet babe would die” (Wordsworth 84). These lines explain a mutual salvation and dependence between mother and child. Nevertheless, we learn that the father is “gone and far away” but that she has “sought thy father far and wide” (Wordsworth 85, 86). Wordsworth has clearly connected the mother with nature throughout the poem, and the closing lines indicate that the two of them will seek the father in the woods, and the woods is where they will live. Wordsworth appears to be offering the same kind of warning here that we saw in “Ruth.” That is, embrace the natural but be careful not to be swallowed up by its wildness. Again, Wordsworth chooses to focus these negative results on his female protagonist and to maintain the structure of separation.

Another Romantic English poet worth our consideration on this point is Felicia Hemans. Hemans, though not as well known, writes at the same time as Wordsworth and also includes American Indians as her subject. Hemans includes female protagonists as well, but she approaches them from an entirely different perspective. In Hemans' poem, "Indian Woman's Death Song," we see again the same topics from the aforementioned poems by Wordsworth: death, abandonment, forsaken wife, and bond between mother and child. In "Indian Woman's Death Song," an Indian woman who has been forsaken by her husband for another woman chooses to float with her child down a perilous river over a waterfall to their death. The difference in subject matter here is the agency of the female protagonist. She is not simply being acted upon. She makes a conscious decision to take her own life and the life of her female child.

An epigraph before the poem is a quote from James Fenimore Cooper's *The Prairie*, which reads: "Let not my child be a girl, for very sad is the life of a woman" (Hemans 377). The female Indian protagonist here laments the fact that she has been discarded by her husband, and seeks to end her pain and the future pain of her daughter. Susan Wolfson sees the Indian Woman of this poem as a Byronic hero, proud and alone, "her ruin specifically the ravage of male culture, with her sole female recourse to 'bear' herself and her daughter beyond human history" (Sweet 168). Fulford argues that Hemans' feminism here is only mild in nature since she "implies that women, British and Indian, have no independent sense of identity and therefore cannot survive romantic disappointment" (198). Fulford further argues that "in the absence of such a cosy marital home, Hemans' heroine seeks a substitute in nature" (198). Hemans is employing the familiar trope used by Wordsworth of becoming one with nature, even in

death, but Hemans' heroine is not merely perpetuating a stock character of British literature, that of the forlorn maiden. There is hardly anything *Indian* about the Indian woman, so it may be reasonably ascertained that she merely serves as a metaphor for British women, but the statement that Hemans is making about women and their plight in life goes well beyond mere "romantic disappointment." Hemans' feminism is not so progressive that she would have the Indian Woman rebuild her life and create a brighter future for herself and her daughter after this rejection, but Hemans is addressing the gender inequalities and the depth of the emotional and social devastation that may be wrought. It is important to note that Hemans uses the Cooper quote as a preface to her poem that essentializes Woman to say not that women are sometimes disappointed, but that the life of Woman, every woman, is very sad. Hemans is speaking to a larger subject than Fulford concedes. While the female protagonist in this poem takes action that is morbid and far from ideal, she does express agency and a sense of power.

The final two poems of Hemans that I will consider are inspired by captivity narratives prevalent in the time period. Both concern themselves with feminine power and agency in different ways. In the Editor's Introduction to Sarah F. Wakefield's *Six Weeks in the Sioux Tepees: A Narrative of Indian Captivity*, June Namias writes:

No set of writings brought the worlds of white American settlers on successive American frontiers more immediately before the nineteenth century public than the reports of Indian capture. The words and images of these experiences were printed in local papers, in pamphlets, and in books of the day. Captivity narratives were widely published and republished on both sides of the Atlantic. Narratives recounted the trials, survival, and sometimes loss – either to Native societies or to death – of fathers and sons, mothers and daughters. Narratives of captivity were the first American literary genre; they were also the first writing of any length by or about American women. (24)

For a poet concerned with gender as Hemans is, captivity narratives provided an excellent source of inspiration. In “Edith, A Tale of the Woods,” we once again see the familiar image of the abandoned woman. However, in this poem, the protagonist, Edith, is not abandoned by a faithless husband, but rather is widowed when her husband is killed in battle. She dutifully attends to him as he lay dying and then shrieks in mourning and becomes unconscious. When she awakens, she is surrounded by the “people of the wild” including an “aged chief” (Hemans 364). Edith is taken captive, but more realistically adopted as the chief’s daughter where she benevolently becomes the substitute for the deceased daughter of the chief and his wife. This is a subtle point, perhaps, but Hemans imbues Edith with specific power that she is not only not killed as her husband was, but that she can provide a sense of compensation for loss to the Indian family. Ultimately, like the protagonist in *Indian Woman Death Song*, Edith opts to kill herself. The motif continues, but Edith chooses death in order to join her beloved in a better afterlife, whereas the Indian Woman chooses death as escape. Again, Hemans is not doing anything to advance American Indians beyond manifest manners, but simply using them as a device to explore gender empowerment.

A more striking example of feminist empowerment, and one that verges on a more complex rendering of the American Indian, is “The American Forest Girl.” This poem also features a captivity narrative. The tone is ominous as a young Englishman faces death at the hands of murderous Natives. He is about to be burned at the stake. Just before he is put to death, a young Indian woman bursts through the crowd, and shielding him, proclaims, “He shall not die!” (Hemans 390). The poem continues:

They gaz’d, - their dark souls bow’d before the maid,

She of the dancing step in wood and glade!
And, as her cheek flush'd thro' its olive hue,
As her black tresses to the night-wind flew,
Something o'ermastered them from that young mien –
Something of heaven, in silence felt and seen;
And seeming to their child-like faith, a token
That the Great Spirit by her voice had spoken. (Hemans 391)

The captive is set free and the poem ends. Clearly this is the most power a female protagonist has had in any of the poems examined here. However, Fulford calls this poem “a piece of wish fulfillment that emerges from gender conventions in Britain” (202). He further asserts that this type of re-gendered love-plot “helped to palliate guilt and fear over the injustice being committed upon Native Americans, reassuring readers that the only Indians who would continue to resent white people were irredeemably savage and cruel, and therefore justifiably subject to punishment or death” (201). Fulford further offers that the Native woman is engaged in a “desire to mother” and that this is a displaced form of sexuality, whereas Flint contends that the American Forest Girl “is motivated by her love for a lost brother” (Fulford 201, Flint 66). Though Wordsworth and Hemans both seem a little wary about the place of American Indians in their world, Hemans is the closer of the two in viewing American Indians outside of the taxonomy of the natural world as conscious human beings.

1.3 Cosmopolitanism as Contemporary Response and Paradigm

Though captivity narratives are not as common in present day, the association of American Indians with nature is still quite relevant. From the White Shamanism Movement of the 1970s to current cultural appropriation of icons and rituals, not to

mention charlatanism, the American Indian continues to be subjugated by remaining in a fixed time and place in history with limited attributes and abilities.

Spokane/Couer d'Alene writer Sherman Alexie is interested in establishing new paradigms for American Indians, beyond the Romantic Indian and even beyond American Indian national sovereignty called for by critics such as Sioux scholar Elizabeth Cook Lynn and others. His approach is more inclusive and pan-tribal than tribally specific. At the heart of his message is concern for American Indian peoples and the cultural and chronological movement toward an optimistic future. Alexie is using his art as answer to the challenges faced by American Indians. But, they must be willing to hear his message. His call to action includes not forgetting the past. Alexie writes:

There are things you should learn. Your past is a skeleton walking one step behind you, and your future is a skeleton walking one step in front of you. Maybe you don't wear a watch, but your skeletons do, and they always know what time it is. Now, these skeletons are made of memories, dreams, and voices. And they can trap you in the in-between, between touching and becoming. But they're not necessarily evil, unless you let them be. What you have to do is keep moving, keep walking, in step with your skeletons. They ain't ever going to leave you, so you don't have to worry about that. Your past ain't going to fall behind, and your future won't get too far ahead. (Alexie 21-2)

One might ask, what does the writing of a twenty-first century American Indian writer have to do with Romantic attitudes toward American Indians two centuries earlier? I would argue that the work Alexie is doing is continuing stories of *survivance*, moving forward in response to those same *manifest manners* that have a firm foundation in the writing of the Romantic period. This movement, this exploration to avoid being trapped by the past or the future, is exactly what Alexie and others continue to do as artists and American Indians. Alexie and other contemporary Native authors

embody the steps in this progression from static Noble Savage to the dynamic American Sovereign in charge of his own rhetoric and agency. Alexie does not look to nationalistic sovereignty, but to the individual sovereignty afforded by cosmopolitanism.

Cherokee scholar Scott Andrews makes the distinction between nationalism and cosmopolitanism and places Alexie's work in the camp of cosmopolitanism. Andrews writes that nationalism calls for the "unique and separate status of one group from another, [and] cosmopolitanism argues for the distinctive quality of a group but also the qualities, circumstances, or desires it shares with the larger group" (51). Andrews further suggests that "perhaps responding to Manifest Manners with a cosmopolitan attitude rather than a nationalistic one can be another way to free a person from the imperialist nostalgia that impedes the reconstruction of a particular cultural heritage" (51). Instead of trying to remap the old boundaries, or recreate a different ending to old stories, Alexie's cosmopolitanism creates new boundaries and new narratives. In this way, Alexie uses his art to triumph over pervasive marginalizing tendencies and to provide the necessary tools for all Indians to overcome this problem of identity as it is couched in narratives that are not applicable.

Though Alexie is working in the genres of fiction, poetry, and screenwriting, and Scott Richard Lyons is a scholar and critic working in the areas of Composition and Rhetoric, their aims are not that far removed from one another. In his article, "Rhetorical Sovereignty: What Do American Indians Want from Writing?," Lyons defines rhetorical sovereignty as "the inherent right and ability of *peoples* to determine their own communicative needs and desires... to decide for themselves the goals,

modes, styles, and languages of public discourse” (450; original emphasis). Lyons argues that “the erosion of Indian national sovereignty can be credited in part to a rhetorically imperialist use of writing by white powers” and that Indian rhetorical sovereignty “requires a radical rethinking of how and what we teach as the written word at all levels of schooling, from preschool to graduate curricula and beyond” (453, 450). This suggests for me any curricula that might include Wordsworth, for example. Lyons offers that one way this rhetorical sovereignty might be achieved “would be to allow Indians some say about the nature of their textual representations” (458). When non-Natives appropriate and commodify Indian representations, according to Lyons, they lack a requirement of Indian rhetorical sovereignty that is “the presence of an Indian voice, speaking or writing in an ongoing text of colonization and setting at least some of the terms of the debate” (462). Lyons asserts that ideally Native language would be included, and he cites Hawaiian nationalist Haunani-Kay Trask who writes, “Thinking in one’s own cultural referents leads to conceptualizing in one’s own world view which, in turn, leads to disagreement with and eventual opposition to the dominant ideology” (462). Lyons sees Indian rhetorical sovereignty, and indeed sovereignty, as “a public pursuit of recognition,” and until this recognition is achieved, sovereignty cannot be achieved (462). As contemporary scholars, such as Lyons, call for rhetorical sovereignty for American Indians, and writers like Vizenor and Alexie speak to a progressive Indian identity, understanding the histories and tropes surrounding the American Indian in the nineteenth century fortifies the opportunities for understanding and realizing American Indian sovereignty today.

1.4 Rhetorics of Assimilation

The relationship between rhetoric and sovereignty is neither new nor outdated. The power of rhetoric in the United States is present in nearly every facet of American lives. The rhetoric of capitalist democracy is pervasive in American cultural and political arenas. The rhetoric of capitalist democracy is pervasive in American cultural and political arenas. Certainly, the study and use of rhetoric has been an essential component across the nation's college campuses in the English composition classroom, and in pedagogy across disciplines with respect to specific learners. Additionally, rhetoric has not only figured prominently in the development of pedagogies but on a larger scale in the development of the nation itself. One aspect of this development can be acutely realized in evaluating the role of rhetoric in the lives of American Indians. A striking episode of American history in which rhetoric has played a large role in this "development" with regard to American Indians is the boarding schools where American Indians were to be assimilated into the discourse of the dominant white culture. In this section, I will focus specifically on the rhetoric surrounding the off-reservation boarding school, specifically Carlisle Indian School, by both administration and students, to ascertain how resistance rhetoric sought to preserve tribal and individual identity in this inhospitable context and how rhetoric might continue to be employed to further achieve individual agency and rhetorical sovereignty for American Indians.

Though nearly fifty reservation schools had been in existence since the 1860s, the Carlisle Indian School was the first off-reservation Indian school and served as the prototype for several off-reservation schools that would follow. Founded by Richard

Henry Pratt and located in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, Carlisle Indian School remained in operation from 1879-1918. Carlisle “enrolled in the first academic year, 1879-80, more than 200 pupils representing about a dozen tribes. The enrollment in [Pratt’s] last year as superintendent, 1903, had risen to more than 1200. During his twenty-four-year tenure the school educated, in all, 4,903 Indian boys and girls from seventy-seven tribes” (Pratt, xxi). The Carlisle Indian School was an effort by Pratt, a veteran of both Civil War and frontier service, to address the “Indian problem” in the United States and advance a philosophy he had cultivated during his time in the frontier where he recognized that the color of a man’s skin was no basis for inequality.

Specifically, Pratt’s philosophy was borne out of an experience he had at the end of his service in the Civil War where he was “ordered to escort seventy-two Kiowa, Comanche, and Southern Cheyenne warriors...to Fort Marion, Florida, and once there, to supervise their confinement...[Pratt] introduced them to English, to the idea of working for wages, and to his culture’s rules for behavior” (Hoxie 54-5). From that experience, Pratt reported that “the dawn of a great emergency has opened upon the Indian...He is in childish ignorance of the methods and course best to pursue. We are in possession of the information and help and are able to give the help that he now so much needs” (Hoxie 55). Pratt did not see the problem of inequality with American Indians and African Americans as biological, but rather he saw this inequality as cultural. Pratt’s philosophy was to immerse American Indians in the discourse of the dominant culture so that they could take equal part in the benefits and responsibilities that accompany being an American citizen.

Pratt felt that it was only through cultural erasure and total assimilation of the American Indian into the white hegemony that the American Indian could hope to be on equal footing with his white counterparts. Furthermore, Pratt saw an example in the African Americans who had recently been freed from slavery as well as immigrants who were assimilating into the dominant culture. Pratt's curriculum focused primarily on proficiency in reading, writing, and speaking English, learning manual or vocational skills such as blacksmithing and sewing, and learning subjects typical of mainstream schools such as geography and arithmetic. Pratt felt that the only way for the American Indian to become a fully productive member of his society was to be recreated in the image of his white counterpart, to begin to assimilate in the same way as European immigrants and African Americans.

In *The Art and Americanization at the Carlisle Indian School*, Hayes Peter Mauro contends that after the Civil War:

creating culturally acceptable identities for immigrants, the poor, Native Americans, and African Americans was part of the federal government's mission. By means of aesthetic transformation, these groups were to be converted from an assumed state of degenerate Otherness into model "American" citizens [and that] a major part of this conversion was visual. (1)

Mauro explores the ways in which American Indians were represented through photographs and other visual media to garner support for the Carlisle Indian School and to further ingrain the philosophy of assimilation. One very obvious way this philosophy of assimilation is propagated as being successful is in the "before and after" portraits of American Indians. Students were photographed in traditional Indian clothing in what might be termed a traditional Indian frontier setting and then photographed later with

shorn hair and “white” wardrobe in a “civilized” backdrop, such as a drawing room, as indicative of the success of the program in assimilating them into white culture.

According to Mauro, “Pratt recognized the efficacy of photography in promoting his efforts and bolstering the dual ideologies of Americanization and civilization” (54). Christopher Lyman offers some support as to the very specific power photography adds to visual rhetoric and representation of the time period as well as the manipulation of this power. Lyman explains:

Photography was invented in 1839 during the booming technological development of the middle nineteenth century. It was seen generally as having caused a cataclysmic change in the making of visual documents. Photography’s chemical-mechanical process was popularly perceived to have eliminated the subjectivity of human intervention which had been increasingly acknowledged in painting and other pre-photographic processes. Photographs, it was thought, presented *things-as-they-were*. (24)

This passage brings to mind the way in which Romantic representations of American Indians tended to describe them as stuck in time, just as they are, without a prospect for progress and how non-Native American rhetoric is used to describe Native Americans supposedly just how they are, without the opportunity of including a Native voice, without recognition. The photographs seem to do the same work of representing Native Americans, setting them in history through a non-Native perspective. Without the process of recognition, the photos as historical artifacts speak one truth, while erasing others.

