

QUEER MIMCRY: RE-PRESENTING THE  
PRIMITIVE IN THE WORKS OF ZITKALA ŠA,  
MOURNING DOVE, JOHN JOSEPH MATHEWS, AND  
WOODY CRUMBO

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Abstract: I argue that addressing early 20th century representation of Native performance reveals potential colonial resistance. I look at Mourning Dove *Cogewea*, Woody Crumbo's Eagle Dancer Paintings, John Joseph Mathews *Sundown*, and Zitkala Ša's *The Sun Dance Opera* to explore the ways Native people performed their own racial identities in early 20th century America, demonstrating that performance undermines colonial imaginings of Indigenous American peoples, drawing on performative theory by Judith Butler and Homi Bhabha's notion of mimicry. Performance and mimicry of Native stereotypes undermine static notions of Native identity by revealing that performance instead of some obscure racial biology "in the blood" determines identity. I look at four textual examples of Native performance and its intersections with gender to reach such a conclusion. In each example, I address how "queerness" challenges representations of Native Americans, especially static notions of gender performance and identity. Historically, gender was thought of as representative of biological sex in similar ways that culture and identity have been conceptualized in relation to an individual's race. Queerness disrupts such stable sexual identifiers, and in this dissertation, I suggest that queer performance challenges sexual and racial policing. That queerness extends beyond simply gendered bodies to include critiques about racial expectations. My analysis suggests ways that individuals subvert taxonomies of race and gender and sustain identities outside hegemonic normative categories, sometimes by their very ability to perform highly stylized notions of race and gender roles, a resistant act I call queer mimicry. I propose that queer mimicry functions as anti-colonial resistance in opposition to larger frames of American aesthetics, opening up discussions of activism within these texts that too often has simply categorized as playing into white constructions of otherness.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

In 1840s America, a pair of self-described Native Americans traveled around the country performing as Indians for eager audiences. The pair went by the names Okah Tubbee and Laah Ceil. However, as Angela Pulley Hudson reveals in *Real Native Genius: How an Ex-Slave and White Mormon Became Famous Indians*, in 1852 when Tubbee's second wife filed for divorce, the public learned that the couple had created an elaborate show (1). Neither Tubbee nor Ceil were Native. Tubbee was actually the ex-slave James McCary whereas Ceil was white Mormon Celesta Stanton (1). Their performances "helped conceal their interracial relationship, as well as other secrets they may have wished to hide, like unorthodox religious beliefs and marital practices" (4). Hudson explores the complex reasons behind the couple's performances, "analyzing how Indianness [was] a complex of ideas and practices ... understood and performed by Native and non-Native people" (10). Increasingly, scholars address performances of

racial identity, but Hudson argues that with few exceptions scholars focus on white performers masquerading as Native which her research attempts to redress with its focus on the Black McCary's racialized masquerade (10). In passing, Hudson alights on an important issue of racialized performance. She makes a provocative and fascinating observation about the way non-Native *and Native Americans* performed "Indianness." Hudson's work paints a fascinating discussion of Stanton and McCary's performances and the "profit, protection, or even pleasure" that turning "professional Indians" afforded the couple (4). While she notes that Natives played indigenous performances, her work largely leaves this issue unexplored. Yet such work is an important discussion in Native American studies both in its historical and contemporary expressions, which this dissertation explores. I believe that addressing racial performance reveals how Native Americans utilize play and shows to undermine stereotypical essentialized notions of race. When Native people perform colonial stereotypes of the Other, they reveal performance as the basis for identity.

By the 19<sup>th</sup> century and well into the 20<sup>th</sup>, Native American people were depicted within the binary of the Noble/Savage. These "primitive" images proliferated American news, literature, art, film, music, and other venues. Native people were coded as Other. Gretchen M. Bataille notes that "Native Americans have been mythologized by anthropologists and ethnographers, by tourists and the tourist industry, and through art and literature" (4). While those images have changed over time, they rely on the creation and deployment of imaginary racial stereotypes (Bataille 4). Elizabeth Bird notes, "the 'noble savage' has been with us for generation, along with his alter ego, the 'ignoble savage'.... However they are pictured, Indians are the quintessential Other, whose role is

to be the object of the White, colonialist gaze” (3-4). Bird notes, however, that certain Native people in contemporary society use such stereotypes to their advantages. She quotes Cherokee Henry Lambert who “‘dressed in feather’ for tourists in the Smoky Mountains National Park for over forty years, having his photo taken for money” (7). While his representation plays into stereotypical depictions of Native masculinity, it allowed him to put his children through college (7). Bird notes that such performances have a number of critics and defenders with opposing groups “‘fum[ing] over such ‘selling’ out’ or lack of ‘authenticity’” and with others “‘perceiv[ing] it [Native performances] as taking back power” from settler colonialists (7). While both arguments have weight, I believe that addressing mimicry and performance reveal further areas of colonial resistance.

The dissension regarding racial performance represents the often-thorny legacy of colonial representation and identity politics. In this dissertation, I argue that addressing early 20<sup>th</sup> century representation of Native performance reveals potential colonial resistance. Exploring the ways native people performed their own racial identities in early 20<sup>th</sup> century America demonstrates that performance undermines colonial imaginings of Indigenous American peoples. Performance and mimicry of Native stereotypes undermine static notions of Native identity by revealing that performance, instead of some obscure racial biology “in the blood,” determines identity. I look at four examples of Native performance and its intersections with gender to reach such a conclusion. In each example, I address how “queerness” challenges representations of Native Americans, especially static notions of gender performance and identity. Historically, gender was thought of as representative of biological sex in similar ways that culture and

identity have been conceptualized in relation to an individual's race. Queerness disrupts such stable sexual identifiers, and in this dissertation, I suggest that queer performance challenges sexual and racial policing. That queerness extends beyond simply gendered bodies to include critiques about racial expectations.

In addressing racial and gendered identity presentation, I address critical work on performance and mimicry in identity politics. In *Gender Trouble*, Judith Butler's challenges biological imperatives by focusing on performance in constituting a gendered identity. In similar ways, Homi Bhabha's work on mimicry suggests ways of re-reading Native deployment of stereotypical representations. Recent Native American critical work by Beth Piatote points to useful interactions with Judith Butler and Homi Bhabha's arguments by showing the relationship between public gender performances and the policing of Native peoples. Piatote's criticism aligns with the recent emergence of queer indigenous theorists like Qwo-Li Driskell, Mark Rifkin, and Scott Lauria Morgensen who locate Native resistance in challenges to western heteronormativity. Native people used gendered and racial mimicry to launch colonial resistance, playing with and against Native American stereotypes such as in Zitkala Ša's opera *The Sun Dance*, Mourning Dove's *Cogewea*, John Joseph Matthew's *Sundown*, and Woody Crumbo's Eagle Dance paintings.

Judith Butler illuminates how identity emerges as a social construction. In *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, Butler argues that "juridical subjects are invariably produced through certain exclusionary practices that do 'show' once the juridical structure of politics has been established" (2). In other words, the "show" or performance becomes normalized by and under the law at the same time that

exclusionary practices conceal productions of racial and gender compartments: “the law produces and then conceals the notion of ‘a subject before the law’ in order to invoke that discursive formation as naturalized foundational premise that subsequently legitimates that law’s own regulatory hegemony” (2). Although Butler’s argument centers on sex and gender construction, her critique is important for Native studies. In the late 19th and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, Native people were conceptualized along a primitive continuum, oscillating between savage primitive individuals or romantic figures perched precariously at the edge of extinction. Assimilationist practices were radically reconfiguring Native communities and identities. We see then a concrete example of Butler’s claims. Assimilationist policies legitimized the policing of Native people by making and concealing Native people into “Subjects before the law.” Native people become locked into a colonial conception of a non-assimilated Native even while the law itself erased any visibility marker of difference. Such a paradox explains how the refusal of identity by the law also serves to create and fashion the very image it seeks to reject and police. Such insight enables us to understand the networks of power shaping performance of indigeneity. Butler reminds her readers:

“*politics* and *representation* are controversial terms. On the one hand, *representation* serves as the operative term within a political process that seeks to extend visibility and legitimacy to women as political subjects; on the other hand, representation is the normative function of a language which is said either to reveal or to distort what is assumed to be true about the category of women. (1)

While Butler primarily is concerned with questions of sex and gender, questions of racial biology, representation, and authenticity often rely on what is “true” about the “category” of race analogously to Butler’s theories about identity performance and reproduction.

It is useful to pause and reflect on the debate about Butler’s theories in terms of race. Lisa Duggan notes that in the 1980s, an increasing number of “women of color particularly argued that the content of the category ‘woman’ is historically marked as racially white, while lesbian and gay activists (as well as Foucauldian-influenced theorists, who were often the same people) maintained that sexual identity is historically constructed and politically contingent” (Duggan 12). In some respects such a move corresponds with Butler’s own discussion of gender subjectivity, specifically *Gender Trouble*. Feminist theorists and race theorists quickly acknowledged the value of Butler’s work for discussing issues beyond gender and sexuality, often with profound racial discussions. Such work is not without detractors.

A number of theorists of race have weighed in on the question of Butler’s usefulness beyond questions of sexuality and gender. Catherine Rottenberg, in an analysis of Nella Larsens’ *Passing*, notes that “mapping out the differences between gender and race norms ... uncovers the way in which regulatory ideals of race produce a specific modality of performativity” (435-6). Utilizing Louis Miron and Jonathan Inda’s “Race as Kind of Speech Act,” Rottenberg suggests that race is always already performative (437-8). Miron and Inda believe that racial identity stems from performative speech acts, arguing that “the interpellation ‘Look, a negro,’ famously addressed by Frantz Fanon, is parallel to ‘It’s a girl.’ And once interpellated, subjects must, in turn, incessantly cite and mimic the very race norms that created their intelligibility .... in the

first place (Rottenberg 437). In similar ways Anoop Nayak points out how “The premise that there are distinct races with biologically inherent characteristics or culturally immutable ethnicities has proven to be little more than a fabulous fiction, a myth of modernity” (411). Instead race demands “the *representation* of human experience which is conveyed through the social apparatus of language, sign, motif, symbol, metaphor and metonymy” (412). In repeating Butler’s claims, Nayak argues that “cultural identities are *produced* in the ethnographic encounter itself rather than coming to precede the event . . . . Race is something that we ‘do’ rather than who we are, it is a performance that can only ever give illusion to the reality it purports. Significantly, there is no racial subject that prefigures ethnographic interaction. As Judith Butler brilliantly alludes, there is no ‘doer behind the deed’” (426). Such positioning recalls Butler’s argument that “gender and sexual identifications are continually remade through repetition, or the compelled performance of dominant discourse” (Nelson 331). As Sarah Salih suggests, “The body is not a ‘mute facticity’ . . . but like gender it is produced by discourses” (55). Butler’s conclusion is that “gender is not something one *is*, it is something one *does*, an act, or more precisely, a sequence of acts, a verb rather than a noun” (Salih 55).

However, employing performativity to discuss race has not been without critics even as some scholars reject Butler’s claims. Many scholars have argued that post-structuralism, like Butler’s theories, are excessively relativist and “Remove the basis for political action” (Chadderton 41) while also “undertheoriz[ing] the reality of the impact of master narratives on individual lives and identities” (Chadderton 42). This is often seen in the tension between post-structuralism and critical race theory, according to Charlotte Chadderton. Even Catherine Rottenberg has “misgivings about the simple

transposition of Butler's notion of gender performativity onto race" despite acknowledging that looking at "specifications of race norms" enables scholars to discuss race in terms of Butler's theories without "eliding the particular mechanisms through which the subject comes to be 'raced'" (437-8). Rottenberg argues that that skin pigmentation often serves of the marker of differences even while pointing to how skin color is "not enough to tell the 'truth' of race" (439). Because of the ambiguity at times in racial identity, "Racist discourse must constantly invoke and reinforce the 'non-whiteness' of the other subject, whom it concomitantly encourages to live up to norms of whiteness," a point that Rottenberg suggest resonates with Homi Bhabha's theories of mimicry (440). Rottenberg makes an important distinction between performativity of race and gender. With Gender, subjects "are interpellated into the symbolic order as either men or women and thus compelled to identify as either one or the other" (Rottenberg 441). Men and women must then adopt the role and perform that role, to desire its performance. With race, on the other hand, "white racist regimes create a distinct bifurcation between identification and 'desire-to-be,' such that certain subjects are encouraged to privileged and thus desire attributes associated with whiteness, but concurrently these same subject are *forced* to identify as black" (Rottenberg 442). Non-white subjects are systemically encouraged and demanded to live up to standards of blackness in order to reproduce racial difference even while they "are compelled and encouraged to privilege and thus 'desire-to-be-white'" (Rottenberg 444). In terms of hetero-patriarchy, though, women are not "encouraged to live up to norms of masculinity, nor are men urged to live up to feminine ideals" (Rottenberg 444). While Rottenberg acknowledges the limits of Butler's theories, she still believes that the hold value for

discussing race in terms of performativity, which Lise Nelson also believes. Nelson suggests re-visiting Butler because few scholars critically engage with her theories. She believes that “Butler’s notion of performativity actually undermines attempts to image a historically and geographically concrete subject that is constituted by dominant discourse, but is potentially able to reflect upon and actively negotiate, appropriate or resist them” (332). Many women of color have “critiqued ‘the subject’ implicit within most feminist thought of the time, a subject that normalized the experience of white, middle-class, first world women (334). But Butler’s theories actually prove useful for such a discussion because “performativity recognizes that ‘the subject’ is *constituted* through matrices of power/discourse, matrices that are continually reproduced through processes of re-signification, ore repetition of hegemonic gendered (racialized, sexualized) discourses” (337).

Butler recognized gaps in *Gender Trouble*, especially in terms of race (60), raising the question if scholars can or should discuss race as performative in ways similar to gender (63). In *Bodies that Matter*, Butler attempts to re-dress this problematic oversight, suggesting that the symbolic order is always a “racial industry, indeed [it is] the reiterated practice of *racializing* interpellations” (qtd in Salih 63). Butler notes that sex and gender do not exist before race, but she still does not always succeed in discussing how “Race is interpellated,” especially as Sarah Salih suggests sexuality may not be visible at birth but race often is (64). Even though racial bodies “cannot be theorized in exactly the same way as the sexualized, sexed, or gendered body ... this [does] not dispute Butler’s assertion that all these vectors of power operate simultaneously and through one another” (64). Even while Salih suggests that Butler lacks specificity in

discussing racial performativity, her work reveals how taxonomies of race and gender are destabilized when individuals fluidly move between racial and sexed compartments, revealing performativity at play in identity of race (65). Similarly Susan Bordo argues that deconstruction” has encouraged us to recognize that the body is not only materially acculturated (e.g., as it conforms to social norms and habitual practices of ‘femininity’ and ‘masculinity’), but it is also mediated by language” (5-6). As such performativity can and does demonstrate and enlighten discussions of race and identity that become visible under the intersections of language and conforming to those discourses, including race (7).

Charlotte Chadderton articulates the benefits of Butler’s theories in critical race theory. Chadderton notes that all too often critical race theory “implicitly essentializes identities by portraying identity as fixed and reproducing fixed notions of fixed cultural difference,” even though such essentialism is used for political aims (46). The danger in such theory is that it treats race and culture as natural categories instead of socially constructed ones (46), which runs the risk of deploying racist discourses that “inadvertently supports racist discourses that essentialise and homogenise people (46-47). Chadderton recognizes that Butler’s theories of performativity fill an important gap. Butler demonstrates that ‘identity categories do not reflect or describe (pre-existing) subjects as is widely believed, they produce them’ (48). Identities are “discursively constituted” as “negotiated reactions to social norms coming from without and therefore historically and socially situated” instead of derived from some internal essence (48). For Chadderton this is important because it allows her to claim that racial categories “are not actually fixed to bodies, [but] they are just perceived as being so” (49). Race becomes

something that one does instead of a thing (49). Race becomes destabilized in Butler's theories of performativity, revealing their ongoing constructions and iterations. Racism requires fixity, so such potential actually provides useful political compliments to critical race theory, according to Chadderton (49).

While most scholars that address Butler's theories in relation to race tend to address the question in terms of African American or diaspora debates, few scholars in Native American studies have interacted with Butler's claims. One glaring exception is Craig Womack. Kristina Fagan notes that "Craig Womack claims that we cannot compare the deconstruction of gender identity with the deconstruction of native identity: 'It is one thing to say gender is not who we are but what we do .... It is quite another to say Indians are not who we are but what we do'" (79). However, Fagan points out that "Womack is her overstating the uniqueness of Aboriginal scholars' concerns with postmodern reasoning" (80). Fagan later points out that generic terms like Indian are constructions of colonialism, which suggests that revisiting Butler's discussion about performativity may in fact prove incredibly useful in discussing racialized identity construction, specifically in light of its colonial construction (82). Ratna Kapur argues that postmodernity's reading of categories of identity and law, of which Butler intersects, do have significant bearing on women and potentially other groups of people (82), a point that Silvia Critstina Bettez makes in her study of mixed-raced women whereby race becomes constituted through a series of repeated iterations that seemingly have become naturalized in racial discourse (156).

Nadine Ehlers takes up the benefits of employing Butler for discussing race. Despite claims that race can be *visibly* determined and thereby naturalized, Ehlers notes

how “Racial designation could not ... rest solely on visual cues” as evidenced by juridical practice that continually mark race through a discourse of “blood” (151). Such legal discourse actually marks how performativity of race “*called into being* particular racial subject “especially as racial subjects were “compelled to occupy the given legal position” of the discourse (151). In this respect, Ehlers notes that Butler’s discussion of performativity is useful for analyzing how language “produce[s] that which it names” (153). Like a gendered subject, the racial subject is named and then the individual adopts and repeats the signification of that name (154). That repetition often becomes equated with nature or biology of race when in fact it is merely the expression of signifiers of difference (155). Because race becomes a performance, “racial prescriptions can be potentially (and innovatively) reworked: for in these embodiments, a moment is availed in which critics ... can be embraced in such a way that it extent the terrain of subjectivity” (156). In other words, a subject can play with the performance and “signify racial norms *in new directions*” (156), which I explore in the ensuing chapters. Even as colonial discourse qualified and determined who Native people are, in the ensuing chapters I discuss ways that Native Americans playfully and politically undermined colonial definitions and expectations for Indigenous peoples.

Representations of Native people in opera and stage focused on the vanishing Indian trope, painting a political myth of the fragile and sensitive natural primitive man who is unable to survive the steady march of Modernism. These colonial sentiments drove a market for Indigenous material artifacts and for ethnographic inquiry of “the last members of tribes” before they forever passed away. Such clamor, though, allowed spaces for Native people to perform before audiences, revealing constructions of Indian

identity under colonial governance. Butler suggests that performances like drag “dramatize the signifying gesture through which gender itself is established” (x). Butler’s emphasis on highly stylized gendered performances suggests ways of negotiating other displays of difference. In the arts, settler colonialists often donned red face to perform Native “primitive” identities. In *Reservation Reelism: Redfacing, Visual Sovereignty, and Representations of Native Americans in Film*, Michelle H. Raheja states that “Playing Indian roles provided . . . actors with class and geographic mobility, financial security, independence from restrictions of white reservation agents, opportunities for political and social activism, and access to a limited range of institutional power” (13). For Native Americans in films, playing “Red-Face” “signals the ways in which the work of Indigenous performers, like that of the trickster, is always in motion and therefore creates acts that operate ambiguously, acts that open themselves up for further reading and interpretation” (21). While Raheja’s argument focuses on film actors, she argues that such “trickster” performance appear in many guises, which my dissertation demonstrates.

Red-Face performances create ambiguity according to Raheja, a point that suggests potential political resistance. Re-reading Butler with an eye for critiquing racial performativity demonstrates how Native identity relies on a complex coding of signification even when colonial rhetoric ties Native identity to essentialist biological ideologies. Butler’s analysis of gender creation is useful for discussing Native resistance by showing the relationship between identity and performance. Butler articulates that “identity is performatively constituted by the very ‘expressions’ that are said to be its results” (25). In the juridical, cultural, and historical creation of racialized and/or gendered body, Butler resists the notion of essential genders and sexualities. One cannot

attribute actions simply to an “expression of gender” but rather as performative. In a subtle but damning critique, Butler argues against a constitutive primary gender that leads to a result of specific gendered expressions but rather demonstrates that the gendered identity is the *result* of the *performance* itself, as the subject is inscribed in a discourse that ascribes performative acts with specific gendered/sexed bodies. Even though I suggest that Butler’s work can offer important work for analyzing racial-gendered performance, I do not wish to suggest that we see race and gender in one-to-one correlations. While race and gender undergo similar public policing and reinforcement, I am not suggesting that we merely insert race into Butler’s argument. Rather, I am suggesting that we note the instances where gender performance in Native texts intersect with other forms of performativity. Recent scholarship by Beth H. Piatote in Native American studies already points to the useful dialogue between gender performance theory and race theory. Such work enriches our understanding of the socio-political construction of Modern Native people, including gender identities, suggesting a useful dialogue between the disciplines.

Examining the intersection of racial and gender performances of Native people establishes the complex power dynamics shaping assimilationist policies and ways Native people had to maneuver them. In *Domestic Subjects: Gender, Citizenship, and Law in Native American Literature*, Piatote addresses the 1887 Dawes Allotment Act in relation to gender constructions. Her analysis reveals how hetero-patriarchal settler colonialists policed Native people with the implementation of the act. The Dawes Act radically reshaped tribal lands and communities through the privatization and allotment of tribal and enforced racial criteria for tribal enrollment. Native American tribal members would have

to meet a specific blood quantum in order to register as citizens of their tribes. Land held in Tribal trust would be broken up into allotments that the Federal Government would distribute to individuals. What Piatote's research discovers, though, is how the allotment policy also created and policed Native American gendered politics. Piatote notes how Native Americans were encouraged to adopt white, hetero-patriarchal gender roles. Individuals could control their individual finances only after they successfully *performed* heteronormative gender roles. The juridical system enabled trustees for Native men and women, but allowed autonomy for those deemed competent. The criteria for competency included racial components as well as gender performance. Piatote notes that for Native women, the demands of competency were forced domestication. She points out that "domestic inventories ... measured citizenship through the production of specific, gendered forms of homemaking and land management" (111). While many Native women farmed or worked outside their homes, the Dawes Allotment encouraged white heteronormative gender divisions with women staying in their homes and men taking the role of "Bread winner." Piatote notes these gender expectations became "a set of dynamic categories that are measured against the normalizing gaze of the state" (112). The "normalizing gaze of the state" reveals how bellicose the Federal Government was in their demand that Native American people assimilate into white hetero-political individuals.

Part of the process of determining competency involved public performances of policed gender roles for Native people. Native Americans publicly acquiesced to standard white gender roles in staged "citizenship ceremonies" (113). For men, such ceremonies included a pledge "to take up agriculture" while placing their hands on plows, while

women were given “small sewing kits and commemorative pins” (113-114). Such public performances reinforced the “normalizing gaze of the state,” ensuring Native Americans accepted their new roles publicly and privately. Piatote’s work presages the policing of gender as an expression of white governance and hegemonic power.

In similar ways, other scholars of Native American sexuality note the policing of gender expression as a form of colonial assault. In *When Did Indians Become Straight: Kinship, the History of Sexuality, and Native Sovereignty*, Mark Rifkin notes how legislature—such as the Dawes Act—disrupt kinship by “breaking up indigenous land holdings” (6). Rifkin notes that in addition to breaking up land holdings, such legislature should be conceptualized as “The effort to insert American Indians into the ideological system of heterosexuality” which “discount[ed] the particular ways family and household formations are center to native peoples’ functioning as polities” (7). Rifkin theorizes that Native Americans were “deemed racially deficient and threatening to the nation due to their failure to conform to the nuclear model of conjugal domesticity” (33). Kinship was non-heteronormative and needed erased in favor of couple-hood because it allowed for alternative community configurations outside nuclear families. Scott Lauria Morgensen argues that “the sexual colonization of Native people produced modern sexuality as ‘settler sexuality’: a white and national heteronormativity formed by regulating Native sexuality and gender while appearing to supplant them with sexual modernity of settlers” (31). Such policies created a dual aim, (1) to establish and regulate a unified depiction of American normative gender roles in opposition to Native ones and (2) to force Natives to adopt western notions of gender divisions as the basis for liberal

personhood. In creating “responsible” Native subjects, the underlying assumption would be individuals who adopted dominant gender roles as well.

“Queer” performance becomes a mode of resistance for Native Americans, a sign of resistance. So scrutinizing gender performance in Zitkala Sa, Mourning Dove, John Joseph Matthew, and Woody Crumbo’s works demonstrate ways queerness operates as political resistance. A number of recent scholars address this work, suggesting that gender policing represents an important moment of colonial hegemony. Qwo-Li Driskell argues that Native peoples’ “lives and identities have been colonized along with [their] homelands” (52). As an example, Driskell points to Wilma Mankiller who writes,

Europeans brought with them the view that men were the absolute head of households, and women were to be submissive to them. It was then that the role of women in Cherokee society began to decline. One of the new values Europeans brought to the Cherokees was a lack of balance and harmony between men and women. It is what we today call sexism. This was not a Cherokee concept. Sexism was borrowed from Europeans. (Qtd in Driskell “Stolen” 53).

Mankiller’s words align with the kind of gender policing that underscored such policies as the Dawes Act. Along with Mankiller and Driskell’s argument, Piatote, Rifkin, and Morgensen articulate how Native American social and political changes become mirrored in tribal gender policing. As Driskell articulates, “The invaders continue to enforce the idea that sexuality and non-dichotomous genders are a sin, recreating sexuality as illicit, shocking, shameful, and removed from any positive spiritual context. Queer sexualities

and genders are degraded, ignored, condemned, and destroyed” (54). David L. Eng, Judith Halberstam, and Esteban Muñoz argue that queerness:

challenge[s] the normalizing mechanisms of state power to name its sexual subjects: male or female, married or single, heterosexual or homosexual, natural or perverse. ... [T]he political promise of the term reside[s] specifically in its broad critique of multiple social antagonisms, including race, gender, class, nationality, and religion, in addition to sexuality. (1)

The Federal Government’s colonialization of Native people, then, forced Native people to adopt White heteronormative identities, but many Native people opposes such gender policing, which I address in the subsequent chapters. I suggest that addressing “queerness” reveals dimensions of political and social resistance.

While queer theory informs my methodological approach in looking at gender, it also suggests ways that analyzing representation of gender in Zitkala Ša, Mourning Dove, John Joseph Matthews, and Woody Crumbo’s work unlock their subversive potential. Queerness calls into question the legitimizing gaze of the state to police Native American people with expressions of identity that fall outside hetero-political governance. Additionally, gender performance suggests ways individual identity emerges through a host of performative semiotic markers, to use Butler’s terminology. Instead of biological determinism, performance and play subvert essentialist paradigms while simultaneously resisting Federal gender policies.

Gender play and performance become political terms for understanding larger racial and cultural forms of resistance. In the ensuing chapters, I look at examples of how gender and racial play undermine romantic stereotypes that perpetuate primitive

mythologies of Native men and women. Performance underscores ways Native people enacted subtle forms of political resistance. Mimicry and gendered performance converge in that both rely on complex signifying processes to create meaning and for audiences to understand the performance. Homi Bhabha articulates the subversive resistance of mimicry. Mimicry calls into question the privilege of power that police colonized people and cultural production, according to Homi Bhabha. In “Of Mimicry and Man: the Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse,” Bhabha suggests that “mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other as a *subject of a different that is almost the same, but not quite*” (126). While colonialists implemented laws and legislature to create assimilated subjects, mimicry calls attention to the reality that the colonized subject can perform an assimilated identity, but that colonialism will never allow the subject to be equal to a colonial subject. Bhabha’s adds:

Mimicry emerges as the representation of a difference that is itself a process of disavowal. Mimicry is, thus, the sign of a double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation, and discipline, which “appropriates” the Other as it visualizes power. Mimicry is also the sign of the inappropriate, however, a difference or recalcitrance which coheres the dominant strategic function of colonial power, intensifies surveillance, and poses an imminent threat to both “normalized” knowledges and disciplinary powers. (126)

Bhabha takes the reader through a linguistic game to demonstrate the difference between official discourse of colonialism and its excess—those moments of difference constantly exposed in colonial discourse (126). On the one hand colonial power “appropriates” the

Other. Bhabha places quotation marks around this word to call attention to its dual meaning. Appropriate can mean to claim as one's own while also calling attention to notions of uprightness and correctness. Colonial authorities appropriate the Other as its subject but also demand that it reform itself as appropriate through the assimilation of colonial cultural, religious, and political standards.

Mimicry skews the lines between colonial and colonized subjects, revealing performance as the arbitrary demarcation between colonizer and colonized Other instead of biological ideological constraints. Through mimicry, a subject *performs* a role that calls into question the legitimacy of continued colonial power. Colonial power demands an Other who needs constant surveillance and power to control, which justifies the continued domination of the colonized. Mimicry calls into question the very discourse of power that creates it. Bhabha reminds us:

Those inappropriate signifiers of colonial discourse .... The identity between stereotypes which, through repetition, also become different ... are the nonrepressive productions of contradictory and multiple belief. They cross the boundaries of the culture of enunciation through a strategic confusion of the metaphoric and metonymic axes of the cultural production of meaning. (130)

Bhabha's point is that identity is always already fluid, and no essential quality exists that differentiates one individual from another: "Its [mimicry's] threat ... comes from the prodigious and strategic *production* of conflictual, fantastic, discriminatory 'identity effects' in the play of a power that is elusive because it hides no essence, no 'itself'" (emphasis added 131). While Bhabha is concerned with depictions of colonial people who

mimic white, Euro-American standards, I believe that Native American mimicry of colonial stereotypes functions analogously.

In the ensuing examples, Native people mimic colonial expectations of Native otherness. In re-claiming and deploying stereotypical images, Native Americans *perform* the stereotype, revealing the creation of Native otherness in American consciousness. Mimicry reveals resistance in that it reveals the colonial construction of Otherness as performative, changing, and open for constant manipulation. Mimicry reveals that subjective identity is not relative to essentialist biological factors. When Native people perform and mimic a variety of identities, they illustrate the signifying markers of Indian identity, but they also create ambiguous meanings of that identity, a point to which Raheja alludes above. Mimicry suggests multiple potential identities and corresponding performances; mimicry threatens the colonial process, which demands a clear Other in order to legitimize its continual assertion of power by suggesting the arbitrary designation of colonial identity taxonomies.

Utilizing the postcolonial work of Homi Bhabha illustrates examples of indigenous resistance, but it has its limits. Peter Hallward expresses some critics concern with Bhabha's work because he focuses on enunciations and Post-structuralist theory to articulate resistance instead of people's struggles (27). Hallward establishes that Bhabha's ideas rely on notions of hybridity that operate outside binaries (24). Bhabha moves to address "enunciative or performative aspect[s] of the articulation of identity" (25). However, it is this move that Hallward suggests leads many critics to claim Bhabha imposes an "idealist reduction of the social to the semiotic" (25). Hallward questions if "oppression is thus effectively precluded as an enunciatory impossibility," which

Hallward suggests might make explaining Bhabha's work to people like the Sioux troubling (26). At the basis, such criticisms result from "Critics suspicious of the incursion of 'high theory' into the study of very concrete forms of oppression and resistance" (Hallaway 35). The value of Bhabha's theories, however, is that notions of hybridity "expos[e] the violent implications of the canonical view of culture as an organic and coherent body" (Cheah 83). Bhabha's theories on performance and hybridity "constitutes a site resistance" by undermining and challenging colonialism (Cheah 83). As an example, mimicry "subvert[s] the moral truths of colonial authority by reflecting the wound of its split self-presence and reversing colonial disavowal" for a colonial subject that is "not-quite/not-white" (Cheah 84). For my project, mimicry reveals operations of identification founded on performance, undermining colonial demands for a recognizable racial Other even while demanding and policing the Others assimilation. In these moments, Bhabha's theories actually seem to suggest that they have real value for discussing ways Native people employ performance to resist.

Some Native scholars bristle at the application of postcolonial theory to address Native concerns. Jace Weaver raises this concern by stating that "American Natives are not postcolonial peoples" in that they are still actively colonized (10). However, such a position fails to realize that post-colonial theory articulates how colonial powers still exert dominance over colonized people. In *Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism*, Jodi Byrd argues for the importance of ongoing dialogue between postcolonial and indigenous studies. Despite reticence by indigenous scholars to engage in postcolonial theory, Byrd reminds her readers that postcolonial studies "arose as a politicized intervention to colonialist knowledge production"; thus, "despite how it may

or may not have been coopted or transformed if its incorporation into the academic metropolises of the global north, ... because postcolonial theory arose as a politicized intervention to colonialist knowledge production, it seems worth reconsidering some of its strategies for the continued development of indigenous critical theory” (xxx-xxx). In the ensuing chapters, I utilize both postcolonial theory and indigenous theories to discuss subversive political representations of Indigeneity, demonstrating that ongoing dialogue between these two discourses reveals historical examples and methods of Native American resistance.

While my examples do not reflect geographical unity, they intersect because of their racial and gendered mimicry and their temporality. Zitkala-Ša’s opera, *Mourning Dove* and John Joseph Mathews’ novels, and Woody Crumbo’s paintings span slightly more than a twenty- five year period between 1915 and 1940. In terms of geography, these works span from Oklahoma (with Mathews’ novel and Crumbo’s paintings), to Utah and Montana with Zitkala-Ša’s opera and *Mourning Dove’s Cogewea*. Each text reveals an ongoing dialogue of Native Americans with larger American issues of representation, primitivism, and modernity.

In chapter II, “Queer Mimicry: Representation and Resistance in Zitkala-Ša’s *The Sun Dance Opera*,” I address racial and gendered performance in Zitkala-Ša’s *The Sun Dance Opera*. I read the opera’s libretto as a text, attending to Zitkala-Ša’s subtle but powerful resistance to Federal policing of Native people and colonial imaginings of Native people. A close reading of *Sun Dance* (1913) unveils how Zitkala-Ša employs mimicry in the opera to undermine the legitimacy of imperial governance, in the process offering rich commentary on the political aspects of settler colonial sexual and racial

representation. I establish mimicry in the text by exploring “Nativist” operas performed in early 20<sup>th</sup> century America. Arthur Nevins’ *Poia* (1907), Victor Herbert’s *Natoma* (1911), and Charles Wakefield Cadman’s *Shanewis: The Robin Woman* (1918) provide historical examples of the portrayal of Native Americans that exhibit colonial fascination with Native American “primitiveness.” Positioning *Sun Dance* in relation to these operas and trite Native representations enables me to establish how the opera interacts with stereotypes but even more importantly challenges colonial governance and stereotypical performances of Native people. Zitkala-Ša politicizes her opera by centering the plot on a religious ceremony that was illegal in early 20th century America (The Sun Dance), while also demanding Native spiritual, political, and environmental sovereignty. Even within these more apparent interventions, I unearth how *Sun Dance* systematically confronts colonial representations of race and gender. Building on the work of recent scholarship by Beth Piatote and Scott Lauria Morgensen that articulate gender policing as a form of colonization, I demonstrate how the Heyoka figure of Hebo in the opera destabilizes essentialist colonialist conceptions of race and gender. Through a queer analysis of Hebo’s mimicry of racial and gender expectations, I explore ways that Zitkala-Ša employs radical mimicry to combat impositions of colonial imagining, a methodology that can inform how we re-evaluate performance of identity by other Native American artists, writers, and activists.

In Chapter III, “Toy Boys, Cowboys, and Playing Indian: Queer Performance in *Cogewea*,” I argue that Mourning Dove’s 1927 novel, *Cogewea*, combats legacies of colonial violence. Mourning Dove writes a novel that playfully undermines Native American representation, responding to and with the genre of the Western novel.

*Cogewea* occupies itself with representation, identity politics and with queerness. Examining the queer moments provides useful framing for subsequent queer scenes that also intersect with primitive representation. By playing with such images, Mourning Dove presents a queer novel that destabilizes racial and gender policing and compartmentalization.

I locate queerness in three major passages of the novel, two that address homoerotic/homosocial relationship between ranch-hands, and one with the eponymous heroine of the text. I address Dixie Canary and Silent Bob's relationship (two ranch hands in the novel) in conference with their fellow rancher, Frenchy the "Toy," as examples of queer, same sex desire. Looking at the first two examples of queerness, I locate queerness as the underlying operation of gender and racial representation in the novel, extending such work to include *Cogewea*. Throughout the novel, *Cogewea* rejects Western racial and gender expectations. An early example of her departure from American heteronormative standards occurs when she performs dual racial roles in two horse races. *Cogewea* enters a race for Native American women and a second race for White women. I suggest that we read this scene and her character as queer, as she uses mimicry and performance to subvert colonial expectations regarding Native people, playing with and against her gender and racial identity. Addressing queerness suggests that Mourning Dove creates a novel that destabilizes heteronormative colonial polices that were used to police Native Americans' gendered and racial bodies.

Chapter IV, "Gendered Performance and Racism in John Joseph Mathews' *Sundown*," links gender performance with racialized expectations of Native Americans in Modern America. *Sundown* (1934) articulates the pressure of Native people following the

assimilationist era, especially the increasingly polarization between adopting Euro-American identities and pressure to retain cultural identification with tribal and cultural values. I address the role of gender and racial performance of the Osage protagonist of the novel, “Chal,” as he grows up and matures in early 20<sup>th</sup> century Oklahoma. The novel concerns Chal’s vacillation with performing white heteronormative masculinity, punctuated with his homoerotic/homosocial fascination with other male characters. Chal mimics what he thinks to be white cultural values and gendered expectations while he also emerges as a character obsessed with masculinity and his relationship with other men. Throughout the novel, readers confront images of homosocial bonding and outright “queer” relationships, eerily vacillating between homosocial and homoerotic bonds between men and the perennial threat of Native “queerness.” I argue that Mathews contests colonial gendering and racial expectations through the queer depictions of the novel’s protagonist as Mathews articulates how settler colonial gender expectations disallow Native inclusion, especially as *Sundown* configures indigeneity as queer. However, Chal’s mimicry of both whiteness and Native identity undermine essentialist discourses of race and gender, revealing both as performative. *Sundown* presents a scathing critique of romantic depictions of Native men and bridges the early work of writers such as Zitkala-Ša and Mourning Dove as I discuss in my first two chapters, and the playful mimicry of Woody Crumbo that I address in Chapter 4.

In Chapter V, “Laughing at the Ridiculous, [and] the Absurd”: Woody Crumbo, Mimicry, and the Modern Native Artist,” I address the role of mimicry in relationship to Potawatomi artist, Woody (Woodrow) Crumbo (1912-89), and his series of Eagle Dancer paintings, which suggests that interdisciplinary conversation about performance reveal

nuances about Native American resistance. Like the previous chapters, I locate how Crumbo undermines colonial stereotypes of Native people through performance and mimicry. My focus on mimicry reveals Crumbo's performance as the operation of his identity instead of biological determinism. Such work re-negotiates the paradoxical and playful identity of Crumbo. Instead of trite typecasts to lock Crumbo into stereotypical romantic artist, spiritual leader, etcetera, I suggest ways that his performance of such tropes deconstructs essentialist rhetoric of Native people as Other. Crumbo's mimicry of primitivism operates as colonial resistance, demonstrating identity as performance and not as racialized essentialism. A queer analysis of his work reveals that his paintings play with viewer expectations about race and gender that call into question primitivist notions of Native American peoples, presenting a playful depiction of a man working against colonial pressure who paradoxically and subversively shaped Native American art.

My concluding remarks reflect my motivations for exploring Queer mimicry. Often when approaching historical and literary examples of Native Americans, we fail to understand the complex factors influencing their histories and works. My work invites compassionate but critical re-evaluation of overlooked texts, works, and individuals. In an era when colonial stereotypes define Native people, scholars should address the legacies of colonialism and Native resistance. In *The Trickster Shift: Humour and Irony in Contemporary Native Art*, Allan J Ryan articulates how a host of contemporary artists undermined colonialism and playfully articulate Native resistance. Ryan states that such work is "a discourse *among* tricksters, *about* tricksters, and even *as* tricksters, in the sense that the 'trickster is a comic discourse, a collection of utterances in oral tradition.' As once open-ended, unfolding, evolving, incomplete, the discourse is imagined in

numerous verbal and visual narratives and multiplicity of authoritative voices” (xiii). I would extend his argument to address historical ways mimicry challenges pervasive images of Native Americans by playing with and against their very forms.

## CHAPTER II

### QUEER MIMICRY: REPRESENTATION AND RESISTANCE IN ZITKALA-ŠA'S *THE SUN DANCE OEPR*

In 1607 two individuals would meet in what is now called the state of Virginia. The event would capture the imagination of countless individuals over successive generations. The principal players were an English settler in Jamestown and a 13-year-old girl, who had a secret name of Matoaka, would later be called Amonute, and who would die with the name Rebecca Rolfe. History knows her by another name—Pocahontas. The settler she met was John Smith. These two people would meet in the year that Claudio Monteverdi composed his opera *L'Orfeo*. Although not the earliest opera composed—that title belongs to the now lost opera *Dafne* (1597) by Jacopo Peri—*L'Orfeo* is the earliest known opera still performed in contemporary musical spheres. myths, legend, and plays, but also, in 2007, an opera by Linda Tutas Hagen that was composed to celebrate the 400th anniversary of the settlement of Jamestown (Blomster n.pag). In an editorial for *Opera Today*, Wes Blomster writes that the opera “commemorate[s] the landing of those 104 adventurous Englishman [sic]” and that it is

“a tribute to the young Native American woman who charmed the new arrivals” (n. pag.). While I do not wish to digress into the colonial implications of Blomster’s work, such as those implied by his “adventurous Englishman [sic]” and the “woman who charmed” them, I do think that Blomster’s review and Hagen’s opera as a whole highlight that 400 years of settler colonial and Native American interactions have only fueled colonial appropriation and performance. Indeed, countless musical scores exist about Native peoples, from the early founders of the art form and well into contemporary operatic compositions.<sup>i</sup>

Even while white composers have historically had a monopoly on “Indian” operatic productions, a number of Native Americans made inroads into the operatic stage in early 20<sup>th</sup> century America, inadvertently at times inviting discussion about cultural representation and Native resistance. In 1913, Yankton Sioux writer and activist Zitkala-Ša (1876–1938) collaborated with scholar William F. Hanson in creating *The Sun Dance Opera*, and thereby became one of the first Native writers and composers creating an opera about Native people.<sup>ii</sup> Zitkala-Ša was already proving to be a strong voice for Native people in both her writings and political involvement, and *The Sun Dance Opera* builds on and engages her larger polemics of Native representation.

In this chapter, I propose to read the opera’s libretto as literary text, attending to subtle but nonetheless powerful articulations of colonial resistance. A close reading of *Sun Dance* unveils how Zitkala-Ša employs mimicry in the opera to undermine the legitimacy of imperial governance, in the process offering rich commentary on the political aspects of settler colonial sexual and racial representation. I begin the chapter with a discussion of three popular operas about Native American representation by settler

colonists: Arthur Nevins' *Poia* (1907), Victor Herbert's *Natoma* (1911), and Charles Wakefield Cadman's *Shanewis: The Robin Woman* (1918). These three operas provide historical examples of the portrayal of Native Americans that exhibit colonial fascination with Native American "primitiveness." Such a genealogy frames *Sun Dance* in its relation to other operatic performances about American Indian and American settler colonial interactions. Despite conceding how *Sun Dance* at times re-presents many of the romantic images of Native American we find in these contemporary operas, I propose that a close reading of *Sun Dance* reveals how Zitkala-Ša challenges settler colonial governance of tribal people and communities. Zitkala-Ša politicizes her opera by centering the plot on a religious ceremony that was illegal in early 20<sup>th</sup> century America (The Sun Dance), while also enjoining for Native spiritual, political, and environmental sovereignty. Even within these more apparent interventions, I unearth how *Sun Dance* systematically confronts colonial representations of race and gender. Building on recent scholarship that articulates gender policing as a form of colonization, I demonstrate how the *Heyoka* figure of Hebo in the opera destabilizes essentialist colonialist conceptions of race and gender. Through a queer analysis of Hebo's mimicry of racial and gender expectations, I explore ways that Zitkala-Ša employs a similar radical mimicry to combat impositions of colonial imagining, a methodology that can inform how we re-evaluate performance of identity by other Native American artists, writers, and activists.

#### Discussion of Theoretical Frames

In *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, Judith Butler argues that representation and imitation de-code and uncover the process of signification as political operations of power. Butler asks if "drag [is] the imitation of gender, or does it

dramatize the signifying gesture through which gender itself is established” (x)? Butler’s question of biological determinism about sex/gender is useful in negotiating Native American cultural and racial performances. In the arts, settler colonialists and artists have donned red face to perform Native “primitive” identities. Native people themselves have also participated, at times, in reifying stereotypical images of Native people, performing a kind of cultural drag. Put another way, Native people engage in a form of colonial mimicry, playing with and against “primitive” images of Native difference. Michelle H. Raheja states that “Playing Indian roles provided ... actors with class and geographic mobility, financial security, independence from restrictions of white reservation agents, opportunities for political and social activism, and access to a limited range of institutional power” (13). Raheja argues that such stylized racial performance “signals the ways in which the work of Indigenous performers, like that of the trickster, is always in motion and therefore creates acts that operate ambiguously, acts that open themselves up for further reading and interpretation” (21). As a methodology, Raheja’s proposal suggests that we analyze the role of representation and history of Native people. Representation reveals spaces of resistance or collusion in gender and racial subordination (and sometimes both simultaneously) because re-presentation reveals that acts of re-creation are always already part of a process of the creation of identity. Creation of identity emerges along a continuum of space and time in that “Gender is a complexity whose totality is permanently deferred, never fully what it is at any given juncture in time” (16). Butler suggests, “the ‘coherence’ and ‘continuity’ of ‘the person’ are not logical or analytic feature of personhood, but, rather, socially instituted and maintained norms of intelligibility” (17). Throughout settler colonial governance over

Native North Americans, the notion of “Indian” constantly was in flux and vacillated between pervading dualities of noble and savage. Just as Butler argues that women as a term “denotes a common identity” and simultaneously reflects “a troublesome term, a site of contest, a cause of anxiety” (3), Indian identity and representation was becoming equally problematic. With the rise of modernist anxieties of urban and mechanical advancements, American politics and aesthetics were wistfully looking to “primitive” people in order to assuage a pervasive cultural ennui, fueling an ever-increasing fascination with romantic depictions of Native people.

Many native people, including Zitkala-Ša, found themselves asked to adopt stereotypical displays of their Native difference. In a publicity photograph for *The Sun Dance Opera*, Zitkala-Ša and Hanson mimic such colonial images of Native people (image 1). Throughout the opera, representation and mimicry become useful means of decoding the interlocking and contradicting elements of the text. In “Of Mimicry and Man: the Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse,” Homi Bhabha defines mimicry as:

the representation of a difference that is itself a process of disavowal.

Mimicry is, thus, the sign of a double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation, and discipline, which “appropriates” the Other as it visualizes power. Mimicry is also the sign of the inappropriate, however, a difference or recalcitrance which coheres the dominant strategic function of colonial power, intensifies surveillance, and poses an imminent threat to both “normalized” knowledges and disciplinary powers. (126)

Mimicry reveals colonial demands for colonized people to assimilate dominant expectations of personhood, the colonial strategies of “reform, regulation and discipline.”

But mimicry also threatens to undermine colonial rule by showing the fallacy of *essential* difference between colonial/colonized identity because a colonial subject's mimicry functions as a camouflaged performance. Bhabha adds that such performances "cross the boundaries of the culture of enunciation through a strategic confusion of the metaphoric and metonymic axes of the cultural production of meaning" (130). Mimicry in the opera, then, reveals the unstable signifying process underpinning colonial control of Native people, especially as Zitkala-Ša can mimic the expectations of both a cultured white composer and romantic, primitive woman.

Zitkala-Ša wrote in a period when American governance demanded Native people assimilate into mainstream society, operating and imposing forms of colonization that targeted religious, political, and cultural performances, as well as gender and sexual performance. Recent scholarship in Native American studies marks how pivotal performance and representation are to the construction of Modern Native people, including gender identities, suggesting a useful dialogue between the disciplines. In *Domestic Subjects: Gender, Citizenship, and Law in Native American Literature*, Beth H. Piatote scrutinizes the 1887 Dawes Allotment Act in relation to gender constructions. She observes that Western Euro-American patriarchal gender roles for men and women undergird and underlie the implementation of the Dawes Allotment Act, an act that would profoundly shape Native land, communities, and personal identity presentation. The Allotment Act ensured that Native tribes could no longer hold land in common trust. As a result, scholars often conceptualize the Act solely in relationship to land claims and enrollment criteria for tribal members. Piatote reminds her readers that part of the act included discussions of imposed gender roles.

Piatote's research addresses how issues of competency—whereby a Native man or woman could control their allotment without the need for a court appointed trustee—result from Western standards of domesticity and gender taxonomies. Piatote argues that “domestic inventories . . . measured citizenship through the production of specific, gendered forms of homemaking and land management” (111). The productions of homemaking involved careful grooming of Native Americans within heteronormative gender divisions. These competency stipulations functioned as policing measures that ensured Native men and women would adopt Euro-American gender roles. Piatote notes that domestic practices for Native American men and women included “a set of dynamic categories that are measured against the normalizing gaze of the state” (112). Piatote's emphasis on the “normalizing gaze of the state” reveals an invasive, violent implantation of colonial paradigms that often found expression in spaces of people's homes and lands. To mark Native acquiesce to American standards, the competency commission began to “stage citizenship ceremonies,” which included the ritual of placing a man's hand on a plow and his pledge “to take up agriculture,” while women received “small sewing kits and commemorative pins” (113-114). Piatote's research demonstrates that settler colonialist practices affected public and private spaces by policing the gender roles and practices of Native American cultures. It is little wonder that scholars of Native Americans and gender studies point to the ongoing policing of gender as a pivotal expression of white American hegemony. Scott Lauria Morgensen argues that “the sexual colonization of Native people produced modern sexuality as ‘settler sexuality’: a white and national heteronormativity formed by regulating Native sexuality and gender while appearing to supplant them with sexual modernity of settlers” (31). Such policies created

a dual aim, (1) to establish and regulate a unified depiction of American normative gender roles in opposition to Native ones and (2) to force Natives to adopt western notions of gender divisions as the basis for liberal personhood. In creating “responsible” Native subjects, the underlying assumption would be individuals who adopted dominant gender roles as well. However, *The Sun Dance Opera* mimics and undermines such colonial imperatives, even flaunting White heteronormative policies, suggesting that the theoretical works of Piatote, Bhabha, and Butler open the potential for a queer analysis of the opera heretofore ignored.

#### “Indian” Operas: Representations of Native Difference

During the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, interest in representations of Native Americans saturated the entertainment industry, from novels such as James Fennimore Cooper’s *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826), Therese Broderick’s *The Brand, a Tale of the Flathead Reservation* (1909), and Zane Grey’s *The Vanishing American* (1922-1923), to Buffalo Bill’s Wild West and other “shows.” It is not surprising that composers and writers would follow this trend by creating and producing new “Indian” operas. A sampling of these works provides the basis for understanding the genre conventions of Native representation in opera and Zitkala-Ša’s contribution to the art. In this section of my dissertation, I investigate Arthur Nevin’s *Poia* (1907), Victor Herbert’s *Natoma* (1911), and Charles Wakefield Cadman’s *Shanewis: The Robin Woman* (1918) as stereotypical examples of Native representation in operatic form. These operas share stark similarities in the demand for cultural and racial stereotypes of Native American in American theatrical spaces. The singers often wear plains style regalia, don red-face, have long black braided hair, and inhabit pristine environments removed from outside

influences or have a relationship with a primitive past that is in jeopardy of contamination by Euro-American values. In some respects, Zitkala-Ša and Hansen work within this same paradigm. Yet, looking at standard operatic depictions of Native Americans allows modern readers to see how they worked with and against such colonial imaginings.

To some extent, ethnographic fascination and romantic nostalgia fueled an interest in Native American musicology and representation in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. In “An Operatic Skeleton on the Western Frontier: Zitkala-Ša, William F. Hanson, and *The Sun Dance Opera*,” Catherine Parsons Smith suggests that the burgeoning interest in Native American musical representation was “triggered by Anton Dvořak’s 1893-95 residence in the United States” in addition to “the publication of Alice C. Fletcher’s *A Study of Omaha Indian Music* in 1893,...[which] led to a discussion of how this ethnic material might be applied to concert music, raising by implication the general question of authenticity” (Smith 2). Within this emerging field, the young composer, Arthur Nevin spent the summers of 1903 and 1904 living with the Blackfeet to study their folklore and music. This sojourn led to an engagement by Walter McClintock to compose an opera based on the Blackfeet myth of *Poia: the Scarface*. In the story and opera, the plot centers on the mystery surrounding the hero’s scar, which serves as an impediment to his love for Natoya who rejects him due, at least in part, to his scar and her love for the evil Sumatsi. Through a dialogue with the Medicine Woman Nenahu, Poiah learns that the Sun God placed the scar on Poiah’s face because of the sins of his tribe and that it is only through the Sun God’s mercy that Poiah can have the scar removed. Mirroring the standard operatic conventions one would expect in an opera like Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart’s *Die Zauberflöte*, Poia accepts a set of trials set forth by the Sun God, eventually earning his

mercy. Fully restored, *Poia* is given a flute that causes Natoya to reject Sumatsi in favor of *Poia*. After its premier, the opera fell into disuse, and yet it provides an important window into the performance of Native identity in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, setting the stage for both stylistic and musical expectations that resonate throughout *Natoma*, *Shanewis*, and to *Sun Dance*.

The theatrical staging of *Poia* reflects a fascination with Native people and reveals common racial depictions of Native people. Pictures from the 1910 Berlin production depict Native people in highly stylized, often stereotypical fashion. Considering that the performers were also non-Native in red-face only heightens the spectacle of racial performance in this venue, as photographs from the Berlin performance attest (figures 2-5). Figures 2 and 3 show singers Putnam Griswold as The Sun God and Herr Kirschoff as *Poia*. Griswold appears to be in “Red Face,” and the discrepancy between Herr Kirschoff’s facial and neck complexion seem to suggest he also to some extent had donned red-face for the performance. Both figures are dressed in buckskin dress and both wear eagle headdresses and other conventional garb associated with Plain Indians. Griswold’s dress includes a sun motif, and *Poia* wears a bone breastplate half concealed by his crossed arms. <sup>iii</sup>

Aspects of primitivism not only exist in the representation of Native people but also in the musical compositions of the opera. The musical score of *Poia* presents complex musical depictions of Native American culture and the musical semiotics of primitive representation. <sup>iv</sup> The opera opens in standard Western form and melodic structure, yet the sounds of stereotypical tom-tom like drum beats set a primitive tone for the audience. Even with the insouciant E-Flat major notation, the presence of the drum

and raising of the curtain on the stereotypical depictions of the Native village presage stereotypical representation of the performance. The zenith of stereotypes, however, becomes most visible by the entrance of the cast in red face, dressed in highly stylized “Indian” costume, singing stereotypical “Indian melodies” (such as evident in the act one chorus between the Native villagers mocking Piao’s declaration of love for Natoya in figure 6). Even as a piano reduction, the score still captures the musical “Indian” elements of the opera. While the chorus sings a punctuated song indicating laughter, the orchestra plays grace notes carrying over a bass line playfully structured on “open fifth chords.” The effect between the bass line and almost orientalist like grace notes would create a musical picture of “Indianness” recognizable to the audience. The presence of open fifths—both in minor and major keys—throughout the score serve as musical pictures, attempting to capture “Authentic” Native musical motifs: such as the aria Nenahu sings that explains how Poia was scarred (figure 7a); and the musical interlude that opens the closing act (figure 7b). Nevin also wove open fifth chords into Poia’s opening aria and motif (figure 8). The juxtaposition of the chorus’s jeering laughter and Poia’s own aria with orchestral accompaniment suggest Nevin’s attempt to create meaning from musical gestures according to notes in the score.<sup>v</sup>

The musical notes provide a guide for understanding the musical language Nevin composes in the opera and how his audience would interpret it. Carefully paying attention to its language and the score are important for understanding other Native operas and Zitkala-Ša’s *The Sun Dance Opera*. McClintock establishes his credentials and the musical sources that Nevin utilized to create his opera, establishing an “authentic” authority to work on this opera. Yet despite an almost laudatory tone of praise on the

merits of Native people and their music and culture, the writer also reifies colonial expectations. The opening theme of the Chorus is stereotypical monosyllables of laughter and “customary” voicing of Indian peoples: “hi-hi-hi-hi-hi” (a curious similarity with later cinematic portrayal of Native people saying “how” and of actors covering their mouths in an attempt to mimic the ululating of Indian war cries). Coupled with claims about Indian music’s “crude style,” the writer has effectively created a series of colonial judgments lauding the more advanced musical styles and harmonies of Euro-American western music against the more “primitive” Indian music. Although employing basic musical notation and theory in the score notes, the writer suggests that these musical figurations were already standard conventions and assessable and understandable to a general audience, peppering the notes with musical examples and a specific musical lexicon, such as “open fifths,” to describe Native musical difference. The inclusion of these musical examples and terms coupled with an absence of discussion of this specific vocabulary suggests that a mainstream American audience would be able successfully to interpret both the text and the sounds they were hearing.

The genealogy on the opera’s creation suggests that an audience wanted to believe what they were hearing and seeing was “authentically” Native, while simultaneously groomed and informed by Western musical aesthetics. The emphasis on McClintock’s observations, recordings, and own tenuous tribal relationship serve as ethos for claiming authenticity. While the writer claims that Nevin used these musical notes as a frame for many of the opera’s themes, he also states that Nevin “developed it [the original melody] considerably” (Poia Program Notes 14). Such contradictory elements articulate the dual elements of colonial representation. They point to the need to believe in the absolute

alterity of the other and its representation—as evident in the costumes, staging, and musical semiotics of the opera—on the one hand. Yet on the other hand, such rhetoric exposes a perceived superiority of Western aesthetics, judgments, and even colonial exploitation and rule—seen in the appropriation of Native cultural artifacts and their recasting in Western venues.

The stereotypical elements in *Poia* are far from unique but appear in both *Natoma* (1911) and later *Shanewis* (1918) and provide important context for understanding *The Sun Dance Opera*. Such work foregrounds the environment that influenced the creation of *The Sun Dance Opera*, revealing the important cultural and musical semiotics that Zitkala-Ša mimic in her composition—an important consideration for understanding the subversive aspects of performance and mimicry in light of Butler and Bhabha’s theories of identity performance. Victor Herbert’s *Natoma* was the second English opera the Metropolitan Opera of New York staged. The opera is set in Spanish controlled California and centers on a complex relationship between Spanish colonial forces, an American Naval presence, and a spattering of Native people including the eponymous heroine, Natoma. Natoma serves in the house of a Spaniard nobleman, serving him and his daughter, Barbara, whom Natoma adores. Natoma meets a United States Naval lieutenant, Paul. When he falls in love with Barbara at first sight, Natoma realizes Paul will forget her, so she begs to serve him as his slave. The foil of the opera is Castro, a “half breed.” He and his friends, especially Alvarado who is also in love with Barbara, orchestrate an attempt to abduct Barbara, but Natoma saves her by killing Alvarado. The town’s people, incensed at Natoma’s crime, attack her, but a Priest offers her sanctuary, convincing her to become a nun. The opera closes with her taking her vows as she sees

Barbara and Paul together in the church.<sup>vi</sup> Like *Poia*, *Natoma* represents a trite picture of colonialism, resistance, and stereotypes. *Natoma* fascinates the viewer by being at both a threat to “progress” and colonial expansion and the vehicle for its continuation. In fact, this is the heart of the opera as *Natoma* is pressured to mount an armed war against invaders but ultimately sides with them, joining a major arm of the colonial process: the Catholic mission churches. In making such a choice, *Natoma* also serves as the trope of noble savage who sacrifices herself for the interests of white colonial power.

Early performances of *Natoma* relied on stereotypical staging, music, and native performance to attract audiences. Following the premier of the opera in February 1911, New York Times journalist Aldrich Richard wrote an editorial claiming that “Mr. Herbert has seized the opportunity to diversify his score with various picturesque melodies to suggest the Spanish-American local color,” including an Habanera and Panuella (Richard X7). Throughout the opera, Herbert makes use of pervasive American Indian stereotypes including a narrative aria by *Natoma* “in which she shows a very near kinship with Hiawatha” (Richard X7). The orchestration also furthers the primitive fascination with stereotypical musical representations of Native Americans. *Natoma* sings at least twice accompanied by a flute, which Herbert argues “suggests the nature of Indian melodies” (Richard X7). New York editorials claim that Herbert’s sources include “At least two Indian s themes ‘verbatim,’ as he expresses it, and has fashioned many other themes out of fragments of Indian melodies, or from suggestions of them. ... Mr. Herbert is anxious to have everybody understand that “*Natoma*” is ‘American in every particular’” (Richard X7). Despite such claims to authenticity, in an earlier interview he simultaneously denies using Native music, “I have tried to *imitate* Indian music. But I have used no special

Indian theme. Indian themes are all very short and unharmonized. I have tried to get the effect of Indian music without using the thing itself” (“Herbert’s First” 9 emphasis added). Although he contradicts himself, his words show how important claiming authentic sources were for composers attempting to create Native sounds whether that be through imitation or borrowing themes “verbatim.” I am more apt to believe his earlier pronouncements, but when placed next to each other suggest that Herbert recognized the importance of establishing a mythology of cultural authenticity for his would be audience. On the other hand, his words detail that an audience might forgive a less “culturally authentic” production so long as it he could “get the effect of Indian music without using the thing itself.” In fact, one wonders if this is not the very foundation for such musical constructions in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Aldrich Richard’s discussion of the opera also reproduced various themes of the score, which provide further evidence of the exacting and demanding standards of Indianness in cultural productions. Aldrich Richard included a number of musical themes from *Natoma* in his editorial. Like the notes on *Poia*, such musical snippets auger that a public was quite aware of musical semiotics and expectations of musical representation. The fragments set a dramatic stage for Herbert’s “Indian” sounds by beginning with a standard Western harmonic motif for Lieutenant Paul in a-major (Figure 9), which is the relative minor key theme of *Natoma*’s fate in f sharp minor. Subtly, Herbert is setting up opposing musical ideas to express dissonance and cultural difference, which become further pronounced in his employment of pentatonic scales to achieve an “Indian” effect (Figure 10) as well as stereotypical “tom-tom” drum like orchestration (Figure 11 and 12). Classical composers have often employed pentatonic

scales to create “oriental” colors. Herbert uses this oriental sound, though, to mark Natoma as different and wholly “other.” The soft sounds of her theme are diametrically opposed to the other “native” themes in the opera such as the Dagger Dance and Castro’s theme (Figures 11 and 12). As we have seen in *Poia*, open fifth chords often serve as the groundwork for creating a musical portrait of “Indian” themes. Likewise, Herbert uses “open fifths” to represent Native music. Castro’s theme ends on an arpeggiated open fifth chord and the dagger dance has a piano reduction of open fifth chords in the bass line.