In his book on Edward Curtis, Lyman explores how the famous photographer manipulated his subject, the American Indian, and even the medium itself to produce images of Indians that perpetuated the myth of a vanishing race of noble savages. In

fact, one of Curtis' best-known photographs is entitled *The Vanishing Race-Navaho*, and is described by Lyman as follows: "A line of Indians traverses a murky foreground (the present) toward a threatening wall of darkness (the future) above which is an aura of light (Curtis' hope for improvement of Indians through assimilation into White culture)" (80). Lyman's assessment of Curtis' *The Vanishing Race-Navaho* seems to directly articulate the exact philosophy of Richard Henry Pratt.

Most of the Carlisle photographs were taken by John Nicholas Choate, who served as the school's official photographer from the opening of the school until his death in 1902 (Mauro 56). However, Pratt "failed to credit Choate as author of the images" that he included in letters soliciting support for the school because "Pratt forwarded notions of photography in which authorship and execution were secondary to the ostensibly realistic content of the image itself" (Mauro 59). Pratt used photographs, therefore, such as the Carlisle "before and after" portraits, to secure governmental funding by providing evidence that the school was achieving its aims.

The photographs also served to convince parents that sending their children to the off-reservation boarding school would better equip them to live in the white man's world. Even in doing so, the photograph served to perpetuate the exoticization of the American Indian and reinforce the negative stereotypes of the Indian's alterity to the dominant white discourse. Young men and women were often photographed in traditional dress, including headdresses, breastplates, and bone necklaces, to support the popular image of the savage. These depictions served as conditions for which Pratt and Carlisle could provide rehabilitation and salvation. In accordance with Lyman's

perception of the realistic rather than mimetic representation that photographs provided, Pratt was able to capitalize on these images to serve his purposes.

Note that Carlisle opens its doors a mere forty years after the invention of photography, so the medium was relatively new. It is also worth noting that another of Curtis' famous photographs, *Geronimo-Apache*, was actually taken at the Carlisle Indian School the day before the inauguration of Theodore Roosevelt, an event in which Geronimo was pleased to participate. Lyman reports that "Geronimo's reputation as a murderous 'renegade' was based more on White legends than on fact" (81). The stoic, contemplative image of Geronimo reinforces Curtis' stereotyping of American Indians in the same way that Pratt found so advantageous.

1.5 Rhetorics of Resistance

In his *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience 1875-1928*, David Wallace Adams extensively documents the reasons for and the types of resistance by American Indians with regard to the boarding schools. Firstly, many Indian parents did not wholeheartedly agree with Pratt's notion of assimilation as the gateway to success. Parents resisted sending their children to the boarding school, and Adams identifies three primary reasons for this. First, parents were immediately concerned that sending their children to these schools would take away their children's tribal identities and cause them to lose their culture and traditions. Indeed, as assimilation and complete white cultural saturation and Indian cultural erasure are the crux of the boarding school mission, these parental fears were well-founded.

Second, parents were concerned for the health of their children. Due to the conditions and the proximally close living arrangements in the boarding schools, illnesses, such as tuberculosis, measles, pneumonia, and influenza, quickly became rampant, and many students became ill or even died. Since illness and death were fairly common (every off-reservation boarding school had its own graveyard), parents were hesitant to send their children into danger. In a letter to Sioux Chief White Thunder after the chief's own son had succumbed to illness, Pratt rationalizes this by writing that on every good mission, such as a hunt or raiding party, there are bound to be casualties. He continues that there is no greater mission than the boarding schools, and these losses, though regrettable, cannot undermine the mission of the schools. Pratt writes:

We must expect death to come to us in a good cause as well as a bad cause...Never in all the history of your tribe have you sent parties away from it on a better mission than this one and while my heart is pained and sad for the loss that you yourself have sustained in it I am sure your strong good will stand by what the Government is trying to do for you and help make it strong. (Adams 129)

Pratt's language seems to appeal to the good will and integrity of the chief, and evokes the Romantic representation of the American Indian as naturally virtuous. Pratt's mention of the government brings up a third reason that parents may not have wanted to send their children to the boarding schools. In the wake of broken treaties and general distrust of white government officials, many parents would have been hesitant to entrust their children to the white man's mission. In this way, political resistance exists in that parents did not submit to the dictates of the United States government. While these forms of resistance by American Indian parents may be telling of the general feeling of many American Indians toward boarding schools, particularly off-reservation boarding

schools, they do not change the fact that there were at least twenty-five off-reservation boarding schools that opened between 1879 and 1902 stretching from Pennsylvania to California and that these schools were filled with American Indian children.

The resistance of these students is perhaps more representative of the power of rhetoric and the need for individual agency and cultural continuity than the resistance of their parents. Resistance by the students in the off-reservation boarding schools, according to Adams, manifested itself in a number of ways. For one, students ran away from the schools. Despite strict security measures, students escaped in the manner of prison escapees. Adams reports that records from the school in Chilocco, Oklahoma, “indicate that in a four-month period in 1927 the desertion rate was 111 boys and 18 girls” (224). This “desertion” was common among the schools. One “dramatic story is the attempt made by a group of Yavawpi boys in 1902 to reach their homes in the Verde Valley. The journey involved a hundred-mile trek, some of it over difficult terrain. Remarkably, without food or water, and in spite of freezing rain and snow, they made it” (Adams 225). Carlisle also was not immune to runaways, a fact that Pratt himself reconciled as a product of students being “educated to run away” by elders and reservation officials. This assertion remains unsupported (Adams 225).

Another more overt form of resistance was arson. Students would literally attempt to set the schools on fire. One of the many examples is to be found at the Carlisle Indian School. Two students at Carlisle, Elizabeth Flanders and Fannie Eaglehorn, made two attempts in a single evening to burn down the school. Two separate fires were set but discovered in time to prevent Carlisle from going up in flames. Their attempts were unsuccessful, but when their guilt was discovered, both

confessed, and authorities “sentenced both girls to eighteen months in the penitentiary and issued a \$2000 fine” (Adams 230). The threat of arson was serious and pervasive enough that the Indian Office took preventative measures, including requiring fire drills, disseminating buckets of water throughout dormitories, and meting out stiffer penalties for arsonists (Adams 230).

In addition to these overt forms of resistance, Adams also cites somewhat subtler forms of resistance, such as passive resistance, bureaucratic exploitation, and cultural preservation. Passive resistance includes not performing assigned tasks, subverting homework assignments, giving pejorative nicknames to instructors, being generally nonresponsive, and even engaging in inappropriate urination and defecation (Adams 231-3). One documented example, though there must certainly have been similar others, occurred at the boys’ dormitory in Keams Canyon “in direct response to the superintendent’s order to padlock the dormitory at night to prevent escape” (Adams 232). Because the building was not equipped with lavatories, students had no recourse but to empty bladders and bowels in the dormitory itself. This, of course, came with unsanitary, unhygienic and repulsive results. The boys were not punished for this resistance in spite of the anger and revulsion of the administration, and the superintendent was forced to provide the boys in the dormitory with buckets. While buckets may hardly seem like much of a concession, this episode exemplifies how resistance was indeed possible. Adams opines that “the solution was not what the boys had hoped for but at least they had made their point” (Adams 232). The rhetoric of passive resistance was among the most powerful in that it allowed students to control the pace of the classroom and, in some ways, even the daily life of the school. Teachers

were virtually powerless to punish because passive resistance was not always readily identifiable as an egregious act.

Some students were able to resist the boarding schools by writing letters and operating within bureaucratic means to secure their release. Through bureaucratic protest, these students were able to use the skills they had been taught (i.e. reading and writing English) as a tool to flee the institution that was supposed to provide them freedom. In other words, they used the school to escape the school.

Cultural preservation is perhaps one of the most striking and ironic forms of resistance. Students would often tell cultural stories in private, and, on the playground, they would reenact scenes from traditional life, even going so far as constructing models of tepees. The aforementioned forms of resistance do not encompass all forms of resistance enacted by the students, but they are best representative of direct opposition to the rhetoric of assimilation. Furthermore, these acts of resistance are evidence of the fact that the rhetoric of assimilation was not only detrimental, but also ineffective. American Indian children faced extreme circumstances in this period of American history. These children were removed, often forcibly, from their homes, cultures, and traditions. They were thrust into the alien environment of the boarding school and subjugated in an effort to get them to internalize and espouse the dominant white discourse. The psychological and emotional strains would have been immense. Yet, in spite of the school's best efforts at cultural erasure, the rhetoric of resistance propagated by these American Indian children not only counterbalanced the school's rhetoric of assimilation but, in some cases, overpowered it so that their voices were heard.

Though there was parental resistance to boarding schools through objection and noncompliance, some Indian parents did willingly send their children to these schools. The above-mentioned Sioux Chief White Thunder is an example. He responded with affirmation and support to Pratt's letter, though his son Ernest had died in the boarding school. Some parents may have truly believed that the boarding schools would secure a bright future for their children in learning the white man's way, while others may have felt that they had no choice but to allow their children to become acculturated in the dominant white discourse. One such parent was Ellen Simmons. Simmons sent her daughter Gertrude to boarding school because "she will need an education when she is grown, for then there will be fewer real Dakotas, and many more palefaces" (Zitkala Ša 44). One might infer that many parents felt that sending their children to learn how to function within white discourse would give them the greatest opportunity for survival.

Ellen Simmons' daughter, Gertrude Simmons, is better known as Zitkala Ša. Not only did Zitkala Ša attend boarding school in Indiana, she also was an accomplished musician and writer, a teacher at Carlisle, and one of the most outspoken critics of Indian boarding schools. Zitkala Ša wrote several essays indicting this system. Zitkala Ša encapsulates her experience at the boarding school in a single episode of humiliation and despair when her hair is cut in "The School Days of an Indian Girl," an autobiographical account, from her *American Indian Stories*. Zitkala Ša writes:

I felt the cold blades of the scissors against my neck, and heard them gnaw off one of my thick braids. Then I lost my spirit. Since the day I was taken from my mother I had suffered extreme indignities. People had stared at me. I had been tossed about in the air like a wooden puppet. And now my long hair was shingled like a coward's! In my anguish I moaned for my mother, but no one came to comfort me. Not a soul

reasoned quietly with me, as my own mother used to do; for now I was only one of many little animals driven by a herder. (56)

Though this is only a single episode, one fully realizes the dehumanization and degradation felt by Zitkala Ša in this moment, a moment representative of the entire boarding school experience. In this passage, one can infer that Zitkala Ša feels that she has lost her individual agency and identity in that she describes herself as “only one of many little animals,” just a member of the herd to be controlled by the herder (56).

In *Resisting the Script of Indian Education: Zitkala Ša and the Carlisle Indian School*, Jessica Enoch argues, “the juxtaposition of Zitkala Ša’s essays with Carlisle’s publications demonstrates two facets of her pedagogical resistance” (118). The first facet of this resistance is Zitkala Ša’s critique of the Carlisle educational plan as an instrument to transform Indian students into members of the dominant culture who espouse “white” rhetoric of capitalist democracy and, therefore, abandon individual and tribal identities, and, secondly, “as her claim to what Scott Richard Lyons calls ‘rhetorical sovereignty’” (118).

Enoch asserts that Zitkala Ša specifically points to “what schools like Carlisle promote as the only good and necessary educational treatment for Indian students is really a form of violent cultural erasure” (124). Specifically, Zitkala Ša refutes three basic educational principles of Carlisle: “(1) that the savage must be civilized, (2) that tribal barriers must be broken down to allow the Indian to become an individual, and (3) that the English language is the ticket to success” (124). Zitkala Ša counters, firstly, that Indians did not lead “savage” lives before the boarding school but that it was in the hostile environment of the school where many Indians learned about cruelty. She cites

episodes of tranquil beadwork with her mother and humiliation by teachers as examples.

Secondly, Indians already had an understanding of their own individual identity within their community that was not necessarily congruent with the white hegemonic ideal of individualism but nevertheless was an individual identity. Zitkala Ša asserts that she had both an individual identity and an Indian identity before the school “constrained and suffocated her” (Enoch 128). Furthermore, the school compromised her identity in that she was not really fit for the white world, but she also was no longer fit for the world of her tribe.

Finally, English was more a tool for “survival and safety” than a ticket to success (Enoch 132). Again, the use of English served to “erase tribal identity” and no longer permitted her the freedom to think in her own language and within the terms of her own culture. Zitkala Ša’s experience in learning to read, write, and speak English came with a host of psychological and cultural detriments never envisioned, or at least articulated, by Pratt. Pratt’s assimilationist paradigm did not address the violence it inflicted. Though Pratt himself espoused the popular philosophy of the time, *kill the Indian, save the man*, he failed to comprehend the impossibility of such a venture because the two are inseparable. Zitkala Ša was a model student and mastered the use of English. But much to the chagrin of Pratt, she used English as a tool for critiquing the oppression she endured, and much to her own detriment, she used English at the cost of her own cultural erasure.

Enoch concludes her argument by using Zitkala Ša’s “pedagogical resistance and rhetorical sovereignty” as a point of departure when she asks, “How can we, as

teachers of rhetoric and composition, be political workers and ethical educators who call students to reflect critically on their worlds and revise the oppressive narratives that script our daily lives?" (137).

1.6 Dynamic American Sovereignty

In regard to rhetorical sovereignty today, it is easy to understand through hindsight why and how the “experiment” of the Carlisle Indian School was not only counterproductive in its aim of benevolence toward American Indians and detrimental to individuals, but also devastating in terms of cultural erasure. Indeed, it is the Indian cultures that Pratt seeks to destroy. The aforementioned terms that Vizenor employs clearly have relevance today in understanding rhetorical sovereignty for Native Americans, but they are worth considering as relevant to the late 19th century as well, though they may not have been understood quite so readily. *Survivance* is exactly what the children of Carlisle were doing when they told their tribal stories in secret and when they refused to completely succumb to the dominant discourse. These are the types of actions and activities that have paved the way for the Indian as American Sovereign, one who is not left behind to assimilate into the white man’s world, as Pratt had envisioned. There would be no demand for the sovereignty of American Indians, rhetorical or otherwise, without these American Indian students maintaining their tribal and cultural identities in the face of this great adversity.

Luther Standing Bear, famous traditional Sioux writer, actor, activist, and former star pupil of the Carlisle Indian School, puts it best and perhaps even provides us a blueprint for the future when he writes:

So we went to school to copy, to imitate, not to exchange languages and ideas, and not to develop the best traits that had come out of uncountable experiences of hundreds and thousands of years of living upon this continent. Our annals, all happenings of human import, were stored in our song and dance rituals, our history differing in that it was not stored in books, but in the living memory. So, while the white people had much to teach us, we had much to teach them, and what a school could have been established on that idea! (Pratt xvi)

Off-reservation boarding schools had resounding devastating effects on both individuals and cultures. It is regrettable that Luther Standing Bear's vision of what a successful school might have looked like was not achieved. However, all is not lost. We are not doomed to repeat the errors of the past. In other words, we still have the opportunity before us today to work toward Standing Bear's vision. But, if we ever hope to rectify the past and create a future in which American Indians are not disenfranchised and oppressed, we must forthrightly and unequivocally be cognizant of the power of rhetoric. Writing in the early 1980s about boarding schools in Oklahoma, Sally McBeth asserts that this survival (what Vizenor would term *survivance*) "is a profound statement of the power, persistence, and pervasive nature of the tribal groups, their sense of ethnic identity, and the symbols (traditional and emergent) which support this identity" (3). We must not allow *manifest manners* to dictate an overarching rhetoric, and we must recognize the *survivance* of American Indians rather than simply the *survival* of American Indians. The American Indian is not now, nor has he ever been, a *vanishing race*. Furthermore, we must be diligent in the use of the power of rhetoric to recognize and support individual agency and to provide the greatest opportunities for the rhetorical sovereignty of American Indians. Through this recognition and diligence in the use of rhetoric, in accordance with assertions of Enoch,

Lyons, Vizenor, and others, the United States can move away from an oppressive, dominating discourse and toward discourses which enable and ensure the freedom to which every American citizen, including American Indians, has the right.

2. OVERCOMING FALLACY: FROM A FALSE NATIONAL IDENTITY IN THE COLD WAR ERA COMIC BOOK SERIES, *WHITE INDIAN*, TO THE CONTEMPORARY COMEDY OF THE 1491S

2.1 National Crisis or National Creed?

In 1953, renowned psychiatrist Dr. Fredric Wertham published *Seduction of the Innocent*, an extensive work, the crux of which was to expose the psychological, emotional, and social damage visited on children by their exposure to comic books. Specifically, Dr. Wertham points to the sexualization, desensitization to and propensity toward violence, and cultivation of illiteracy as the primary influences on children. Dr. Wertham painstakingly offers specific examples from comic books, case studies, and his own experience in psychiatry to vilify comics as symptoms of greater societal ills.