In addition to stereotypical musical conventions to create “Indian” themes, the initial production also relied on stereotypical costumes to create an “Indian” atmosphere. Famous soprano Mary Garden appeared in the premier of the role. Unlike *Poia*, very few photographs remain of the staging or chorus, but a single picture of Garden as Natoma suggests the stereotypical atmosphere of the production in its depictions of Native people in the opera (figure 13). In the photograph, Garden wears a wig of black braided hair and an “Indian” dress complete with geometric designs, sash, and fringes. Her depiction is complete with what appears to be darkened skin tone and an “Indian” vase, transforming the startling white Scottish American soprano into a Californian Native woman

In some respects, *Shanewis* (1918) exhibits many of the stereotypical elements modern scholars expect in early 20<sup>th</sup> century representation of Native peoples. Photographs of Sophie Braslau in the opening role might just as easily be from *Poia* or *Natoma*. In her picture, she wears the ubiquitous braided wig and tribal dress (figure 13). The score features a number of “Indian” melodies, evident in their open fifth chordal style and archaic language, such as “Oh Ye Birds of Spring” (figure 14). The opera centers on Shanewis, a talented young Native American singer. The story relies on a

tension between “traditional” Native people and the possibility of change to their nations and cultures. In the opera, a white man pursues Shanewis despite being already engaged to a white woman. Shanewis rebukes her lover and her foster brother kills him. Librettist Nelle Richmond Eberhart states that the opera is about “a well-educated native girl, who with the modern American characters appears first in a California bungalow, and later at an Indian powwow in Oklahoma” (“Staging the Indian” 51). Eberhart argues that the importance of the opera is its local color and setting, maintaining “that an Indian powwow in the Far West is very different from those they have seen, by totally different tribes” (“Staging the Indian” 51). Eberhart perhaps provides a modern reader with what she felt was the greatest value of the work: its role in “preserving” and “capturing” the vanishing Indian. She states:

The Indians of the present day ... are not Indians at all in the true sense of the word. In general they are degraded from an ambitious, noble, and simple race to a very different sort, content for the most part do as little as possible in order to exist. Here and there on the reservations and in the cities, where some of the more energetic have gone into business or farming, there are to be found beautiful specimens of a once powerful people, a race that is now vanished. On their reservations there is little of the ancient Indian left. The dress is merely a cheap imitation of its ancient form and is more ugly than beautiful. The ‘Shanewis’ designs introduce a few costumes of this time, but have also utilized some of the ancient materials, assuming these to have been revived by the modern descendants of the Indians. (“Staging the Indian” 51)

In a number of ways, Eberhart reveals the tension at play in early 20<sup>th</sup> century American attitudes with and towards Native people. On the one hand, her words and the general clamor for Native spectacle bespeaks a colonial fascination with the Other, a fascination that would only grow in popularity in mainstream American imagination, a point that I address in relation to literature and art in the ensuing chapters of this work. Yet on the other hand, her words reveal a startling revelation about authenticity and performativity.

Eberhart's interview illuminates a tension in assimilationist era policy towards Native people. In the interview Eberhart bemoans the loss of "real" and "authentic" Native people on reservations, reverting to racial stereotyping of Native people as lazy degenerates (rhetoric that mirrors that of many 21<sup>st</sup> century politicians and America as a whole). The production of *Shawenisi* stands in for the American preoccupation with the "lost Indian," perpetually playing out the vanishing Indian trope before a white audience. Eberhart's words betray a double bind of colonial expectations for it is only the opera *production* that can reflect the *true Indian* who no longer exists. The noble Indian is one who adopts white values and capitalistic expectations while the unassimilated Native is nothing like its predecessor, yet neither one can ever fully live up to the expectations of white audience because the "vanished race" of "the Indians of the present day are not Indians at all in the *true* sense of the word." Opera itself serves as the mediator for a lost racial and cultural identity, with its white singers adopting stereotypical clothes, scenes, and melodies. Taken together, all three operas to some extent reflect the pervasive anxiety about a loss of true Native identity and the way white performers attempt to mimic authentic Native cultural experience. In addition, the performance of racialized Nativeness by non-whites calls attention to a general unease of representation and

rhetoric of purity since such performances blur the boundary between real and fake, pure/authentic and soiled/vanished. *Poia*, *Natoma*, and *Shawenis* represent three distinct times of American and Native American contacts: *Poia*, a pre-contact mythological pure past; *Natoma*, first contact between Natives and settler colonialists; and *Shawenis*, 20<sup>th</sup> century assimilationist policies and their effect on Native communities. All three operas share an underlying fascination and fear of cultural loss that haunts their work. Yet none of the three represents the way that Native people adopted to change and sought new and ingenious ways of resisting and surviving. At times they reified stereotypes, but their actions suggest ways they wrestle cultural representations away from white America even while they negotiate colonial expectations of culture and racial performance.

#### Performed Resistance: History and Politics of *The Sun Dance Opera*

While *Poia*, *Natoma*, and *Shanewis* emerged from an entertainment industry fueled by a desire for consumption of exotic otherness, the public seemed largely ignorant of the link between performance and colonial practices. Nowhere is colonial history more evident than in the writings of Zitkala-Ša. Zitkala-Ša's life mirrors the hardships that many Indian children endured throughout the United States during the assimilationist era. The author was born in 1876 on Pine Ridge reservation, living in a teepee until she was 12. She was coerced into attending Indian Boarding School at White's Manual Labor Institute in Wabash, Indiana where she would be forced to adopt Christianity, learn English, and endure systematic indoctrination in Euro-America cultural, religious, and political hegemonies, while simultaneously being denied use of her Native Language and forced to disown cultural and religious customs (Hafen, "Introduction" xv).

Native American forced enculturation into Euro-American ideologies did not just occur in school but throughout the Americas, and performance of gender became one of many capstones for assessing Native acquiescence to colonial objectives. Attending then to how Zitkala-Ša's encodes counter-hegemonic Lakota gender constructions in *Sun Dance* reveals a useful way to read the opera as resistant. Before *Sun Dance*, Zitkala-Ša had already fought and won numerous cultural battles through her writing, taking up her pen to campaign against the Federal Government's extreme injustices. In her introduction to *Dreams and Thunder: Stories, Poems, and The Sundance Opera*, P. Jane Hafen argues that Zitkala-Ša was one of the "first Native American autobiographies not filtered through a translator or editor" and that she used those writings to challenge Indian policies (xiii).

Zitkala-Ša creates an act of resistance in composing, writing, and staging *The Sun Dance Opera* by wresting representation of Native people and particularly of Native gender away from outsiders and challenging heteronormative assimilationist policies. While the opera exposes uncanny similarities with *Poia*, *Natoma*, and *Shanewis*, contemporary readers should note that the text opens a space for deconstructing prevailing performances of Native people. Representations in opera and stage often focused on the vanishing Indian trope, and such sentiment drove a market for Indigenous material artifacts and for ethnographic inquiry of "the last members of tribes" before they forever passed away. However, Zitkala-Ša challenges the belief that Native American tribes were in danger of passing away. Instead, *Sun Dance* articulates the survival of tribal communities. The opera focuses on Ohiya, the hero, and his affection and love for Winona, a Lakota woman. The arrival of the outsider, Sweet Singer, threatens Ohiya and

Winona's relationship. Sweet Singer has been lavishing gifts on Winona's father, the chief, who then gives him the role of performing sacred music for the upcoming Sun Dance. At this event, Winona's father will decide who gets to wed his daughter. Sweet Singer intends to sabotage the Sun Dance by manipulating the sacred songs in the hopes Ohiya will not succeed in his spiritual quest. Sweet Singer vows to sing extraordinary long songs in order to weaken Ohiya and thus secure Winona's hand. At the finality, though, Ohiya prevails, Sweet Singer is exposed as a dangerous interpolator, and the tribe celebrates another successful Sun Dance.

The *Sun Dance Opera* represents an early example of some of the problems facing Native representation in opera in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. While scant critics have tackled the thorny text that is *The Sun Dance Opera*, a few have attempted to shed light on the value of the text and its music. On the surface, the composition and text seem garish. Scholar P. Jane Haven theorizes that part of the difficulty may stem from the “challenges of forgoing distinct and disparate cultures by harmonizing traditional Native melodies and perspectives into the pinnacle of artistic expression in western civilization: grand opera” (Hafen 103). Hafen invites contemporary scholars to note how important it was that a Native woman would use opera and her classical musical training “to *affirm* her Sioux cultural identity and to engage the conventions of popular culture” (103). She concedes that Hanson at times “used his fondness for Indian people and his association with them in what critics would now recognize as an artistic colonialism,” but that the opera becomes a culmination of an “uneasy duet of two cultures.” Part of this merging of two cultures is the result of Zitkala-Ša and Hanson's creation of the text. By reproducing tribal melodies for Hanson and placing them in the context of Western opera, Zitkala-Ša

transformed the pieces by placing them “into a foreign medium of orchestrated drama” (Hafen 104). In “An Operatic Skeleton on the Western Frontier: Zitkala-Ša, William F. Hanson, and *The Sun Dance Opera*,” Catherine Parsons Smith makes the argument that a ritual as spiritually significant as the Sun Dance would lose much of its cultural and religious meaning if non-tribal people staged it for purely entertainment purposes (3). Yet as Smith points out, *Sun Dance* “rates very high for its level of authenticity” (3) a point that resonates in light of the analysis of other Nativist operas such as *Poiah* and *Natoma*.

Like other Nativist operas, *Sun Dance* suffers from musical stereotypes. Despite Zitkala-Ša’s close work with Hanson, the result is a composition “based in nonmetrical rhythmic patterns, pentatonic modes with occasional nonstandard pitches, vocables rather lyrics, and nonharmonic melody patterns” (Hafen *Dreams* 126). Hafen admits that despite a score which often includes stereotypical elements—such as the sound of tomtom rhythms—she maintains that Zitkala Ša and Hanson understood their work as imaginative and at times seem to suggest that much of the stereotype came from additions by Hanson (Hafen *Dreams* 127). Smith points out that pieces like Winona’s “The Magic of the Night” aria “begins with a quasipentatonic motif that is echoed by the soprano” (107). Throughout the opera, “the chromatic use of the secondary dominants, trilled transitions, and syncopated rhythms reflect the popular sentimental song style of the period” (Smith 107), and the composition as a whole often includes stereotyped sounds such “as traditional Native musical styles, a pulsing drum accompaniment, certain melodic phrases with pentatonic qualities, high introductory phrase with choral imitative response” (Smith 108). Smith notes that the sounds could appear traditional but conceded

that their original sounds and structures simply disappear under the imposition of Western musical compositional standards:

the melodies may have been tribally authentic, but they are virtually unrecognizable placed in the framework of precise meters and notation and with an orchestral accompaniment. Additionally, the music seems thrown into the realm of what has become, in the span of twentieth century, parody and seed for stereotype. Contemporary listeners exposed to popular media might find familiar throbbing drums and pentatonic scales as background music to classic pseudo-Indian Western films or Saturday morning cartoons. (108)

Even though Hafen points that that Zitkala Ša “would play Sioux melodies on the violin and he [Hanson] would transcribe them. Then they would add harmonies and lyrics” (Hafen *Dreams* 126), the end result sounds more like early 20<sup>th</sup> century musical caricature.

While critical analysis of the opera’s music reveals trite deployment of Nativist musical semiotics, Zitkala-Ša and Hanson’s politics of representation seem to suggest a critique on colonial appropriation and even collusion. Recent scholarship encourages scholars to rethink Zitkala-Ša’s work and politics as a whole, especially in relation to *Sun Dance* instead of criticizing Zitkala-Ša for mimicking stock depictions of Native people. Robert Warrior states, Zitkala-Ša “play[ed] into US fascination with this continent’s Native past,” making tribal specific readings of the opera and her work with the Society of American Indians difficult and tenuous at best (qtd in Evans 238). A look at Hanson’s role in mimicking “Indianness” would certainly lend credence to Warrior’s claim. Smith

argues that Hanson was not above playing on Native identities and Western musical traditions as a teacher, as seen in an editorial that reads: “Indian Pianist to Make Debut at Provo School An Indian co-ed, who is a skilled pianist, will play in tribal costume at Brigham Young University . . . . She will interpret ‘From an Indian Lodge’ by MacDowell and “the Coming of the Bear from Hibernation’ from Prof. Hanson’s opera. She will appear in colorful Ute garb” (emphasis in original 27). Hanson even created his own troupe that was similar to other Wild West shows –The Hanson Wigwam Company—touring Utah after the first production of the opera (Hafen “Duet” 105-106). In its first performances, white singers sang the lead roles against and with a chorus of Native singers, but later productions in New York inversely staged the opera with Native lead singers and non-Native singers making up the chorus (Hafen “Duet” 109). While Zitkala-Ša seems largely ignorant of the threat that her work allowed for cultural appropriation, it is likely that she believed the opera helped assert Native rights’ to perform their culture and religious traditions (Hafen “Duet” 109).

Hafen seems to agree with the theatrical quality of Hanson’s work and even *Sun Dance*, placing it in the context of Wild West shows that were so popular in early 20<sup>th</sup> century America. However, she suggests a place of resistance in Zitkala-Ša’s work:

As a writer and musically and oratorically trained performer in European tradition, she had already demonstrated the “civilizing” accomplishments of the boarding school system. Rather than continuing as trained Indian on exhibit, she may have been trying to assume artistic control with composition and direction of the opera and to present her own cultural

viewpoint. The performance of the opera allowed her personal and cultural validation. (Hafen “Duet” 105)

Hafen proposes reading *Sun Dance* as a space for Zitkala-Ša’s personal resistance. In reshaping Zitkala-Ša’s collaboration with Hanson in a more active role, Hafen attempts to overthrow the ruling view of *Sun Dance* as “simple and unimaginative” (“Duet” 109-110). She focuses on how the opera as text “provides a space in which to examine the perplexing relations between Euro-Americans and indigenous peoples and cultures” (“Duet” 110). However, her conclusion restates a view of the text ominously aligned with Warrior’s criticism, albeit more sympathetic and historically nuanced:

in the context of Gertrude’s whole life, she had to make choices that many of us would not make today. The hegemonic assaults on her person, her tribe, and her culture were more direct and threatening than the cultural exploitations of Hanson and the opera. Her well-documented struggles in boarding schools and as a teacher, her fight for Indian citizenship, her complaint against peyote (despite the legal threat to tribal sovereignty), and her documentation of violence in Oklahoma during the ‘reign of terror’ all reveal her underling commitment to indigenous causes. (“Duet” 110)

The article suggests that the opera is part of the “choices many of us would not make today,” a suggestion that sounds like the text does not fit in with Zitkala-Ša’s other anti-colonial writings and activist strategies. Warrior’s criticism is justified: Zitkala-Ša’s opera re-capitulates romantic stereotypes that seem largely incongruent with the lived experiences and desires of early 20<sup>th</sup> century Native peoples. Because of those

stereotypes, literary historians may well align with Warrior's criticisms and also Hafen's, who see the opera almost as a blemish in relation to Zitkala-Ša's other activist work.

While grateful for Hafen's thorough and carefully nuanced evaluation of *Sun Dance*, I am interested in ways that more careful analysis on *Sun Dance* might further elucidate the level of resistance in the work as a whole and even in Zitkala-Ša's performances of her racial identity.

By staging an illegal ceremony, scholars note Zitkala-Ša's political resistance to Federal policing of Native religion. While that is important to consider (and I revisit this question later), I argue that performance in the opera suggest equally important possibilities of colonial resistance. Hanson's earliest writings about the opera suggest that he wanted to compose an opera that went beyond earlier representations of Native peoples as noble savages. While he never fully succeeds in meeting this end, his words serve as invaluable place to start in parsing out the deeply political elements of the opera. Hanson writes that he and Zitkala-Ša "have tried to use the Opera as a medium to interpret the inner and human side of the Red man. He has been influenced in his forms, rituals and social customs by a heredity and environment so vastly different than ours, that we often mistake and call the Aborigine a being without heartthrobs, loves, social standards, or devotion" (qtd in Smith 4). In stating that Native Americans are influenced by "heredity and environment," Hanson reiterates the common belief of a biological component to race and culture. Yet his writings also point to the hope that *Sun Dance* will show the human quality of Native Americans. I am not suggesting that we should accept this at face value or ignore how Hanson conceptualizes Native people for their entertainment and material value. His words, though, do resonate with the work of

Zitkala-Ša and other Native writers fighting violent images of Native people. Hanson takes the bold move in asking his audience to conceptualize alternative modes of identity and culture that are as legitimate as white cultural expectations. To some extent, the opera succeeds in that viewers see Native people acting in a Native centered environment of cultural representation.

Unlike earlier operas that relied on white singers and dancers, *Sun Dance* gave Native performers a space to present *themselves*. Critics quickly noticed this key difference. Hanson's colleague Nelson wrote, "this opera does not follow conventional lines, depicting the Indian in the dime store novel fashion so familiar to the world in drama and moving picture shows. On the contrary, it is a sympathetic portrayal of *the real Indian*—a conscientious attempt to depict the manners and customs, the dress, the religious ideals, the superstitions, the songs, the games, the ceremonials—in short—the inner life of people hitherto but little understood" (Smith 18-19). We should be suspicious of such effusive praise, especially as my own research suggests ways that the score and production actually very much align with "conventional lines" that musically and visually depict Native peoples "in the dime store novel fashion so familiar in drama and moving picture shows."

While the opera does reify romantic depictions of Native people, a closer analysis attuned to performance reveals potential for colonial resistance encoded in its stylized language. For example, Winona often sings arias that focus on the magic spirituality of Native cosmology and metaphors ripe with stereotype. One example is her aria, "The Magic of the Night," where she intones:

The magic of the night of nights beckons me, beckons me, beckons me; a wonder-world is sheltered 'neath the trees from grass and shrub and willows low. Come mystic voices, sighs, enchanting breeze from mystic voices, sighs enchanting breeze. The pallid lake lies quiet now beneath your mountain's sober breast. The moonlight? Branches low but I, but I, my lover comes, he comes to me of night, of night, he comes to me in his serenade. Before the coyotes call at morn or bird awakes its make dawn while spirits mystic sign their song he come he come come come. My love comes I know 'tis he. Ohiya brave, Ohiya brave. I know 'tis he; know that it is he. In the serenade my love comes to sign to me, come to sign his serenade. I pass into the night world unafraid. He comes to chant, O ecstasy, he comes to chant his serenade. (142)

The lyrics seem largely congruent with the musical stereotyping we see in other Nativist operas. Images of nature interspersed with sounds of trees, mystic sighs, animals, and the soft light of the moon all create a romantic environment with Winona depicted as a romantic and primitive child of nature. The text sustains such a view, when Winona next sings to the moon: "A wonder world you reign upon, O gentle Moon. Yes! It turns to a fairy-world the most familiar trees and foothills. O Fairy Indian people—People of the night world, hear me, I pray to you—Aid my lover in his great test for me" (139).

Winona plays into a romantic ideology and representational framework of Native people as at one with nature. Fairy references in the aria only heighten the pervasive mythos of Native people as out of touch with contemporary and modern society. In these arias, Winona dehumanizes Native people—they become fairies and mythical creatures

emerging at night in relationship to animals and natural elements. Yet despite such trite lyrics and egregious underlying implications, Nelson is right that *Sun Dance* also establishes important performative space for Native resistance. The first productions utilized Native people to perform many of the secondary roles and to make up the chorus. Additionally, Zitkala-Ša's service as impresario ensured a measure of Native control in the way she would stage the songs, rituals, and music: a sharp distinction with other more standard operas about Native people.<sup>vii</sup>

Despite its romantic limitations, *Sun Dance* challenges Federal governance of Native people, specifically in their fight for religious, spiritual, and cultural autonomy. By the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, following such disastrous genocides of Ghost Dancers at Wounded Knee and heightened tension of “heathen” Native religious practices, “the Bureau of Indian Affairs banned all dancing at the Southern Ute Agency and, specifically, forbade the Sun Dance and Bear Dance at Uintah Ouray” (Hafen “Duet” 105). Evans points out that “US Congress authorized the Courts of Indian Offenses in 1883 to uphold the religious Crimes Code. ... The Sun Dance ceremony itself was listed as a punishable crime from the beginning of the Courts of Indian Offenses” (243). In light of such historical analysis, Hafen argues “*The Sun Dance Opera* provided a stage for Bonnin and other Native American singers and dancer to participate in rituals whose practices were forbidden by the United States government” (Hafen “Duet” 103). By making this Sun Dance visible, Zitkala-Ša established a form of resistance by “honor[ing] an important spiritual and communal event” while maintaining control over what she and Hanson would show the predominantly white audience (Evans 245-246). Hafen theorizes that because of the injunction against Native dancing, the performance of

*The Sun Dance Opera* enabled native people a space of resistance in that they could “sing familiar songs and dance traditional steps,” which were illegal (“Duet” 105). Because the Federal government suppressed the Sun Dance, staging the important religious event showed the “success and survival of Native peoples ‘in the real world,’” according to Evans (247). Part of this survival is the ability of Native people to engage with their own representation. Hafen points out that throughout the performance “the opera would come to a dead halt as the Native performers entered the stage to sing and dance. Because the Utes practiced the Sun Dance, it is easy to draw the conclusion that, knowing the topic, they performed their own ritualistic songs and dances,” which are not recorded in the current score (Hafen *Dreams* 127). The fact that Ša left “Many ensemble pieces unscored,” according to Hafen, “allow[ed] the Native participants to sing their traditional songs,” songs that in larger cultural and religious settings were illegal (“Duet” 108). While such ellipses in the score render any kind of reproduction of the earliest performances impossible, it certainly allowed the Native performers great political and representational flexibility thereby transforming the stage into a space of resistance.

Zitkala-Ša is known as a writer who re-envisions dominant spaces for her own political and cultural ends. Just as she transforms the operatic stage into a space for political resistance, Zitkala-Ša was already using her Euromerican education to undermine American racist and xenophobic ideologies in her writings. In her article “Writing, Performance, Activism: Zitkala-Ša and Pauline Johnson,” Roseanne Hoefel negotiates Zitkala-Ša’s collusion with depicting Native people stereotypically with her much larger activism. Speaking of her writing, Zitkala-Ša states: “I have tried to transplant the native spirit of these tales—roots and all—into the English language, since

America in the last few centuries has acquired a new tongue” (Hoefel 107). Hoefel reminds readers that Zitkala-Ša was at times contradictory and even inflammatory, advocating for “assimilation, citizenship, and abolishing the BIA as well as common properties” (Hoefel 108). Yet Zitkala-Ša was adept at taking aspects of her education in order to bring to light the conditions of real Native people, such as in “Why I Am a Pagan” where she mounts a powerful argument for Native spiritual autonomy, “insisting upon Indians’ rights to their own spiritual traditional” (Hoefel 110). Hoefel also suggests that *Sun Dance* functions in a similar vein (110). While Hoefel does not provide much textual evidence to support this claim, I agree with her conclusion. However, I recognize a gap in the research on *Sun Dance*, a gap that a nuanced evaluation of the text *as text* can fill. Such textual criticism unveils the full scope of Zitkala-Ša’s activism and the ways that *Sun Dance* undermines colonial racial and gendered discipline. Through the staging of the illegal Sun Dance, challenging of colonial representation, and Hebo’s queer mimicry contemporary scholars see a radical way to read Zitkala-Ša’s own racialized performance and her opera.

#### Encoded Resistance in *The Sun Dance Opera*

The few scholars who tackle *Sun Dance* often point to the way the text serves to undermine the Federal Governments assault on Lakota Sovereignty and larger Sioux and Native communities as a whole. I have already addressed how the staging of illegal dances and ceremonies re-asserts Native spaces of cultural performance, but the opera raises questions about the Federal policy of land annexation from Native peoples and the resultant tensions ensuing from such policies. The opera places the outsider, Sweet Singer, as a threat to the interiority of the tribe. Sweet Singer’s attempts to woo Winona

by undermining the sacred ceremonies of the Sun Dance. As Evans asserts, Sweet Singer “uses language to trick those around him so he can get what he wants” (Evans 255). He plans to sing longer songs in the hopes Ohiya tires more quickly and potentially cannot finish the ritual. Ohiya’s inability to finish the Sun Dance, would comprise his role in the tribe; Sweet Singer’s effrontery calls into question Ohiya’s masculinity as someone who is not “the ablest” and “bravest.” Sweet Singer’s act would also weaken the tribe as Sweet Singer undermines the sacredness of the event. The Chieftain, who is Winona’s father, sings that he “would choose the ablest man for [her] to wed” (145). The Sun Dance represented a tradition that, as Evans articulates, represents “the values and rituals that hold the community together” (258). Sweet Singer represents the role of a treacherous outsider who undermines the rituals of the tribe. His duplicitous actions endanger the Lakota tribe and have already deeply scarred and hurt the young woman he earlier seduced, Shoshone Maid. In the opera she sings, “Forsaken. Lonely words in hunted forests, my heart sobs with your cry” (149). Instead of haunted, Shoshone Maid sings of hunted forests. She had become mere prey for Sweet Singer’s greedy consumption of Native women. Sweet Singer collects women for his ends. Early in the opera, Sweet Singer recalls his seduction of Shoshone Maid. Employing love medicine, he seduces her. We might say he rapes her in light of her dubious ability to exercise free will. She is emotionally tethered to Sweet Singer, but he wants only to jettison her. Sweet Singer confesses that while he “gave her the love leaves,” he no longer wants her (147). Journeying to the Sioux, Sweet Singer meets Winona and tries to win her hand, but she refuses. In his aria, Sweet Singer confesses that just as he used trickery to win Shoshone Maid, he will do the same with Winona by sabotaging the Sun Dance: “With my songs

will I cruel heart win. It cannot be; it will not be. He shall be his disgrace. He shall fall, my victim. He shall weary stage, weary stagger, faint and fall, shall fall my victim” (147). Sweet Singer’s violent language reveals that he is willing to stop at nothing to get what he wants--he parades his cruelty, violence, and ambition as markers of his own identity.

Winona’s own language further reveals her deep understanding of Sweet Singer’s true intent. When Ohiya asks Winona about the “stranger at thy chieftain father’s dwelling (131),” she tacitly responds, “The Sweet Singer is the Shoshone, a stranger in our village now made welcome at our teepee by my brother. Nightly sings the Sun Dance music he. Sweet Singer the Shoshone, with his singing he has captured my dear father” (132). Words like capture and Sweet Singer’s role as outsider represent powerful indictments against threats of outsiders, especially those who would use language and lies to seduce tribal members into costly mistakes. Ohiya warns of Sweet Singer’s unprincipled character: “Beware of Sweet Singer, a man of idle thoughts. Love is for valor, not for empty words. I will not throw my love away. Adore the brave and true. Throw not love away. I love the brave and true” (132). Ohiya’s words sadly resonate with a history of broken promises and underhanded materialistic dealings between the Federal Government and Native peoples. One way to read the opera is to pay attention to the way the opera reveals itself as a text of resistance against outsiders. When read analogously with resistance to settler colonial expansion and Federal Government’s policies, the opera startlingly reveals a surprising political treatise on resistance and tribal survival. Zitkala-Ša’s own politics would place her increasingly at the center of legal fights to remiss Native concerns over broken treaties and outright threats.

Much of the opera references the Pipestone Quarry now in Yankton, South Dakota, which links together spiritual and physical survival within the text (Hafen “Duet” 106). Zitkala-Ša fought in protecting the Quarry, which had been illegally settled by squatters despite an 1858 treaty that guaranteed quarry rights to the Yankton Dakota. It would take decades of litigation before the matter was resolved.<sup>viii</sup> Zitkala-Ša was active in this litigation and weaves this location and its significance spiritually, politically, and physically into the text. Evans argues that within the context of the fight for sovereignty over land, *Sun Dance* becomes a synecdoche for larger political action by Native peoples. She argues that “if the Sioux can defeat the threat of Sweet Singer by persisting in their tribal rituals, returning to their traditional stories for guidance, and re-energizing communal bonds through collective action, *Sun Dance* argues, the Utes (and others) can defeat the threat to their communities posed by federal Indian policy in similar ways” (263). Since the matter regarding the quarry would not be resolved in favor of the Yankton Sioux until 1926 and ratified in 1937, I think such a view is a bit naïve. Yet, I do agree that the opera raises concern about the survival of the tribe and resistance to outside attacks to tribal survival. Evans sees this as an indictment on how outsiders infiltrate tribes for their material benefit: “Although Sweet Singer, a Shoshone, is a cultural outsider and thus resonant with the land-hungry Euro-Americans encroaching” on Native lands, which results in intertribal hostilities over scant resources (259).

While the libretto at times reify romantic Native people, Zitkala-Ša’s weaves resistance to colonial pressure and representations, playfully undermining racist rhetoric. Evans brief analysis of the opera suggest ways readers can approach the text as anti-colonial rhetoric, which I wish to explore through closer analysis of the opera’s emphasis

on representation and performance. Even as Winona sings of romantic fairies and other highly romanticized images and sounds, her aria changes in tone, becoming a violent expression of spiritual and physical armament. In Winona's monologue, she states:

O Fairy Indian people—People of the night world, hear me, I pray to you—Aid my lover in his great test for me, for he has vowed. At the Sun Dance, give him courage--give him strength for it a great test. Yon fields of the firefly lands, I recall my childhood fright lest your crop of winged cinder should burn me in their flight. Send your myriad sparks to hover over the elfin arrowhead makers. Cast your lights on their stony ticking chisels that they may the better perfect the magic arrowhead for Ohiya. (139-40).

The juxtaposition between the beginning of the aria and its continuance is highly evocative and powerful. While the aria begins with a mood of romantic nostalgia, it quickly darkens and deepens as Winona prays for the spirits to help guide Ohiya. When we recall that Ohiya is threatened by the machinations of a tribal outsider, the text takes on greater urgency. Winona evokes her spirituality in order to uphold Lakota tribal traditions, ceremonies, and the overall wellbeing of her community. The violent images of “winged cinder” burning a young girl seem ominously linked with Zitkala-Ša's own earlier writings about the violent threat of outsiders who ultimately facilitated her removal from her community.

Recalling Zitkala-Ša's own struggles with colonial violence when reading Winona's monologue reveals the opera's potential colonial textual exegesis. Just as Winona is frightened by the winged cinders but as an adult calls on their powers to aid

Ohiya in overcoming the duplicitous Sweat Singer, so the now adult Zitkala-Ša simultaneously utilizes her education in order to “perfect the magic arrowhead.” In order to understand this significant event, as readers we must realize the metaphorical quality inherent in this passage. Winona prays for spiritual arrowheads for Ohiya, who will use them to overcome his enemies instead of using them with which to fight. The arrowheads become part of Ohiya’s ability to defeat an outsider while participating in an event that celebrates Lakota identity and the survival of Native people. I am suggesting, then, that these “perfect” and “magic arrowheads” may well serve as a synecdoche for Zitkala-Ša’s own political writings. Just as Winona sings for spiritual aid to assist Ohiya’s attack on a tribal enemy, Zitkala-Ša raises her pen and voice to silence the forked tongues of the BIA and Federal government who continually striped Native people of important cultural, physical, and spiritual tools.

Within the context of the opera, that perfect arrowhead of Zitkala-Ša’s writings become her weaving of resistance to white appropriation of Native identity and culture. Winona’s aria continues,

Cast your lights on their stony ticking chisels that they may the better  
perfect the magic arrowhead for Ohiya. Of our braves on your high walls,  
thus dooming them to untimely death. I have heard how one of our braves  
declared he wished to marry one of the Witches of the Night, and how that  
very night, you carved his form. On the morrow he lay cold in death. You  
had called him to your land of Spirits and of Witches. O Witches of the  
Pipestone Quarry, do not beguile Ohiya from me. Do not take him away  
.... O tiny fairy Indian people, who work and play mid moonlight magic,

O fairies of the night world, hear me and aid my lover in his great test.  
(139-140).

Woven throughout this passage, Zitkala-Ša critiques colonization. Winona sings of Witches of the Night who carve a man's form and then the next day he is found dead. It is the threat of "beguilement" that concerns Winona. She does not want him to be taken away from her. Yet, such morbid sentiments seem completely out of place in relationship to Ohiya's ceremony. While the Sun Dance could be a grueling event for participants, it seems highly unlikely that dancers died during the event. Scholars should read his beguilement symbolically. If Ohiya fails to succeed in his Sun Dance, he and Winona lose the chance to be together. To Zitkala-Ša and the audience who know the threat is the direct result of an interloper, the opera suggests that spiritual and physical tribal survival stems from undermining outside influence and colonial pressure. To the opera's tribal participants who had seen the Federal government's encroachment of tribal sovereignty, such as outlawing tribal religious practices, Winona's words would surely resonate with their own struggles. The Witches of the Night become aligned with Federal government agencies intent on destroying Native culture in the hopes of assimilating Native people into a colonial frame of American society and perhaps eventually disappear.

Zitkala-Ša hardly stops with her indictment of illegal demands of the United States government to eradicate and suppress Native culture, but weaves within Winona's aria the danger of the emerging trend of cultural appropriation within United States culture. At this stage in the opera, Zitkala-Ša consistently weaves into the textual tapestry of the libretto an emphasis on representation. Readers hear this as Winona sings about witches who had "carved his [a young brave's] form" and the next day his community

found him dead (139). The aria seems like some kind of mythical Native legend about a physical death in one space that leads to another life in another for a young brave who wants to join the witches of the night. Such an interpretation, though, hardly seems celebratory within the time and context of the opera. While 21<sup>st</sup> century American might feel more kindly to witches and alternative forms of spirituality, an early 19<sup>th</sup> century audience is hardly going to respond favorably to such a dalliance, especially when it results in death. Given the destruction of Native tribe's overall numbers,<sup>ix</sup> I find it difficult to believe that Zitkala-Ša would use death in this context as a celebration. Words such as untimely and beguile paint an ominous warning, which cause Winona to cry out that the witches not "take him away." She creates a sharp divide between the Witches of Pipestone Quarry and the protective Fairy Indian people with clear distinction between one group being helpful and the other destructive.

As Winona continues her singing, the threat of portent only increases. Winona continues singing,

Winona: To the Witches of the Night when no man, no man hath seen you  
who carve on pipestone at night. At night so keen ... Oh leave no pictures  
of our braves. Their forms let not, let not us see. Let not us see with the  
fate. Do not come. Do not come to enchant our braves. Do not chip on the  
cliff. Oh make not a picture of fate. Stay away. Stay away. Oh! make not a  
picture of fate. Stay away, lest we die away, away. Make no picture of our  
braves; stay away. (141)

Here she cries that the Witches of the Night, who carve on pipestone at night, not make pictures of Native people so that they should not "see with the fate." Winona later

clarifies that to “see with the fate” is linked with the “enchantment” of young Indian men, who we now already know would die as a result of such spell-work. As the aria continues, the intensity increases as the libretto includes Winona’s larger tribal family and community. It is not only young men who would perish but she cries for them to “Stay away, lest we die away” (141). Zitkala-Ša follows this aria with a choral duet, where she returns to these themes but changes significant terms in the aria, revealing the underlying anti-colonial thrust of the text. The chorus repeats the opening lines of Winona’s aria almost verbatim, singing: “Let not us see, let not us see, with thy fate” before adding, after the injunction not to enchant young Indian men, “Do not chip on the cliff or make not a picture of fate” (143-44). Given that the Pipestone Quarry had been compromised at this time by being annexed by settler colonialists, the restriction against further chipping on the cliff’s face points to a veiled motif of outsiders effacing the Quarry. Rhetorical flourishes like the chorus’ inversion of Winona’s “make not a picture of fate” to the more divisive “let not us see with *thy* fate” align with the already pronounced division between malevolent and benevolent forces, with the chorus voicing concerns over continual threats from evil interlopers. Through a damning critique on destruction ecological practices of settlers, Zitkala-Ša creates a binary that celebrates Native resistance against settler colonialists. Given the spiritual significance of the Pipestone Quarry to Lakota people and the larger Sioux group as whole, it seems likely that Zitkala-Ša recognizes the dangers of continued annexation of Native lands by the Federal government and encroachers.

The aria’s emphasis on representation, carving, and making pictures might also suggest ways of understanding Zitkala-Ša’s own paradoxical relationship to Indian

representation. The opera opens a space to question the move for Native people to take back control over their own representation. Zitkala-Ša's own involvement in *Sun Dance* seems to point on the one hand towards her own collusion with Indian representations, images often seen in Wild West shows. Hanson's own involvement with such shows certainly lends credence to such a position. However, such a view does not take into account Zitkala-Ša's relationship with the production. The stage became a Native space of political resistance possibly because of Zitkala-Ša's own staging and collecting of Native people to perform in the opera. Native performers did not simply "play Indian" for an audience but acted in a subversive creative act—they participated in rituals, songs, and dances that strengthened their relationship to each other and their tribe in an act of sovereign disobedience against the Federal government. Zitkala-Ša's involvement in the opera was the cohesive glue that stabilized the incongruent and lack luster arias and story-line. We should not overlook, then, that Zitkala-Ša takes on a significant role in how Native people would be represented. While I do not wish to gloss over the fact that the major roles were sung by white performers in red-face, Zitkala-Ša's involvement as producer, composer, and writer marks an important step in a turn to Indian representation by Native people. In the Choral Duet, "To the Witches of the Night," the chorus concludes, "Man chips away making arrows till days; chip away, chip away, good luck on our braves bestow; chip away lest we stay away" (144). Unlike the Witches at the Quarry, here the chorus sings about good luck to those who are industrious and who chip away making arrows. In the opera, Zitkala-Ša becomes such an individual who metaphorically chips away at the edifices of colonial representation. Even though at times she mimics stereotypical Native expectations, her sentiments chip away at colonial

images while calling to Native people to refashion Native representation.

#### (Re)Presentation and Gendered Resistance in the Opera

Much of the success of the first production of the opera relied on these very stereotypical constructions of Zitkala-Ša's race and gender. Hanson would exclaim that Zitkala-Ša was "an Indian maiden--for she is a full Blooded Sioux" (Smith 21). Hanson would further claim that she was "[g]entler, refined, modest to a fault, and of a strongly intuitional cast of mind, this woman has assimilated the best in American civilization, without losing any of her deep appreciation of the spiritual ideals of her own people" (Smith 21). As a man whose career spanned Wild West shows and who encouraged his students to "play" their Indianness, Hanson's emphasis on a stereotypical depiction of Zitkala-Ša's identity as a Native woman is hardly surprising. Hanson's own performance of Native identity in the publicity photograph (image 1) also points towards his own romantic notion of Native representation. P. Jane Hafen believes that Hanson "could be identified as a 'wanna-be,' as evidenced by a photo where he is dressed in beaded buckskins, or as an Indian lover who attempts to consume Native ritual through his own cultural views" (109). In the photograph both Hanson and Zitkala-Ša both perform a standard, romantic view of Native cultured identity. She becomes the full blooded Indian princess of Western stereotype, who has lost all vestiges of savagism in assimilating Western education and cultural values without sacrificing "any of her deep appreciation of the spiritual ideals of her own people" (Smith 21).

Zitkala-Ša becomes a representation of the desire for the Other in colonial imagination, an image that relied on romantic images in order to reify those expectations. Hanson's emphasis on Zitkala-Ša as an Indian maid certainly suggests that the

intersection of Zitkala-Ša's constructed race and gender are equally important in discussing her work and representation. Catherine Parsons Smith argues that scholars must address both of these issues in relationship to pervading constructions of sexuality and gender in early American consciousness, in fact elements that certainly continue into contemporary society. The audience constructed race and gender "from the basic premise of an essential difference between female and male Indians" and that such a "premise is as fundamental to the story as is the premise of essential difference between Indians and white, as is evident from the use of language" (25). To buttress her argument, Smith notes that Hanson always used "full-blooded" Native performers and relied on a catalog of euphemisms to refer to the gender of Native people. Smith points out that the "Indians are always 'maidens' and 'squaws,' 'braves' and 'boys,' never 'women' and 'men,'" a point that we see even in relation to Zitkala-Ša herself. Smith reminds her readers that such issues of representation would no doubt hold great importance to Zitkala-Ša, who once faced a white flag with the image of a 'squaw' emblazoned on it while at a competition as a school girl (25-26). While externally it would appear that Zitkala-Ša's involvement with the opera tacitly shows her assent to be objectified as both a woman and Native--in fact, for many scholars, her work on the opera demonstrates her collusion with reifying such stereotypes--the opera reveals a startling deconstruction and resistance of representation in relation to gender and racialized performances.

Zitkala-Ša encodes gender performance at the heart of the opera in relationship to Lakota culture and its opposition to Euro-American expanding policies of gender conformity. The Chieftain presages issues of gender, by raising concerns about masculine performance and the ritual of the Sun Dance. He tells his daughter that he will marry her

to the candidate “who answers my requirements of a man,” in other words, to the person who best fits the look of who is a man (146). The Chieftain also prays for a sign to ascertain “The truest one [suitor], bravest of all those who as suitors bow to win Winona. Pray hower o’er, whom deeds make worthy to be my son, and Winona my daughter dear” (146). The emphasis on bravery and masculinity become linked with Lakota spirituality and survival in these passages. In the context of the opera and according to Lakota definitions of masculinity, gender did not always rely on *physical* biological markers. Much of the humor in the opera stems from this important distinction, especially in light of the *heyoka* figure, Hebo. Often translated as clown, *heyokas* were venerated figures in Sioux societies. *Heyokas* often received spiritual callings in visitations from the thunderbird, a “deity who lives in the West on a mountain high above the clouds” (“Heyoka” 645). Once visited by a thunderbird, they would outwardly mark their identity by rejecting their previously established roles and social expectations, including at times gender roles (“Heyoka” 645). In the opera, Zitkala-Ša has Hebo play the “contrary” role of a biologically sexed man gendered as a woman. While to various degrees Sioux society allowed for certain forms of gender identifications not connected with biological sex,<sup>x</sup> scholars should pay close attention to Hebo’s role because it marks Zitkala-Ša’s departure and resistance to the colonial demand for Native Americans to perform Euro-American gender standards.<sup>xi</sup>

Zitkala-Ša actively rejects colonial taxonomies of gender in her creation of Hebo, which suggests, to borrow from Piatote’s lexicon, a rejection of the “normalizing gaze of the state.” While certainly accepted and even at times celebrated in traditional Sioux cultures, *heyokas* destabilize the undoing assault on gendered politics of Native people by

celebrating identities that fall outside Western Euro-American heteronormativity. David L. Eng, Judith Halberstam, and Esteban Muñoz argue that queerness:

challenge[s] the normalizing mechanisms of state power to name is sexual subjects: male or female, married or single, heterosexual or homosexual, natural or perverse. ... [T]he political promise of the term reside[s] specifically in its broad critique of multiple social antagonisms, including race, gender, class, nationality, and religion, in addition to sexuality (1).

By refusing to name and assign her characters in a lexicon of Western heteronormativity, Zitkala-Ša creates a “queer” text. I do not wish to suggest that *Heyoka* figures traditionally were seen by Lakota and the larger Sioux networks as queer, but rather my queer analysis suggests that her direct confrontation on the stage of her audience’s gender expectations provides the moment of queerness, undermining the continued political gaze of settler colonial power. That Hebo dresses and is recognized as a woman in the opera augers a radical confrontation with Western sexual politics. As a performance for a white audience, Hebo’s role conflates their prevailing gender expectations. Following Eng, Halberstam, and Muñoz, reading Hebo as subversive illuminates how race and culture, like sex and gender, are socially constructed and that those constructions rely on outside markers in order for audiences to create meaning. Hebo’s character serves as a cipher not only in the text but also in understanding Zitkala-Ša’s life. Both call attention to how essentialist identity constructions emerging from biology limit and restrict Native experience. *The Sun Dance Opera* suggests ways that race and gender are performative, eroding master narratives that perpetuate colonial hegemonies.

Hebo as (Re)Presentation of Gender in *Sun Dance*

By undermining and chiding Sweet Singer, Hebo plays against a colonial presence unable to read Lakota representations of gender and identity, while simultaneously demanding his audience recognize his gender as resistance. Throughout the opera Hebo continually draws attention to Sweet Singer's inadequacies, and members of the tribe invite Hebo to rid them of Sweet Singer (134-136). Early in the opera a group of tribal members referred to as the Gossips sing: "Let us now try till he shall, till he shall die. Blue Necklace here, and Hebo to rid of him. We will die—Blue Necklace here, and Hebo to rid our tribe of him. We will love him—tease and please him, scare and haunt him—day and night—till his life here be a burden, till he leaves us here in peace" (133). Hebo and Blue Necklace utilize Hebo's trickster *heyoka* status to rid themselves of the carrion, Sweet Singer. In the chorus of the Gossips, they call attention to Hebo's juxtaposition of loving and teasing against scaring and haunting Sweet Singer, suggesting that on the surface Sweet Singer's sexual fascination with this "woman" will cause his own destruction. Sweet Singer seems largely ignorant of the threat against him and confuses Hebo with Winona. To his audience, Hebo rejoins: "he thinks I'm Winona! And as I'm Winona. I bid you serenade" (134). Further goading Sweet Singer, Hebo invites him to practice his art, utilizing the opportunity playfully to criticize him: "Were you wooing? I thought I heard a howling coyote. You bring Sioux people bad luck, thus wooing" (134). To the audience already aware of Sweet Singer's true identity, Hebo's words resonate not only with humor but also Sweet Singer threat to the tribe. Hebo is launching his own attack against Sweet Singer. Later Hebo, along with Blue Necklace, states similar lines: "Were you singing? I thought I heard a howling coyote. You are surely calling forth evil spirits for our Sun Dance!" (147). Although Hebo's second

incantation creates a sober and ominous tone with allusions to the hauntings of evil spirits, he immediately adds “But why so sad? Are you about to chant your death song?” (147). While aware of the spiritual threat to his community, Hebo uses his clown status to undermine, taunt, and expose Sweet Singer’s inadequacies.

Hebo operates as a voice of reason within the opera with his arias serving as a commentary both on the events of the opera and as anti-colonial resistance. While Hebo suffuses the opera with much of its humor, it is easy to overlook more nuanced appreciation of his humor in relation to their anti-colonial underpinnings. As *heyoka*, Hebo often plays against the paradox of comedy and tragedy. For instance, when Hebo ruminates on his own role as a *heyoka*, his song invokes a history of violence largely incongruent with the rosy depiction of himself as “Clown.” He Sings:

Hebo Hebo Hebo Hebo. The lazy the crazy, eternally  
stubborn Hebo ...  
Your yes, my contrary no.  
To run, for me is to stand  
To swim, for me is to land.  
No Yes No Yes Yes No No Yes No.  
Your yes, my contrary no ....  
They cried, “Run Eastward, Hebo.”  
West I turned and ran into the foe. ...  
When you ask, “Is the water deep?”  
“Drown me yourself,” I reply.  
So contrary am I,

tho scalped I could not die.

The lazy, the crazy, yet praiseworthy, stubborn Hebo. (135)

Part of the function of the aria indubitably serves to acquaint the audience with *heyokas*. In the aria, Zitkala-Ša establishes a common vocabulary with her non-Native audience. Throughout the aria, Hebo juxtaposes a variety of binary terms, providing important clarification for understanding his role as *heyoka*. For a predominantly white audience, such background would be essential in understanding both Hebo's humor and his representation as a Native man dressed as a woman. Skillfully, Zitkala-Ša presents a binary between Hebo and his audience, vacillating between the litanies of Hebo's yesses against the audiences nos. Although Hebo invites the listener/reader to conceptualize him as crazy, like a fool in Shakespearean drama, Hebo operates as the voice of reason and uses that voice to critique settler colonial violence. Zitkala Ša covertly employs a "contrary" figure in order to contest colonialism. Hebo states that your—read in this context as the audience and more broadly as settler colonialism as a whole—yes is met with his negation: his no. He even goes on to suggest his resilience in the face of violence by maintaining that he "could not die."

Hebo's aria also reveals the painful remnants of colonial violence many Native people faced, while flaunting his survival and identity as *Heyoka*. The violence of moving from east to west, meeting foes, being scalped all surface; however, he claims this history and playfully marks himself as the lazy, crazy, and stubborn Hebo, acting a role that parades western heteronormative roles. Although not traditionally thought of as outside the bounds of normativity for the Sioux, Zitkala-Ša's *heyoka* flaunts the outward manifestation of Western expectations of gender binaries: he dresses and performs a

gender that is oppositional from his sex in western gender paradigms. At a time when proscriptive gender laws were being violently imposed on Native children at boarding schools, and, as Piatote articulates, in performances for determining competency, Zitkala-Ša creates an opera that challenges settler colonial gendered expectations for Native people. Although an audience might simply dismiss him as a comedic element, his insistence at the closing of his aria on resistance portends the continued survival of his role, his tribe, and their spiritual tradition, traditions that directly conflate settler colonial expectations for Indians.

Hebo also represents a more nuanced critique of colonialism through a mimicked identity that challenges static notions of identity. Catherine Parsons Smith suggests that readers “*begin from the basic premise of an essential difference between female and male Indians on the part of Hanson and the white audience [and that] [t]his premise is as fundamental to the story as is the premise of essential different between Indians and white, as is evident from the use of language*” (emphasis in original 25). Smith is not suggesting that there is an *essential* difference but is suggesting that to Zitkala-Ša’s audience and Hanson there are differences. Hebo’s role in the opera actually undermines such static visions of sex, gender, and race, and that subversion is pivotal to a deeper understanding of the text and also Zitkala-Ša’s work as a whole. Hebo *plays* at being female. Zitkala-Ša and William F. Hanson employed white professional opera singers to play the lead so that Hebo’s *playing* becomes even more pronounced: he is a white man playing an Indian man playing an Indian woman. Hebo demands the audience witness the arbitrary re-presentation of identity founded on essentialist cultural and biological stereotypes, and by performing his *Heyoka identity* de-stabilizes signifiers that allow an

audience to “read” him. Just as Judith Butler argues that drag performances “dramatize the signifying gesture” of gender, Hebo serves as the performance of semiotic markers colonialists use to create racial and gendered taxonomies (Butler x). All the settler operas I have examined rely on external semiotic markers to deploy Native cultural and racial bodies, especially because non-Natives played Native roles. But Hebo’s character—regardless of who plays him—speaks to a fractured self that must adopt a variety of roles and not to any unified, essentialized identity. In a poignant monologue, Hebo cries,

Yet when alone, Yet when alone, I think about my self—my real self. So no I look at him my self. So no I look at me my own self stares at me. I know him now, he that is weak. He wearies when others falter not. His breath quickly chokes. His heart beats hard and loud. When others rise, when other rise he winks. My really-self fails. His head is drooping. His face draws cold. He gazes listlessly at me. His fingers clinch his eyes. They stare as ghostly now, his fingers creep toward me slowly like spirits to devour me. His evil eye is haunting me. He’s come to kill me. Ho. No, I’m Hebo, only he the lazy the crazy eternally stubborn Hebo. (135)

As a blithe trickster figure who playfully sings between standards forms of culture, gender, and representation, Hebo offers meta-commentary on performative identity. Hebo articulates a tension between performance and observing a performance, a tension that reverberates because the framework of the text is itself performance—is opera. The text vacillates between strength and weakness, survival and death, and with violent images of being haunted, killed, and devoured. For Hebo, his “really-self fails” and is haunted by the *image* of himself as Other, an image that he must perform.

Just as Hebo's performance physically exhausts and threatens his annihilation, Zitkala-Ša would know only too well the dangers of being caught in a gendered and racial performance. Throughout her life she played on such roles, becoming an exotic "noble savage." In a probable publicity photograph of Zitkala-Ša and Hanson for the *Sun Dance Opera* (figure 1), Zitkala-Ša performs the role of a specific Native woman in colonial imagination, and she often did this throughout her life (Washburn 285). Mimicking colonial expectation provided Zitkala-Ša, and for performers coming after her, a space for resistance. Zitkala-Ša was exposed to vicious and violent images predicated on stereotypes, which certainly affected her own perception of Native representation. In an act of defiance, she assumes those very roles of primitive, romantic, and wholly other. In "essence," she adopts the role of the "pure-bred" Native that individuals like Hanson would demand of her. Zitkala-Ša changes her name, denies her Christianity, and at times rejects tenants of her white education. Unlike Smith, though, I do see this as Zitkala-Ša negotiation of two cultures. Her ability to write and compose an opera suggests that she could "perform" the role of assimilated, cultured woman. Her photograph in Indian costume with Hanson also suggests she can vacillate easily between two contradictory elements, between being assimilated and the desire to maintain un-assimilated Indianness.

Zitkala Ša's opera uses the stage to subvert colonial ideologies that impose settler sexualities and racial and cultural hegemonies onto Native Americans--legacies of larger Indian cultural manufactured colonial representations. Hebo's performance of both racial and gendered expectations suggest how much signification plays a part in identity and representation. Performance and mimicry creates ambiguity. In the traditional Bhabhian

sense, mimicry is the act of a colonial subject re-presenting him/herself in the guise, clothes, language, and customs of the colonial power. Such mimicry reveals the unstable binary of colonial power, a binary that *needs* otherness to justify its claims of power and appropriative disciplinary governance. Mimicry also has the power to destabilize and threaten the underlying cries of legitimacy (126). Hebo can mimic the audience's expectations of both race and gender in a similar way that Zitkala-Ša can mimic the expectations of both a cultured white composer and romantic, primitive woman.

As a colonial marker of representation, Hebo reveals and distorts the expectations and beliefs about Native people. His queer performance and mimicry undermine representations as normative function. By wresting back control of her own representation and that of Native people and mimicking and performing cultural expectations for Native people and women, Zitkala-Ša's opera reveals the duality always already present in colonial frameworks and discourse. Through queer mimicry, the opera suggests that an individual is always already more than a simple representation and that static representation result in an individual's entrapment in a colonial role and premature death.<sup>xii</sup> Hebo recognizes this threat when he sings, "My really-self fails. His head is drooping. His face draws cold. He gazes listlessly at me. His fingers clinch his eyes. They stare as ghostly now, his fingers creep toward me slowly like spirits to devour me. His evil eye is haunting me. He's come to kill me" (135). Yet, because of the play involved in his mimicry, he holds the power to end his aria with resistance. He sings, "Ho. No, I'm Hebo, only he the lazy the crazy *eternally* stubborn Hebo" (135). Hebo takes charge of his role as *heyoka*, and while he realizes that intricacies of that role, his ability to *play* and *act* enable him a space to undermine the outside influence of Sweet Singer. Playfully

flirting with Sweet Singer, goading him, teasing him, Hebo transforms himself into a character intent on undermining the threat of the colonial outsider. Attending to Hebo's queer mimicry and performance opens up the possibilities of play and performance as colonially resistant not just in the opera but also of Zitkala-Ša.

When Native men and women began to work in the entertainment industry of early 20<sup>th</sup> century America, many of them found work playing roles that mimicked colonial stereotypes. Looking at Native portrayals in American operas starkly reveals that cultural images of Native people relied on romantic notions of noble primitive people or dangerous savages. Native people often found themselves re-inventing such colonial images. Such mimicry, however, destabilizes the colonial discourse of power about engendered colonial expressions of violence and subjugation (Bhabha 130). The performance of dual identities forces an audience to confront the signification process that manufactures identity instead of a biological predicate.

Zitkala-Ša was a master at negotiating such complex performances. By working with, staging, and writing *Sun Dance*, Zitkala-Ša claimed an identity of a “cultured” woman, highly accomplished, polished, and refined. Yet, she simultaneously used her elite training and education to compose an opera about Native American experiences, experiences that at the time were illegal. Throughout the opera, she weaves a tale of colonial exploitation and resistance undermining BIA and Federal Government policies. While it is true that Zitkala-Ša would appear with Hanson in elaborate Native costume, the very libretto of the opera provides an anti-colonial way to read such dichotomous performances. Like Hebo, who plays the trickster and de-stabilizes the threat of the outsider, Zitkala-Ša's mimicry suggests a woman who refused easy compartmentalization

into the colonial boxes of the time. She is a writer, activist, performer, and that most complex of all roles, Native woman. Re-evaluating Zitkala-Ša's life and her work through the productive intersection of gender theory and postcolonial theories of identity performance reveal a startling picture of a complex woman taking control of her own representation. Representation, discourse, and performance can never characterize singular expressions of selfhood, and Zitkala-Ša's own life reveals the complexities of life for Native people in 20<sup>th</sup> century. With an eye toward her mimicry and hence undermining of colonial expressions, modern scholars would do well to take a closer look at the entire legacy of Zitkala-Ša and many other Native performers. Such re-evaluation can lead to deeper understanding of their roles not only as performers but also as humans facing the challenges of racist, and for many of them sexist, stereotypes that stymied their expressions of art and culture. *Poia*, *Natoma*, and *Shanewis: The Robin Woman* exemplify the kind of static colonial representations of Native people in early 20<sup>th</sup> century America. Zitkala-Ša never completely rejects all of the cultural stereotypes, but employs mimicry in order to sustain her on form of colonial resistance in *Sun Dance*. *Sun Dance* mimics gendered and racialized identities, revealing a radical text in comparison to other Nativist opera. Zitkala-Ša's *Sun Dance* expresses the subversion of her mimicry, leading the way for more work in this arena that will undoubtedly provide a deeper and more compassionate view into Native performers in early 20<sup>th</sup> century America.

(Figure 1: Zitkala Zitkala-Ša and Hanson publicity Photograph for The Sun Dance Opera)



Figure 2 (Putnam Griswold as  
The Sun God)  
("Opera Collection" N. Pag.)



Figure 3 (Herr Kirschoff as Poiah)  
("Opera Collection" N. Pag.).



Figure 4 (Act Three “The Indian Camp”) (“Opera Collection” N. Pag.)



Figure 5 (Act I: “The Indian Camp”) (“Opera Collection” N. Pag).



( Figure 6: Act 1 Chorus) (Poiah 15).

Per-chance Po-i - a! Sop. *mf* Ha ha, Po - i - a, Po -  
 Chor. *mf* Ha ha, Po - i - a, Po -  
 Chorus. Ten. *mf* Ha ha, Po - i - a, Po -

(Poia ist inzwischen langsam nach vorn gekommen, in der Mitte der Bühne, demütig, doch ge-  
 (Poia comes slowly down center of stage, humbly yet mysteriously and dreamily.)

i - a! Ha ha, ei-nen Frei - er! Ha ha ha ha Ha ha ha ha  
 Ha ha as a lov - er Ha ha ha ha Ha ha ha ha

Figure 7a: Nenahu's Act 1 Aria) ("Poiah" 34).

Pomphaft. M.M. # = 108.  
 Pomposo. *mf*

Von küh-ner Tat. in tap-frer Schlacht des Krie-gers Nar - be  
 The warrior's scar an em-blem is, Of deeds of val - or

(Indian Travelling song) *mp* *cresc.*

zu uns spricht, vom Kamp-fe ge - gen Klau und Zahn des Jä-gers Wun - de gibt Be -  
 in the strife, The hun-ter's wound a sur'-ty is, Of com-bat fierce 'tween fang and

*mf* *poco a poco agitato*

richt. Doch wer die Nar - ben nicht er-rang durch Tap-fer-keit bei  
 knife, But he who bears a scar un-bless'd By va-lant deed in

*poco a poco agitato*



(Figures 9: Paul's theme) (Aldrich X7).



(Figure 10 Natoma's Love) (Aldrich X7).



(Figure 11 The Dagger Dance) (Aldrich X7).



Figure 12 (Castro's Theme') (Aldrich X&).



(Figure 13: Mary Garden as Natoma)

(“Natoma.” N. Pag.).



(Figure 14: “Oh Ye Birds of Spring”)

(Shawenis 27).

A musical score for the song "Oh Ye Birds of Spring". It includes a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The tempo is marked "Allegretto giocoso (♩ = 116)". The vocal line begins with the instruction "(Like an incantation)" and the lyrics "Oh, ye birds of spring, Come from your hiding; Rob-ins all and hum-ming birds. Come un-to this bar-ren land." The piano accompaniment includes parts for "Orch." (woodwind) and "Piano on stage". The score is in a key signature of one sharp and 2/4 time.

(Figure 16: Sophie Braslau in the role of Shanewis)

(“Sonia Sharnova.” N. Pag.).



Sophie Braslau in the title role of *The Robin Woman: Shanewis*.  
Photograph by Herman Mishkin.