Wertham specifically targets crime comics for their violence, but also finds fault with characters such as Batman, Wonder Woman, and Superman, whom he defines as “a symbol of violent race superiority” (97, 381). Indeed, Wertham asserts that comics are responsible for perpetuating racial prejudice through stereotypical characters at the same time that the United States government is investing “millions of dollars to persuade the world on the air and by other propaganda means that race hatred is not an integral part of American life” (100). Wertham strongly enlightens his readers to the fact that although “what we call ‘minorities’ constitute the majority of mankind,” comics lead children to “stereotyped conceptions of race prejudice”

and conclusions that non-white races are inferior (100, 102).

In addition to the racial element, Wertham argues that “the superman conceit gives boys and girls the feeling that ruthless go-getting based on physical strength or the power of weapons or machines is the desirable way to behave” (97). Wertham also contends that images of violence and brutality, such as appear in mystery or war comics, contribute to sleep disorders and are detrimental to the morality of children (105, 107). Wertham claims that children can pick out the “bad man” in a comic they have not seen before simply by whether or not the character appears to be American (102).

Historian and critic William W. Savage, Jr., who devoted an entire chapter of his *Commies, Cowboys, and Jungle Queens: Comic Books and America 1945-1954* to Wertham, criticizes *Seduction of the Innocent* as “pompous, polemical, biased, and poorly documented” (96). Savage further argues that “Wertham tarred all comic books with the same broad brush” and “simply ignored what he did not wish to acknowledge as worthwhile in the comic books under attack” (96-7). Savage characterizes Wertham as “a forerunner of the kind of media- oriented pop-psychiatrist later to be in vogue on television talk shows and syndicated self-help programs” (96). Author David Hajdu describes Wertham as “a nest of contradictions – intelligent and contemplative, yet susceptible to illogic, conjecture, and peculiar leaps of reasoning; temperate in appearance and manner, yet inclined to extravagant, attention-grabbing pontification” (99). Hajdu cites as further contradiction that Wertham “abhorred comics, which were born of the immigrant experience, while he was deeply empathetic to the Negro condition” (99). Wertham was known to enjoy

the spotlight, serving as a medical expert in many legal cases and thought of his battle against comic books as not an issue of freedom of speech, but rather an issue of “the mental health of a generation” (qtd in Hajdu 102).

One might find it interesting to note that in the three years prior to publication of *Seduction of the Innocent*, a comic series flourished that exhibits all of the factors that Wertham deems detrimental to youth, yet it somehow seems to have escaped Wertham’s scrutiny. Perhaps Wertham’s critics are right about his selective criticism. Frank Frazetta’s comic book series *White Indian* contains violence, racial prejudice, a white American superman, ill treatment of women, and pederastic sexuality, yet escapes censure. This escape from criticism may most likely be attributed to its gesture toward a strong national identity in a time in American history when American national security was most under threat. Though the comic itself is fraught with ideological and social problems, these problems are overshadowed by the hyper-patriotic plot lines and stalwart support of a hyper-masculinized version of a supposed American ideal. Furthermore, the comics in which *White Indian* appeared frequently were augmented with mini-features, such as “We Can Stop the Enemies of Youth,” which used tactics of fear and alienation as deterrents to succumbing to the “dope menace” and becoming a “dope fiend” (Frazetta 24). “He Stayed Behind” and “He Chose to Fight” were also typical mini-features called “Heroic True Life Stories” that ran alongside *White Indian*, touting the virtues of military selflessness and sacrifice to promote patriotism and to sell U.S. Defense Bonds (Frazetta 32, 40). The juxtaposition of these comics may have rendered them harmless to critics of crime and horror comics of the time. However, it is exactly the timely and insidious

nature of *White Indian*'s elements and politics that beckon us to investigate.

2.2 An Unlikely “Hero” Emerges in *White Indian*

Comic book legend Frank Frazetta, best known for his fantastic art and his hard-bodied heroes, including Conan and Tarzan, illustrated *White Indian* from October 1949 to May 1952 as a backup feature of the popular series, *The Durango Kid*. In May 2011, Vanguard Productions released *White Indian* as a part of Vanguard Frazetta Classics. In the introduction to this republication of Frank Frazetta's comic series, editor and art director J. David Spurlock outlines the publication history of *White Indian* and summarizes the premise of the series (though much of this summary is plagiarized directly from the series' original introduction). Spurlock also offers a second-hand report that Ray Krank, editor of Magazine Enterprises, publisher of *White Indian*, wrote the scripts for the series and that Frazetta was inspired by two Zane Grey novels, *Spirit of the Border* and *The Last Trail*. These novels include a character named Lew Wetzel who “was known to the Indians who menaced the colonists of Ohio as ‘The Wind of Death’ because he was so successful at killing Indians, who claimed that, before he struck, they heard a strange wind blowing” (Frazetta 7).

Throughout the introduction, Spurlock is exuberant in his praise of Frazetta's artwork, and his admiration for the artist is clear. Also clear is Spurlock's failure to address the problematic elements of cultural erasure, national identity, paternalism, female erasure, and masculine privilege present in the series. In the sixteen episodes that comprise *White Indian*, specific tropes remain constant throughout: Indians, though historically situated in Colonial America, are regarded as “vanishing,” existing only as vestiges of the past; national identity adheres exclusively to Manifest

Destiny ideology; Dan Brand, the protagonist who slightly resembles the character of Lew Wetzel, always knows best; there are virtually no female characters; and the masculine ideal remains dominant.

I will examine how Frazetta uses exploitative romantic ideals of American Indians to perpetuate the myth of the European American colonialist pioneer as the benevolent savior of Native Americans. Also, I will examine how *White Indian* attempts to define an America that is built upon the Western European (specifically, Greek) motif of the homosocial ideal, strengthened by historical cultural convergence as long as a single, dominant white American culture emerges (Sedgwick 87).

The action of *White Indian* begins at the wedding of Lucy Wharton and Dan Brand, wealthy Philadelphia colonialists, when Lucy is inadvertently killed by a rival suitor, Peter Bradford, whose bullet was intended for Dan. In seeking revenge, Dan trails Bradford westward into the forest where Dan unwittingly encounters a bear. Though he is able to overcome and kill the beast, Dan is left unconscious as “the ominous silence grips the forest once again and darkness draws a veil over Dan, plunging him into a half-sleep, half-death” (Frazetta 11). Dan is rescued by the Catawba tribe, specifically Chief Great Deer and his son Tipi. Dan recuperates and stays with the Catawbans for a year, learning the “ways of the forest, the Indian lore” and his clothing style has changed from Philadelphia to Catawba (Frazetta 12). Later, after an undisclosed amount of time, Bradford reemerges and kills Great Deer, who, with his last breath, enlists Dan to avenge his death and become caretaker to Tipi, thus uniting Tipi and Dan in a series of adventures in which Dan clears the way for white American progress, embracing Manifest Destiny ideology toward a national

identity and shared responsibility that may have resonated with Cold War Era readers.

The relationship of Dan and Tipi exemplifies a blending of cultures in which the European American adopts the “desirable” characteristics of the Native American and appropriates them toward a single national identity, thereby dominating and erasing Native culture. Dan acts paternalistic toward Tipi, his Tontoesque sidekick and “blood-brother” (a term employed but not defined), but the pair also both seek to build a life together and achieve goals to the exclusion of all others.

One of the more obvious and off-putting aspects of this series is the “Cooperesque idea of a non-Native becoming a better ‘Indian’ than the real ones” (Sheyashe 14). We can read here a paternalistic figure who “knows best” for the nation and its inhabitants, Native or otherwise, as Dan is always right. Dan also always acts in the interests of American frontiersmen, in spite of the invasive, murderous displacement of Native peoples involved in frontier expansion. Frazetta attempts to portray Indians as humans, but seldom does, beyond the stereotype of “noble savage” and certainly never to the point of equality with the white man. Savage asserts that one common social aspect of comics involving nonwhites (he lists Africans, Indians, Mexicans and Chinese) in this era was that the minorities “all required Caucasian intervention on their behalf. Natives were natives, it seemed, and wherever the white hero found them, they could be depended upon to have submitted already to liquor, drugs, Communism, scams of various kinds, and all sorts of criminal activity, either as perpetrators or as victims” (77). Indeed, this sort of white deliverer, popularized by the *Leatherstocking Tales* of James Fenimore Cooper

previously alluded to by Sheyashe, is present in *White Indian* in the character of Dan. Sheyashe suggests that in *White Indian* “there is a palpable undertone of respect and seriousness in every Indigenous character,” but he ultimately concedes that “*White Indian* offers too little specific Native culture (which supplies the prowess and abilities Dan is famous for) and instead celebrates the white protagonist’s ‘greatness’” (16). I am less forgiving in my assessment of Frazetta’s *White Indian* regarding the treatment of Indians in that *White Indian* is a great example of *manifest manners*, as mentioned in the previous chapter. In *White Indian*, manifest manners are vividly portrayed with Dan Brand situated at the center as the primary agent who perpetuates this myth of the changing and inevitable American landscape.

2.3 The Making of the American Myth

“Man is a myth-making animal,” writes Richard Slotkin (7). “He naturally seeks to understand his world in order to control it and his first act in compassing this end is an act of the mind or imagination” (Slotkin 7). In his book, *Regeneration Through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier 1600-1860*, Slotkin explores the idea of an American national mythology. Slotkin’s work is expansive in its breadth and depth of American literature and its contribution to the mythology of the American frontier. The scholarship in this volume is far more extensive than is necessary to use as a tool to investigate *White Indian*, but Slotkin does include details of tropes and problems that can be of service to our purposes here.

Slotkin informs us that “three critical problems lie in the path of any study of the so-called myth of America” (5). The first of these problems is that it is difficult to ascertain what exactly is meant by “the Americanness of its origin” in that the

American population before 1800 is comprised primarily of those of European or American Indian lineage. The conflation of these two groups provides a mixed mythological heritage. Slotkin asserts that “it seems important to question whether our national experience has ‘Americanized’ or ‘Indianized’ us, or whether we are simply an idiosyncratic offshoot of English civilization” (6).

Secondly, Slotkin identifies as a problem the fact that the American nation emerges simultaneously with the printing press. Therefore, American myth is forced to contend with literature in ways that other national mythologies have not. Slotkin ponders whether “the post- Gutenberg period [is] also postmythological” given that printed literature may impede a natural process of myth development (6).

Thirdly, Slotkin identifies a problem “which lies at the source of every study of myth in history and literature: the problem of defining myth and of distinguishing between archetypal myth, folk legends, and artistic mythopoesis” (6). In an examination of *White Indian*, this third issue may be of most relevance, especially in regard to artistic mythopoesis. We must remember in the scope of this essay on *White Indian* that we are not examining the emergence of the American myth, but that we are seeking to understand the Cold War Era reformulation of a version of the American myth. The aforementioned artistic mythopoesis, or creation of mythology, is honed to suit purposes beyond what those might have been as a national myth began to emerge in the centuries before the Cold War. It is, however, useful to consider one of the earliest literary contributors of that myth, one which the previously mentioned James Fenimore Cooper would exploit, and that is John Filson’s 1784 *The Discovery, Settlement, and Present State of Kentucke* (Slotkin

268). Filson's intention in crafting this narrative was as "an elaborate real-estate promotion brochure," but in doing so he created the Boone narrative, "the first nationally viable statement of a myth of the frontier" (Slotkin 268-9). Slotkin argues that "a myth is a narrative which concentrates in a single, dramatized experience the whole history of a people in their land. The myth-hero embodies or defends the values of his culture in a struggle against the forces which threaten to destroy the people and lay waste the land" (269). It is no great leap to imagine that *White Indian* is fulfilling the requirements of this definition in regard to the threat, real or imagined, of Communism in America. The problematic part of this definition is in *White Indian* only white American culture is being defended concurrently as American Indian nations are destroyed. Therefore, Slotkin's third problem of artistic mythopoesis supersedes what he recognizes as the first problem of studying American mythology by eliminating an entire populace through the second problem of literature overtaking myth. That is to say, *White Indian* can best be considered in its historical moment as Cold War Era propaganda rather than as a serious attempt at defining an American mythology.

Filson's Boone narrative, a liberal and literary retelling of the life of Daniel Boone, allows "Filson and his readers, standing between the Indian image of man's natural potential for good and the European image of civilization's historical failures to realize that potential, [to] have the opportunity to shape their own future with full awareness of their possibilities for good and evil" (Slotkin 276). *White Indian*'s Dan Brand can be read as a caricature of Boone in that, like Brand with the Catawbas, Boone is adopted by the Shawnee tribe and is accepted "as virtually a blood member

of the tribe” (Slotkin 287). Slotkin points out that though he is adopted and accepted into the customs of the tribe, “Boone remains superior to the Indians: he masters their technique of living, without surrendering his consciousness of ‘white’ social values or his personal philosophy of self-reliance and self-restraint” (287). Though this description is of Boone, it could easily be applied to Dan. Slotkin posits that there are three reasons the Boone narrative had such a great impact. The first of these three reasons is that Filson portrays the protagonist as contemporary and believable, a great man with great accomplishments, and not a semidivinity (Slotkin 295). One can relate this type of protagonist to Dan and to the protagonists of comic strips in general.

Secondly, “Boone’s adventures are shown as instances relevant to a range of metaphysical, moral, and historical questions that the enlightened reader would be sure to regard as having the highest level of philosophical and social importance” (Slotkin 295). The adventures of Dan, with the exception of the homosexual undertones to be explored later, could be categorized similarly given the Cold War Era insistence on preservation of American national identity.

And thirdly, Slotkin argues that the narrative had such an impact because it “supports its rationalization of the westward movement by basing it on the deepest unconscious assumptions of the culture about its place, destiny, and value in the world” (295). Therefore, if we can accept Slotkin’s argument about the efficacy of Filson’s Boone narrative’s emergence as a national myth and creation of a national hero, then we may readily see Frazetta’s *White Indian* doing similar work in a very different historical moment. *White Indian* then becomes a retelling of a national

myth that resonates with its readers in the Cold War Era in much the same way as Filson's in 1784.

Dan, then, may be seen as the quintessential American. Though used here contextually to justify western expansion and the creation of a new America in the colonial era, the figure of Dan may also be read in terms of the Cold War ethos as the ultimate American hero, which rests at least partly on the masculine ideal. In fact, the entire sixteen-episode series only includes female characters five times: twice in death as a catalyst to action, twice as background characters, and once as a damsel in distress, another catalyst to action. In "Trees of Doom," Dan asserts his masculinity and his individuality when he says, "It is the white man I want! With him I will do battle. But if my red brothers stand in the way, then they too shall feel the might of my arm!" (Frazetta 46).

The masculine ideal seems to be an apt description of the "natural" relationship between Dan and Tipi. Benedict Friedlander offers "that homosexuality was the highest, most perfect evolutionary stage of gender differentiation" (qtd. in Sedgwick 88). If we read Dan and Tipi as a homosexual couple desirous of living in a natural state, that is, the woods, we may also read their sexuality as ranked hierarchically and naturally above all others, enabling them to accomplish their goal of creating a new nation without the burden of the sexual politics of the nuclear family and the capitalistic concerns that accompany such politics. Furthermore, the masculine activities of Dan—outwitting the enemy, fighting skillfully in hand-to-hand combat, successfully employing strategies of war—establish him as a hero in line with James Steakley's assertion that "as distinct from the effeminate

homosexual, [the masculine homosexual] was seen as the founder of patriarchal society and ranked above the heterosexual in terms of his capacity for leadership and heroism” (qtd. in Sedgwick 88-9). Thus, we can read in Dan a type of founding patriarch echoing the Greek founders of Western democracy.