## CHAPTER III

### TOY BOYS, COWBOYS, AND PLAYING INDIAN: QUEER PERFORMANCE IN *COGEWEA*

Like *Sun Dance Opera*, Mourning Dove's *Cogewea: The Half Blood* (1927) tackles a host of violent actions implicitly and explicitly linked with settler colonialism including sexual assault and genocide. Using the genre of the Western, Mourning Dove undermines and rejects static notions of Native American identity. Playing with Modern America's fascination with the West and Native Americans, *Cogewea* centers on issues of representation, identity politics, and queerness. Attending to the queer moments in *Cogewea* guides the reader to moments when that queerness intersects with Romantic depictions of primitive and rural life and how Mourning Dove plays with both to undermine colonial authority. Mourning Dove presents a novel that destabilizes racial and gender policing and compartmentalization. The underlying queerness in the novel surfaces in the homoerotic and homosocial relationship of the ranch hands. However, attending to queerness in the novel also suggests that the eponymous heroine herself can be read as queer. Throughout the novel *Cogewea* rejects Western racial and gender expectations, most pronounced when she enters two horse races, performing once as a

Native woman and as a white woman. I argue that the homoerotic and homosocial expression between the ranch hands suggests reading the novel as queer, which opens a space for analyzing how Cogewea also emerges as a “queer” figure as she uses mimicry and performance to subvert colonial expectations regarding Native people, playing with and against her gender and racial identity. Addressing queerness is important because it suggests ways Mourning Dove destabilizes heteronormative colonial policies that policed Native Americans’ gendered and racial bodies.

Queerness emerges in *Cogewea* in the relationship between Dixie Canary and Silent Bob (two ranch hands), and also in the homosocial and homoerotic relationship between other ranchers and their “Toy, Frenchy. In this chapter, I discuss these queer relationships to establish an ethos of gendered performance and identity in the novel that also encompass Cogewea. Such textual analysis suggests ways that performance and representation, intersect with colonial imagining. In this chapter, I argue that Cogewea undermines colonial authority by merging her own queer identity with performative identity play.

Cogewea is a “mixed-race” Native American woman, and the novel follows her relationship with her friend James LaGrinder, a “mixed-race” Native man who is also in love with her, and the arrival of the white easterner Alfred Densmore, who tries to marry Cogewea. Alfred arrives at Cogewea’s brother-in-law’s ranch and is tricked into believing Cogewea owns part of the ranch. The novel follows Alfred’s attempt to seduce and marry Cogewea because he believes she is a rich woman. While Cogewea’s grandmother and sister along with Alfred recognize Alfred’s mercenary desires, Cogewea herself seems largely duped by his words, which culminates in their elopement scene.

Cogewea has withdrawn a sizable amount of money from the bank. When Alfred realizes that this is all the money she actually has, he steals it and leaves her tied to a tree. James and other ranch hands rescue her and eventually the two wed. The novel concludes with Alfred reading a newspaper article that discusses Cogewea inheriting a larger sum of money from her estranged white father. Like *Sun Dance Opera*, the love triangle invites critical discussion of colonialization and racialized violence, with Alfred mirroring the colonial threat of an outsider to a Native community in Zitkala-Ša's opera.

But the novel also concerns itself with the western form as genre and presents the western ranch as a subversive queer space. Such analysis reveals a text that systematically questions Euro-American gender roles for men and women and their intersection with racial and cultural roles. I read Dixie Canary and Frenchy's—two ranch hands—homosocial/homoerotic relationships as a gateway for establishing other forms of queerness in the novel. Queerness raises issues of racial and gender compartmentalization in the text. Cogewea's fluid identity and mimicry and performance of stereotypes suggest she herself can be read as queer.<sup>xiii</sup> Cogewea “performs” Indian and white identities, disrupting those clear taxonomic divides that allow for reading “purity” and racial signification. The breakdown and deconstruction of easily readable racial compartments establish how Cogewea queers colonial's power to name and classify the racial and gendered body. That performance suggests ways scholars can read Cogewea. Cogewea rejects heteronormative operation of classifying gendered and racial bodies, playing with feminine expectations, resisting patriarchal control over her personhood, and blurring her racial identity. Queer performances in the text subvert gendered and racial expectations for Native Americans, and part of the novel's concern is a sustained critique of Western

sexual identities and practices. I propose a reading of the Native and non-Native characters in the novel that defies Western taxonomies of both race and gender; such queerness allows for analogous disruption of static depictions of Native people.

#### Scholarship on *Cogewea*

As I discuss in the previous chapter, Piatote's research addresses how issues of gendered performance directly tie into constructions of Native American subjectivity and political and economic autonomy. Under white heteronormative scrutiny, Native American men and women were systematically groomed to perform gendered roles deemed "natural"—women were domesticated and men were taught to be farmers (111-114). Focusing on *Cogewea*'s mimicry of gender and racial expectation, Piatote argues that *Cogewea*'s actions align with early Native American show-people, whose racialized performances undermined stable identities. Piatote argues that such Native American performers expressed "multiple identities, identities that should be discrete in the gender and racial system of settler colonialism" (124). Utilizing Judith Butler's discussion of performance, Piatote's point is that performance reveals the fabrications of identity that underlie essentialist discourses. While colonialism sought to create "discrete" compartments of sex and gender, *Cogewea* ruptures "The racial and gender imaginary of settler colonialism" that relies on clear separations between men and women and white and Native (124-5). Colonialism often relies on the construction of a racialized Other for the construction of its inverse self, but *Cogewea* subverts the operation of such binaries, blurring the boundaries between each box.

Much scholarship focuses on *Cogewea*'s identity as "half-blood" to understand the complex nature of a novel's construction and the question of its authorship. Scholars

often wrestle with questions regarding the role of its author, Mourning Dove, and its editor, Lucullus V. McWhorter. In “Mixed Messages: Authority and Authorship in Mourning Dove's *Cogewea, the Half-Blood: A Depiction of the Great Montana Cattle Range*,” Susan K Bernardin wrestles with the perennial questions surrounding the collaboration of Mourning Dove and McWhorter on *Cogewea*, noting that the novel has conflicting and at times opposing voices and themes. McWhorter’s desire in publishing was the “bringing about [of] a reformation and cleaning up of the Indian department” (488). In collaborating and editing Mourning Dove’s *Cogewea*, he inserted ethnographic and “culturally authoritative indices” to add authenticity to the novel (488). Similarly, in “Generic Power Plays in Mourning Dove's (Co-Ge-we-a),” Susan M. Cannata attempts to understand the relationship between Mourning Dove and McWhorter’s work on *Cogewea*. While acknowledging the tension between the two, she argues that his presence in the construction of the novel “legitimizes Mourning Dove’s efforts, in that his white and hence (in this case) authoritative discourse validates Mourning Dove’s minority discourse, [while] it does not subsume her voice” (703). However, I do see such merging operating in the creation of a paradoxical, hybrid work that at times subverts and simultaneously plays with representations of Native Americans.

Albert Braz and Linda Karell similarly call for understanding *Cogewea* in relation to collaboration. Braz uses issues of Native and non-Native collaboration in order to wrestle with the limits of Tribal nationalist literary theory. He argues that instead of discrediting and questioning the indigeneity of pieces that involve collaboration between Native and non-Natives, critics pay attention to the relationship between writers in assessing works such as *Cogewea* (2-3). Such work, he argues, explains the often

contradictory elements in the novel, especially between the “political tracts and ethnographic studies” attributed to McWhorter, and Mourning Dove’s more Western like tone (4). While not addressing Tribal nationalism, Karell suggests looking at the title of the novel itself as a exegetic inroad into the text, which destabilizes “the European concept of literary authority granted by a single authorship into the much more vexed and undefined literary space of collaboration” in that both Mourning Dove and McWhorter are named (451). Like most scholars who discuss *Cogewea*, Karell notes the “mingled, even competing, voices” caused by the title of the novel and that also emerge within the text (452).

Critics also focus on how Mourning Dove subverted the standard Western novel by challenging pervasive Native American stereotypes in the genre. Mourning Dove seems largely interested in contesting the Vanishing Indian trope proliferating western novels, disrupting “this cultural consensus by inscribing mixedbloods within the contemporary western landscape,” according to Bernadin (489). Mourning Dove utilized her own knowledge of indigenous cultures and history in order to serve as “as cultural translator,” weaving indigenous themes into the popular genre form of the Western (490). While the genre serves to disseminate stereotypes of Native people as vanishing or as noble-savages, “Mourning Dove appropriated popular literary forms in order to reshape the discourse surrounding Indians in the early twentieth century” (Bernardin 490). Like Bernadin’s discussion of Mourning Dove’s play with genre conventions, in “Generic Power Plays in Mourning Dove's (Co-Ge-we-a),” Susan M. Cannata suggests that part of Mourning Dove’s voice is an attempt to destabilize pervading myths of Native people as “stoic, passive, and ultimately powerless” (704). Instead of keeping the recognizable

western genre that often includes cowboys facing and killing violent and dangerous Indians, her cowboys become Indians (Kent 54). Such a move means that “she can create the kinds of characters and events she wants, revising or reinventing the genre” (704). In other words, she subverts the standard depiction of western literature. She also destabilizes white privilege by favoring her eponymous heroine over Alfred, “disempowering this white man, [and] often bringing him to the point of ridicule” (708). Kent will suggest that Mourning Dove inverts the vanishing Indian trope because at the end of the novel it is the white man, Alfred, who disappears and not the Native characters (52).

While most critics have addressed issues of gender in relation to Cogewea, her sisters, and Grandmother, a few have observed that the novel also discusses masculinity. Linda K. Karell notes that “*Cogewea* is populated by stereotypical cowboy characters whose comic antics and practical jokes on one another situate the novel in a specific region and time, and they help establish the sense of masculine community and affection which Cogewea’s ultimate rescues from Densmore will depend” (Karell 459). Along the same continuum, Dilia Narduzzi comments that in keeping with genre conventions for a Western, the novel adds “male camaraderie and female subjectivity” (62). While scholars generally ignore male relationships in the novel beyond passing remarks, re-visiting those relationships reveal an underlying queerness in the text. Susan Bernading notes that Mourning Dove disrupts “expectations encoded in gender-marked romance and western forms” (495), and a careful reading of homoerotic and homosocial relationships establishes a potentially queer analysis of the novel opens ways that *Cogewea* also

performs queerness, subverting hetero-political colonial power over her racial and gendered body.

#### Queer Cowboys: Dixie Canary and the Silent Homoerotics of *Cogewea*

Nearly two-thirds into *Cogewea*, the plot takes a singularly ominous turn with the sudden and tragic death of “Dixie Canary,” a hired hand who works for Cogewea’s brother-in-law.<sup>xiv</sup> The seemingly secondary account of Dixie Canary appears incongruent with the central plot development of the novel. In fact, his appearance and death could easily be cut without disrupting the novel’s central storyline. His introduction and death only comprise a single chapter, seven pages long. Despite the brevity of space allotted Dixie Canary, I believe it would be a mistake for the reader to ignore or pass over his character. To the contrary, Dixie Canary’s rupture in the text affords modern readers clear textual evidence for the recurring theme of homoeroticism throughout the novel. Attending to how Dixie Canary’s presence portends and expresses homosocial and homoerotic possibilities opens up ways that other characters mirror these dynamics, specifically Frenchy, another ranch-hand, and ultimately Cogewea herself.

The narrator introduces Dixie Canary to the reader and the ranch-hands as an attractive and desirable addition to their community, presaging the homoerotic possibilities of the newcomer. Up to this point, *Cogewea* seems largely concerned with the tension between James “Jim” LaGrinder’s deep love for Cogewea and the machinations of the mercenary Alfred Densmore. Departing from this triad, Mourning Dove introduces the new character of Dixie Canary. While only briefly present in the text, he reconfigures the themes of the text with his homoerotic/homosocial depictions and relationships. Where Ang Lee’s *Brokeback Mountain* (2005) rendered homoerotic

relationships between Montana ranch-hands visible to a modern public, *Cogewea* more subtly but none the less powerfully gestures to such a possibility in her novel nearly 80 years prior. In fact, *Cogewea* presents homosocial and possible homoerotic relationships frankly and honestly throughout the text. The narrator describes Dixie Canary as “a handsome, active man in his early thirties” (178). He was “Among the last riders to be picked up by Jim,” yet the narrator does not name any of the other men (178). He garners attention from the others in part because of his physical attractiveness: “Superbly mounted on a fine black gelding of remarkable swiftness, an expert with the rope, this tall, lithe stranger proved a valuable asset to the force” (178). Before this addendum, the narrator has already marked him as attractive, which is further reinforced in the subsequent passage that fluctuates between his abilities as a ranch-hand and his physical presence. The other hands hired are simply “among the last” to be hired, largely forgotten within the text, whereas Dixie Canary becomes prized because of his “valuable asset to the force,” with the valuable asset seeming strangely tied to his physical attraction. Though he is an outsider, a man who seems somewhat different from the other ranch hands, Dixie Canary becomes linked with same sex desire and homoerotic expression.<sup>xv</sup>

Dixie Canary illuminates the subtext of homoeroticism in the novel, emerging in his tragic death. Dixie Canary is known for his singing voice, and after a hard day’s work his fellow ranch hands notice the absence of his songs. The ensuing dialogue about his absence reveals the deep homosocial relationships he has with his fellow ranchers. The scene surrounds the final stages of the annual roundup. Another rancher, Rodeo, and Dixie Canary “had, in a dice contest, drawn a particularly rough mountain belt, gutted by deep gulches and yawning precipitous canyons” in which to work (179). After breaking

up, Rodeo returns to a log cabin that serves as home-base for the ranchers only to be “Accosted with a chorus of inquir[ies] as to the Canary” (179). Dixie Canary had not returned and the other ranchers feel concern. Yet interspersed with their discussion of his absence and of their growing concern, Mourning Dove’s prose complicates Dixie Canary’s role on the ranch. Attending the scene’s nuances sheds light on the novel as a whole. The ensuing dialogue between Rodeo and “The Silent One” (Silent Bob) reveals the potential homoerotic element of the two men’s relationship:

“His moosic is absent an’ th’ home-gatherin’ is lonely,” observed Celluloid Bill. “Life ain’t none too sweet at th’ bitterest.” “Why! ain’t the Canary here?” Rodeo’s voice attested his deep concern. “I s’pose he got in long ago.” “Whar’ yo’ leave him?” questioned the Silent One. “I hater think of th’ Canary bein’ out such a night; I hater not hear his singin’ befo’ goin’ to bed.” (179-180)

Without Dixie Canary’s songs, the group of men is lonely, and Silent Bob states that he hates the thought of retiring without hearing his songs. Upon closer inquiry, Silent Bob learns that Rodeo saw Dixie Canary tumble in the mountains, but he did not consider the possibility that it was dangerous or worthy of further inquiry.

In discussion of the possibility that Dixie Canary is injured, the text breaks down, suddenly trailing off to silence. Silent Bob’s voice disappears from the text and the narrator interrupts the dialogue. This interruption and even distancing from the possibilities of the silence caused by Silent Bob’s inability to speak, presage the text’s inability to articulate the homoerotic possibilities that underlie Silent Bob and Dixie Canary’s relationship. The scene unfolds as a dialogue between Silent Bob and Rodeo

because Dixie Canary failed to arrive at the home base. In light of Dixie's absence, Rodeo begins to question Dixie's safety as he retells his tale. In response to the tale, Silent Bob declares his intent to search for Dixie Canary: "Boys, I'm a goin' to fin' th' Canary who sings of Dixie. Do yo'-all want to go? I hater—" (180). Silent Bob is unable to finish his sentence, leaving the reader to surmise what exactly Silent Bob "hater." At this point, the narrator interrupts the text, marking the passage with a double removal of Silent Bob's speech (once by Jim himself and secondly by the narrator). In explanation of Silent Bob's inability to pronounce his fears or hate of Dixie Canary's absence, the narrator continues:

The Silent one turned aside, blinking hard. The firelight hurt his eyes.

During the brief interim of their acquaintance, an *attachment* had sprung up between the two Southerners, *undemonstrative*, yet *warm* and *reciprocal*. The response to his appeal was an immediate donning of caps and buckling on of spurs by all the riders. The even voice of the foreman interrupted the proceedings. (180 emphasis added)

While the narrator takes great pain in defining and explaining these two men's relationship, the fact that the text must legitimize their relationship as undemonstrative despite its reciprocity, warmth, and strong attachment augers for the text's attempt to cover up their potentially queer desires and relationship.

While it is impossible to surmise the exact possibilities of Silent Bob and Dixie Canary's relationship, the strength of their bond has given the narrator enough justification to qualify their relationship. The narrator anticipates readers' possible concerns about the very expression of their relationship. What emerges is an unsuccessful

juxtaposition of “undemonstrative” against “attachment,” “warm,” and “reciprocal.” Further distancing the possibilities of any erotic relationship between the two men, the final scene concludes with Dixie Canary describing a visit from a “little gal.” In a strange mirroring of Dixie Canary and Silent Bob’s relationship, Dixie Canary uses points of ellipses to define his relationship. In a moment where the heterosexual couple should serve to alleviate any fear of an inverse homosexual desire or risk of its expression, Dixie Canary goes “silent.” Such silence suggests that Mourning Dove carefully encodes non-normative desire in the text in resistance to larger colonial heteronormative policies. With silence dominating the scene, the reader must negotiate a radical rupture in the text’s often humorous and jovial tenor. Such ruptures serve to draw reader’s attention to how queerness intersects with the novel’s larger concerns racial performance and Cogewea’s identity.

A close look at Dixie Canary’s death fully unveils his queer relationship with Silent Bob. The scene follows after the ranch hands have found the critically injured Dixie Carter and his injured horse. The horse had fallen in a concealed hole and, after flipping a summersault, “landed full on his rider” (181-2). Recognizing that Dixie Canary could not survive the severity of the accident, the men draw near in an attempt to comfort the injured horse and dying rider. At one point, Dixie Canary sees a circling buzzard and cries, ““Bob—you won’t—let—that—damned—thing” (182). Dixie Canary’s sentiment is certainly understandable. He does not wish for his horse to suffer or to be eaten by the buzzard. Before Silent Bob responds, however, the narrator states, “Eyes expressive of *indefinable tenderness* turned to Twilight. The Silent one understood” (emphasis added 182). While he then attempts to reassure Dixie Canary that they will bury the horse and

rider together, he is unable to finish his speech: “Bob *struggled* to hide an *emotion* that was choking. A wave of *comprehension* suffused the dimming eyes, as the sufferer fought for speech” (emphasis added 182). In the ensuing speech, Dixie Canary asks that the ranch hands “make it—easy for” the horse (in other words, to put it out of its misery) and to bury the two together. The narrator uses highly sentimental language in describing the relationship between Dixie Canary and Silent Bob. As the scene progresses the reader is privy to a startling revelation that begins as an “indefinable tenderness” and “emotion” that the men “struggle” with and against before “comprehension” dawns on the men.

The text both unveils the homoerotic possibilities between Silent Bob and Dixie Canary at the same time that the narration struggles to leave unsaid that possibility and even to deny its very actuality. Such passages illuminate Mourning Dove’s attempt to fashion a novel that departs from standard Western representations, which allows her textual space to subvert the expectations of Native men and women. *Cogewea* represents another example how addressing queerness in Native American studies discloses pockets of resistance in texts that mimic and interact with colonial expectations such as in *The Sun Dance Opera* and in the works of John Joseph Mathews and Woody Crumbo. While the text largely leaves expressions of same-sex desire unsaid, the text’s continual wrestling with homoerotic/homosocial relationships suggest it is a powerful force in the text. In the closing passage between the two men, Mourning Dove resorts to pauses and unsaid innuendo to explore the queer relationship between Silent Bob and Dixie Canary:

Twice he tried to speak. Silent Bob kneeling, took his “Chum’s” hand:

“Twilight won’t never know. He’ll be with yo’! But I hater—” A

suppressed sob shook the kneeling form. “Bob, you and—the boys have—  
been good friends— to me. But you seemed—the closest! Maybe it was—  
the Dixie tie. I never told—you about the—little—little—But no use now.  
It’s alright! Last night— she came. Little gal— of long ago. When  
children—we played in—old orchard—back home. We’d sing— ’hollerin’  
down—my apple tree’. Last night I was—oh! so cold. Wet, freezing!  
Twilight—shivered. She came— little gal. Spread blanket— over me and  
—Twilight Sang again—that song. Placed hand on—my head. Pain—all  
left. I slept warm. Twilight—seemed not —cold. Dreamed of—the  
appletree,—old,—crooked. Heard song as—we used to—.” (183)

The scene begins with Dixie trying twice to speak to his “Chum,” Silent Bob. Their special bond is evident by Mourning Dove’s choice of the word chum, which she brackets with quotation marks. While those markers could call attention to the vernacular Mourning Dove suffuses throughout the novel, it also potentially raises concerns that chum is being used ironically to connote another kind of relationship. The possibility that these two men’s relationship extends beyond that of simple “chums” saturates the long pauses, interruptions, and Mourning Dove’s word choices of the entire chapter and heighten the instability of the text. Dixie Canary interrupts himself, distancing himself from publicly citing Silent Bob as his singular friend, before finally saying “you seemed—the closest! Maybe it was—the Dixie tie” (183). In his dying words, Dixie Canary reveals his deep regard and affection for Silent Bob, before distancing himself from such a possible relationship by focusing on their shared “Dixie” identities and then through the “little gal.”

Dixie Canary creates and fashions a romantic spectral for his audience in his death scene, a move that initially explains his affective silence and melancholic demeanor. Dixie Canary says the he “never told” about this “gal” with whom he used to play as a child, singing “hollerin’ down--my apple tree” (183). Dixie Canary references an allusion of which the reader would already be aware. At the beginning of the chapter, the narrator states,

Of his past life, the Canary was never known to speak .... Oftentimes he appeared distraught, to live over again some pathetic episode of other days. On these occasions, oblivious of his surroundings and gazing southwards, he ever sang a low, sad, child-like refrain: “You may holler down my apple tree; / I don’t like you any more” (178).

Narratively, the text presumes that Dixie Canary’s aloofness and even melancholia stem from a tragic unexplained event from his past. Even as he lies dying, he simply says that the “little gal” comes to him, spreading a blanket over him that eased his pain. Initially a reader might assume that Dixie Canary has never fully mourned the loss of this relationship and that he carries that grief with him, an inexpressible love. Largely incongruent with such a surmise is the emphasis on diminutive language. Additionally, Dixie Canary sings a “sad, child-like refrain,” and it is only on his deathbed that he links that song with an unknown girl whom he “never told--you about” (183). We arrive at a juxtaposition in the text where Dixie Canary and even the narrator attempt to weave into the reader’s mind a deep, romantic relationship. However, the text reveals that the love would be between two children, with Dixie Canary mourning the loss of a little girl. Given the time period of the novel, Dixie Canary’s diminutive language might simply

presage a term of endearment, albeit sexist. Regardless of how readers read this scene, Dixie Canary removes a sense of homoerotic connection with Silent Bob by invoking the absent “little gal.”

By making present the absent body of a presumable childhood sweetheart, Dixie Canary legitimates the attraction between him and Silent Bob. I suggest that an alternative and more nuanced understanding of the scene relies on Dixie Canary’s failure to declare “the love that dare not speak its name” to Silent Bob. In his dying words Dixie Canary states, “I never told--you about the--little--little--But no use now” (183). Predicated on what Dixie Canary later reveals, the reader might quickly deduce that Dixie Canary never told Silent Bob about his childhood friend, a young girl that the text wants the reader to believe he deeply loved. And yet all the evidence of the chapter reflects that the only example of deep love is between the *two men*. In other words, Dixie Canary tries and fails to speak his love publicly, instead replacing the object of his affection with the spectral image of the “little gal.” The entire scene is the “*struggle*” of the two men and their emerging “*comprehension*” of their “*indefinable tenderness*,” an “*emotion*” that could not be named. Instead Dixie Canary invokes the little gal to legitimize and alleviate any homophobic/homoerotic tension that his relationship with Silent Bob creates. In the inauguration of queer literary studies, Eve Sedgwick’s early writings on how women mediate homosocial tension between men potentially explains the significant inclusion of the “little gal” to Dixie Canary and Silent Bob’s relationship. In *Between Men*, Sedgwick delineates erotic triangles in literature between two men and a single female character. She theorizes that in a homophobic, patriarchal society, deep homosocial bonds need the presence of a woman to alleviate any fear of homoerotic desire. The solitary woman

mediates the desire between men for each other, assuring readers outside the text as well as an internal audience inside the central male characters are indeed “straight.”<sup>xvi</sup>

Throughout the chapter, Mourning Dove seems to agonize over “correctly” defining and defending Silent Bob and Dixie Canary’s relationship, often resulting in paradoxical passages and expressions of their relationship. At Dixie Canary’s death, the pinnacle of the text’s attempt to mask the desire between the two men, the chapter fully reveals the potential of their queer relationship. The legitimizing of their relationship through the spectral image of the “little gal” and interruptions and silences only heighten the pathos of the scene.

At the closing of the chapter, the text attempts to allay any fears stemming from the deep relationship of Dixie Canary and Silent Bob. By erasing any special reference of Silent Bob and Dixie Canary’s, deemphasizing their warm and reciprocal relationship in favor of Dixie Canary’s relationship with this horse. While it is common for riders to form deep bonds with their horses, the complete erasure of Silent Bob glares in the text as a conspicuous absence. The replacement of Silent Bob with Dixie Canary’s horse occurs as he is dying. In that earlier passage Dixie Canary voices his concerns about the horse before steering the conversation to his relationship with Silent Bob and then finally careering towards the “little gal.” When he dies, the horse stands in the place of Silent Bob: “The poor, broken body fell back against the breast of the only Twilight,” instead of in the arms of his special friend Silent Bob (184). The ranchers bury the two together, “marking the final resting place of the mysterious ‘Canary’ and his inseparable ‘Twilight’” (184). In a tin box, the ranchers inscribe a memorial to Dixie Canary, with the following inscription: “TO MEMERY UV THE DIXEY CANERY & TWILITE

ARECTED BY THEY BOYS Angils Drempt A Singin Voise. God Gived That Voise  
To The DIXEY CANERY A Cattle King Offered All His Range For a Hoss Woth While.  
God Knowed His Bisnis. He Saived That Hoss For The DIXEY CANERY *Bob*”  
(emphasis in original 184). The inscription emerges as a paradoxical cipher for the  
relationship of Silent Bob and Dixie Canary. On the one hand the elegy de-emphasizes  
Silent Bob’s relationship to the deceased. The last stanza of the inscription accentuates  
the bond between horse and rider, ordaining the union between the two as “God  
Know[ing] His Bisnis” (sic 184). Two surprising anomalies surface, however, despite  
Mourning Dove’s attempt to authenticate Silent Bob’s and Dixie Canary’s relationship by  
the spectral haunting of the “little gal” and the bond between horse and rider.

While so much of the chapter stems from Mourning Dove’s wrestling to  
legitimize the homosocial relationship between the two ranch hands, Silent Bob’s own  
character refuses such silences even as he attempts to distance himself from the  
homoerotic economy of their relationship. In the elegy he states that the memorial marker  
was “arected by they boys” (184). Yet Bob signs the marker, revealing who erected the  
memorial. Furthermore, the innuendo accompanying “Arected” calls attention to the  
sexual implications of the verb, which further complicates the Freudian slip in the  
spelling error of “They” instead of the definite article “the.” The reader assumes that the  
spelling variant is simply an attempt to phoneticize the long vowel sound of “the,” but it  
could easily stand for the pronoun they or even possessive plural “their,” with these  
possibilities coloring the meaning and subconsciously eroticizing the possible relationship  
between the ranchers with Dixie Canary.<sup>xvii</sup> “They” calls greater attention to the

ambiguous relationship of between subject and object, pointing towards a slippage between the pronoun and its antecedents and even between the deceased and his comrade.

Throughout the chapter, readers negotiate an unease between the erotic possibilities of Dixie Canary and Silent Bob, a homosocial relationship that precariously crosses into distinct homoerotic possibilities. While much of the chapter is an attempt at legitimizing and distancing such possibilities, the closing line's signed by Silent Bob read like a love letter, an elegy to a love impossible to speak. The radical rupture to the central, heterosexual relationship of the novel signals an uneasy vacillation throughout the text and serves as a useful entry point for the queer potential of the novel. Whereas Dixie Canary's chapter attempts to dissolve queer potentiality in the text, the novel itself refuses such erasure. Directly following Dixie Canary's death, the next section of the novel addresses an equally similar homosocial relationship between the hired hand, Frenchy and Celluloid Bill. Examining their relationship, however, connects queerness in the novel with the larger issue of performative identity.

#### Frenchy: The Return of the Repressed

While the text attempts to negotiate the undercurrent of homoerotic possibilities through a modicum of silence and ellipses on the one hand and the legitimizing of homosocial bonds through erotic triangles on the other, queerness continually erupts from the text's enforced suppression of homoerotic possibilities. At the closing of the section of Dixie Canary, the reader arrives at an uneasy truce between the tensions created by his relationship with Silent Bill. Mourning Dove inaugurates queer possibilities through the depiction of Dixie Canary only to destroy its possibility. The ensuing but tenuous at best respite against homoerotic possibilities once again collapses as the novel progresses. In

fact the very next chapter centers on the queer potentiality of strong homosocial/homoerotic links on the ranch, specifically between Frenchy, and Celluloid Bill. The introduction of Frenchy signals the ongoing homoerotic tension surfacing throughout the text. While Frenchy supports a queer reading of *Cogewea*, thereby buttressing greater discussion of gender and racial subversion in the novel, his queerness further unveils the role of performance in the text, the fascination with performance, and also the fear of inauthentic performance, and public shame of unsuccessfully performing a role. Mourning Dove entitles the chapter of the novel after the new character, naming it “Frenchy, Toy Boy of the Cowboys.” With the introduction of Frenchy, the novel’s humor re-emerges and also its homoerotic potentiality. Building on the homoerotic possibilities between Silent Bill and Dixie Canary, Frenchy signals a continued homoerotic tension in the text, in which he plays a significant role in demonstrating the homosocial bonds of the ranch hands and performance of masculinity. Frenchy unites the issues of performance and gender dynamics and closer analysis of his figure significantly shapes how modern readers tackle the novel as a whole. A queer reading of Frenchy and his “performances” open a space to understand how *Cogewea* functions as a queer text that subverts gendered and racial expectations for Native Americans.

The homoerotic tension between the ranchers and Frenchy emerge as a series of jokes, with Frenchy bearing brunt of the men’s shenanigans. However, the rest of the stage hands also interact with Frenchy, essentially “hazing” him. As we shall see in John Joseph Mathews’ *Sundown*, hazing rituals in literature can and often do strain the line between violence and sexual desire. The narrator veils such a possibility: “Jim had devoted his idle moments victimizing the verdant Parisian. As Foreman, qualified to give

instructions, he insisted that, to become a good horseman, a beginner should at least ride one entire day without making any use of his stirrups” (186). As a “verdant” and naïve rancher, Frenchy acquiesces. The next day he “mounted the chuck wagon instead of his horse” when they broke camp the following day (186). The text never explains why Frenchy chooses to sit in the chuck wagon, and a modern reader dissociated from riding horses might miss the implications of the scene. Frenchy has always ridden “bounc[ing] so like rubber in the saddle” (186). While later I will return to the notion that Frenchy never successfully learns the role of cowboy (and in fact he emerges as a caricature of the Western Cowboy through his attempt to mimic his own ideas of what a rancher should be), but for the purpose of establishing the queer potential of Frenchy, readers should focus on the scene in relationship to his earlier disruption. Jim victimizes Frenchy by having him ride without the stirrups. Because Frenchy does not know how to ride a horse properly—he bounces like rubber—riding without stirrups would undoubtedly become painful, and perhaps even excruciatingly as his backside would constantly slam against the saddle without the stirrups allowing him leverage to lessen the impact.

The ranch hands participate in laughing and chiding Frenchy for sitting in the chuck wagon, who undoubtedly sits there because he is sore from the previous day’s ride. The ranchers acknowledge Frenchy’s “victimized” position as he “he doffed his hat in courteous acknowledgement to the lusty cheering of his companions as they cantered by” (186). In both the acknowledgment of “lusty” cheering and being victimized, Frenchy becomes the object of masculine aggression, an aggression that subtly converges with the tension of homosocial/homoerotic desire. Once Frenchy surrenders to being the victim, he eventually becomes part of the group: he becomes their “Toy.” Naming Frenchy a toy

connects with the image of his bouncing like rubber in the saddle, like a rubber bouncing ball. Now, though, his role is as the rancher's toy. Metaphorically, Frenchy is "broken in" the day he rides without stirrups, and as a result of his "victimization" cannot ride a horse. Mourning Dove writes the scene with humor, but the image seems largely sadistic, dark, and even carries rape connotations. It is as if French is sodomized and as a result of his victimization cannot perform his regular duties. Making the scene even darker is that Frenchy willingly accepts his role, serving now as the rancher's toy: "all this past, the Toy was now proudly riding in the midst of the merry-making cavalcade" (186). Frenchy emerges as a plaything in the novel, a sight for their lusty affection.

While the more violent hazing ends, the homosocial elements of Frenchy's relationship with the ranchers, especially Celluloid Bill, emerge through constant play and "victimizing" of Frenchy. In a parallel moment of queer potential, Mourning Dove creates another strong male couple like Dixie Canary and Silent Bob' with the relationship of Frenchy and Celluloid Bill. Playing a practical joke on Frenchy, Celluloid Bill puts Frenchy in a "an old skiff" with a broken oar and launches him into a river. The ranch hands believe that Frenchy "would go insane" because of his lack of knowledge about rowing and of the threat of rapids in the river. In a hilarious scene, Frenchy usurps the dynamic between himself and the ranchers. At the moment he realizes that he cannot expect help from the other men, he takes off his boots and "gazed longingly at the surrounding mountains and the immediate woods; as though in a last farewell .... For one brief moment he hesitated, and then sprang overboard, to be directly overwhelmed by the turbulent tide" (186). For his audience, Frenchy appears to be jumping to his death. The pathos of his performance made all the more tragic at his wistful, longing gaze to the

sublime beauty of the river and mountainous scene. He is a tragic character that seems to be jumping to his death.

Because Celluloid Bill believes that his “Toy” is jumping to his death, he immediately attempts to save him. Recognizing the danger of the situation, Celluloid leaps onto his horse, diving into the river after Frenchy:

Celluloid, startled at the serious turn of his joke, did not falter. With cat-like action he leaped to his saddle and drove into the stream. He saw the Toy come to the surface, to instantly sink again from sight. The rescuer wisely giving rein, the powerful horse cut the water like a racing canoe. Submerged to his hips, his new “chaps” were soaked. But what of that? He was going to rescue his “amusement-man”—his “Toy. The tanned cheek of the rider was a trifle pale. Just as he thought Frenchy gone for all time, he glimpsed his head appearing on the surge like a tossing pine canoe, only to immediately disappear. (187).

Celluloid betrays his deep affection for Frenchy, his “amusement man,” his “toy.” Once again the text is absent on how exactly Frenchy functions for Celluloid’s amusement and as his toy. However, in light of the “serious turn of his joke,” his swift attempt to rescue Frenchy, and the manifestation of his fear by the marked color change of his complexion suggest a deep bond between the two men. Some readers may simply legitimize the relationship between the two men as that of comrades, explaining Celluloid Bill’s appellation of Frenchy as his “amusement-man” simply as bespeaking the pleasure of playing jokes on his person, but such an interpretation fails to address the already queer potential of the text in light of the scenes of Dixie Canary and Silent Bob. What emerges

is a thread of queer subversion throughout the novel. While at this point, we have seen that subversion as a rejection of heteronormative coupling in favor of homoerotic/homosocial bonds between the rancher, Mourning Dove will employ queerness to subvert policing of Native Americans, as we see through Cogewea's own gendered expressions.

While the text seems uneasy with queer expression, at times emphasizing heterocoupling, *Cogewea* skillfully use gendered performance to address stereotypical representation. The novel constantly vacillates between painting male-male attachments (to various degrees) and then resolving fears of homoeroticism resulting from those attachments. As with Dixie Canary, the text attempts to remove any tension that Frenchy is an object of homoerotic desire by eventually paring him with Cogewea's sister: "Jim, too, had remarked this courtly scion of France gazing enraptured after the girl as the hack dashed through the gate; and smiling, muttered under his breath: 'The poor frog-eatin' fool! Makin' eyes at that there breed-gal who ain't got no more heart than her witch-sister!'" (205). Despite such "straightening" of the text, queer subjectivity and representation abound. Queerness functions at the very least to disrupt taxonomies, compartmentalized boxes. Frenchy's character as a whole obscures and obfuscates Western masculine identity: emerging as a queer figure. Frenchy mimics stereotypes of cowboys, revealing the tenuous foundation of performance in creating a gendered identity, an important consideration for ways that Cogewea herself consciously plays with this reality. Likewise, Frenchy's character at times seems fully aware of his performance. When he jumps into the river, Frenchy *performs* the role of a tragic man about to die. His longing gaze to the mountains is a production, a theatrical show for his

audience. The reality is that Frenchy is well equipped to maneuver the rapids of the river, being a powerful swimmer and boater. Frenchy has simply mimicked *their* expectation of him: “The boys had not dreamed that their Toy was a graduate from one of the highest educational institutions of France, and an instructor in boating and swimming; and that he commanded wealth sufficient to buy, many times over, the ranch and outfit for which he was working” (188). While “The Toy” has suffered abuse and the brunt of repeated teasing, he turns the tables on the ranchers, revealing gaps in their constructed image of him.

The text’s emphasis on Frenchy’s attempt to perform a Western identity, reveals the heart of the novel: identity expression as performative. Frenchy attempts to perform an identity that results in a caricature performance. When readers first meet Frenchy, he rides into the ranch, marking himself as an outsider through his dress and his *performance* of a cowboy: “The girl noticed that he bounced in the saddle like a rubber ball, also that he wore a green flannel shirt and that when he dismounted, his buckskin breeches bagged at the knee. They were of a style seen only in the early days of the West, and appeared out of place even on the Flathead. He wore high-heeled boots, a broad sombrero, and a scarlet kerchief was about his neck” (151-2). Frenchy’s dress marks him as an outsider, yet it also establishes his character as a man who is outside the physical and symbolic structures of the ranch. Cogewea notes this as she “nearly laughed at the comical figure . . . divin[ing] at a glance that he was a tenderfoot trying to play the role of a real westerner, even to the formidable looking six-gun at his belt.” (152). The emphasis on comedy and performance resonate with Hebo’s posturing from *Sun Dance* in the previous chapter, specifically because his performance opens a space for analyzing

representation. What makes Frenchy's character so comical is his "Drag" performance of being a cowboy, the artificiality and inauthenticity of his clothes and manners. Judith Butler comments that drag has the potential to "dramatize the signifying gesture through which gender itself is established" (x). Frenchy's performance reveals a production of cowboy masculinity and homosocial relations, whose very performance invalidates his initial attempt to embody his ideal: a western cowboy. His buckskin breeches do not properly fit him and are out of fashion. The narrator calls attention to the fact that they are even out of place on the Flathead Reservation, implying that even in a remote and perhaps undeveloped place, his clothes harken back to western days that are long gone. Resplendent with a handkerchief and sombrero, Frenchy mimics what he believes to be Western masculinity, but his mimicry betrays the artificiality of his performance. He resembles a clown trying to play a serious role.

Frenchy is also hampered by a significant language barrier. When he meets Cogewea, "He doffed his hat with a sweeping bow and a polite: 'Bonjour!' to which she returned a cheery: 'Hell-o!' He then spoke: 'I wassasoom blee-ad'" (152). What follows is a raucous romp and hilarious breakdown of intelligible communication between Frenchy and the ranch hands, revealing the limits of performance and mimicry in the text. Frenchy arrives at the ranch exhausted and starving. The ranch hands and Cogewea make fun of his request for "blee-ad" demanding him to "speak English" (152). Cogewea skillfully plays on his rejoinder for "some le-tal bis-a-cat," playfully voicing that he wants a little cat and that "they have none to spare" but can place an order for him (152). The pain of Frenchy and general din of laughter erupts into a "stampede" that only ends when Cogewea's sister yells that the stranger wants bread or a biscuit to eat. The

carnavalesque atmosphere camouflages Mourning Doves discussion of mimicry. Frenchy is doubly hampered by language barriers in that he is not only French but that his English vocabulary was already compromised. The reason Frenchy calls bread “blee-ad” is because “he had only recently dined at a Chinese restaurant and asking the waiter the name for bread, had been answered: ‘Blee-ad’” (152-3) Here Mourning Dove resorts almost to stereotype, implying that the waiter undoubtedly struggled to produce an “r” sound with the end result of hilarity at the ranch when Frenchy mimics the word he heard. Cogewea and the ranch-hands “play” against his inadequacies, suggesting that despite his accent and mispronunciation of the word they understand his intended meaning.

Despite his linguistic limitations, the ability for Cogewea to understand and read Frenchy reverberates throughout his entire persona, further revealing his mimicry and performance. Frenchy’s mimicry of what he thinks is a correct cowboy becomes a parody, a drag performance. Drag demands a subtle but important network of interrelated significations with an audience able to understand the intended representation and its divulgence from it. Drag, though, highlights that identity and representation of it emerge in relation to a series of signs, their performance, and intelligibility. Frenchy’s charade deconstructs the signifying process of identity, which then extends to her other character including the heroine, Cogewea, who will also play with performance and mimicry. Mourning Dove makes explicit that the comedic element of Frenchy stems from his desire to “play the role of a real westerner” right down to “the formidable looking six-gun at his belt” (152). Much of the humor of Frenchy stems from his attempt to mimic the expectations of what *he thinks* a cowboy is. While Frenchy already had certain erroneous

ideas about cowboy costume, the ranch hands exacerbate his performance by supplying him with misinformation regarding cowboy dress and culture. In preparation for a basket social, in which women would cook dinners and place them in baskets to sell, the ranch hand, Slim, dupes Frenchy: “ ‘Real cowboys never dress for s’ciety like yo’ city chaps. If yo’ go all dood-toggl’d up, th’ gals won’t dance with yo’. They’d only laugh an’ make sport of yo.’ Jus’ cinch that there belt o’ youm a bit tighter’” (206). Because Frenchy is unable to identify Slim’s speech as humorous irony at his own expense, he follows Slim’s injunction:

and now drew his worn leather belt considerably tighter, which gave him a most comical appearance. His ancient buckskin breeches, wrinkled and bagged at the knee, were dust-stormed and discolored after the prolonged roundup. His blue flannel shirt, minus buttons, was open at the throat, while a worn silk handkerchief was knotted about his neck. High heeled boots and a slouchy sombrero, tilted jauntily to one side, only added to the wild grotesqueness of his figure. (206)

In attempting to mimic his idea of a cowboy, Frenchy exposes himself to ridicule with his “most comical appearance.” Exacerbating his performance, the other gentleman “had soon donned their best clothes” (207). Upon seeing the joke, Frenchy tries to leave the basket social, “But, to the great amusement of the spectators, the boys would not permit him to pass the door, A tenderfoot was being ‘broken in.’ Baffled, the victim shrank into the shadows away from his tormenter. He was humiliated and ashamed of his absurd and fantastic attire. He loathed the buckskins which he had imagined made him so much a real westerner” (209). As with the earlier hazing ritual, Frenchy becomes the passive

object of a painful and humiliating joke even feminized through his costume, which the basket auctioneer calls “buckskin negligee” (211). While the use of negligee historically has been applied to both men and women, the use often emphasizes revealing and feminine attire. Within the context of the *mise-en-scene*, Frenchy’s masculinity becomes linked with his performance. As when readers first meet him, Frenchy is discussed in feminine lexicon and passive roles. Frenchy must be “broken in,” and that depends on the ranch hands parading him around town as an object of spectacle.

While Frenchy is by and large accepted at the ranch, he still functions at the periphery of that society, always already marked as not belonging in part because of his identity performance. His desire to play the role of an “authentic” cowboy only exacerbates his attempt to negotiate successfully the role of cowboy in that he constantly performs a caricature. Frenchy’s desire to look the part of cowboy stems from his own misconceptions of about the lifestyle and culture of ranch-hands: “meeting with Jaquis, who had long been connected with the range, he became infatuated with the picturesque life of the riders so graphically depicted, and determined to become a ‘real’ cowboy” (153). The text does not explicitly state Jaquis manufactures a picturesque portrait of ranch life although that is certainly the implication. The syntax establishes that following his meeting, Frenchy then becomes infatuated with ranch life. Given the general clamor and fascination with Native American people and “The Wild West,” it is quite plausible that Frenchy’s fascination stems from such expectations. The narration supports such an argument by weaving a critique of romantic representation and subsequent mimicked performances based on stereotypical images. Jaquis “had long been connected with the range,” but that does not make him an authority on ranch life, culture, or identity

necessarily. The reader is left to question if Jaquis and perhaps even Frenchy's notions of identity stem from cultural productions that woefully and willfully distort the reality of life on the Flathead reservation. Regardless of their genesis, Frenchy assumes a role he believes to be true despite constantly being the victim of cruelty because of his performance. But he is also not above playing on the rancher hands' own misconceptions of him. As seen above, he performs the role of a picturesque man jumping to his death, and for a brief moment wrestles control from the ranch hands at their own game.

Frenchy's performance and mimicry of "picturesque" romantic depictions reveal Mourning Dove's potential critique of racial and cultural representations. The ranch hands understand that Frenchy's performance does not represent who they are. His mimicry reveals the construction of identity and its limits. Frenchy makes a picturesque cowboy, but the other ranch hand recognize that his performance does not reflect their own images of a "real" cowboy. The ranchers' constant hazing makes Frenchy's exclusion painfully aware to the audience. Even Frenchy's own ability to counter static notions of his own identity highlight the limits of performance and complete knowledge of an individual. Frenchy and the Ranch-hands allow stereotypes and their own vision and desire for the other to dictate how they see each other. However, throughout the text, each of their identities intrudes on their expectations of each other. Within the text Mourning Dove never explicitly invites her characters to acknowledge that doubt and slippage, but it remains an unstated and provocative theme throughout the text. Frenchy's character highlights the homoeroticism of the ranchers but also the potential of rupturing identity taxonomies. Even though Frenchy eventually marries Mary (Cogewea's younger sister) at the end of the novel, throughout the text he is marked in relationship to

homoerotic/homosocial relationships. Frenchy plays with identity and how he performs social expectations regarding his performances. By refusing to be placed in closed compartments, Frenchy and the Ranchers constantly enact a resistance to static representation and rigid taxonomies. Each of their identities are fluid and overflow with transgressive possibilities, even when the novel attempts to foreclose such possibilities. The inescapable queerness throughout the novel extends beyond the ranch hands, becoming a useful means of negotiating Mourning Dove's challenges to picturesque and romantic depiction of Native Americans.

#### The Picturesque as Colonial Imagining

Frenchy's emphasis on the "picturesque" reveals *Cogewea's* occupation with representation and identity politics. Analyzing the queer moments reveal the homoerotic tension of the text while also serving to guide the reader to moments when that queerness intersects with Romantic depictions of primitive and rural life. Just as Frenchy arrives at the ranch because of his obsession with images and expectations of cowboys and Native Americans, Alfred Densmore seeks similar picturesque stimuli, as he searches for "authentic" Native Americans. When he arrives at Flathead, he is disappointed that he does not see anyone that meets his criteria of true American Indians: "Fresh from a great eastern city, he had expected to see the painted and blanketed aborigine of history and romance; but instead, he had only encountered this miniature group of half-bloods and one ancient squaw" (44). Like Frenchy whose ideas about cowboys are filtered from other people and perhaps even popular culture, Alfred looks for depictions of the "noble savage," Native people wearing war paint and blankets such as a reader would find in "history and romance." When Alfred meets Bob, recognizing him as a rancher, he angrily

“express[es] his vexation and disgust for the writers who had beguiled him to the ‘wild and woolly’” (44). In a moment of lucidity, Alfred recognizes that fictional accounts of Native people as primitive have created his own perceptions of Native Americans. However, Bob is able to prey on his desire to see the Other. Just as the ranch hands dupe Frenchy because of his inability to read beyond cowboy stereotypes, Bob plays a similar trick on Alfred. Bob argues that while not visible here, Alfred could see “th’ gen-u-ine article” on the reservation: “‘Yo’ can strike ’em back on the reservation whar they wear feathers an’ scalps,’ answered Bob with an inward chuckle, ‘but yo’ don’t fin’ th’ gen-u-ine article a cavortin’ in a bus’lin’ concentration like this here miterpolish’” (44). Bob plays with Alfred’s desire for “authentic” Native people, individuals who satiate the modern appetite for wholly Other primitive people. Alfred’s response solidifies such a reading, rejoining, “I would like to see some of them. I grew tired of the tameness of city life, and came out here hoping to secure employment on some large stock farm. I want to rough it a while among Indians and cowboys” (44). The narrator adds that he responded with “sudden interest,” so that Alfred once again becomes obsessed with the possibility of seeing romantic images of Native people and cowboys, analogously to Frenchy’s own desire.

Alfred vocalizes his desire to see romantic depictions of Native people, which becomes linked with his predatory interest in Cogewea. Alfred agrees to work on the ranch in order to see stereotypical Native American people. While there, he has a riding accident. During his coalescence, he begins to notice Cogewea, in which his desire manifests. Alfred wrestles with his growing attraction, but concedes that Native women “are alright as objects of amusement and pleasure, but there it must halt” (81). After this

realization, he concedes the full desirability of Cogewea when he sees her “neat riding habit [that] set off her splendid figure to advantage and the Easterner felt his heart bound a trifle faster as he surveyed this ‘exquisite living picture’” (82). Alfred does not see the full of actuality of Cogewea, but merely looks at her as something to observe, enjoy, and consume. Alfred will later claim that he sees Cogewea merely as “any pleasing chattel. As a game, she affords amusement, but hardly a dividend” (90). Alfred’s statement occurs before he is tricked into believing Cogewea is a wealthy woman, but the sentiment powerfully articulates his belief that Cogewea—or any Native woman—exists for his pleasure and his material comfort. Cogewea pleases him as a “picture,” and while the linguistic concessions of exquisite and living slightly augment the cold reality of his dehumanizing gaze (but only ever so slightly), they do not invalidate that Alfred sees her in relationship to stylized depictions of Native Americans.

Alfred seems unable to see Native people as truly human, at times relegating Cogewea to a picture or a painting for his own viewing pleasure. Following Alfred’s observation, Mourning Dove turns once more to the threat of representation. Out of boredom, Cogewea decides to read a novel; however, the stereotypical portrayal of Native people incenses her with its woeful distortions of Native people: “The girl, vexed and disappointed, had resorted to reading but with no concentration of thought. The theme, an unjust presentation of Indian sentiment and racial traits; *The Brand*—stigma of the blood—did not tend towards calming her perturbed mind. In sheer desperation she continued poring through the pages” (88). The novel Cogewea reads is Therese Broderick’s *The Brand* (1909). Like *Cogewea*, *The Brand* focuses on a host of Native American characters of the Flathead reservation. Cogewea astutely observes that the story

has little basis in reality. The cause of its genesis rests in the desire for romantic depictions of “primitive” people for entertainment. Cogewea argues that “The story, interesting to the whites, was worm-wood to her Indian spleen” (91). Cogewea sees the stereotypical portrait of herself in the novel: “Cogewea became absorbed—absorbed with rage. The writer, wholly ignorant of her subject, instead of extending a helping hand, had dealt her unfortunate hero a ruthless blow” (88). Mourning Dove establishes a disconnect between white depictions of Native Americans and Native people’s real experiences.

Reading the novel wounds Cogewea, and she notes that colonial representations create as much damage as she does the physical violence against Native people. Lashing out in anger, Cogewea states

I almost hate myself today. Every thing is against me, even to this maligning, absurdity of a book. The thing does nothing but slam the breeds! as if they were reptiles instead of humans. You are no good! along with all the rest of us. You are only an Injun!—a miserable *breed!*—not higher than the dust on your white brothers’ feet. Go away!” (emphasis in original 89).

Cogewea is forced to associate herself with the racial stereotypes of her novel, and in so doing expresses anger with herself, she “almost hate[s]” herself. *Cogewea* articulates that mis-representation has damning effects on Native people. Within the novel, part of Mourning Dove’s critique stems from the binary between Native people as cultural artifacts and their real experiences and lives, a point to which Cogewea seems to allude above. She can vacillate between her own sense of identity or attempt to live up to an image of what she is supposed to be but with dangerous implications.

At times *Cogewea* playfully and gleefully satirizes white American's fascination with Native American representation; however, underlying that humor is always the threat that American representation by outsiders insidiously reifies violence against Native people. The danger inherent in stereotypical representation is its emphasis on the picturesque, with Native people as objects for amusement and as a people dying out because of the threats of modernity. At times *Cogewea* herself falls prey to such views of her own people, such as when she likens Native people to the near extinction of Bison. A number of dead animals decorate her brother-in-law's ranch, including "a mighty buffalo bull" (31). The Narrator explains that the dead bull haunts her with its "fixed glassy eyes ... as a ghost of the past" (31). In a moment of romantic nostalgia, the narrator interiorizes *Cogewea*'s ruminations, claiming that "With her people had vanished this monarch of the plains. The war-whoop and the thunder of the herd were alike hushed in the silence of the last sleep—and only the wind sighing a parting requiem" (31). Language such as requiem, silence, last sleep, and the like reiterate the vanishing Indian trope, a mythos strangely out of place within a text demonstrating a vibrant community, and yet presage the paradoxical and queer way that *Cogewea* colludes with and resists Native American stereotypes.

Not only does the experience shape *Cogewea*'s consciousness but it also serves to foreshadow her own assault by Alfred. During Alfred and *Cogewea*'s elopement, Alfred learns that the other ranch hands duped him regarding *Cogewea*'s true financial state. Assaulting her, Alfred ties *Cogewea* to a tree, leaving her to die. His concluding remarks, however, link the above passage with his own vision of Native people, subtly revealing Mourning Dove's indictment of Native representation. After Alfred secures *Cogewea* to

the tree he states, “Good bye! little sweetheart! O statuette in bronze with a wild-wood setting! How superb! and the sun fast sinking to rest. A merry time and pleasant dreams as you hear the coyotes squalling tonight” (265). The scene suggests the material way that Alfred conceptualizes Cogewea. As he leaves Cogewea tied to the tree, he speaks of himself in the third person: “Densmore the ‘tenderfoot’ has not fared so badly financially, considering the few months that he has sojourned in the wilds, do you think! Good bye! good bye!” (266). On the one hand, Alfred articulates that Cogewea merely functions as a commodity for his own search for material gain. However, such a view refuses the obvious pleasure Alfred has in looking at Cogewea, as seen when he acknowledges that Native Women “are alright as objects of amusement and pleasure” (81). Much of the pleasure Alfred has in watching and observing Cogewea is a result of his colonial fascination with the ideology of Native Americans as picturesque. As discussed previously, Alfred goes to the ranch in part because his sojourn in the West afforded him no opportunity to see “painted and blanketed aborigine of history and romance” (44). While he never finds his “myth,” in the closing scene he re-creates the myth of the picturesque with a “living specimen.”

Alfred’s earlier specular pleasure returns, and he is able to secure the image he has been searching for of Native Americans. He makes Cogewea into “a statuette in bronze,” resplendent in her “natural” environment of the woods. Just as Cogewea feels frightened by the mounted Bison in at the ranch, she now must contend with Alfred placing her in a similar position. Mourning Dove scathingly attacks representations of Native people as a tool of colonial violence. Instead of seeing and representing complex realities of Native people, popular cultural representations at the time, and even today,

recapitulate trite romantic images of Native people. Such representations destroy the reality of Native experiences, creating fictitious expectations for consumption about “real” Native Americans.

When we read *Cogewea*’s own history and calamitous relationship with Alfred alongside *Cogewea*’s fear of the novel, the colonial threat of false-representation emerges with frightening clarity because of the potential destructive consequences. Yet at times *Cogewea* as text reifies the very ideologies Mourning Dove seems to criticize, seemingly disallowing a reading of the novel as a colonial resistant text.<sup>xviii</sup> On the one hand *Cogewea* does invite critiques of various forms of colonialism; however, how should readers approach a novel that challenges Native representation and stereotypes at the same time it mimics colonial expectations? I believe a careful reading of the novel’s queerness opens a possibility out of the binary. The very queerness of the novel opens the possibility that *Cogewea* actively plays with expectations of white audiences and by so doing subverts ideologies of Native people as vanishing, endangered, or noble-savages.

#### Cogewea as Queer Figure

*Cogewea* resists gendered expectations of herself as a woman and a Native American, resisting colonial compartments of both. *Cogewea*’s resistance to heteronormative gendered and racial classification establishes one way to read her identity as queer. Early in the novel Jim recognizes that *Cogewea* does not always adopt an entirely idealized feminine identity: “You’r ‘bout the queerest I ever saw. Sometimes you talk nice and fine, then next time maybe yo go ramblin’ just like some preacher-woman or schoolmarm. Can’t always savey you.” (33). Jim points out that *Cogewea* does not fit western standards of femininity because she vacillates between two depictions of

women in early 20<sup>th</sup> century America: being a “proper” lady and a suffragette. Cogewea’s rejection of passive gender roles mark her as “queer.” While readers should not over-read Mourning Dove’s usage of the word “queer” in this section, within the scope of the text, Mourning Dove’s language does include heteronormative resistance. Silent Bob says, “I’m a thinkin’ yo’ all’d make a good preacher woman. Them there kind what wants ter be made perlice wimin an’ jedges an’ th’ main push. Wantin’ to wear th’ breeches an’ boss th’ hull shebang” (42). Cogewea jokingly asks Silent Bob what he means, forcing him to clarify that he speaks of “them there wimmin what go out an’ make speeches an’ everythin’ else” (42). Despite the narrator’s claim that “He knew that the girl mean right, despite her odd, ‘foreward’ ways,” Cogewea points out that she cannot decipher if he meant his remarks as “a compliment, joke, or slur” (42). Silent Bob may simply be playfully teasing Cogewea, but her response clarifies that she herself does not fully know the limits to his playfulness.

Cogewea herself presents the possibility that Silent Bob may be earnest in his appraisal of Cogewea, a woman whose actions, speech, and expectations elide her with women who want the “hull shebang,” including donning masculine clothes, professions, and performance. By raising the question of gender as performance, Mourning Dove fully presents Cogewea as queer. Piatote notes that Native American men and women were expected to perform publicly gender identification. Yet, Cogewea appears to flaunt her rejection of heteronormative, colonial gendering. In fact, Silent Bob’s “teases” Cogewea in part to ascertain her own views of her gender performance, suggesting that despite admiring her, he is also uneasy about the role she plays and his inability to pin her down. And he is not the only person who notes that Cogewea does not operate within the gender

standards of her day for she concedes to Jim, “That’s what others tell me,” rejoins Cogewea, establishing that other people in her society in addition to Jim notice her “queerness” (33).

Jim and Silent Bob both seem to place Cogewea into the compartment of suffragette, and such a position would mean that Cogewea rejects standards of white femininity while also resisting expected standards of assimilated Native femininity (at least by colonial standards). Alfred tries to place Cogewea into a similar position, as seen above, making her into a picturesque statue of Native femininity. Even there, though, Cogewea challenges passive femininity: she simply refuses to stay quiet. Alfred violently accosts her and states “The more quiet you are the better it is going to be for you. I am giving you warranted consideration,” but Cogewea refuses. Even as Alfred beats her, she taunts him, “Give my back my gun! You may keep you big one but I will not fear, though I am a woman” (265). Alfred does not miss Cogewea’s challenge to his masculinity, who “winced at this challenge” and who replies, “that tongue of yours is now going to have a rest, if I meet my guess” (265). While Cogewea at this point “loftily disdained” replying to Alfred, a reader should not see this as silencing her. The narrator points out that she knew “the futility of resistance . . . submitting without a word” as he ties her to a tree and gags her (265). The fact that he gags her, suffices to attest that she would not stay quiet long. In order to make Cogewea into standard, colonial depictions of femininity, Alfred must tie her up, disarm her, and silence her. Her voice marks her as “queer,” refusing to play social roles of gendered performance. At times the men around her joke about her refusal to play by heteronormative social roles for women and even seem intrigued by it,

they must negotiate their unease with Cogewea's repudiation of such gendered performances.

Cogewea emerges as queer in relation to expectations of herself as woman and Native American. As Beth Piatote articulates, *Mourning Dove's* novel concerns itself with assimilation specifically in relation to Native American gender roles. Piatote points that Native men and women had to enact Western gender roles in order to control their finances and be deemed competent (110-114). Cogewea controls her finances, establishing that to some extent, she has assimilated the gender and political role for an assimilated woman. While the novel would seem to suggest that boarding school encourages Native women to jettison "Indian coyness and modesty of manner" (43), Cogewea would emerge as a fully assimilated woman. However, part of Jim's concern and even later Alfred's disdain of Cogewea is that she rejects Euro-American standards of femininity. The novel sets up a dichotomy between primitive femininity on the one hand and Cogewea's more expressive, voluble expression of womanhood on the other. Perhaps unwittingly, *Mourning Dove* has colluded with a colonial stereotype of Native women. It is precisely because Cogewea does not interpolate herself into passive femininity that marks her as queer: she is unique and exuberantly expresses her own selfhood even though it places her at odds with the expectations for her. Cogewea expresses a desire to write, to record her experiences as a Native woman, and it is this emphasis on language that places her outside the patriarchal and colonial expectations of woman. Colonial depictions of Native women often emphasize a binary between demure/savage femininity or their fully assimilated acceptance of white gendered expectations, but Cogewea does neither.

## Race and Primitivism: *Cogewea* as Modernist Text

*Cogewea* raises questions about romantic gendered representations of Native people while simultaneously linking such depictions with racial performance, especially within a rubric of primitivism. If critics often focus on the disparate voices of the novel, some critics have used that discussion in order to articulate the novel's relation to modernity. Like other scholars, Linda Karell launches into a discussion of the dialogic elements of the novel, remarking that *Cogewea* is "marked by splinters and fractures, as resisting simplistic and stereotyped understanding of an essentialized Native American harmony, one perhaps desired by a white audience in search of a redemptive spirituality" (458). Karell establishes the novel in relationship to Modern America's cultural ennui. A key feature of modernism is the desire to look to "primitive" people to combat their own fears of the changes of 20<sup>th</sup> century, caused by the extreme violence of World War I, industrialization, and the urbanization of early 20<sup>th</sup> century life. Readers of *Cogewea* see such interest with "primitivism" with Alfred's attempt to find primitive Native people but even to some extent with Frenchy's desire to become a cowboy.