Other visual images of the Cold War Era support this utilization of the Greek ideal to celebrate, or at least invoke sympathy for, male homosexuality and to privilege whiteness. In his essay, “White Skin, Red Masks: ‘Playing Indian’ in Queer Images from *Physique Pictorial*, 1957-67,” Rahul K. Gairola explores images presented in the popular gay magazines of the 1950s and 60s. Gairola writes that:

a glance at the titles of many physique magazines suggests the dominance of the white closet in representing “American gayness”: *Adonis*, *Grecian Guild Pictorial*, *American Apollo*, *Olympians*, *Demi Gods*, *Triumph*, *Champ*, *Little Caesar*, *Mars*, and *Young Adonis*. Such titles suggest that the supposedly liberatory publication of homoerotic images consolidate whiteness as the racial standard of a sexual ideal while geographically placing the origin of American male beauty in Western Europe. (8)

Furthermore, Gairola suggests that “some of the images are symptomatic of a concentrated effort to champion queer desire in and through the emulation of native peoples” (8). Gairola specifically addresses three images from *Physique Pictorial* of models in “native garb” (8). Gairola describes model Kurt Freeman in an image displayed on the back cover of the Spring 1957 issue of *Physique Pictorial*:

His full body on display for the homospectorial gaze, two prominent props mark his body as Native American. A large and flowing headdress sporting black and white feathers crowns his head, falling the length of his torso to his buttocks while a ‘loincloth’ with an ostensibly Indigenous design covers his genitals. Despite the partially visible tattoo on his left forearm, the visual linkage of the Native American garb with his chiseled body analogizes hyper-masculinity with hyper-Americanness. (8)

The description Gairola provides of Freeman could be a description (sans tattoo) of Dan as the White Indian. Dan is always presented as both hyper-masculine and hyper-American, not only in word and deed, but also in his visual representation. Beyond the first episode when Dan is a colonialist in Philadelphia society, he is never again seen wearing a shirt, unless he is in disguise. Brand's shirtlessness allows us to see his whiteness as well as his masculine physique, especially when he is wrestling with a villain or wild animal or performing some feat of strength, usually in a successful effort to save Tipi from a predicament fraught with danger. Dan also wears a bear claw necklace, a headband, moccasins, a lengthy loincloth, and fringed pants that are inexplicably cut away at the buttocks. Tipi's appearance copies Dan's with the exceptions that his skin is darker, he is less muscular, he wears a single feather in his headband, and his loincloth is shorter. Tipi is feminized throughout the series in contrast with Dan as he has a slighter build, has noticeably longer eyelashes, and is often drawn with softer lines.

2.4 Using Illustrations to Establish Universal Truths about National Identity

In regard to the way that characters are drawn in this series, Sheyashe praises Frazetta's representations of Indians as "real and believable" and not simply "caricatures" (16). Of course, the same could be said of the villains in this series as well. In *Understanding Comics*, Scott McCloud suggests that the more realistic representation of a subject, a human face, for example, entails less identification by the audience due to the specificity. In other words, fewer visual referents allow us to better identify the face as our own. We are more likely to see ourselves in a simple

line drawing of Charlie Brown (though we look nothing like him) than we would in a character drawn with specific facial features, such as wrinkles and facial contours that identify a specific person. McCloud employs the phrase “amplification through simplification” (30), and argues that “by stripping down an image to its essential ‘meaning,’ an artist can amplify that meaning in a way that realistic art can’t” (30). This is why, according to McCloud, when we see two dots and a line inside a circle (a happy face), we cannot help but see a face. McCloud suggests that this universality is why children are attracted to cartoons. Though McCloud’s arguments are debatable, specifically in regard to universality and essentializing, generally, his points on the way characters are drawn can contribute to our investigation into *White Indian*. In *White Indian*, Dan and Tipi are rendered more abstract in their representations in that not many details are included in their facial features. Outlines and shading comprise their facial features, whereas other characters in the series, including most Indians, villains, colonialists, and even George Washington, are drawn with much more detail, such as deep wrinkle lines, warts, and bushy eyebrows.

By drawing Dan and Tipi in this way, Frazetta iconicizes the pair and provides a symbol with which the reader may more readily identify because the image is not cluttered with signifiers that would suggest that one is looking at a specific individual situated in time and place. The iconicity and universality of Dan Brand and Tipi allow us, according to McCloud’s theory, to identify them as symbols of a new America that may persist throughout time, whereas the very realistic images of the others (Indians, villains, George Washington) suggest that those characters are

relegated to history or, at the very least, will not escape the pages of *White Indian*. McCloud's theory is problematic in that universal interpretation of images is implausible, (though white American males may have easily identified with Dan) but the idea of amplification through simplification is relevant to Frazetta's rendering of the characters insofar as he attempts to sublimate the character of Dan, and to a lesser extent, Tipi.

Application of Umberto Eco's "The Myth of Superman" also contributes to our understanding of the character of Dan, both in terms of his being a hero and also in terms of how the hero character is used in *White Indian* to contribute to a sense of national identity. In "The Myth of Superman," Eco explains the hero in myth, novel, and comic strip. Eco explicates the mythic nature of the hero in contrast to what he calls the "civilization" of the novel when he writes:

the traditional figure of religion was a character of human or divine origin, whose image had immutable characteristics and an irreversible destiny. It was possible that a story as well as a number of traits backed up the character; but the story followed a line of development already established, and it filled in the character's features in a gradual but definitive manner. (15)

Eco claims that in traditional mythology or Messianic religions, the hero is fixed within the story (which serves as a representation of the hero's characteristics) and the plot, therefore, is defined by the character. For example, there are several stories in the New Testament about Jesus, but each story serves to extol the defining characteristics of Jesus. In other words, the plot is employed to exemplify and support the archetype of the hero.

In contrast, Eco writes that "the civilization of the modern novel offers a story

in which the reader's main interest is transferred to the unpredictable nature of what will happen and, therefore, to the plot invention which now holds our attention" (15). An example character from popular American literature is Alabama lawyer Atticus Finch from Harper Lee's novel, *To Kill a Mockingbird*. The novel is fraught with social tension and difficult decisions in racially-charged 1930s Alabama. Atticus must make his way through twists and turns in the plot to prove himself worthy of the reader's respect. In this case, then, the plot does not serve as scaffolding to reveal what is already known about the hero, but rather it serves to provide the hero with opportunities and decisions to be made in the same way that we readers face in our own lives. This structure creates identification and connection by the reader for the hero while it eliminates any grand universal lesson or truth. Eco elaborates:

This new dimension of the story sacrifices for the most part the mythic potential of the character. The mythic character embodies a law, or a universal demand, and, therefore, must be in part predictable and cannot hold surprises for us; the character of a novel wants, rather, to be a man like anyone else, and what could befall him is as unforeseeable as what may happen to us. Such a character will take on what we will call an "aesthetic universality," a capacity to serve as a reference point for behavior and feelings which belong to us all. He does not contain the universality of myth, nor does he become an archetype, the emblem of supernatural reality. He is the result of a universal rendering of a particular and eternal event. The character of a novel is a "historic type." Therefore, to accommodate this character, the aesthetics of the novel must revive an old category particularly necessary when art abandons the territory of myth; this we may term the "typical." (15)

The distinction that Eco draws between characters from mythology and characters from novels is quite clear. Traditional heroes can be read as archetypal, symbolic of a divine or universal truth, whereas characters from novels simply provide a guidepost, suggesting how we might think and act. Though both Atticus

and Jesus are arguably icons of moral goodness, the difference in these characters lies in their predictability and purpose. Readers understand that the fate of Jesus is sealed and any actions or interactions in which he partakes will inevitably lead to the same result. Atticus, on the other hand, faces difficult decisions that could affect not only his own future, but the future of his children, the futures of specific others, and even the future of his community. Eco situates the hero of the comic strip somewhere in between the definitions he offers for traditional mythological characters and characters from novels. Eco deftly describes how the comic strip characters borrow from both to create an entirely new and distinct category of hero. Eco writes:

The mythological character of comic strips finds himself in this singular situation: he must be an archetype, the totality of certain collective aspirations and, therefore, he must necessarily become immobilized in an emblematic and fixed nature which renders him easily recognizable (this is what happens to Superman); but since he is marketed in the sphere of a “romantic” production for a public that consumes “romances,” he must be subjected to a development which is typical, as we have seen, of novelistic characters. (15)

White Indian's Dan Brand is a quintessential character exemplifying this “singular situation” that Eco describes. Furthermore, Eco's notion of the “totality of certain collective aspirations” may be used to explain that Dan represents a national identity that is founded on white American progress (Eco 15). Thus, Dan is an archetype of cultural erasure and nation building that is realized through a “typical” development which involves unpredictability as he wages war and faces unexpected obstacles. Like Superman, Dan is easily recognized by his readers and understood most likely to emerge victorious no matter how dire his circumstances may seem, but the means by which he will meet with success are not always readily apparent, and the plot points serve to provide recognition rather than confirmation of his heroic essence.

Further in his essay, Eco discusses the interruption of temporality that exists as a function of the hero's ability to perpetuate the archetype without the constraints of time which ultimately lead toward death. Time functions for Dan, as for Superman, only in the immediacy of each episode. That is to say, the action of *White Indian* occurs in what Eco calls "an ever-continuing present" which relieves the reader of the burden of holding the hero's development to "the dictates of time" (19). This abandonment of the constraints of time is vital in that the reader forgets the problems which are at its base; that is, the existence of freedom, the possibility of planning, the necessity of carrying plans out, the sorrow that such planning entails, the responsibility that it implies, and finally, the existence of an entire human community whose progressiveness is based on making plans (Eco 19). This forgetfulness of the reader is especially important in *White Indian* due to the fact that if freedom and planning are considered, then Dan is more culpable in his actions regarding ill-treatment of American Indians. Since each episode begins anew, Dan is merely acting without regard to the events that have happened previously, and the story arc of the series is not made to reveal any significant truths. The first episode of *White Indian* is set in 1770 and lays the foundation for Dan Brand to become the White Indian. However, the second episode takes place in 1754, a temporal impossibility. Further episodes either have no discernible place in time, other than colonial America, or clearly move back and forth through time between 1754 and 1778. Therefore, the story arc becomes repetitive in its reinforcement of Dan's archetypal nature in direct contradiction of its seeming to represent a social and ideological progress in the form of Manifest Destiny. In so doing, Dan is absolved of

personal responsibility, and his agency is mitigated by the overarching eventuality of white America. In speaking to a tribe of Indians who are resistant to the onslaught of white settlers, Dan proclaims that “there is no stopping the march of history! The settlers will come despite everything! Live at peace with them – and great riches will come to the land. But if you make war – soldiers will come, there will be destruction and death – and no one will gain!” (Frazetta 26). Dan seems to espouse the notion here that Manifest Destiny, as the name suggests, is unavoidable and is brought about by the actions of the divine and not the actions of individuals. Dan, therefore, has no personal responsibility for the annihilation of American Indians and culture or for the proliferation of Euramerican land theft, but is subject to irresistible forces beyond human measure or control.

White Indian is problematic in numerous and, often, obvious ways, not the least of which is the depiction and treatment of Native Americans. In spite of being geographically situated in the Ohio River valley area and Frazetta’s use of specific tribal names, *White Indian* often conflates all Indians to exhibit Plains Indians cultural referents. In “Massacre,” the title pane explains that “the Indian tribes united into one great bloodthirsty army” (67). “Massacre” is published almost two years before (and the final episode of *White Indian* is published more than a year before) the passage of House Concurrent Resolution 108 in 1953 which was “the policy of Congress, as rapidly as possible, to make the Indians within the territorial limits of the United States subject to the same laws and entitled to the same privileges and responsibilities as are applicable to other citizens of the United States” (H.Res. 108). Although the culmination of *White Indian* narrowly precedes House Concurrent

Resolution 108, the comic fully is in alignment with the federal termination policy articulated by the resolution. It is precisely this historical moment, the Cold War era, in which the comic series appears and its dependence upon the homosocial (if not homosexual) foundation on which, the series seems to argue, a new national identity must emerge, that makes *White Indian* worthy of interrogation. Furthermore, these fallacious tropes are worth investigating in order to understand how we can best confront stereotypes and false and reckless notions of Native Americanness that persist today. Through a greater understanding of the insidious falsehoods propagated in our country throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, we can better prepare ourselves to dispel and dismantle those same falsehoods and inequalities and discriminations that are, unfortunately, still with us today.

Three generations after Dr. Wertham wrote his book, ostensibly to protect the youth of America, we find that we still have not moved very far away from the racial tension and violence of the mid-twentieth-century. On November 24, 2014, a Federal Grand Jury in Ferguson, Missouri, decided not to indict Officer Aaron Wilson in the August 9, 2014, shooting death of Michael Brown. Following the verdict, protests sprang up all over the country, some resulting in violence. Many Americans feel that Wilson, a white man, used excessive force and police brutality when he shot and killed Brown, an unarmed African American teenager. Regardless of the details in the case and whether or not one feels the Grand Jury made the most appropriate decision, it is undeniable that this incident has triggered an explosion of simmering racial tension in the United States. Though we are 53 years removed from the Civil Rights Act of 1964, it has become clear that there is still much unrest in the nation

regarding race relations. Currently, there is heated debate about changing the professional American sports team names and mascots which are racial slurs, yet these names persist with the support of the United States Supreme Court. While many African Americans and other minority groups decry police brutality as a violent and widespread manifestation of the systemic racism that pervades our national community, there are equally pervasive and insidious acts of violence perpetuated against minority groups by white hegemony, such as cultural erasure and racial inequality which cause tremendous emotional, psychological, physical and economic trauma. The election of Donald Trump to the presidency of the United States has solidified fears for many Americans as his platform and policies target specific racial and ethnic groups in negative and discriminatory ways³. A major part of the problem in addressing racism, according to Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, is that

the usual sequence in media accusations of racism...is that the racist statement is made, offense is expressed, punishment is called for: all of which provokes a series of counter-statements—that the person in question is not racist, that some of the person’s best friends belong to the race in question, and so forth. The process has the apparently positive result of placing certain statements beyond the pale of civil speech; blatant racism is stigmatized and punished. But the more subtle, deeper forms of discursively and institutionally structured racism remain unrecognized. The discussion has revolved around the putative racism of a single individual; the problem is assumed to be personal, ethical. The result is a lost opportunity for antiracist pedagogy: racism is reduced to an individual, attitudinal problem, distracting attention from racism as a systematic self-reproducing discursive apparatus that

³ Trump’s travel ban and the proposed wall target specific ethno-racial groups, and the proposed healthcare legislation targets low-income Americans and women. In spite of protests by the Standing Rock Sioux, Trump signed a memorandum to advance construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline. President Obama had initiated legislation and social programs with the objectives of greater equality, social, and environmental sustainability, whereas Trump has sought to reverse these actions. The Southern Poverty Law Center has published statistics which indicate that the rhetoric during Trump’s campaign and presidency has led to a vast increase in hate speech and hate crime (“Ten Days After”).

itself shapes racist attitudes. (811)

In other words, we as a society are apt to punish an individual for racist behavior or comments but are slow to indict an entire system or government entity that propagates systemically oppressive racism. Indeed, targeting an individual may be convenient and even gratifying in terms of its immediacy, but this type of small-scale address will not result in broad sweeping changes as the problem is endemic within the system and not simply a problem on the level of individuals. When people begin to understand that the problem is inherent in the system of government or the pervasiveness of demeaning stereotypes, they can begin to resist, to push back against this oppression.

2.5 True Heroes Emerge: the 1491s and the Power of Comedy in Deconstructing False Representations

Humor and comedy have often provided a vehicle for political criticism and to confront or provide relief for the concerns of our everyday lives. The 1491s, a Native American acting troupe, combat racism, especially in terms of false notions of Native American identity, in a positive way through comedy to allow the voices of Native American peoples to be heard and their cultures to be celebrated in the face of a hegemony that would sooner have them silenced. They describe themselves on their website as follows:

The 1491s is a sketch comedy group, based in the wooded ghettos of Minnesota and the buffalo grass of Oklahoma. They are a gaggle of Indians chock full of cynicism and splashed with a good dose of Indigenous satire. They coined the term *All My Relations*, and are still waiting for the royalties. They were at the Custer's Last Stand. They mooned Chris Columbus when he landed. They invented bubble gum. The 1491s teach young women how to be strong.

And...teach young men how to seduce these strong women. (the 1491s)

Their website contains many of their videos and blogs. One can also catch The 1491s on YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter. The 1491s are irreverent. The 1491s are unabashedly sarcastic. The 1491s are hilarious! But the 1491s also have a sensitive side, and they are on a serious, subversive mission. It is through their humor and subject matter that the 1491s provide criticism and commentary on relevant and timely Indian topics, such as identity and mainstream perceptions of Native communities and individuals that hope to effect positive change in Indian communities and American society, in general.

The 1491s engage in relevant discussions about the ways that American Indians are perceived and misrepresented by mainstream America. The 1491s also offer Native Americans an opportunity to consider their own identity amidst this cultural disruption. Appropriation of Native culture contributes to and is complicit with systemic racism, such as the Ferguson verdict and the Washington Redskins name change debate. The 1491s use the subversive nature of comedy to make their videos pertinent, and it is important to consider how the immediacy and accessibility of their website and YouTube channel offers their medium the opportunity to have the greatest impact on the greatest number of people, Native and otherwise. The 1491s seize the “lost opportunity” that Shohat and Stam describe in order to expose a debilitating racism while simultaneously empowering and privileging their own cultural centers. I use the plural here to denote that there are hundreds of tribes in the United States, each with their own cultural practices and traditions. At the same time as these different cultures and groups are recognized as distinct within the larger

group called Native American, the 1491s address what might be considered a shared Native American experience in the United States, especially in regard to a shared history of racial inequality, economic disempowerment, and cultural erasure. The 1491s help us to understand, celebrate, and protect what it means to be a Native American in the United States today.