Like Karell, in "Mourning Dove's *Cogewea*: Writing Her Way into Modernity," Alicia Kent establishes the relationship between modernism and *Cogewea*, questioning to what extent critics should inscribe the novel within modernism. In her introduction, Kent argues that referencing modernism and the novel "seems a slippery and questionable endeavor" in part because the novel "fits none of the many paradigmatic definitions of modernism" even though it does represent "a pivotal role in our understanding of the modern movement" (39). Part of Kent's thesis stems from the assumption that modernist texts often concern themselves with breaking free from the past" (40). Kent suggests that

critics conceptualize modernism and Native literature in relationship to assimilationist Federal policies that actively attempted to force Native communities into modernity (43). She then suggests conceptualizing a new form of modernism: Native Modernity, which would fall between the years 1887-1934, overlapping with Mourning Dove's own life (43). But *Cogewea does* insert itself into discussions of modernism with themes of assimilation and cultural survival (41). The novel and its heroine, according to Kent, serve "As the cultural mediator ... between the traditional and the modern, attempting to write her tribe's cultural existence into the future. Preservation becomes a conservative act of maintaining traditions, but it is also a proactive step to envision one's survival in the future through the preserved tradition" (45). Additionally, Mourning Dove's play with and against the western genre suggests a "hybrid of genre, form, and language" (46). I agree especially as I show how the novel's hybridity underscores the queerness of the text as a means of resisting colonial representation and gendered and racial policing.

Like Karell and Kent, Delia Narduzzi critically engages with *Cogewea* in relationship to modernism, specifically as it corresponds with depictions of nature, femininity, and indigeneity. "Modernity," according to Rita Felskis' *Gender of Modernity*, which Narduzzi quotes, "embraces a multidimensional array of historical phenomena that cannot be prematurely synthesized into a unified Zeitgeist[;] ... the discourses of modernity reveal multiple and conflicting responses to processes of social change" (qtd in 62). Narduzzi's concern, then, is understanding the conflicting paradigms of modernity that shape *Cogewea*. Part of that involves an ecocritical discussion about how *Cogewea* negotiates pervasive myths that conceptualize Native women as intrinsically linked to the earth and embodied by it (66-67). While interacting with

landscape, Cogewea emerges as a character separate *from* landscape, questioning her relationship to place that is increasingly characterized by colonial factors and ecological destruction (67). Consequently, *Cogewea*'s modernity stems not from a woman "who aligns herself with the forces of modernization" but from the eponymous character's relationship to the land and an occupier of that land (69). In her discussion of modernity, Narduzzi also raises the issue of performance of race as well. In her interaction with Liz Conor's *The Spectacular Modern Woman: Feminine Visibility in the 1920s*, Narduzzi points out that Aboriginal women's "appearance" on modernity's stage "was only in mimicry of white women, and of course she could only be 'not quite white.' She only succeeded in appearing to be comic, abject, or reduced to fetishized object" (qtd in 71). As primitive Other, Aboriginal women were erased by modernity, objectified and abjected (71). Whereas White women saw themselves as emerging on the social and political stage, they often conceptualized brown and aboriginal women "at the end of theirs" (Conor qtd 71). Cogewea fights invisibility and blending into the land, resisting such racist assumptions (Narduzzi 73).

Addressing the relationship of *Cogewea* and modernity is not a simple exercise in literary movements, but rather opens up discussion about the novel's handling of cultural change and even the contradictions in the text about hybridity. While Karell argues that Mourning Dove would not have access to the education and economic privilege necessary "to intellectually participate directly in the moment" (453-454), I actually see the discussion of primitivism within the novel as a sign that Mourning Dove is acutely aware of modernism. She resists the modern impulse to paint picturesque depictions of Native people as primitive people. So while I disagree with Karell's assertion that

Mourning Dove does not participate in modernism directly, she is absolutely right that the novel disrupts notions of Native identity by “presenting ethnic groups as dynamically changing, unstable, and multiple constituted entities” (460-1).

The fraught relationship between tradition and modern change resounds throughout the novel, especially the uneasy depictions of change, cultural authenticity, and hybridity. Bernadin notes that Mourning Dove’s title establishes a break with depictions of Natives in that the use of the Okanogan name for chipmunk, *Cogewea*, lends authenticity to the novel at the same time that the inclusion of “half-blood” would distance such claims of authenticity because of its emphasis on hybridity and miscegenation (495). Utilizing trickster like techniques that undermine and destabilize the American western genre, Mourning Dove contests McWhorter’s own collusion with a call for cultural purity and fears of Natives as vanishing, providing a nuanced “revision of the vanishing, victimizes Indian and demonized ‘half-blood’ embedded in popular cultural” (496). McWhorter wanted *Cogewea* to end tragically, but Mourning Dove prevailed (502).

As a modernist text, it is not surprising that the novel reveals troubling concerns about the role of modernity shaping American culture and society, especially as it pertains to Native Americans. Part of this dissertation’s goal is to point out how white America increasingly looked to Native Americans as bastions of primitivism in early 20<sup>th</sup> century America, demanding Native Americans to perform “authentic” traditionalism. Like *Cogewea*, such racial performances, however, actually undermined essentialist discourses about Native American. Mimicking social expectations and racialized performances reveal multiple Native identities and ways they could manipulate such

representations to subvert and challenge colonial authority. So much of the text is an interrogation of the taxonomy of mixed-raced Native Americans and concern about this group, especially as such individuals like Cogewea would not tacitly fit in the binary between “primitive” Native Americans and Modern white Americans. Part of the contradiction of the text results from the uneasy attempt to put Native people into boxes.

At the close of the Fourth of July festivities, the novel breaks with the larger concerns of its eponymous heroine to deliver a diatribe on Native music, dance, and threats of “contamination,” revealing fear of cultural change. The writer begins by arguing that Native music is “discordant and monotonous to the whites, [while it] is all rhythm to the Indian ear. The sudden break in time and pitch has a significance well understand by the initiated” (73-74). The section of the novel takes great pains in establishing a binary between untrained white audiences and the “initiated.” At this point in the commentary, the writer does not racialize the term initiated, but alludes that a mostly white audience would not appreciate true Native music. However, the narrator earlier had argued that white spectators jeopardize the authenticity of Native dances, “These ceremonies, held sacred by the more primitive tribesmen, are now, shame to say, commercialized and performed for a pittance contributed by white spectators who regard all in the light of frivolity” (59). What begins to take shape, then, is a concern with changes of Native culture by individuals who are not “initiated” in understanding Indian aesthetics. As the passage continues, the narrator indicts Native youth, suggesting that that the term “initiated” refers to individuals who wholly reject cultural change and hybridity. What the narrator seems to fault most of all is Native young men who betray outside influences: “See those young men! Their slouchy ‘*traipsing*’ tells of contact with

the meaningless ‘waltz’ and suggestive ‘hugs’ and ‘trots’ of the higher civilization—a vulgarity—a sacrilegious burlesque on an ancient and religiously instituted ceremony. Like other of his tribal cultures, the Indian’s dance is suffering in modifications not always to be desired as morally beneficial” (emphasis in original 75). The narrator places the young men in relation to an older man “whose movements denote the gliding serpent—the crouching panther—the stalking cougar—the leaping mountain-cat—the on-rushing swoop of the aerial eagle. Mark that visiting, stately Nez Perce! Although facing the sunset, decadence shows not on his sinewy form. . . . His step is that of the conqueror rather than that of the vanquished and fallen” (75). Taken collectively, the narrator’s juxtaposition between a picturesque man “facing the sunset” and the “sacrilegious burlesque” reveal uneasy sexual connotation between hybridity and purity. The old man represents the threat of dying out and immobility while the youth in their adoption of new steps and hybrid dance steps represent a moral corruption. In strange feminized rhetoric, the young men who change parade their difference as a burlesque, a word simultaneously connoting performance of strip-tease, parody, and mimicry.

Any change to Native “authenticity” becomes a threat at various points of *Cogewea* and reveals a preoccupation with maintaining clear markers of cultural difference and purity. The narrator reveals that change to Native community in any form becomes something immoral, perhaps even unnatural, and by placing the young men in opposition to a powerful warrior, queers their identity. The old man represents virility, honor, and morality, a view established between his description as a conqueror. However, the young men have allowed themselves to be corrupted by outsiders and as a result

engage in a sacrilegious display of hybridity—they blur the boundary between modern and primitive.<sup>xix</sup>

More than any other issue in the novel, Cogewea's performance of racial and cultural identity queers clear taxonomies. Early in the novel, Cogewea takes it upon herself to show the limits of categorizing individuals, of the colonial intent that Native Americans should remain forever locked in picturesque imaginings as primitive people. Her dialogue with Alfred merely repeats an understated position of culture as performative and not essentialist. Alfred can turn Native, but might not Cogewea turn white? For the narrator who attends cultural amalgamation at the Fourth of July dance, the answer is a resounding no, as the speaker derides Native people who include the Waltz step in their tribal dance, but for Cogewea the answer is yes. Cogewea negotiates multiple sides to her identity, but she always remains clear about her selfhood. And it is that chameleon like ability at negotiating culture that challenges notions of primitiveness and essentialism in the novel.

#### Mimicry of Identity at the Races

The most pronounced discussion of cultural performance and of Cogewea's ability to operate between a binary space of white and Native cultures occurs at the Fourth of July Race, which occurs fairly early in the narrative as a whole. As a foreshadowing for the queer context as a whole, Cogewea unashamedly calls into question colonial imagining of Native and white culture by *performing* both. Beth Piatote notes that Native people were systematically taught white gender rules. As a novel *Cogewea* also points out that part of assimilation was teaching Native people to be *Indian*. Even if they were to deny that identity, colonial education involved careful

taxonomy of what an Indian *is* and then why they should reject such cultural displays in favor of white society. The dis-ease of that colonial education is that Native people were no longer always operating as walking displays of primitive cultures; simultaneously the danger also involved hybridity and slippage between clear taxonomies of cultural and racial identities. The scene of the Fourth of July Race powerfully points out the danger of such slippage. A number of critics have discussed this important scene. Susan Bernardin argues that “Cogewea disrupts the rigid racial and gender roles assigned to ‘ladies’ and ‘Squaws’” (498). Alicia Kent also sees the race scene as Cogewea’s claiming “her bicultural identity in sharp contrast to those who try to ‘pass’ as either one or the other” (49), which shows Mourning Dove’s rewriting of “the role of the tragic half-blood,” a mainstay in 19<sup>th</sup> century American literature (49). Margaret A. Lukens sees the scene as indicative of the novel as a whole:

Mourning Dove sets up a clear polarity between white and Native cultures, illustrated in the novel by events such as the Fourth of July segregated horse races for ‘Ladies’ and for ‘Squaws’ ... and by the sharp contrast between the greedy desires of the white villain, Densmore, and the traditional Okanogan wisdom of Cogewea’s grandmother. In the process of the story Mourning Dove takes Cogewea through experiences of the antithetical nature of these cultures, defines and constructs a middle ground where half-blood people can exist fully, without pressure from either the white or Indian world. (416)

In “From ‘Half-Blood; to ‘Mixedblood’: *Cogewea* and the ‘Discourse of Indian Blood,’” Arnold Krupat provides an interesting and provocative observation about the scene.

Krupat discusses the racist and cultural hegemonies at play for “half-blood” Natives in early 20<sup>th</sup> century American (121), placing racial depictions of Native people against and with increasing racialized criteria of African Americans (122-5). After a thorough and commanding discussion of race and blood, he notes in passing, that *Cogewea* “suggests something that goes against the grain of discourse of blood that otherwise dominates the novel, namely that identity may be a matter of performance” (126).

The scene opens with Cogewea and Jim discussing the day’s races: one for Indian women and one for White women. Cogewea states: “If there’s any difference between a squaw and a lady, I want to know it. I am going to pose as both for this day” (59). By qualifying her sentence with *if*, Cogewea has already asserted a belief that no difference exists. However, by stating she will pose as both, she effectively states that the taxonomy of both relies on acting, and not on any inherent essentialist identity. In order to create her masquerade, she tells Jim:

“I’m going over to the Kootenais and rent a buckskin dress. I have no native costume and this garb would be a dead give away; Then mounting, Cogewea cantered to the Kootenai camp, where she had but little difficulty in securing a complete tribal dress. Very soon she came from the tepee in full regalia, her face artistically decorated with varied paints. The Indian children saw and giggled among themselves. Remounting, she doubled the bright shawl over her knees, lapping it securely. When she rode back to the track, the “H-B” boys recognized her only by the horse. (65)

Cogewea so well plays the part of a Native woman that her friends from the ranch do not recognize her, noticing her identity only through her horse; however, other men notice

her, reiterating the danger of primitive colonial fascination with Native women as other. One observer pointedly states: “Some swell looker for a Kootenai squaw, eh?” Might good pickin’ for a young feller like you. Wish I wasn’t so badly married! I’d sure keep an eye out for her. But the Missus would raise a hurry-Cain if she knowed that I rather like some of the squaws around here” (65). The narrator later adds that “The young man’s reply was of like sinister import, and then they began conversing in lowered tones” (65). While the narrator fails to declare explicitly the conversation between the two men, the meaning is clear: the men only see Cogewea as a sexual object, one for short term pleasure. Such rhetoric prefigures Alfred’s own discussion of Cogewea when he states, “a be-pistoled woman who can swear a little on occasions may be picturesque, but she is no mate for a gentleman of the upper society” (81). Here, though, the implication is that a Native woman can function in other ways for the nefarious designs of sexual predators. The men freely discuss their sexual desire for Cogewea because they assume she does not know English, a result from her successful performance.

Cogewea uses her dual performance to mount her own victory. In her drag performance of racialized identity, Cogewea enters the race and wins just as she had the white woman’s race when she wore “A riding habit of blue corduroy fitted her slender form admirably. Red, white and blue ribbons fastened her hair, which streaming to the racer’s back, lent a picturesque wildness to her figure” (62). While both white riders and Native riders challenge Cogewea’s rightfulness in participating in the race, she maintains her ability to be in both. I see this scene as a moment of queerness in the novel. While so much of the novel attempts to police performance of Native identity, Cogewea queers expectations of Native and White women. She does these by donning a Native dress at a

moment when assimilationist ideologies encouraged adoption of Euro-American dress, but she also disrupts the foundation of identity, performing a burlesque of her own. Even the judges of the race fail to recognize Cogewea as the same person, and when they renounce her prize for the “ladies race,” Jim responds to such injustice, questioning: “take it that the little gal bein’ a squaw, she can’t be a lady! Is that it? She’s a waitin’ to hear you say that. Tell these here people your ’cisin regardin’ the character of the little gal” (69) Jim well knows that “character” is not the issue at the “race” but Racial profiling is. In a colonial taxonomy, one could be Indian or White, but certainly not both. Cogewea’s own response is to fling the prize money in the Judges face, screaming: “Take your tainted money! I do not want to touch any thing polluted by having passed through your slimy hands! ... since you are disbursing racial prizes regardless of merit or justice” (70). In both races, Cogewea epitomizes the expectations for patriarchal, heteronormative women. She is an object of colonial fascination for one and a patriotic picturesque figure in another. Both roles rely on a certain objectified status as sexual objects, both performances fulfill standards of race and culture. However, the judge, onlookers, and even fellow participants cannot agree on which singular identity Cogewea should act.

By refusing to adopt a singular identity and instead claiming multiple visions and versions of herself, Cogewea both as a character and novel trumps colonial taxonomies. Part of colonial enterprise is the act of naming and classifying in order to create subjects, Cogewea refuses to be easily placed into an either/or compartment. While that choice often leads to feelings of isolation, it effectively throws into relief rhetoric of essentialism and difference that relied on notions of inherited culture and identity to function. The foundation for mimicry is recognizing that the colonial process both relies on Native

difference as other in order to self-fashion colonial self and to legitimate continued colonial authority of Native subjects. Just as a colonial subject who “mimics” whiteness disrupts the foundation of otherness and the signifying process of colonialism, Cogewea perfectly performs a dual role. Her performance of Whiteness and Nativeness articulate that race exists as a series of signs that observers can interpret and then use to assign an identity to someone. Like the hybridity of the dancers following the Fourth of July Races, Cogewea’s performance suggests she operates within an economy of personal selfhood that refuses to be easily contained, slipping between extremes to subvert the very foundations of colonialism and patriarchy. Cogewea’s slippage even places her odds with the narrator, who at times attempts to cordon off Native people. While they may result from polyphony of the text itself or betray her editor’s revision of key moments in the text, the emphasis on Cogewea’s queer mimicry of colonial expectations challenges colonial discourses of purity, even discourses that surface within the pages of the novel itself. The queer presence emerges in key episodes of the book, and exploring queerness in the novel attest to the novel’s capabilities of launching wide-ranging critiques against colonialism, specifically in relation to gender performativity. *Cogewea* presents non-standard forms of gender and homoerotic relationships and that queerness surfaces in relation to the cultural and racial productions of Cogewea’s own performances. Undermining the operation of heteronormativity, *Cogewea* galvanizes readers to think about identity creation, politics, and the rubrics of signification that enable and sustain colonial exclusion.

## CHAPTER IV

### GENDERED PERFORMANCE AND RACISM IN JOHN JOSEPH MATHEWS' *SUNDOWN*

Like *Cogewea*, John Joseph Mathews' *Sundown* (1934) links gender performance with racialized expectations of Native Americans in Modern America. The novel charts the creation of the Osage Reservation in north-central Indian Territory, the creation of the state of Oklahoma, discovery of rich oil deposits on the Osage Reservation, and the Reign of Terror that marked the middle years of the 1920s until the collapse of the oil reserves. Even though Mathews weaves those events into his narrative, they only provide a backdrop for the text. While scholarship on the novel often focuses on the historical context of the novel, it often overlooks the novel's concerns of queer masculinity and indigeneity.

*Sundown* articulates the pressure of Native people following the assimilationist era, especially the increasingly polarization between adopting Euro-American identities and pressure to retain cultural identification with tribal and cultural values. The narrative follows Chal's birth, formative years at Indian boarding school, entrance into college at

the University of Oklahoma, his role in World War I as an aviator, and his life on the Osage Reservation after he retires from his war duties. For Chal, the pressures between performing white masculinity and maintaining an Osage identity always boil beneath the surface, punctuating and disrupting a novel that reveals the fractures of American governance of Native people in 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> America.

*Sundown* focuses on Chal's attempt to perform white heteronormative expectations of masculinity while negotiating his homoerotic/homosocial fascination with men. Chal mimics what he thinks to be white cultural values and gendered expectations while he also emerges as a character obsessed with masculinity and same sex relationships. Throughout the novel, readers confront images of homosocial bonding and outright "queer" relationships, eerily vacillating between homosocial and homoerotic bonds between men and the perennial threat of Native "queerness." In this chapter of my dissertation, I argue that Mathews contests colonial gendering and racial expectations through the queer depictions of the novel's protagonist, Chal. My analysis suggests that Mathews articulates how settler colonial gender expectations disallow Native inclusion, especially as *Sundown* configures indigeneity as queer. However, Chal's character reveals how sexuality and race find expression in mimicked performance, as his character obsesses about his ability (and lack thereof) to perform correct white standards of manliness. Chal's mimicry of both whiteness and Native identity undermines essentialist discourses of race and gender, revealing both as performative. While Chal himself may never successfully undermine colonial oppression, the novel as a whole presents a scathing critique of romantic depictions of Native men and bridges the early work of

writers such as Zitkala-Ša and Mourning Dove as I discuss in my first two chapters, and the playful mimicry of Woody Crumbo that I address in Chapter 4.

In this chapter I begin with a discussion of the romantic depictions of Native people that proliferate the text, suggesting that Mathews consciously positions his text in relation to Modernist' fascination with Native people as romantic figures. I then discuss how the novel's paradoxical fear and fascination with hybridity suggest how Mathews undermines romantic notions of Native Americans, especially in the manifestation of queer gendered and racial performances in the novel. Focusing on the text's emphasis on gendered performance, I suggest Chal ruptures essentialist racial discourses as he mimics white and Osage gendered expectations. Chal must confront his own expectations of gender difference, as he negotiates his own slippage between racial and gendered performance. Such analysis reflects ways that Chal constantly wrestles with a queer identity both in his desire for homosocial/homoerotic relationships, but also in an indigenous identity as odds with white masculinity.

#### *Sundown's* Engagement with Modernism and Osage History

*Sundown* follows the history of the Osage Nation from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century through the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Those years include the discovery of oil on the Osage Reservation, hysteria and mass movement of outsiders to the reservation, the ensuing racial violence of the Osage Reign of Terror, collapse of the oil reserves, and subsequent mass exodus of settler colonialists (Gillan 2). Much of the scant scholarship on *Sundown* focuses on Osage allotment, oil rights, and the violence to Osage people during the "Reign of terror." Like other Native tribes in Indian Territory, the Osage become targets for assimilationist policies, including education policies and allotment of land. The Osage

settled in Northern Oklahoma after paying the “Cherokee Nation for land in Indian territory” (Hunter “Protagonist”321). Because the Osage owned the land-base of the reservation, they were able to maintain greater control over the land and resources, resisting the Dawes Allotment Act. Many of the Osage opposed the Dawes Act and although they were unable to exempt the tribe from allotment, their protests forestalled allotment to a time much later than that enforced on other tribes, by which point they were aware of the presence of oil on their reservation land. In 1906, in a radical legal and political maneuver, they agreed to privatize their ‘surface’ land but not its subsurface mineral resources. Thus, while ceding the communal ownership of their land, the Osage gained an ‘underground reservation,’ and the tremendous profits derived from oil were divided equally among all tribal members. (Musiol 362-363)

When prospectors discovered oil on the reservation, the Osage become quite wealthy because of their subsurface oil reservation. In the 20s, the Osage were “known as the richest people per capita in the world as the result of the discovery of the discovery of valuable oil deposits. Osage oil leases and the royalties, until around the 1930s, brought in millions of dollars per year. These leases were obtained by oil companies through a public auction held three times a year under an old tree. .... [T]he Osage tribe also attracted the attention of the national media” (Hunter “Historical” 67). Because of the wealth of Osage people, a number of white men married Osage woman to gain access to their royalties. Many of these men later murdered their wives, culminating in an Osage “reign of terror” (Hunter “Historical”68).

While many critics of *Sundown* have focused on the history of Osage people in the novel, other have charted the novel's relationship with modernism. In "Formulating a Native American Modernism in John Joseph Mathews' *Sundown*," Christopher Schedler's argues that "modernism is not as homogenous and totalizing as it appears in ... criticism" (Schedler 130). In the essay he suggests ways of conceptualizing "border modernism," which he says is "often predicated on a greater connection to place, history, community, and the 'other'" (Schedler 130). Schedler articulates how in "border' modernism ... the external world is seen as constitutive of the self, and identity is more often explored through identification with those defined as culturally, racially, or linguistically 'other'" (Schedler 130-131). Chal is like other "isolated" "high" modernist protagonists, but "Mathews shows this form of identity is untenable to the modern American Indian" (Schedler 132). To support such a reading, Schedler notes that Chal functions as a "modernist artist-hero" who constantly looks for ways to self-express but never can fully actualize those desires (Schedler 133). The novel, according to Schedler, is an experiment in exploring ways that modernism could interact with Native representations of the self (Schedler 132). He fuses Native traditions and Western literary traditions to reach this end (Schedler 140).

Like Schedler, Hanna Musiol in "*Sundown* and 'Liquid Modernity' in Pawhuska, Oklahoma" argues that readers see the novel in relationship to the pressure of modernism, specifically capitalism and oil production. Musiol argues that the novel's title alludes to such an intersection, "indicated[ing] that petroleum ... effected a 'sundown' for Osage traditions, for a way of life, and for the prairie, 'where oil and salt water had killed every blade of grass'" (Musiol 360). Tracing the effects of the oil industry on Osage people,

Musiol argues that it “had a devastating economic, environmental, and social impact on reservation culture” (Musiol 360). Musiol also notes that the novel is “a narrative of the Osage ‘queer world’ as Chal calls it, of frenzied modernity, ‘liquid’ ... with petroleum as its emblem, no its cause. That is, oil is the character whose *Bildung* reveals the ‘liquefying’ forces of colonial modernity” (Musiol 366).

While scholars such as Musiol, Schedler, and Hunter address the novel, to various degrees, within its literary and political history, recent scholarship has broadened such discussion to focus on sexual politics in the novel. In “‘Tribes of Men’ John Joseph Mathews and Indian Internationalism,” Emily Lutenski articulates how John Joseph Mathews’ life not only parallels other American expatriates but is also “inflected” because of his native identity. Lutenski argues that Mathews’ transnational identity serves to deepen his interaction with his Osage identity and nationalism specifically in relationship to gender (Lutenski 40). Lutenski shows that, like Hemingway, Mathews asserts his Osage identity as a result of his travels, specifically his interactions with racially, culturally, and religiously different men in Northern Africa (Lutenski 44). Matthews, by describing his unification with the Kabyles, a Northern African people, creates a space of homosocial desire and relationships (Lutenski 44). Lutenski uses the trope of masculinity to complicate traditional perceptions of Mathews as an Osage writer, politician, and man (Lutenski 45). She addresses the larger discussion of Mathews as a Modernist, specifically his concern with the tensions between alienation and community (Lutenski 45-46).

In similar ways, Michael Snyder and Mark Rifkin articulate the queerness of *Sundown*. Rifkin discusses the novel’s “queerness” as an “alternative Osage forms of

sociospatiality, with their own complex temporal dynamics,” employing Albert Einstein’s theory of time to locate such alternative forms of temporality in the novel (Rifkin 36).

Rifkin suggests the novel is queer by “being out-of-sync with Euroamerican narratives of development, [and] it also marks the role of heteronormative conceptions of nuclear family property holding and racial identity/inheritance in the legal dynamics of Osage allotment” (Rifkin 37). In “The Hazards of Osage Fortunes: Gender and the Rhetoric of Compensation in Federal Policy and American Indian Fiction,” Jennifer Gillan articulates how history informs gender roles in the novel. Gillan argues that allotment and the adoption of white gender roles become linked with consumerism—especially as allotment broke up land held in tribal trust in favor of individual ownership and capitalist economic structure (8). Yet she also addresses how allotment encouraged white-heteronormative familiar dynamics, with a Native husband taking control over the family and his wife (Gillan 3). In “He Certainly Didn’t Want Anyone to Know that He Was Queer”: Chal Windzer’s Sexuality in John Joseph Mathews’s *Sundown*,” Michael Snyder suggests foregrounding issues of gender in the novel, especially through an analysis of Chal’s queerness. According to Snyder, “*Sundown* engages with issues of Native American male same-sex desire, despite almost total critical neglect of this fact. .... Chal’s sexuality indicates a problematic silence and taboo surrounding same-sex desire within the community” (Snyder 28). While such work provides useful commentary on ways to approach analysis of *Sundown*, it fails to address the interplay of racial and gendered performance in the novel. In the first two chapters of this dissertation, I explore pervasive images of Native people as romantic savages and/or children of Nature. Working within such frames, Zitkala-Ša and Mourning Dove create spaces that

undermine and resist static notions of indigeneity. While not always dismissing such racist depictions of Native people, they nevertheless invite their readers to question colonial governance of Native people. In both instances their works reveal how mimicry and performance reveal cracks and fissures about static notions of race and sexual difference, which *Sundown* echoes as the novel's emphasis on mimicry reveals race and gender as performative.

#### *Sundown's* Textual Modernity

*Sundown* re-asserts an interest with and against the tension, excitement, and fear of modernism, which Schedler, Musiol, and Schedler address. Lines such as "Far from the screeching of the mechanism of Progress, the little Agency slept peacefully in the winter sun" (42) and "Awaken to the optimistic voice of Progress" (62) add a pulse of change and modernization to the heartbeat of the text. Throughout the novel, readers glimpse depictions of rural Oklahoma and the pressure for Native people to assimilate, yet they are not the only portraits of the tension of modernity. The juxtaposition of modernity and tradition materialize throughout the text, such as Mathews' emphasis on women's changing fashions and sexual mores, a point that resonates with Gillan's research on the novel. Far from anecdotal, the text's concern with changes of gendered performance presage themes of change, progress, and social disruption in *Sundown*. Such examples also articulate race and gender as performative, which Chal's vacillation between white and Osage masculine identities suggests.

Throughout *Sundown*, Chal and the narrator offer insight into the changing face of American society and culture, specifically according to gender. Chal comments on gendered expectations when he begins his university studies. Early in his college days,

Chal's fraternity brothers invite him to take a young, popular sorority woman named Blo to a dance. The scene leading up to the dance switches narration to include caveats of Blo and her sorority sisters' preparation to the dance. At one point, the narrator switches to dialogue between one young lady, Gladys, and Blo. Blo is getting dressed and Gladys declares, "The old gal would've hit the ceilin' if she'd seen you--goin' to dance without your corset." (120). Blo ignores Gladys's observation, simply asking: "Say, what did the cats say about my shavin' under my arms?" before moving to a mirror to apply her lipstick (120). Blo's remarks gesture to dramatic shifts in gendered performance in early 20<sup>th</sup> century America as she shaves, jettisons her corset, and wears cosmetics. While Blo will play with and against standards of femininity, Chal seems locked in static notions of femininity and sexuality.

Gender performance enables Chal to compartmentalize women. While at college, Chal overhears his fraternity brothers discussing sex and women. While the narrator states that Chal "couldn't see why there was so much importance attached to such natural things, and why the brothers laughed and looked as though they were secretly enjoying something that was forbidden," he at least participates in listening to the conversation (140). Chal thus knows that when his brothers "talked about 'chickens' he knew that they were talking about professional women, and he knew that they differed from 'nice' girls, but he couldn't see why they talked so much about it" (140). Chal relies on the division between "nice" girls and "chickens" in his own sexual adventures when he enlists in the air force. While practicing and studying aviation, he meets an older woman, Lou, who eventually invites him to her room.<sup>xx</sup> While there, she smokes a cigarette with him. The narrator comments, "He had never seen a woman smoke a cigarette before, and knew that

it was considered daring and not quite the thing” (206). Later when the two dance, “she danced too close and he couldn’t dance so well (207). Chal feels “exhilarated” despite “the fact that his thoughts had been very primitive” (207). Chal euphemistically couches his sexual desire in terms of primitivism in this scene. Despite acknowledging that he was not “supposed to feel that way about nice women,” he reminds himself that “she smoked cigarettes—what did that mean, he wondered” (207). Chal’s ability to read Lou’s gestures precipitates their brief affair; however, later in the novel, his ability to maintain such pet gender categories fracture and crumble.

The novel discloses Chal’s interior thoughts on gender, yet the changes to men and women’s roles in the 1920s collide with Chal’s earlier beliefs about sexuality and gender performance. Readers see such a view when later in the novel Chal sees a young lady from his school days. The narrator comments, “Chal noticed that Marie’s skirts were shorter than any of the skirts in town. He wondered how they could become any shorter (247). He is further surprised when Marie both smokes a cigarette in public and asks for Chal to get her an alcoholic drink. The narrator reminds readers that “only faster girls in town” smoked in public (247) and that “the idea of Marie Fobus of the Pi’s, the strait-laced, intolerant, virginal Marie Fobus asking for a drink was a surprise to him” (248). Earlier when Chal met Lou, he is able to react to her subtle clues in determining whether to have a sexual relationship with her because of clear gendered roles. However, Marie’s flagrant disregard for social expectations surprises him. While he remembers Marie as “strait-laced” and “virginal,” it appears that Chal has difficulty reconciling changing notions of gender performance: she no longer fits in his definition of a “nice girl.” The novel reveals fissures to identity that complicate how readers confront both sexuality and

race in the text. Such constructions, subtly reinforce how race is also constructed through performance. While Chal struggles with changing perceptions of sex and gender roles, his views of race do not seem to change, largely reflecting settler colonialist's monolithic racialized expectations.