In the late 1990s, in *Mixedblood Messages: Literature, Film, Family, Place*, Louis Owens writes that “the most popularly and commercially successful Native American works thus far are marked by a dominant and shared characteristic: They are the direct heirs of the modernist tradition of naturalistic despair, of which the Indian is the quintessential illustration” (81). Owens even critiques Sherman Alexie, a now widely read writer well known for his use of humor, for reinforcing “all of the stereotypes desired by white readers: his bleakly absurd and aimless Indians are imploding in a passion of self-destructiveness and self-loathing” (79). Were he alive today (Owens died in 2002), Owens would likely be pleasantly surprised to see the work of the 1491s. The 1491s do not subscribe to the notion of “naturalistic despair” in that they do not accept that Indians (or their cultures and traditions) will simply fade away as depicted in photographs by Edward S. Curtis at the turn of the twentieth century featuring the “vanishing Indian.” This troupe subverts stereotypes and inspires tribal and individual pride through the medium of film and the art of comedy.

The 1491s move away from a binary where non-Indians are the heroes and Indians are icons of despair, as Owens laments, toward an American Indian identity that refuses to vanish into a mythical tragic history. The 1491s use their sketch

comedy and the accessibility of the internet to create new boundaries and new narratives. In this way, the 1491s use their art to triumph over pervasive marginalizing tendencies and to provide the necessary tools for all to overcome this problem of an identity couched in doomed and unnecessary narratives. The 1491s use their comedy in a way that some Native American artists have used the postmodern devices in their works. If we can believe that “deconstructing the construction of false Indian Identity has always been a part of Indian art,” then we can reach the inevitable conclusion that the 1491s adeptly achieve that goal (Rader 145).

In the vein of postmodernism, the comedy of the 1491s figures in with these characteristics, particularly the blurring of boundaries, accessing liminal spaces, and the potential unsettling (or rejuvenating) effect all of this has on the audience. It is exactly this “decentering of privileged centers” that the 1491s have at the heart of their mission. Through laughter, and sometimes absurdity, the 1491s invite the world to consider themselves and American Indians in a new and positive light.

In *A Companion to Film Comedy*, published in 2013, Andrew Horton and Joanna Rapf provide a helpful framework that can be employed in considering the comedy of the 1491s. Horton and Rapf outline “six of what could easily be dozens of observations on comedy in general that go beyond film, television, theater, books or the internet” (2). These six observations are:

1. Comedy is a way at looking at the universe, more than merely a genre of literature, drama, film, or television.
2. Comedy is a form of ‘play’ that embraces fantasy and festivity.
3. Comedy and tragedy are near cousins whose paths often cross.
4. Comedy implies a special relationship with and to its audience.
5. In the world of the truly comic, nothing is sacred and nothing human is rejected.

6. Comedy is one of the most important ways a culture talks to itself about itself. (Horton and Rapf 2-4)

These six observations are certainly applicable to the work of the 1491s. In regard to the first observation, Horton and Rapf point to the therapeutic aspect of comedy as a way of approaching life. Surely, no one could refute that American Indians have a painful history dating from contact that persists today. If we agree with Horton and Rapf that comedy is a coping mechanism, then it should come as no surprise that Indians often employ humor as a way of addressing the pain of issues brought about by colonial oppression, such as land theft, tribal removal, alcoholism, and domestic violence that have persisted and surrounded American Indians for several centuries.

Addressing remedies to the pain of oppression, one of the 1491s videos entitled *Alcohol and Drugs* claims to be “a short PSA- for Native American people” (the 1491s). Bobby Wilson of the 1491s speaks directly to the camera in a single shot and forthrightly explains the dangers of drugs and alcohol to Native Americans. As Wilson explains the negative consequences of drug and alcohol abuse, he consumes a fast food meal of high fat and high sugar content. The humor here is that while there is nothing necessarily ironic in Wilson’s message about drug and alcohol abuse, his actions are ironic in that he remains blissfully ignorant of other detriments to the health of American Indians, such as obesity and diabetes. This video may be understood as a coping mechanism because it allows us to laugh at ourselves at the same time as it reminds us to be wary of all the ways in which we should be cognizant of all hindrances to health, not just high-profile problems such as drug and alcohol abuse.

Almost every 1491s video confirms Horton and Rapf’s second observation

that comedy is play. All of their videos have an undercurrent of playfulness, if not outright silliness, that is used in such a way, as Horton and Rapf suggest, for rebirth and renewal within the boundaries of the comedy itself (3). The 1491s choose very sensitive subject matter, such as land theft, but often approach this subject matter in a tongue-in-cheek way that allows us to hear their voices without anyone feeling threatened. The messages conveyed by the 1491s are a little easier to talk about when considered through their comedic angle, no matter how unpleasant they might be.

This, of course, leads to the third observation about the close kinship of comedy and tragedy. As previously mentioned, the troubled history of American Indians on this continent is long and painful. That is not to say that American Indians do not have much to celebrate as well, but it is through the tragedy that the comedy is born. If one were to abbreviate every 1491s video to a single subject and create a list, that list would not seem very comedic. The list would include topics like cultural appropriation, poverty, domestic violence, drug and alcohol abuse, loss of tradition and identity, as well as genocide, just to name a few. While there does not seem to be anything particularly funny about the topics listed above, the popularity of the 1491s attests to the fact that they can take a comedic approach to these separate tragedies as a way of providing hope and understanding. In an August 2013 presentation by the 1491s at a TedTalks in Manitoba, Canada, 1491s member Migizi Pensoneau clearly states, “Go cry over somebody else’s tragedy, because we’re alive and thriving, man!” (1491s). Much of the resilience and perseverance that has led to the survival and continued cultural sovereignty of American Indians is in part a response to horrific tragedies and the ability to overcome, which is at the crux of the comedy of

the 1491s.

The fourth observation by Horton and Rapf is especially apt in understanding the work of the 1491s in that the relationship of the audience is an integral part of their work. Generally speaking, Horton and Rapf explain the inclusivity of the audience that comedy utilizes, and breaking the fourth wall facilitates that inclusivity. The 1491s frequently break the fourth wall, but that is not the only way in which they include their audience in the narrative. Because the 1491s center their comedy on issues that concern or involve Native people, much, if not all, of their comedy reaches those who are conversant in the current relevant discourse in ways that it would not reach those outside of the conversations of the specific Native American discourse community. For example, the 1491s have two separate videos about “talkin’ Indian” in which college students speak directly to the camera using various slang words and expressions, out of context and often in funny ways. Those unfamiliar with the expressions, such as pointing with lips, and words featured in the videos may find some enjoyment in the videos and the obvious fun the participants are having on screen, but they will not be able to grasp the deeper enjoyment intended by the 1491s for an audience that does understand the slang and is able to laugh at themselves. This type of inclusivity is especially important to those communities whose voices have been silenced and whose people, cultures, and traditions have been threatened with eradication. In her chapter entitled *Samson Occom as Writing Instructor: The Search for an Intertribal Rhetoric in Reasoning Together*, Kimberly Roppolo argues that part of the power of language, (specifically Indian oratory, but I think one might reasonably extrapolate her idea to other media,

such as a 1491s sketch), is that it

carries messages intended for Indians and other messages intended for both those outside the culture and within it. The messages intended for Indians carry the same purpose as narrative in Native cultures, to bring the people back into the circle, back into balance...the messages intended for both those inside and outside the culture are intended to *do* something for the people, whether this is to obtain a boon, negotiate terms of an agreement between cultures, or simply to express how some cross-cultural interaction has affected the people. (307)

The comedy of the 1491s does exactly that. The aim of their satire is to reinforce community and serve to remind Native peoples that their traditions are still important in spite of a hegemony that might be desirous of erasure. The 1491s express Native voices that might not otherwise be heard. Through their comedy, those voices are not only heard and recognized but also celebrated and reunited.

Horton and Rapf's fifth observation, that in the world of comedy nothing is off limits and all things human are accepted, absolutely applies to the work of the 1491s. Nothing is off limits, regardless of whom they might offend. A prime example of this is their video, "Lincoln Was a Douche." Abraham Lincoln is undoubtedly one of the most popular, if not most revered, presidents in American history. Lincoln is credited with the abolition of slavery and preserving the United States. The setting for "Lincoln Was a Douche" is the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C. Primarily through voiceover, a white man, a black man, and a Native man consider Abraham Lincoln's legacy and contributions to the United States. As the camera focuses on the white man we hear Lincoln's opening words to his Gettysburg Address, "Four score and seven years ago, our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are

created equal” (the 1491s). As the camera moves to the black man who, like the white man, reveres Lincoln, we hear Lincoln’s words again: “I think slavery is wrong, morally and politically and I desire it that it should be no further spread in these United States and I should not object if it should gradually terminate in the whole Union” (the 1491s). As the camera pans to the Native man, we hear a less than noble Lincoln say, “Indians? Uhh...Let the bastards hang!” to which the Native man voices aloud, “Lincoln was a douche!” (the 1491s). The title of the video conveys the Native man’s conclusion and reception of the memorial. The film is dedicated to the “memory of 38 Dakota hung on December 26th, 1862. It remains the largest mass hanging in U.S. History” (the 1491s). Lincoln ordered the execution. In this way, the 1491s criticize the atrocity perpetrated by Lincoln in spite of his status as a much-revered American icon.

Horton and Rapf’s sixth observation on comedy addresses its ability to serve as a cultural self-reflexive mechanism. This self-reflexivity rings very true for the 1491s. In the TedTalks presentation previously mentioned, Pensoneau explains that after the physical battles between Natives and whites ended in the late 1800s, the clash between white hegemony and Native Americans became more a war of “crushing the [Native American] culture out because it stood in the way of [white] progress” and Native Americans became dehumanized (1491s). Pensoneau continued, “The work that we do seeks to reverse that completely. It’s all about the humanization of Native America. And the way that we do that is by giving a voice” (1491s). In addition to their strictly comedic videos, the 1491s also have a Represent Series, which are shorts featuring primarily Native college students representing their

cultural heritage according to their own voice, their own volition. One such example features a Native woman dancing across her campus to tribal music playing through her iPod. The Represent Series offers Native men and women an opportunity to represent themselves as they wish to be represented.

Upon accessing their website, 1491s.com, one is greeted with several blog and video entries which address Indian stereotypes, debunk faux Indian mysticism, and confront contemporary social problems currently faced by American Indians. One is also greeted by an Oscar Wilde quote which reads, “If you’re going to tell them the truth, you better make them laugh, or they will kill you” (the 1491s). This Wilde quote gets at the heart of what the 1491s are up to in their comedy. The aim of the 1491s is to shed light on (and poke fun at) the way Indians are understood in mainstream consciousness. And they do so with incredible accuracy.

In his essay, “Winking Like a One-Eyed Ford: American Indian Film Comedies on the Hilarity of Poverty,” Joshua B. Nelson writes that “Indian comedic film takes aim at mainstream misrepresentations and their tried-and-true caricatures of Indians” (366). This is certainly true of the 1491s. Consider their video, entitled “Twilight Wolfpack Auditions.” The video opens with the regional casting director, John Haines (a slightly veiled reference to Rene Haynes, Hollywood Indian casting director) welcoming four Indian actors to the auditions for *Twilight: New Moon*. Haines (played by Seminole/Creek filmmaker Sterlin Harjo) asks the cultural advisor for the film, Garrett, to say a few words. Garrett begins to explain the “sacred” nature of the auditions. As he begins to speak of the spiritual nature of the auditions and the

respectful way in which they should be approached, Native flute music overpowers his words as the camera pans across the face of each of the actors, who put forward their best stereotypically stoic Indian face. One of the auditioning actors (played by Ryan Red Corn) is phenotypically white and presented as a nerd (or hipster possibly), and his peers look at his attempts at vocalization disapprovingly. The actors are then asked to “do [their] sort of Indian stuff” (the 1491s). The actors dance nonsensically and scream and howl in silly ways. Auditions continue in a completely farcical way, as the no-talented actors list films they have been in or are mistakenly thought to be in, such as *New World*, *Apocalypto*, and *Dances with Wolves*.

This video is an obvious response to the depiction of American Indians, in not just early Westerns but also in more recent films, such as those previously mentioned. In fact, we may view this video as a response also to the marginalizing of cultures and systemic racism perpetuated by misrepresentations of Native American cultures in the medium of film. Shohat and Stam argue, “films which represent marginalized cultures in a realistic mode, even when they do not claim to represent specific historical incidents, still implicitly make factual claims” (802). We can see evidence of this as the director tells the auditioning actors “the native wolfpack guys are very sexy, the sexiest part of the film” and encourages them to be “sexy” (the 1491s). The actors, of course, are ridiculous as they attempt to enact their seductive portrayals, yet the cultural advisor even comments on one pose when he says, “they call that one the Elk Medicine. It’s very powerful. I use it” (the 1491s). This speaks to the kind of exoticization of Native Americans that Rocío Quispe-Agnoli writes about in his essay, “Elusive Identities: Representations of

Native Latin Americans in the Contemporary Film Industry.” Quispe-Agnoli argues, “the representation of Latin American nativeness in contemporary motion pictures uncovers the consumption of an Indigenous subject that is usually victimized, eroticized, infantilized, and/or exoticized in the film industry” (95). The Native actors here are clearly auditioning for a part in which they will be eroticized and exoticized, and one actor even points out how in a previous film he was able to portray Native innocence “pretty accurately” (the 1491s). The absurdity of this entire video is that no one is very aware of anything Native and all involved perpetuate stereotypes. American Indians have long been troubled with images and narratives of popular Western culture that seek to write American Indians out of history, to stereotype American Indians, or to ignore American Indians altogether in an otherwise relevant framework, such as can be witnessed in *Oklahoma!*. At the very least, American Indians have failed to be presented with positive images of themselves and thus are confronted only with what Alexie has called “the brown folks at the edges of the screen” (32). The 1491s address this by moving “brown folks” front and center, away from marginalization into positions of power.

At one point in the auditions, one of the actors suggests that they turn off the camera because he is worried that it might take his soul. The actor is obviously appealing to a stereotype, and when he is told he could not possibly get the part if they are not allowed to film him, he responds, “Film away!” (the 1491s). The director closes the auditions by telling the actors, “I speak for all us when I say that you guys did great. You did an awesome job. I work in LA some and you guys pretty much are as good as some of the people out there,” a clear commentary on Native

representation in Hollywood films (the 1491s).

The video closes as a late-auditioning actor rushes in and asks if he is too late. The actor is phenotypically African American, claims to be “a little bit” Indian (the cultural advisor says he looks full blood), and that he has no acting experience. The director assures him, “you don’t need much. For this part” (the 1491s). It is implied that this last actor will get the part whereas the others will not, again, reaffirming that accurate Native American representation is not an important element of feature-length Hollywood films. Indeed, part of the battle in which the 1491s are engaged is against demeaning stereotypes of Native Americans as represented in mainstream media. Shohat and Stam argue in “Stereotype, Realism, and the Struggle for Representation” that:

while all negative stereotypes are hurtful, they do not all exercise the same power in the world. The facile catch-all invocation of ‘stereotypes’ elides a crucial distinction: stereotypes of some communities merely make the target group uncomfortable, but the community has the social power to combat and resist them; stereotypes of other communities participate in a continuum of prejudicial social policy and actual violence against disempowered people, placing the very body of the accused in jeopardy. (806)

While we may see this type of violence enacted, as in the Ferguson case, it is no less relevant to any “disempowered” groups, and it is exactly these sorts of stereotypes that the 1491s address and aim to subvert. Shohat and Stam continue that “the sensitivity around stereotypes and distortions largely arises, then, from the powerlessness of historically marginalized groups to control their own representation” (806). By seizing control of their own representation, the 1491s minimize the efficacy of the dominating nature of stereotypes in mainstream media.

Furthermore, by putting cameras in the hands of other marginalized peoples, or at the

very least allowing these people to dictate how they are filmed (as in the Represent Series), the 1491s provide others the same agency to control and dictate their own representation. While the Represent Series features videos that are not necessarily comedic, the end goal is the same as the 1491s' comedy sketches, the restoration of individual and tribal agency.

For some, Indigenous humor is not so easily defined. Cherokee author and critic Thomas King speaks to the fluid nature of native comedy and humor in "Performing Native Humour," an essay regarding his own native comedy radio show. King suspects that "we will never find a good definition for native humour, that the definition may lie and change with performance, which is a fancy way of saying that, if there is such a thing as Native humour, it's like the wind, we can't see it. We don't know where it comes from. And the only time we feel it is when it's blowing in our face" (171).

While I am not as eager as King to throw Native humor to the wind, I understand his point that in attempting to define what constitutes Indigenous or Native humor can be an arduous task. Later in the same essay, King comes a bit closer to an essence of Native comedy, if not a definition:

There are probably cultural differences in humour, but I suspect what makes Native people laugh is what makes all people laugh. Sure we laugh at misfortunes and we laugh at catastrophes and we laugh at sexist and racist jokes, but these moments do not define our humour so much as they define our fears and hatreds. We are at our best when we laugh at ourselves. (181)

The 1491s use their humor, their satire, to explore exactly these issues that King brings up. W.S. Penn writes that satire "pokes fun at something in such a way that

we recognize our connection to it, see in an instant of self-awareness that ‘somethingness’ in ourselves; and in laughing as a group, we are laughing at ourselves and a community of selves in a way that can even evoke change or induce understanding of the satirized behavior” (qtd. in King, 170). At the heart of every crass or vulgar joke, every cringeworthy moment that may hit a little too close to home, the 1491s seek to rebuild and maintain community through laughter. Even if, at times, the message is not abundantly clear.

In “I’m an Indian, Too,” a comedic music montage featuring Ryan Red Corn as Hipster in a Headdress Mascot, we see a phenotypically white man dancing around the Santa Fe market with actual tourists to the song “I’m an Indian, Too” from the play, *Annie, Get Your Gun*. The premise of the video seems to be to highlight Native cultural appropriation by whites. I should note here that Ryan Red Corn is often used as a cultural stand-in for whites because of his phenotype to much comedic effect. Red Corn is in a headdress and loincloth with the word HIPSTER emblazoned in red across his bare chest, and he dances in a silly fashion with tourists and marketgoers to the rhythm of the song. The video features some uncomfortable moments as Red Corn perhaps gets too friendly with unsuspecting bystanders, but also moments of community as the camera pans to phenotypically Native people mouthing the words, “I’m an Indian, too!” By the culmination of the video, the camera has moved into an auditorium where a crowd of people, presumably from many different ethnic backgrounds, sings along and ambiguity reigns. It is impossible to tell who might truly be Indian, highlighting the complex issue of Indian identity. What begins as an indictment of Native appropriation by whites ends in somewhat lighthearted confusion.

This is where the 1491s find their niche. As a group, they do not pretend to provide all of the answers, but they are willing to engage the questions. And they engage these questions on their own terms in ways that do not marginalize or disenfranchise Native peoples. In writing about Native authors, Kristina Fagan offers that:

they are aware that ‘community’ is neither an ideal or a fixed thing. Rather, a Native community is continually being built and challenged, and humour can play a role in both these processes. On the one hand, humour is deeply social: a shared laugh is an affirmation of norms, attitudes, and assumptions in common. Humour can allow the tolerance of disruptive forces, teach social values, and enforce social norms. But these functions can have a problematic side, sometimes leaving people feeling excluded or humiliated [and] thus, Native writers also use humour not only to shore up community but also to complicate it and problematize it. (25)

Through their sometimes irreverent and sarcastic but highly accessible medium, the 1491s are able to reach their community and serve to bring important issues to light, even if they do not necessarily provide solutions. Popular media such as comic books and internet videos are pervasive and widely consumed and can make a significant impact.

Misguided though he was, Dr. Wertham understood the power of media that would certainly have been disregarded by some as lowbrow literature, at best. And the 1491s understand this power, too, which is why they reach people in a way that lengthy novels and scholarly journals never will. One might argue that the social function of some art is, at the very least, to make us think, but also perhaps more concretely, to inspire us to action. In the Introduction to *Red on Red*, Creek/Cherokee critic and professor Craig Womack addresses this functionality of art. Womack is considering art as a tool for land redress, and one of his students has highlighted the political role of Native authors in articulating rights violations and other wrongs.

Though the topics are different from those the 1491s address, the essential element of righting wrongs and using art in this way still applies. Womack writes that:

Native artistry is not pure aesthetics, or art for art's sake: as often as not Indian writers are trying to invoke as much as evoke. The idea behind ceremonial chant is that language, spoken in the appropriate ritual contexts, will actually cause a change in the physical universe...language as invocation that will upset the balance of power. (Womack, 16-17)

Though the performances of the 1491s should not be directly compared to ceremonial chant, they are making a positive cultural impact in direct opposition to cultural products such as *White Indian* and the use of such racial slurs as the R-word as a professional football mascot. The 1491s are working to “upset the balance of power” as Womack suggests is the function of language.

The United States is a land of diversity. The United States is comprised of citizens who are open to conversations with those of different ideologies, willing to listen to one another in order to facilitate understanding and ensure peace and equality. The United States is also comprised of citizens who are ignorant and unwilling or unable to peer beyond the scope of their own insularity to gain a greater sense of understanding of their fellow human beings, thus begetting more violence and hate. The incongruence of Native American identity and settler colonialism in this country has always been a tragic conundrum, one seemingly without a solution. And we will never find a solution as long as we continue to perpetuate Native American stereotypes, appropriate Native American culture, and refuse to acknowledge that Native American identity is not a thing of the past but is a vibrant, living part of the present and future. But there is hope in Native American literature and art, Native American studies programs that continue to proliferate around the

country, and increased visibility and economic strength of Native American communities. Native Americans like the 1491s, as well as other artists, scholars, and cultural allies, help us to imagine a day where we will have moved beyond the hatred and racism we should have already left behind. There is much work yet to be done. The 1491s give us the opportunity to find humor where we may have previously only been able to find anger, and in that humor, we can find strength. The 1491s provide us with laughter; and where there is laughter, there is hope.

3. CULTURAL AND SPIRITUAL RESILIENCE IN VOLATILE LANDSCAPES AND LIMINAL SPACES IN SELECTED WORKS BY GEARY HOBSON, IRE'NE LARA SILVA, AND CRAIG WOMACK

I see everything as part of a map. Stories, memories, emotions, people. Everything's connected.

--ire'ne lara silva

3.1 The Living Among the Dead: Mythic Realism in ire'ne lara silva's *flesh to bone*

The dedication page for ire'ne lara silva's *flesh to bone* reads, "for my brother, Moisés quien, mejor que yo, conoce la oscuridad y la luz." In English this translates, "for my brother Moisés who, better than I, knows the darkness and the light." While I cannot speak for Moisés, silva deftly explores the darkness and the light, as well as the spaces in between, with such mastery of lyrical prose and inclusion of myth that it is impossible not to be swept into the world she presents to her reader. *flesh to bone* contains nine stories that are poetic, haunting, and beyond captivating. Within the pages of this text, the dead not only walk among the living but also interact with them directly (even sexually and homicidally), words spew from characters' mouths in the form of vibrant paint, women turn into birds of prey and wolves, dry bones are resurrected into healthy flesh and blood, figures such as *la malinche*, *la virgen*, and *la llorona* are brought to life in contemporary settings, and vivid colors and light swarm together with timeless aromas and tastes, shadows and darkness, pain and survivance. Survivance certainly is at the heart of silva's work (vii-viii). In a January 2014 interview with Juan Luis Guzmán, silva describes the stories in *flesh to bone* as:

story problems with the same instruction: solve for survival, solve for re-creation. There are different characters, different situations, different settings, different obstacles—but the imperative is always to survive. Survival requires transformation—sometimes incremental, sometimes dramatic, sometimes internal, sometimes external. And in every instance, what is needed is remembering/learning/imagining from the depth of bone. (silva)

Perhaps none in this collection of nine stories based on myth is more heart wrenching and visually stunning than “cortando las nubes, or death came on horses.” In this story, silva retells the myth of *la llorona* using personal details. She connects intergenerational trauma and land in a way that is too powerful to be easily forgotten, even though one may find most of the images unsettling at least, terrifying at most. In the original myth, *la llorona* is denied entrance to heaven after drowning her children in order to be with a man. silva’s story features a dead woman with a machete and her children who wander the land caring for the newly dead and bringing merciful death to others in macabre scenarios. In “cortando las nubes, or death came on horses,” *la llorona*, the mother, is revealed by story’s end to be searching for her children, though sadly they follow her everywhere without her knowledge. As if this were not poignant enough, silva also reveals that the children die at the hand of the soldiers, save for her teenage son whom the mother must kill out of mercy when he has been left for dead by the riverside where he was fishing. This scene is particularly painful as the mother finds her son, eviscerated by dogs and left with only one eye. silva captures the intensity and pain of the moment in the following sentences:

His single eye stared up at her with an odd calmness and pleaded, begged. There was nothing, her hands held nothing. She made herself go into the river and lift one of the heavy water-polished rocks. She made herself come out of the river and then she made herself dash it against his head. Once he was dead, she stained her face and her chest and her swollen belly with his blood. (52)

In just a few lines, silva captures the heartache of a mother who is forced to violently euthanize her child as a result of the violence visited upon him by an oppressive regime. In this way, we might understand that violence begets violence. As *la llorona* smears the blood of her son on her face and chest, we understand the pain that only a parent could know in the moment of the horrific act of his evisceration and her subsequent responsibility. The face is personal and the breast is maternal. The blood on her belly also indicates the hopelessness she feels for her unborn child. This version of the myth paints *la llorona* in a different light (she is often perceived as a vengeful murderer of her children) and explains the pain and her weeping as a deeper and more justifiable expression of her loss.

Even in her dedication, silva moves seamlessly between English and Spanish, crossing borders and perhaps creating obscurity for some, and illumination for others. silva guides us through the world of ancient Indigenous myth and the world of contemporary Indigenous realism in such a way that they are inextricable from one another. Though I have juxtaposed myth and realism here, they are not to be understood as mutually exclusive. As Paula Gunn Allen observes:

Popularly among Americans, *myth* is synonymous with *lie*; moreover, it implies ignorance or a malicious intent to defraud. Thus, any attitude or idea that does not conform to contemporary western descriptions of reality is termed myth, signifying falsehood. Labeling something a myth merely discredits the perceptual system and worldview of those who are not in accord with the dominating paradigm. Thus, current dictionary definitions of *myth* reinforce a bias that enables the current paradigm of our technocratic social science-biased society to prevail over tribal or poetic views just as it enables an earlier Christian biblical paradigm to prevail over the pagan one. Indeed, terms such as *pagan*, *tribal*, and *poetic*—often used interchangeably—imply ignorance, backwardness, and foolishness. They allow dismissal by western readers, just as their allied term, *myth*, does. (102)

We must not consider myth in this way if we are to gain a full appreciation and understanding of silva's *flesh to bone*. We must think of myth in terms of truth. Renowned mythologist Joseph Campbell describes myths as "clues to the spiritual potentialities of the human life, the experience of life" (5). silva herself echoes these sentiments when she says, "I believe we have a fundamental need for myth. For stories that are larger than ourselves or our realities, for stories that speak to our culture(s), for stories that teach us something about life—to show us how wild and heart-breaking and beautiful it can be" (Interview).

I would further suggest that myths are ancient (not antiquated) stories that are inseparable from other experiences of existence and have power in and of themselves. Cherokee critic Daniel Heath Justice reinforces this idea when he writes that he:

understood that stories are never just dramatic entertainment – they have power that can be used to heal or harm, and we can't always be sure of the impact at the time. To be a keeper and sharer of stories is to take on a sacred trust, whether we assume the responsibility ourselves or are given it by others. (207)

Justice also references Thomas King who writes in his own book, *The Truth About Stories: A Native Narrative*, that "the truth about stories is that that's all we are" (206). Justice and King, both Cherokee, refer to the importance of stories and myth and support the unity of mythological, physical, and spiritual realms. Some artists, like Gabriel García Márquez, express this unity through what many term *magical realism*.

One of the claims made by Lyn Di Iorio Sandín and Richard Perez, editors of the anthology *Moments of Magical Realism in American Ethnic Literatures*, is "that U.S. ethnic or minority writers insert magical moments in otherwise realist texts to highlight certain spectral realms, within our midst...[which] represents a place of both

opacity and illumination in an otherwise realist text where a forgotten or repressed history or discursive formation intrudes or appears for the U.S. subject in a manner that is catalytic” (1-2). Magical realism, then, seeks to create a new discourse in which the disenfranchised, or those who have suffered due to the oppression of the dominant hegemonic discourse, can express their “truths” situated within their own cultural contexts. The use of magical realism may have particular significance for ethnic writers who are often not only bringing different worlds and cultures into contact with one another, but attempting to re-center history in such a way that their ideologies are not marginalized, erased, or banished to antiquity.

In his essay, *Magical Realism and Postmodernism: Decentering Privileged Centers*, Theo L. D’haen discusses how the terms *postmodern* and *magic realism* serve similar functions in regard to the assignation of meaning to a given text. D’haen describes characteristics of the postmodern as “self-reflexiveness, metafiction, eclecticism, redundancy, multiplicity, discontinuity, intertextuality, parody, the dissolution of character and narrative instance, the erasure of boundaries, and the destabilization of the reader” (192). Magical realism figures in with these characteristics, particularly the blurring of boundaries, accessing liminal spaces, interruption in space-time sequence, character development, and narration. But, D’haen further argues that:

magic realist writing achieves this end [displacing the dominant discourse] by first appropriating the techniques of the “centr”-al line and then using these, not as in the case of these central movements, “realistically,” that is, to duplicate existing reality as perceived by the theoretical or philosophical tenets underlying said movements, but rather to create an alternative world correcting so-called existing reality, and thus to right the wrongs this “reality” depends upon. Magic realism thus reveals itself as a ruse to invade and take over dominant discourse(s). It

is a way of access to the main body of “Western” literature for authors not sharing in, or not writing from the perspective of, the privileged centers of this literature for reasons of language, class, race, or gender, and yet avoiding epigonism by avoiding the adoption of views of the hegemonic forces together with their discourse. (195)

D’haen’s description and argument certainly seem to explain much of what is going on in silva’s work. And certainly magical realism is often connected with Latino/a writers, such as Gabriel García Marquez, Juan Rulfo, Alejo Carpentier, and Maria Luisa Bombal.

However, at least one voice disagrees. From a blurb on the back cover of *flesh to bone*, Norma Cantú writes that silva “uses hauntingly lyrical language to tell stories cast in the Latin American tradition of Juan Rulfo and Maria Luisa Bombal. But, do not mistake this for magical realism. The fantastical elements, raw voices, and shifting realities inhabit an emotional, psychological, and all-too-physical landscape of loss and violence” (Cantú). Magical realism might be defined as the inclusion of fantastic or outlandish elements in an otherwise realistic expression of prose. If Cantú is considering a similar definition of magical realism, we may infer from her brief statement that she believes silva’s work is doing more than is afforded within the confines of the term *magical realism* (and maybe even strictly Latina) and is perhaps more in line with the previous discussion of the function of story by Justice and King, one that establishes a unifying presence among the spiritual, emotional, psychological, and physical. silva herself describes the “shifting realities” in her writing:

In my mind, it isn’t a wholly Latino tradition—it is instead, part of a Native/Indigenous worldview and part of the Native/Indigenous foundation of what it means to be Latino. So much of the time, people approach Latino existence as a fraught thing caught between two opposites—the “American” culture and one’s Latino culture. In some

ways, that can lock us into victim stories, immigrant stories, and/or assimilation stories. That focus on either/or and the pain of ‘between’ doesn’t lend itself into seeing everything as ‘one’ or seeing ourselves as whole beings. We are simultaneously all of our bodies (emotional, spiritual, physical, etc.) in a world that, at its truest essence, is one world. Oppressive systems have made us believe in borders and assigned societal roles and in un-crossable distances between different people(s). (Interview)

Perhaps the term *mythic realism* is a more useful term in coming to a better understanding of silva’s writing. Allison Brown’s excellent essay “Blood Re(a)d: Native American Literature and the Emergence of the Mythic Real” may be useful in trying to understand how exactly silva is incorporating Latino/a myths into her stories that transcend what might be termed by some as magical realism.

3.2 Myth and Reality

silva uses several myths, including *la llorona*, *las lechusas*, *cucuy*, *la huesera*, *la malinche*, and *la virgen*, to bring her stories to life in a way that she calls inspiration, but that ultimately feels like a continuation or extenuation, or perhaps even a perpetuation, of the original myths. Brown explores how Native American characters have often figured in American literature as vanishing vestiges of the past or contemporary tragic figures (194). Brown further explains that the “literary image of the violently ghostly, supernatural, or otherwise otherworldly Indian has spread into U.S. national culture from our literary culture; children tell ghost stories about Indian burial grounds” (194). Indeed, how many campy horror movies have “the haunted Indian burial ground” as the catalyst to action? And the result never seems to be to offer restitution for violence perpetrated against Indigenous peoples, but rather an opportunity to revisit those same atrocities with more permanent erasure, where Indians

will stay put, will reside only in the stagnant places of the American imagination. Brown further writes that American literature has made insidious contributions in terms of Indigenous representation because in American national culture:

it is understood, even among children, that Native Americans are to be symbolically relegated to a liminal space somewhere between the tangible world and the invisible world. Whereas the violence of Native American colonization and removal are well known and widely acknowledged, the violence of our national literature, which for many years treated Native American genocide as a *fait accompli*, is less widely acknowledged. (194)

In other words, harmful images persist in literature and work as a social mechanism to continue oppression. Like all systemic racism, once an ideology of hate is embedded within a national psyche, socio-political positions are difficult to sway. The cycle of hate and violence will continue to perpetuate itself until radical moves are made that disrupt the status quo and can provide a rift in subjugating ways of categorization and regulation. Brown argues that a radical shift such as this has occurred in American literature as those early images of vanishing Indians and the tragic Indigenous have been taken over by Indigenous authors.

Borrowing the term from Bo Schöler in his essay, “Mythic Realism in Native American Literature,” Brown uses the term in such a way that it includes the cultural, historical, and narrative aspects of the literature. Brown writes, “*mythic realism*... takes into account both the cultural origins *and* the distinct literary and narrative elements of a text while simultaneously recognizing that the mythic realism of today is the natural evolution of—and Native American response to—the tales of Indian blood upon which so much U.S. literature is predicated” (196-7). Brown acknowledges that many American authors have employed instances of “Native American death, magic, and

supernatural spectrality” but that “contemporary Native American authors are using this expectation of otherworldliness and reorienting it to express tribal, political, *and* literary concerns” (197). silva is doing exactly this as she uses myth prominently in her stories. For example, in “la huesera, or flesh to bone,” silva connects the myth of *la huesera*, or the Bone Woman, with violence against women, Indigenous and otherwise, that continues to this day. In the myth, the Bone Woman discovers the bones of a young woman who had been starved and severely beaten by a man, left to die alone in the wilderness. The Bone Woman collects the woman’s bones and sings life back into them, repeating the phrase “flesh to bone, flesh to bone” (“La Huesera”). The woman is restored to health and prosperity.

In silva’s story, she relates the personal story of character Maite Hernandez Ayala and her personal struggles as a girl without a family who faces extreme violence and human trafficking. silva offers this story “for the women of Juarez, for women everywhere” (136). Maite is figured in silva’s story as not only the girl who was betrayed and left to die in the wilderness, but also as the Bone Woman, and the story closes with life being breathed back into her. Maite herself begins to call her own spirit back: “Flesh to bone to blood to spirit to power. Beyond counting, the number of spirits I’ve rewoven, like the stars tossed in the sky, but this is where I began. Healing myself. Creating myself” (136). We can see silva using this ancient myth to address contemporary concerns and providing hope, not only spiritually but politically as well, in terms of speaking out against the atrocities perpetrated against women.

silva’s story here is an example supporting Brown’s assertion that:

whereas earlier American writings rely on presentations of the supernatural Indian in order to create narratives that are unsettling and mysterious, twentieth- and twenty-first century Native American mythic realism transcends this uncanniness by using specific and culturally inscribed mythic scenarios *in conjunction with* an objective presentation of reality that is easily recognizable to readers from the cultural mainstream. (197)

We see in silva's "la huesera" exactly this type of recognizability in the cultural mainstream at the same time as we can recognize the myth, if we are familiar with it. So in this way, we can see silva's story doing work simultaneously on two different levels. Much of the violence that silva writes about is borne out of cultural collision, especially the violence against women.

In a similar way, we see *machismo* in the Chicano/a community acted out in violence against women in that the colonized male body, in resistance to oppression, seeks to oppress others, the first target being the female colonized body. This contemporary domestic imbalance has deep roots, and silva uses the deeper roots of myth to address these issues. silva addresses ways her work seeks to move beyond these cycles that are borne out of arbitrary borders and cultural subjugation:

I've worked to abolish ideas about boundaries and borders and opposites in order to undo the seams of the world. Subverting expectations results in a release of energy and the birth of possibility. Otherwise, we're locked into certain roles and narratives that don't serve any transformative purpose. We end up with the same dominant narratives and characters (and stories) locked into the same old tired roles, the same limited outcomes. (Interview)

In other words, silva is retelling narratives in such a way that they are able to gain that transformative energy that is lost when repeating trite and futile tragic refrains. silva seeks to move away from a grand narrative of oppression by subverting the dominant

discourse to allow for possibilities of growth and healing. Her writing, then, is not only aesthetic but also educational.

3.3 Education and Understanding

Vine Deloria, Jr. and Daniel R. Wildcat offer insightful essays regarding educational and pedagogical topics facing Native American students in the twenty-first century. In *Power and Place: Indian Education in America*, Deloria, Jr. and Wildcat propose “an indigenization of our educational system” (vii). Each of these authors offers an essay on metaphysics that might prove useful in our consideration of *silva’s flesh to bone*.

Deloria’s essay entitled “American Indian Metaphysics” explores the idea of metaphysics “as simply that set of first principles we must possess in order to make sense of the world in which we live,” or a way of knowing (2). Deloria explains Indian metaphysics in terms of a “unified world” in which everything is related in contrast to the “disjointed sterile and emotionless world” of Western science and civilization (2). Deloria continues that “we can translate the realities of the Indian social world into concepts familiar to us from the Western scientific context, such as space, time, and energy, [but] we must surrender most of the meaning in the Indian world when we do so” (2). Deloria situates “two basic experiential dimensions” at the heart of Indian metaphysics as “place and power, the latter perhaps better defined as spiritual power or life force” (2). Deloria argues that “Western scientists frequently suggest that the Indian way of looking at the world frequently lacked precision because it was neither capable of nor interested in creating abstract concepts or using mathematical descriptions of nature” and that Western science regards Indian traditions and ways of knowing “as

mere remnants of a superstitious, stone-age mentality that could not understand or distinguish between the simplest of propositions” (3). Deloria is explaining this conflict in worldviews as particularly painful for Indian students who try to reconcile their traditional beliefs with those of Western education, but his explanation is pertinent to discussion of *flesh to bone*. Many aspects of *flesh to bone* support Deloria’s assessment of Indian metaphysics and with his notions of place and power in mind, a much deeper reading of silva’s work may be understood.

Wildcat’s essay, “The Schizophrenic Nature of Western Metaphysics,” sheds even further light on the sharp dichotomy between Western and Indigenous ways of knowing. According to Wildcat, Western metaphysics “requires a level of abstraction beyond human experience, while [Indigenous metaphysics] requires abstract concept formation in the service of experience” (48). Wildcat’s use of the term “schizophrenia” is somewhat problematic unless we understand the term to simply mean confused thinking or behavior, particularly in regard to empiricism and religion. Wildcat observes that “American Indian metaphysics has the advantage of designating science and religion not as mutually exclusive realms of experience or areas of human interest, but as fundamental questions of knowledge and understanding found on a ‘continuum of experience’” in direct contrast to the mutual exclusivity of science and religion denoted in the Western tradition (49). In agreement with Deloria, Wildcat further postulates that “the irreconcilable conflict between meaning/values and knowledge/facts in Western metaphysics is obvious” and “clearly demonstrated in the inability of Western legal institutions to grasp American Indian and Alaska Native claim that some places on the planet possess a degree of sacredness that precludes treatment as real estate, private

property or public lands” (48). *flesh to bone* exhibits the “continuum of experience” that Wildcat writes about, as in silva’s stories the natural or real and the supernatural or mythic coexist within a single plane of existence without being mutually exclusive of one another. Choctaw scholar, author, and playwright LeAnne Howe has provided American Indian Studies with a theoretical and critical framework that she terms *tribalography* that proves useful in exploring this continuum of experience further.

Howe’s *tribalography* is such an important and relevant critical lens that *Studies in American Indian Literature* devoted a special issue to the discussion of tribalography in Summer 2014. Guest editor of the issue, Joseph Bauerkemper, writes that “each of the contributions to this issue takes up tribalography as an innovative critical framework that accounts for the workings of Native media, performance, and intellectual traditions while also shedding light on the machinations of colonial settler contexts” (6). Bauerkemper goes on to question how tribalography might differ from other theoretical approaches and whether tribalography provides a durable framework for continued research and investigation (6). Though none of the contributors directly address silva’s work, their discussion of tribalography as methodology may inform our investigation of *flesh to bone*.

In her essay, “The Story of America: A Tribalography,” Howe defines the term:

Native stories, no matter what form they take (novel, poem, drama, film, memoir, history), seem to pull all the elements together of the storyteller’s tribe, meaning the people, the land, and multiple characters and all their manifestations and revelations, and connect these in the past, present, and future milieus (present and future milieus mean non-Indians). I have tried to show that tribalography comes from the Native propensity for bringing things together, for making consensus, and for symbiotically connecting one thing to another. (42)

If we are to understand tribalography in the sense that everything is interconnected and relevant to both a people and the individual (which may also be inseparable), we can begin to see how ancient stories are not to be treated as forgotten or esoteric artifacts but as contemporary tools for our experience of being alive, just as they have always been. In this way, tribalography is helpful in consideration of the stories in silva's *flesh to bone*. In the *Acknowledgements* page of *flesh to bone*, silva honors "the old stories/myths that inspired several of these stories" because she doesn't "believe that we are done with the old myths yet—or that they are done with us" (175). By intricately weaving myth into her stories, silva creates a new/old way of knowing that allows those who may have forgotten or who never knew the myths to understand their relevance without relegating them to a forgotten time and place. The myths do not age and their usefulness does not change, though they might be applied to different situations and different lived experiences. For example, the myths that inform silva's stories often employ symbols, such as one's voice or voicelessness implying agency, or the lack thereof, which do not lose their meaning over time.

One of the primary symbols of *flesh to bone* is the mouth. This symbol manifests itself in a number of ways through speaking, breathing, eating, voicelessness, death, hunger, the power of words, the power of story. Though the mouth appears symbolically in every story in this collection, silva opens with *hunger/hambre/mayantli*, which prominently features the symbol in a few different ways. silva unveils the action of this story through sections titled with the names of the four main characters: Luis, Luisa, Adrian, and Bertha. Luis and Luisa are siblings, and Bertha is their mother.

Adrian is dead but walks among the living. Adrian appears to Luis and Luisa and affects them in profound ways. This story has many fantastical, eerie, and powerful moments and serves as an excellent example to illustrate the interconnectedness of tribalogy.

The story opens with Luis constantly dreaming of physical hunger, yet in waking life he is never hungry nor is he very interested in food. It is only after Adrian visits and Luis, in a trancelike state, begins to draw Adrian's life, that he feels hungry. It is also in this scene that Luisa is able to speak in a communicative way. Prior to this moment, Luisa is uncommunicative in that she only mutters words that are not comprehensible to anyone. Her family has learned to ignore her and the school cannot discover what is "wrong" with her. But in this moment, she begins to speak, and like Luis, begins to develop a hunger, a yearning to be alive. As Adrian told her his story without speaking, "she spoke his words and Luis drew" (silva 13).

The title of the story includes English, Spanish, and Nahuatl in an interesting way. If we consider them as a progression in English from left to right, these words appear to be going backward chronologically (in a Western sense of time) in terms of the languages spoken by Chicano/a people. In the progression of the plot, however, chronological time is mostly irrelevant, but the story opens with *hunger* and moves to *mayantli*, suggesting a return to old stories, old language. If we can think of these languages in this way, we can understand the character of Luisa as only able to move forward in her own understanding as she looks backward to the past. These same three words figure as revelation for Luisa by the end of the story when she works through *hunger*, and *hambre*, to finally reach *myantli*, which she understands as a yearning inside her that carries with it the impetus for her very existence. silva writes, "She

hungered to be, she hungered to live, to feel, to speak, to run. She hungered to be free” (23).

silva’s *flesh to bone* reads like poetry. Her combination of myth, fiction, and lyrical language expresses a unity of experience that can only be realized in terms of mythic realism. Her vivid imagery affects the reader not only in mental, emotional, and spiritual ways, but also in a physical sense. One can taste the salt of the ocean and the tears, hear the wailing of *la llorona* and feel the pain of *la malinche*. silva harnesses the power of myth and contemporary experience to bring her reader into this world of which she is already a part but of which she may not be aware.

silva’s work supports Howe’s assertion that “responding to oppression with separatism and fear continues the cycle of historic grief by keeping individuals and tribes self-oriented” (Romero 24). silva is able to weave together a tapestry revealing a world in which we all have always played a part. *Flesh to bone* also embodies Howe’s tenets of tribalogy as put forth by Channette Romero in that “tribalogy urges a fuller representation of the past, one that recognizes and honors not only historic grief but also stories of collective resistance” as we see throughout this collection, most pointedly in stories like “cortando las nubes, or death came on horses,” and the story of *la llorona* (24). Romero further contends that “tribalogy advocates that individuals and tribes expand their identities and political practices, adopting early tribal traditions of diplomacy and inclusiveness more actively to resist intergenerational trauma” (24). silva’s *modus operandi* of resisting intergenerational trauma might be read as a way to use tribalogy as a rhetorical space in which she connects past, present, and future as a unified experience in which life is not to be considered a series of progressive events

but rather as a single story. By doing so, tribalogy can offer “inherent critiques of the conventional dichotomy between both history and fiction and the past and the present. One-dimensional constructions of fact and fiction do not allow for the diversity or the complexity of Native experiences or the multidimensional ways in which Natives often construct narratives” (Doerfler 67). Jill Doerfler writes, “Tribalogy offers an important perspective on history, which does not limit our understanding of history to the past but acknowledges a dynamic interaction between the past, present, and future” (67). Doerfler further suggests that “tribalogy rises above disciplinary barriers and acknowledges the power that stories carry. Stories create us as individuals, families, communities, and nations; they help us formulate understandings of who we were, are, and will become” (67-8). Doerfler is primarily writing here about the way that tribalogy can transcend different disciplines as a useful theoretical framework in American Indian Studies, but I think her take on tribalogy is certainly applicable to the work that *silva* is doing in her fiction. *silva*’s writing is nothing if not dynamic. Her stories function exactly as Doerfler suggests that tribalogy functions in that they provide an interconnectedness that leads to a greater sense of unity and understanding, particularly for people who still bear the scars of intergenerational trauma and oppression caused by colonization.

In the words of *ire’ne lara silva*, “To tell the stories of bones is to take a stance against erasure and amnesia as well as an acknowledgment that we are more than just our physical bodies. We are also our spiritual bodies, our emotional bodies, our psychological bodies—we are all of them at once and our bones remember everything” (Interview). Through her imaginative fiction, *silva* has given us insight into how to

remember, how to heal, how to transform our narratives, and perhaps most importantly, how to live. This is not to suggest that history be forgotten, but rather as Romero argues, “tribalography urges a fuller representation of the past, one that recognizes and honors not only historic grief but also stories of collective resistance” (24). In other words, history is not to be simply considered as a tragic past, but more holistically as containing elements both negative and positive that can be useful, in the present and future.

3.4 Volatile Landscapes and Liminal Spaces

Tribalography may also be applied to the work of other contemporary authors. In Hobson’s 2011 short story collection, *Plain of Jars and Other Stories*, over half of the stories are narrated by Vietnam War Era veterans. U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War is a particularly tragic and traumatic period of American history, yet Hobson’s stories offer positive or honorable elements amidst the evil and despair that is equally present in stories pertaining to war. Hobson achieves this, in part, through the transcultural framework of narrators who have the simultaneous experiences of being a Marine in the Vietnam Conflict and an American Indian. We can see Howe’s theory of tribalography at work here, too, as we see the two experiences, the two narratives, converge to become one and, in so doing, become a totally different experience than would be had otherwise.

We can see a good example of this in Hobson’s short story, “Moogerman.” Moogerman, a self-loathing, closeted homosexual, the eponymous antagonist, is a thorn in the side of Rollins, the narrator, as well as the rest of the barracks because of his tendency to make every “discussion a highly argumentative and contentious ordeal.”

primarily through his racist diatribes and homophobic rants (Hobson 34). He makes himself even more repulsive as he brags about “queer-bopping,” violent attacks on homosexual men that he perpetrates while on leave. But, Moogerman’s self-hatred is explicitly revealed as Rollins witnesses him berating his own reflection in the mirror before violently smashing his face into it. Later, as the story concludes and Moogerman has been arrested for another especially violent attack, Rollins contemplates his own reflection in the mirror in the early morning rituals of personal hygiene. He explains that he would often:

catch myself looking a little extra long at my reflection in the mirror, as if expecting to see a me there that I couldn’t abide. After a while, I determined that such morning rituals should become an integral part of my own private “going to the water,” that time of personal renewal, to ensure that such me’s remain in the place where they belong. And I make a point of never looking too long. (Hobson 96)

This is an example of how Hobson uses the traditional ceremony of “going to the water” to deal with the horrors of war and personal trauma that his fellow Marine could not. In this way, Rollins benefits by having ancient story and ritual to draw upon to help him navigate the difficulties he faces in the narrative of his own life. Moogerman represents the worst sorts of bigotry and hate, in contrast to Rollins who is able to find peace and understanding.

Similarly, in “Plain of Jars,” the titular story of Hobson’s collection, four decades later an older Rollins is reflecting on his own life and war (the Iraqi war this time) and wonders how and if wars and purveyors of wars can be stopped. Rollins opines that “my Indian elders and medicine people would caution not to attempt such, but rather to stand off to the side, with all your relatives and cared-for ones with you and let the damned juggernaut run its headlong destructive course as it will” (Hobson

46). Again, Rollins is able to appeal to his culture to make sense of his current situation. Rollins compares the plain of jars, “large limestone urns carved as replicas of ceremonial drinking cups...scattered over a plain of nine thousand acres” in Laos,” to the “burial and ceremonial mounds that can still be found in my home country” (Hobson 60-1). Rollins reflects on the fragility of life and the loss of his friends and even those he abhorred as he explains that “their lives, too, are equally beautiful, fragile—like limestone drinking cups—and must be cherished as well. In my own Indian way, when I can’t burn tobacco or cedar to honor [my friends] I will always tip my beer bottle down before my first sip and let a drop or two land on the table or the bar or in an empty ashtray” (Hobson 62). This particular passage may remind those familiar with Leslie Marmon Silko’s *Ceremony* of the conversation between Betonie and Tayo as Betonie explains the necessity of changing rituals and ceremonies as the world began to change and that “things which don’t shift and grow are dead things” (126).

Just as in Rollins’ aforementioned “going to the water,” so too, his ritual of honoring his fallen comrades retains meaning, though the act may have changed out of necessity. Rollins further reflects that in his time of war, witnessing “incalculable waste and loss...I was never severed from my medicine bundle, that talisman of protection and grace made for me by my father before I went overseas—much like the ones I make for my own children: sons, daughters, nieces, nephews, adoptees. It is for me an intact jar, a restored locket, a kept faith” (Hobson 62). The story of Rollins’ faith connects with the story of his facing imminent danger in Laos, and the two narratives combine to create a new story that allows his culture to thrive and prosper. The medicine bundle is not a relic of the past but a part of Rollins’ present and future. In this way,

transculturation emerges to reaffirm what Howe posits as a part of tribalogy. In Hobson's narrative, we can read the Indian *in* the world, rather than in isolation or in direct opposition to the world that surrounds him.

3.5 Crossing Boundaries

We can see further evidence of this type of transculturation and boundary crossing in Womack's novel, *Drowning in Fire*. Womack's novel incorporates traditional Creek stories, Creek history, family stories, and even some analysis of the songs of popular country music legend, Hank Williams. Protagonist Josh Henneha, Creek and homosexual, comes of age in the liminal spaces of heteronormative Oklahoma. While it is readily apparent to many that American Indians have long been faced with images and narratives in popular Western culture that seek to, at best, stereotype or romanticize them and, at worst, to marginalize or eradicate them, Womack, like Hobson, challenges and complicates these images and narratives by offering his own Indigenous perspective. The chapters in *Drowning in Fire* do not progress in chronological order. They meander back and forth through time and eras, in the Western sense, and are sometimes conflated. In a way that agrees with tribalogy and the mythic real, Womack highlights the use of language as power when the novel's protagonist, Josh Henneha, attempts to mentally transmit secret messages. Though Josh's repeated attempts to transmit a message to the object of his desire, Jimmy Alexander, do not result immediately in any kind of satisfaction, he nevertheless seems to be very aware of the power of words. Later in the novel, Josh makes Jimmy invite him to check out a swing on Gill Creek through his secret messages. Josh rationalizes that he simply "helped him out a little since he was so close to noticing [him]" and that

“maybe it was cheating, making him say it like that, but in only a matter of time he’d be doing it on his own” (Womack, *Drowning* 59). When Josh is ready to give up on his words, he is incapable of abandoning the idea of the power of language because his grandfather’s stories “demanded some kind of listening akin to physical participation, and he cast his voice in such a way that drew you into the presences his words created” (28). Josh understands the power of story and is captivated by the stories he is told by his grandfather and Aunt Lucille. Josh also frequently imagines stories as a way of making sense of his family history and his own lived Creek and homosexual experience.

In accordance with the power of language and stories, several places in the novel also allude to silence in a negative way. For example, Josh hopefully imagines that he might be “transformed into a boy who spoke, a boy with a voice, a boy who fashioned things out of words,” devaluing those who remain silent (75). He also refers to a particularly sad summer, calling it the “summer of the suffocating silence...the summer I spent hoping for words descend upon me as cloven tongues of fire, so I could speak my own language and be understood. I carried with me a story ember, waiting for a chance to touch the spark to tinder, to dance around the fire” (Womack 79). Josh recognizes the “suffocating” nature of his silence, but he is optimistic, envisioning a future wherein he finds his voice. Womack is equating the condition of being without a voice to suffocation, or dying.

Josh also refers to most of his sexual experiences as “anonymous and without speaking” (215). Perhaps the most stark, vivid and frightening episode in the entire novel is the passage where Josh and Jimmy, who have not really come to terms or spoken of their sexuality, walk through the fog along the bank of the Canadian River

when they are in high school and encounter a group of homosexual men who are there for anonymous sexual encounters. Womack's description is riveting:

We were passing through a dark tunnel, and before we came all the way through it, men began rising up from behind copses and trees, approaching as *silently* as communicants. Though I'd never seen such a thing, immediately I knew what the men were there for. Lovers of darkness rather than lovers of light; I could hear the preacher's voice. Oh, my God, I thought, if I pass out from the whiskey, I'll be devoured by these *ghosts*, stripped to the bone like a carcass surrounded by vultures, covered by the black pitch of night, *unspeakable* acts taking place all around me. (101; emphasis added)

This other world, in all its horror, is presented in a silent, dreamlike mode more terrifying than the cacophonous activity it suggests, the only sound the imagined voice of the preacher inside Josh's head identifying the men as "lovers of darkness rather than lovers of light" (101). Simultaneously, the silence can construct new meaning in the rejection or absence of another. That is to say, if there is an expectation of explanation, and that expectation is met with silence, then the meaning that is expected (explication) is replaced with an altogether new meaning (the inexplicable, the absent, or the uncooperative). Or worse yet, the hegemonic voice intervenes to maintain the silence of the marginalized.

In a chapter entitled "Theorizing American Indian Experience" in *Reasoning Together*, Womack himself argues against this hegemonic voice by arguing for a nationalist literary and critical separatism for Native Americans. Part of the problem that Womack identifies in Native literary criticism is the dichotomous nature of us vs. them, situating American Indians writing in response to a master narrative all the while allowing that narrative to remain at the privileged center. He expounds that the dichotomy is problematic in and of itself. He calls the binaries "corrosive" and asserts

that they “assume culture without intellect” (Womack, “Theorizing” 358). Howe’s tribalogy accounts for disrupting these binaries as tribalogy is inherently about making connections. Womack finds it problematic to place Native experience purely in the physical realm while relegating the mental realm to intellectual criticism without consideration of intersection where the two worlds meet. The mythic real makes this accommodation. Howe argues that American Indians are “creating a future ‘literary past’ for American Indians, but the textual space, tribalogy, creates a literary and literal past for non-Indians as well” (46). Tribalogy, then, addresses Womack’s concerns and allows Native writers to move away from writing from a marginalized perspective toward a master narrative in a mode that is more inclusive and provides greater agency than either separatism or subjugation.

This separation is at the heart of what many critics might term *essentialism*. In other words, it is an essentialist view to conglomerate things, such as medicine and ceremony, as existing in isolation from critical theory and artistic representation in terms of the American Indian experience. Womack calls for a “reexamination, rather than a simple rejection of essentialism” (“Theorizing” 358). Tribalogy may be a methodology in which this reexamination can occur. Womack is pointing to national sovereignty as the rights of “Native peoples to self-determination that do not originate in legislation,” but also what he terms “imagined sovereignty” (362). This type of sovereignty exists within the self-awareness of American Indians and exists outside of political and legislative sovereignty. Imagined sovereignty has more to do with how individuals view themselves and their rights as tribal members and as human beings. Womack argues that “one of the primary vehicles for imagined sovereignty is oral and

written literature and its attendant criticism. Stories provide key opportunities for community members to present images of themselves on their own terms” (362). This is at the heart of Brown’s discussion of the mythic real. This sovereignty is present in the fiction discussed in this chapter and is ubiquitous in the field of contemporary American Indian literature. The critical frameworks or lenses of tribalogy and the mythic real support agency.

In trying to reconcile competing discourses or eradicate false dichotomies, these frameworks can be of optimal benefit to scholars of American Indian literature as well as native communities. Methodologies or critical frameworks that increase our understanding of transcultural experience and that disallow systemic oppression and violence are vital to ethical human interaction. It is imperative that we listen to and tell the stories that enable us to most fully embrace compassion and understanding. It is our shared responsibility.

CONCLUSION: MOVING FORWARD

In many ways, some of the subject matter in the preceding chapters seems to belong to a bygone era. Of course, in many ways, it seems odd that racism would persist into the 21st century. I am not so naïve that I do not understand that racism has very deep roots that are often not so much about the color of one’s skin, except as a sign of economic and political space. It seems unthinkable that racism, or world hunger for that matter, would persist when humanity has spent so much time thinking about and solving many of our problems. But, we have also spent a great deal of time creating new ones or recycling old ones for the same old hegemonic gains. I have written about the things I

have written about in this dissertation because these issues have not been relegated to the past, but are still very much with us.

Carlisle and Thunder Bay

The Carlisle Indian School was in operation from 1879 to 1918, yet between 2000 and 2011, seven Indigenous high school students died as a result of attending residential school in Thunder Bay, Ontario, hundreds of miles from their homes, and just 300 miles northwest of Duluth, Minnesota. In her book, *Seven Fallen Feathers: Racism, Death, and Hard Truths in a Northern City*, Tanya Talaga shares a brief history of Thunder Bay, Ontario, “a city of two faces” (3). She explains the stark division between the white and Indigenous communities, Port Arthur and Fort William, respectively. As the white community grew and the fur trade diminished, Indian assimilation became a white objective to be carried out through residential schooling. Although more than a century has passed since the first residential school was built in Thunder Bay, mistreatment of Indigenous students persists. Talaga writes with precision, grace, and compassion about contemporary atrocities perpetrated on Indigenous youth in Thunder Bay, Ontario. She writes:

To understand the stories of the seven lost students who are the subjects of this book, the seven “fallen feathers,” you must understand Thunder Bay’s past, how the seeds of division, of acrimony and distaste, of a lack of cultural understanding and awareness, were planted in those early days, and how they were watered and nourished with misunderstanding and ambivalence. And you must understand how the government of Canada has historically underfunded education and health services for Indigenous children, providing consistently lower levels of support than for non-Indigenous kids, and how it continues to do so to this day. The white face of prosperity built its own society as the red face powerlessly stood and watched. (Talaga 11)

Talaga's account of seven children who lost their lives as residential school students is as clear and comprehensive as it is heart-wrenching. She painstakingly recounts the lives and deaths of Jordan Wabasse, Jethro Anderson, Curran Strang, Paul Panacheese, Robyn Harper, Reggie Bushie, Kyle Morrisseau, all killed while attending residential school in Thunder Bay. By pointing to the systemic causes and the lack of governmental funding and involvement that allows deaths such as these to proliferate, Talaga seeks to offer hope that Indigenous students can get the support they need so that these atrocities do not continue. Yet, atrocities such as these do continue.

The final words of Talaga's important book strike a personal note in the *Acknowledgements* section as she writes to her own children, "you two are the next generation: remember who you are and carry the stories forward" (349). It is only through remembering the fallen and telling the stories that we can ever hope to escape a brutal and unjust past and present. This work is important, and not just for Canada. Talaga's attention to detail and willingness to meet with people and help to tell their stories serves as the kind of vehicle of truth that leads to healing for Indigenous people, not only in Canada, but everywhere Indigenous people are subjected to the injustices of systemic racism and the deleterious aftermath of colonial practices. The "hard truths" that Talaga shares in this book are indeed difficult, but she also shares stories of those who are taking action to prevent further violence against Indigenous youth and stories of those who are beginning to heal. The fight is not over, but it is being fought.

White Savior Still Among Us

Though it is easy enough to look back on White Indian and see the white savior trope performed in a ludicrous, heavy-handed way, the trope has not died out in spite of

all its ridiculousness. A recent example is the 2017 film, *Wind River*, directed by Taylor Sheridan. *Wind River* grossed nearly 34 million at the box office and is currently featured on Netflix. In spite of the fact that the film takes place primarily on the Wind River Indian reservation in Wyoming, Native American characters only have minor roles. The protagonist is a white Fish and Game officer who helps an inept white FBI agent solve the murder of a young Native American woman. This plotline is really not out of line with countless Hollywood productions that have preceded it, but what really makes *Wind River* stand out is that it *pretends* to take Native American issues seriously. The IMDb page for *Wind River* relates the following anecdote:

During the course of the shoot, writer-director Taylor Sheridan was visited on set by some Shoshone tribal leaders who astonished him with the revelation that, at that very time, there were 12 unsolved murders of young women on a reservation of about 6,000 people. Due to a 1978 landmark government ruling (*Oliphant v. Suquamish*), the Supreme Court stripped tribes of the right to arrest and prosecute non-Natives who commit crimes on Native land. If neither victim nor perpetrator are native, a county or state officer must make the arrest. If the perpetrator is non-Native and the victim an enrolled member, only a federally-certified agent has that right. If the opposite is true, a tribal officer can make the arrest, but the case must still go to Federal court. This quagmire creates a jurisdictional nightmare by choking up the legal process on reservations to such a degree, many criminals go unpunished indefinitely for serious crimes. (*Wind River*)

The government ruling mentioned above serves as the premise for the film, but this is complicated by more recent government action. According to the United States Department of Justice website:

On March 7, 2013, President Obama signed into law the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2013, or "VAWA 2013." VAWA 2013 recognizes tribes' inherent power to exercise "special domestic violence criminal jurisdiction" (SDVCJ) over certain defendants, regardless of their Indian or non-Indian status, who commit acts of domestic violence or dating violence or violate certain protection orders in Indian country. ("Violence")

Nevertheless, the film closes with a statement about the lack of statistics for missing and murdered Indigenous women, in a seeming attempt to bring light to this very serious issue. And as much as I would like for people to be aware of the high rates of murdered and missing Indigenous women, using this format feels more self-serving than altruistic. In fact, the movie itself has contradictory messages. In one of the closing scenes, the successful white savior consoles the inept white FBI agent as she lies in the hospital recovering from her wounds after he saved her life. She again reflects on her incompetence, and he explains to her (through a nature metaphor) that the strong survive and that it is the weak who are killed (*Wind River*). This is a revolting message to receive as the film has heretofore described the victim, Natalie, in positive terms regarding her strength, even in her final acts attempting to survive. Suddenly, we are again confronted with the Noble Savage and the White Savior. This film is just one example, but it is a poignant one because it passes itself off as Native-centric. Perhaps, that is the more dangerous. There is still work to be done.

The pervasiveness of racist tropes is disheartening. From local elementary schools to professional organizations, sports teams still use one-dimensional stereotypical Native American images as mascots. The battle to have these removed is one that continues. Similarly, companies use offensive images of Native Americans in their marketing logos. Halloween costumes revisit cultural appropriation every October. Non-native music festival goers frequently don headdresses and face paint.

The good news is that Native filmmakers are making incredible films. And Native novelists and poets are producing more books, now than ever. Art is at the heart of every culture. And it is through art and activism that we can move closer to a

common understanding of what it means to be an American Indian and understand the challenges faced by Indigenous people, but also how we can move closer to the opportunities afforded by listening to the voices of Native people. As these Native voices grow stronger and greater in number and become more ubiquitous, the future begins to look brighter than our past. I close with a poem by Cherokee/Quapaw/Chickasaw writer Geary Hobson. In a poem entitled, “Going to the Water,” which references a Cherokee purification ritual, Hobson writes:

This morning I come to the water again.
It has been a long time.
It has been too long.
 Having the need to pray
I come to the water’s edge
where dawn light spreads out
 over the riverbank
like a blessing of hands.
 The water is cold.
Sunlight on the river’s surface
diffuses into peacefulness
and adds luster
to the currents of my soul.
 An undertow of grief
lost in fragments of dreams
 broken on rocks
carries me calmly
 into the eddy.
 I face the east
and breathe gently to the sun.
I am praying softly:
 I turn northward
And talk to the wind.
 I turn westward,
and last to the south.
 I bathe my body,
touching my face
 and the coolness of water
prays with me.
 I am reluctant to leave the cold stream
but my prayer
at least this part of it

is nearly finished
and I go shoreward
to burn red tobacco
for the earth's new morning
for the river's new earth. (*Deer Hunting 30*)

And these words give me hope.

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