Marie challenges Chal's binary construction of sexuality and gender, analogously to an ongoing discussion of the difference between a "lady" and "nice girl" in *Sundown*. Readers glimpse such paradoxes in the character of Blo. Blo is forward thinking young woman who jettisons her corsets and wears makeup. Following her dance with Chal, she engages with a performance of her sexuality identity. She plays against the divide of "chicken" and "nice girl," negotiating the binary construction for women that Chal seems to reify. The narrator states that after Blo returned from the dance: "She limped toward the closet to get her nightgown, but as she passed the mirror she stopped to look. She caught sight of her face, which seemed distorted, and she came closer and held it up to the glass" (127). Mirrors surface throughout *Sundown*, and reveal an important trope of identity construction, re-assessment, and performance; in fact, this is the second scene in which readers see Blo look into the mirror. Blo had earlier looked into the mirror as she prepares for the dance. While looking into the mirror the narrator proclaims that Blo thought she looked like a "dream," which for her "meant the same thing" as being "glorious" (121). Blo has created an image of herself, applying her lipstick "Carefully and lightly" so that the "the old cats might [not] see it" (120). While Blo creates a socially acceptable vision of herself before the dance, she fully flaunts those social roles in the second scene in which she performs a burlesque sexual performance.

Blo's second mirror scene creates a fascinating discussion of gender and performance, especially as Blo seems to perform a non-white sexualized vision of herself. Her performance provides important ways to theorize Chal's sexuality, as both seem preoccupied with depictions of "primitive" sexuality. Once Blo looks into the mirror, she begins to dance before the mirror smiling at her reflection while spinning (127-8). Blo turns away from the mirror to retrieve a shawl, and it is at this moment that Blo the "nice girl" begins to perform a more sexual role:

She went back to the closet, rummaged there a while, then came out holding a red shawl, which her uncle had sent to her mother from Panama. She undressed as she looked at herself in the mirror. When she was quite naked except for her stockings, she stood for some moments and appreciated the beauty of her hips and her rounded thighs. .... She liked to look at herself this way--the stockings made it look daring and--and--kinda--it gave you a queer, ticklish feeling. She pulled off her stockings and spent some minutes draping the shawl around her, leaving one breast only half hidden, and drawing the shawl tight around her middle, the tassels dancing with every movement. Just as she was about to change to another position, she heard a sound at the door. (128)

Blo has just enough time to grab a dressing gown and assume a more standard portrait of a herself, but the reader has already witnessed her transformation. Initially Blo stands naked before the mirror wearing only her stocking, which "made it looking daring." Subtly Mathews is describing what reader can only describe as a burlesque or strip-tease performance, daring because of who Blo is. The narration also suggests that Blo often

performs this ritual because she “liked to look at herself this way,” meaning that Blo at least occasionally executes this ceremony.

Blo subverts standards of “good girls” in her celebration of her own sexual prowess but also in her ambiguous cultural performance. Taking a shawl from Panama, Blo begins a striptease performance, “leaving one breast only half hidden.” In the scene, Blo seems to play with representations of sexuality and with a fascination with material from exotic locations. Her uncle sends the shawl from Panama, and it could potentially represent a cultural artifact that dominant White-American culture would see as different. In addition, the color of the shawl is red, a color that Chal associates with both Blo and traditional Osage culture, as readers glimpse when Blo and Chal go on another date together. When they meet, Chal sees that her “gown was red; red the color of the dawn, and to him came the picture of fire dancing” (147). The subtle, but nonetheless thread in Blo’s mirror scene seems to suggest that she plays with and against her social expectations, resulting in a moment of queerness. The narrative names queerness in the scene: her performance was “daring and—and—kinda—it gave [her] a queer, ticklish feeling” (128). Blo cannot define her feelings, and so the syntax quite literally breaks down. Disrupted by dashes, the sentence halts and breaks down before the narrator concedes that Blo has a “queer feeling.” Part of that queerness is Blo’s transgressive act. She subverts the role of the “nice girl” with the “chicken,” playing both roles. However, the use of the work queer also portends Blo’s own cultural performance. Blo refuses a single moment of identity. She appropriates markers of cultural difference to transgress a white American identity, albeit briefly, and that gendered and potentially disruptive cultural performance emerge as the creation of the “queer feeling,” while it also

introduces the link between indigeneity and queerness in the text. Blo is queer because she performs a role between gendered expectations of whiteness, with queerness marking the space between binary gendered performances but also the possibility of racial ambiguity and performance. By using queerness to define the moment Blo blurs the lines of her identity, Mathews forces the reader to connect her with Chal and his own “queerness.” Throughout the text, Chal continually states that he feels “queer.” Part of that queerness is the manifestation of his own homosocial/homoerotic relationships, but also it reveals Mathews attempt to wrestle with notions of masculinity defined by whiteness and Euro-American standards in *Sundown*.

#### Queerness and Chal

The topic of queerness and sexuality complicate and enrich scholarly discussions about both *Sundown* and American cultural expectations for Native men and women. Blo’s racial/sexual performance reveals the subtle ways that *Sundown* and American culture intricately entwine notions of race and sexuality. Chal seems to wrestle with ideas about sexuality, manifesting a divide between Osage and Euro-American notions of sexuality. Blo reveals a link between white American cultural expectations and heteronormativity. It is useful to recall that American assimilationist polices demanded Native men and women learn white notions of gender expectations, as my analysis of *Cogewea* presents. Similar to *Sun Dance Opera* and *Cogewea*, queerness and racialized performance become ways of negotiating de-colonial possibilities in *Sundown*. I have argued that queerness ruptures political and cultural essentialist identity categories. Queerness operates in similar ways in *Sundown*, with queerness revealing the fears and loss of (white) racialized masculinity. Chal becomes locked in a colonial rubric of

sexuality and race from which he cannot seem to recover. Carol Hunter notes this, arguing that, “Osage and white cultures created two realities for Chal so that his Indian values eventually conflicted with the values of white civilization. Consequently, he become psychologically crippled, emotionally stunted, and incapable of expressing his own character which resulted in alienation from his own self-worth and identity” (Hunter “Protagonist”324). Likewise, Hanna Musiol suggests that “Chal never ‘becomes’—he neither fully ‘Indianizes’ nor ‘civilizes’—and his cultural duality collapses within the narrative apparatus of the genre that expects him to progress and ‘achieve’ things” (Musiol 366). Just as he places women into two categories, he continually vacillates between polarized visions of Nativeness and masculinity. Carol Hunter adds, “[Chal] failed to meet the challenge of taking the best values of two worlds ... adjust[ing] these values into a viable lifestyle” (Hunter “Protagonist”334). Through his own collusion with colonial identity standards, Chal is unable successfully to negotiate the changes of Osage culture and history, forever locked within a colonial rubric of primitive (queer) Native on the one hand, or American (straight) man on the other.

At the start of *Sundown* readers must confront the text’s discussion of sexuality and masculinity. Chal’s father journeys into town to announce his son’s birth to a group of Osage men who congratulate him on finally having a son after the birth and death of a number of unnamed girls. One man in particular raises questions about his masculinity, stating: “‘For a long time I thought that you did not have strong juices in your body, but now since you have son I know that you have good juices.’ .... ‘They say it is good that son should come to lodge after many girls have come. I believe it is better since these girls have gone away’” (7). The words of the Native man link masculinity with strength

and reproduction, and yet as the novel continues Mathews' illustrates how assimilation disrupts and complicates Chal's gender identification.

When Chal begins to attend boarding school, his mixed-blood identity complicates his Native masculinity. On his first day of school, a group of young Native men deride him:

'Shug, look at that one—I bet he's aint got them things like a boy, ain't it,'  
'Shuh,' said another one, crowing up. 'Gurl, I bet.' They all laughed.  
'Sure, he's a gurl, ain't it.' 'Yeah, white gurl, that one.' 'Why don't you  
go the gurl's buildin' like all them?' ... 'Yu say you ain't no gurl?' Chal  
thought his own voice was very feeble. 'No,' he said, 'Ima a boy.' 'Ho—  
oo-ooo—oh, he says he's a boy.' ... He looked at their faces and they  
were expressing contempt. He was not afraid, but he was unhappy, and  
felt miserably along. ... The big boy came closer. 'Yu ain't little white  
gurl, huh? Yu look like little white gurl standin' there 'fraid. (28).

Unlike his father who must endure teasing about his masculinity, these boys tease Chal because he does not look like their version of Indian boys. Not only do they call into question his Osage identity but also his sexuality, rhetorically castrating him with suggestions that he "ain't got them things like a boy." Later that evening when his father learns that the schoolchildren harass Chal, he discusses another young man who was teased, Squit. Squit was Osage and Cherokee, and when the other schoolboys learn this, they began to tease him. The implication is that Chal is teased because he also is different from the other boys. Squit refused to engage with the Osage youth, and so they thought he lacked courage, "they figured he was a coward and they didn't like him 'cause he

wouldn't fight" (30). His father adds that his Native peers dismissed him, "Even to this day the men his age don't have much respect for him, so he fools around with the white people mostly—*neither fish nor fowl*, as the sayin' goes" (30 emphasis added). Squit's inability to perform standard notions of Indian masculinity alienates him. Similarly to Chal, Chal's father's narrative reveals that Squit's inability to fight leads to questions of his masculinity and indigeneity. Squit becomes an individual who never quite fits in—he is "neither fish nor fowl." His father's advice is "'to fight an Indian—just enough to show him you ain't 'fraid'" (31). Following his father's advice, Chal does fight the boys and wins the boy's respect.

Not only does Chal become friends with the Big Hill Native boys, but he also becomes friends with white boys. The ensuing relationship between this mixture reveals a moment of Chal's own view of sexuality and culture. The narrator seems to equalize all the players at this point in the novel, stating that "It was a surprise to Chal to find that the Big Hill boys were just like any of the others, and he soon accepted them just as he was beginning to accept the little white boys who were coming into the Agency" (34). Yet while the young men play together at a swimming hole, the narrator reveals the tensions with Chal's own vision of himself, white youth, and sexuality. Michael Snyder suggests that Chal is "consistently *fascinated* by the bodies of other boys and men . . . . Chal is curiously attracted yet repelled by the boys" at the watering hole (Snyder 33). At the swimming hole, Chal feels nervous around these newcomers. Close analysis of text, however, raises questions about Chal's nervousness, his fascination with male form, and racial difference. The narration begins by introducing a group of white boys "whom Chal had never seen" (36). Chal feels annoyed by their presence, telling his friends that:

he was going because the white boys stared so and made so much noise. As they undressed they began to shout at each other. . . . The Indian boys pretended not to see them, but there were so fascinated by some of things they heard that they lost interest in their game. One of the little boys on the bank used words like a freighter, and Chal thought he used them because he wanted to show the others how big he was. As they undressed and revealed white, glistening bodies, they kept using such fascinating words as ‘gee whiz,’ and ‘the hell yu bawl out, and ‘judas priest.’ . . . he had a feeling that their white bodies were indecent in some inscrutable way. He didn’t know why but he felt that they were a sort of sacrilege. (36-7)

The scene is complex, revealing a variety of inconsistencies and ambiguities. Much of the scene focuses on masculine gaze. While Chal states he wants to leave because the white boys “stared so,” it is in fact the Indian boys and specifically Chal who watches the naked white youths. The narrator attempts to distance the possibility of homoerotic fascination between the boys, stating that the “Indian boy *pretended* not to see them” before conceding they there become “so fascinated” by their speech they stopped playing their own game. Chal reveals his irritation with one white boy, who he believes uses language “to show the others how big he was” (36). The phallic implication could not be clearer in the text, especially as the next sentence *reveals* the youth’s nudity.

Chal does not understand the full range of his emotions watching the young boys swimming. The confusion intensifies, revealing Chal’s ambiguous feelings about the boys, vacillating between feigned indifference and his belief that their whiteness was “indecent in some inscrutable way” (36). The scene only intensified when two of the

boy's horses rut, with both groups of boys watching the event. The narrator states, "The little white boys swam to the bank and crawled out ... burdened with secretiveness, and they gathered one. ... Two of them shouted and hugged each other and danced in circles" (37). While Chal believes that "crazy people acted that way .... [,][t]he impression of that day was deep and he remember the incident the rest of his life" (37). The white boys' vision of the horses mating creates a secret knowledge of sexuality that operates as a bond between them. But Chal is left "mystified" because "He couldn't understand ... the white man making so much over the very unimportant matter of the possibility of another horse coming into the world" (37). Chal is left in the dark of the white "boys' club" and their own "secretiveness" regarding sexuality, and this marks an important moment in his development.

Masculine sexuality plays out throughout the text, with Chal attempting to negotiate his own apparent "queerness," white expectations of sexuality, and his own vision of his racial identity. Chal begins to create and construct himself increasingly against his Osage companions: "he had succeeded, to a certain extent, in associating himself almost entirely with the white boys, but occasionally he saw his old playmates in the village. .... However, like many of the other young men, they were now wearing 'citizens' clothes,' but clothes didn't seem to change them any" (68). What Chal realizes is that dress alone is not enough to construct his own masculinity, and so he becomes more concerned with his actions. He begins to copy "the other boys because he thought it was the thing to do, and they in turn very likely got their ideas from novels of the period, wherein 'scions' of rich manufacturers in the East were always sent away by rugged self-made fathers to some lumber camp or branch factory, to separate them from girls or *other*

*evils*” (emphasis added 69). Chal mimics expectations of masculinity, and it is often white masculinity he tries to emulate. Such examples suggest ways that Chal’s performance challenged static notions of Indigenous identity. In mimicking whiteness—and in other passages what he believes to be examples of indigeneity—he undermines that race is predicated on blood. Despite espousing such a rhetoric, his own ability to perform multiple and paradoxical roles undermine such a position.

In passages where Chal acts out Native identity, he often regrets his performances. In one scene the narrator comments that Chal:

felt that there was something in him which must come out, and unable to find any expression, he took action as means, and raced his pony wildly as before. He would race him until he felt sorry for the panting little fellow. One day he removed his saddle when the rain started, undressed, and raced naked, but even then he felt that he had not got rid of that thing which was within him. .... One day he stripped off his clothes and danced in a storm and sang a war song. .... A great unhappiness filled him, and for the briefest moment he envied the coyotes, but he didn’t know why. .... He arose from his blankets and stood naked there in the light, then walked nervously and aimlessly about. .... He tried to dance but the hill was rocky, then he chanted; chanted an Osage son, but the feeling that he was being overpowered caused him to stop. (69-71)

Pairing this scene with the next scene in the novel reveals that Chal’s vision of himself and his masculinity are directly tied to fears of being identified as Native American even while at times he performs that identity. The narrator comments that:

he liked to look at himself in pools of water, and often he found himself posturing on his pony before imaginary people. Sometimes he took an eagle feather with him to wear in his hair, and one time he took some paints and painted his face, and for a short time felt the thrill of the eagle feather spinning in his hair. But he did this only once. He had felt so mortified that he could scarcely bathe the paint off fast enough. He almost sweated when the thought of the *possibility of a cowboy having seen him* (72).

Chal enjoys performing depictions of Indigenous masculinity analogously to Blo's own fascination with her depiction in the mirror with a red, Panama shawl. Both characters revel in their bodies and racial burlesque performances, and both take steps to avoid and maintain their secrecy. However, Chal actually identifies the gender of his fear: he is afraid a *cowboy* will see him.

Like the earlier water-hole swimming scene, Chal seems concerned with how other men view him, ambivalently fearing his own difference. As the scene closes, the narrator reveals that Chal "wanted to struggle with something. His body seemed a wonderful thing just then, and he had a feeling that he could conquer anything that might stand in his way. There seemed to be intense urges which made him deliciously unhappy" (73). As the novel progresses, though, it appears that what Chal struggles with is his own gendered identity in relationship to racial expectations. Blo may play at her identity in ways similar to Chal, but readers should not assume that they are on equal footing. Chal is always already marked by his Osage identity. Even while throughout the novel he attempts to reject that identity, the world around him forever attempts to compartmentalize him. The contrast between Blo's performance and Chal's suggests that

settler colonialists forced Native people into closed racial identities. While both Blo and Chal's identities are contradictory and at times even paradoxical, Chal's only recourse to playing with colonial racial identities is either to mask and hide his Osage identity or mimic those standards. Blo and Chal's gendered performances then unlock the text's preoccupation with racial and gendered expressions and markers.

Mathews comments on how colonial objectification and fascination mark Chal as queer, as an individual between spaces. Within the novel, Chal's mixed raced/ Indigenous identity puts him at odds with standard expectations of white masculinity. As I mention above, Chal has already been marked as different at school, with Native youth calling into question his sexual and cultural/racial identity. And while Chal is later accepted by both white and Native youth, he is always marked as different, becoming increasingly aware of settler colonialists' demand to separate whiteness from Native culture and identity. Early in the novel, Chal's Aunt provides him with postcards depicting the crucifixion of Jesus. Chal often positions himself in relation to visual images of those cards, and coupled with his assimilationist education, they influence his perception of race throughout the novel, establishing a hierarchy of race with Chal consciously and unconsciously attempting to perform whiteness. The narrator states:

The picture held him. It fascinated him so that he couldn't look away from it, although he wanted very much to do so. .... As he looked steadily, the sardonic face of the Roman, the beautiful blue robe, and *the pale body* of Christ all became blurred and he felt a tear on his hand. He put the other picture aside, then dug a hole in the soft earth under the vines and buried

that picture of the crucifixion face down, picked up the other, and walked back to the house. (18-19)

The whiteness of the body of Christ becomes the focal point of the depiction. Recalling the later scene when Chal sees the white bodies of the boys at the swimming hole and thinks they are indecent, here the paleness represents the beauty of Christ. When his aunt learns that he has ruined the pictures, she cries, “‘I’m goin’ straight and tell your mother, she warned ... ‘Little Savage!’ His heart was broken. A queer world” (20). His Aunt Ellen racializes him, calling him a little savage. His response is to note the *queerness* of the world, as he is heartbroken at the events and his own feelings.

Chal’s indoctrination of racial identity emerges in *Sundown*, as he adopts white cultural expectations while systematically disabusing his Native identity. While his aunt scolds him, his experiences at school only exacerbate Chal’s own racial tensions. As Chal starts school, he notes that the “buildings seemed sinister to him. .... He had a feeling that they were like animals in a cage, and certainly there seemed to be much sadness in their faces” (22). While his father praises Chal’s opportunity for “education and the Indian as a citizen” (23), readers are aware of the sharp reality between his father’s ideals and the conditions of the school. Chal had the advantage of going home every night because he was a “day scholar,” but Chal still notes “that he had never seen a face so severe except in the picture on the card which cousin Ellen had given him” (24). Once he is alone with the students, he begins to criticize the students, saying: “‘I don’t want any of you lookin’ like a lotta wooden Eendians outside a cigar store when she tries to teach yu something.’ ... he had learned long ago the futility of attempting to teach a lot of Eendians anything” (25).

Taken collectively, these two scenes demonstrate the unconscious and conscious ways that assimilationist standards of culture and race insidiously affect Native people. Chal's depictions of spirituality and intelligence are informed by racialized and cultural expectations. Not surprisingly, when the narrator introduces Chal at the start of *Sundown*, s/he states that he "learned to say meaningless things[;] he had a reverence for it as long as he lived; even when he had assumed that veneer which he believe to be civilization" (13). This cultural hegemony becomes more pronounced in Chal's fantasy life, when he imagines civilization as a white woman. The narrator surmises,

he got the idea that civilization was feminine .... Perhaps he saw a picture of a woman with a sword, standing haughtily in defiance of something. In any case, he thought of a civilization as woman. ... In fancy he saw the most delicate white woman he could imagine; a composite of all the white women he had seen ... [H]e didn't see the fulbloods standing around the bed of the lady, but sad-faced mixedbloods, the traders and the new white people who had come into the town. (66)

The narrator states that *perhaps* he had seen a picture of a woman with a sword, but such a qualifier suggests that any number of alternative possibilities exist for Chal's belief. Such a view challenges the assumption that art and representation do not have political and social ramifications because they reveal the racial implications of dominant views of Native people and white-ness. Chal notes that he does not see any full blood people around the bed of the "white woman," the metaphor of civilization. The "woman" is "the most delicate white woman," the culmination of every white woman he had seen. While the narrator had surmised that perhaps Chal had seen a fierce depiction of a sword

wielding personification of civilization, in Chal's fantasy she is weak, sickly, and laying on a bed. Underlying the image is the clear assumption that Native people cannot associate with "civilization" or perhaps even more sinister that they threaten civilization and progress.

The scene also presents Chal's own fraught relationship with white idealized racial and gendered expectations for Native people. While Chal creates a metaphor of civilization as passive and feminine, his notion of Government is of patriarchal authority. When Chal hears the word government, he "visualized it as a great force which had overcome everything; but a force that was just and kindly, like the picture of God on one of the cards Cousin Ellen had given him. A great, bearded patriarch somewhere among the clouds, with outspread arms. Now he felt that it would be better to avoid it, as one might avoid the giant which the little white boy, Jack, had killed" (60). Chal initially felt sympathy with the image of the government as a patriarchal figure, one to whom he could turn. However, as a result of the Federal Government increasingly flexing its power over Osage men and women, Chal amends his views. Now he believes that he would do best to avoid the government, but that view does not extend to his views of civilization. While he should avoid the patriarchal figure of the government, his fantasy of feminine civilization emerges as needing protection. Within a rubric oscillating between civilization and masculinity, Chal emerges as a young man who attempts to perform the role of the civilized man, who maintains the standards of white American values. It seems that early on Chal realizes he can negotiate his own standards of (white) civilization with an association with white femininity even though his vision already notes the impossibility of such a position.

Chal's performance of whiteness in *Sundown* discloses gender and racial expectations foisted on Native youth. While various scenes in the early stages of the novel reveal the novel's preoccupation with race, the tenor of gender performance increases as Chal leaves his home to attend college. Performance of masculinity underlies the novel, questioning gender as a biological predicate. Men and women, masculine and feminine become loose terms that reveal political, social, and cultural values, and Mathews' acerbic observations challenge the neutrality of these terms. Chal's vision of civilization underscores the necessity to protect, serve, and uphold tenuous standards of colonial superiority, but Chal's experiences at college further reveal the fragility of such gender expectations and performances. When the recruiter meets with Chal and other Osage young man, he strategically uses language to seduce the young men, preying on gendered meanings and nuanced layers in an attempt to manipulate them: "He had used the word 'men' consciously, as though to indicate that 'fellas' or 'boys' lacked virility, and were words dangerous in a society where the manly virtues were scrupulously kept—where certain words in salutation and assumed mannerisms were defenses against softness" (87). The passage reveals that softness was "dangerous" to society, and that exaggerated forms of masculinity counter that threat. However, as the novel continues, the softness that threatens social cohesion represents un-assimilated Native cultural expectations and values. Chal straddles Native Osage cultural expectations and white demands, between a dangerous "softness" and hardness. His own masculine identities create tension, so he increasingly learn to mimic the expectations of white America to combat his own "queer" identity.

#### Homoerotic Context in *Sundown*

Throughout *Sundown*, Mathews weaves an undercurrent of homoerotic tension. While that subtext appears in various degrees, as we have already seen in such scenes as at the waterhole, homoeroticism emphatically emerges when Chal journeys to university. As a text so preoccupied with gender, race, and sexuality, the homoeroticism might be a threat to the novel's heteronormativity. And yet, the homoeroticism in the college scenes speaks to the construction of white settler colonial depictions of straightness, which emerge in Chal's mind in opposition to his (queer) indigeneity. White homoeroticism and homosocial acts still become expressions of straight masculinity with queer indigeneity becoming the markers of non-heteronormative performances.

Masculinity in *Sundown* emerges as a celebration of whiteness, an exclusive club for select "men." While Chal is at times allowed to participate in the bonding experiences, he often withstands the worst of gendered assimilationist ideologies. Before Chal gets to school, readers already glimpse that terms such as men and their link with masculine performance will wield considerable influence in campus dynamics. When Chal arrives at the school, the emphasis in creation and maintenance of those terms continues. Chal and his Osage traveling companions meet a delegation at the train station, a "party of 'men' from the Chi house" (94). Within the text, the use of quotation marks around "men" references the earlier dialogue of the University representative. In his speech, Mathews places quotation marks around the word men. By emphasizing and marking a specific gendered lexicon, *Sundown* calls attention to the irony of college fraternity boys performing as "men," while also suggesting that they are heirs of the patriarchal institution they mimic. The ironic designation of "men" for discussing the

white fraternity boys, articulates the novel's discussion of cultural productions of gender, especially as they continually influence and define Chal.

Chal finds himself in the midst of cultural gendered productions when he joins the Chi fraternity, which influences his own racial and gendered identity performances. Like *Cogewea*, readers begin to see homosocial desire and comradery play out in overtly sexual and violent ways. Michael Snyder argues that the fraternity reveals the current of queer sexuality in the novel. He states, "the fraternity house, full of virile young men, is a hothouse of desire, revealing the homoeroticism underlying homosociality as theorized by Sedgwick. While most of the men are probably heterosexual or at least would see themselves as such, this constant sexual frisson suggests that mutual attraction swells inside the fraternity house" (Snyder36-37). While I agree with Snyder's astute observation, I would like to add that Chal's homoerotic interaction with his fraternity brothers includes threats of same-sex violence and sexual dynamics. During Chal's rush, his fraternity brother Harmon states that Chal and his friends are going to a dinner where they will be given "a good sweatin'" (96). Harmon argues that the events are "all right, all in the game," before later adding, "I know you men won't do anything until yu talk to me, like your promised—kind of an undersandin' among friends, see. Yu know I told you what would happen when I'se down to Kihakah last summer" (96). It appears that Harmon implies that other fraternities might want Chal as a member, and that Chal might be seduced away from the Chi house. But the other aspect of the dialogue is the pressure and darker nuance of Harmon's words. Chal's masculinity, his ability to claim the moniker of "man" depends on his performance, a point Harmon alludes to by reminding him about their discussion at Kihakah. The scene presents a double bind for Chal, who is

feminized by Harmon. Chal becomes a figure in danger of being seduced by other men, and in order to maintain his privileged masculine status must submit to the orders of a masculine figure. As a dynamic, such a homoerotic/homosocial dynamic only increases as Chal negotiates the rituals of the fraternity.

As a pledge in the Chi fraternity, Chal must submit to the violent rituals of his fraternity brothers, rituals that call attention to the homoerotic tensions of the novel. The night before he receives a bid from the fraternity, Chal goes to “sleep in tragic loneliness” (104). The next passage of the novel skips ahead to “pledge court,” and the tests initiated endure before they can pledge their fraternity. The narrator states that Chal “knew what pledge court was. He knew that he could go through the *humiliation*.... He understood that it was *only horseplay*, and that you had to be *a good sport and take it laughingly* (emphasis added 104). While the narrator does not directly name the trial of pledge court, s/he finally states that Running Elk and Sun-on-His-Wings “would not tolerate a paddle wielded against their sacred persons” (104). Jennifer Gillan reads the paddling as a joke scene since the fraternity would not allow Native men to become full members (15). However, such a reading misses the sexual innuendos and violence of the scene. The narrator claims that Brother Harkings’ “desire to use the paddle on freshman might have indicated *sadistic* tendencies, but it was only his way of impressing others, especially freshman, with the fact that he was a sophomore, and he enjoyed all the prerogatives. ... he stood some time with a *satyr* expression” (emphasis added 106). Even while the narrator attempts to distance the possibility of sexuality in the act of whipping the pledges, his description actually calls greater attention to the homosocial dynamics of the scene.

Harkings's desire stems from his attempt to dominate Chal, which the narrator links with sexuality in the passage. The narrator moves from denying Harking's sadism to describing his unbridled pleasure, evidenced by his "satyr expression." As the scene concludes, Harkins adds that he is "gonna do a little a rear end work" (107). As we have already seen in *Cogwea*, the violent teasing that marks homosocial relationships can include a subtext of sexuality and even rape. In this scene, Harkins' language calls greater attention to the possibility of sodomy as a tool for dominance and control, but also the possibility of homosocial desire. Linking such possibilities with Chal's initiation seems to "straighten" any unease of queerness, even as the text itself encodes the scene and the novel with questions of sexuality, masculinity, and indigeneity. Readers glimpse this matrix when the narrator states, "Harkins looked at him in a queer manner as though he saw something strange on his face. ... it wasn't what you felt, it was showing it to others that was so terrible.... He had the Indian way of smiling when he was angry, masking the gentler and kindlier emotions with an unreadable expressions" (107). Chal's unreadability makes him appear strange. Harkins looks at him in a "queer" way, in part because Chal does not perform the expected role of masculinity in the text, always already operating outside the scope of heterosexual masculinity.

#### Indigenous Masculinity as Queer

Chal often discusses his identity as a "queer" man from his early days at University when "he had a queer feeling that he had cut bonds of his old life" (89) to his own fears and preoccupation with not "want[ing] anyone to know that he was queer" (90). It is during his tenure at University, however, that Chal himself begins to mark his queerness in relationship to his inability to perform the role of a white, heterosexual man.

When Chal attends a dance with Blo and her friends, he recoils when he realizes that he has failed in his performance of masculinity by “effeminately” shaking the women’s hands “Indian” style: “he was suddenly aware that he had given them a *limp* hand, with just the three middle fingers touching their palms in a salute; Indian fashion. He grew hot all over again. Why couldn’t he remember to grasp other people’s hands with conscious *pressure*?” (118). Throughout *Sundown*, passivity marks femininity with masculinity performed through gruffness, loudness, and hardness. Chal’s handshake marks him as different, and he is consciously aware of that gulf. Throughout the evening, he makes up his mind that he will remedy the situation by shaking hands “properly.” Yet as the evening concludes, Chal is almost too late in remembering his intent. When Blo shakes his hand “He realized that her hand was squeezing his, and he was allowing his fingers to remain limp in an Indian salute. He was almost too late but gripped her hand just as it was about to leave his, and to his surprise he felt her hand tighten on his again. He felt with a thrill that some message had been thus conveyed, but he didn’t know just what; some understanding which he didn’t understand” (126). Collectively, the two handshakes reveal Chal’s ongoing struggle to perform settler colonial expectation of masculinity. He feels unease for his—and we can read this as effeminate—own cultural legacy of shaking hands with three fingers sans pressure. In a queer lexicon, limp hands become a signifier for effeminacy.

Even as Chal attempts to negotiate white standards for masculinity, he still feels like an outsider. When he enters the Varsity shop on a later date with Blo, he ruminates that “If he stopped at several of the tables and had slapped backs and said in a booming voice, ‘Howdy, men, sure glad to see you!’ and waved a genial hand to the people in the

room, they would have accounted him a ‘good scout’” (159). Like the construction of cultural expectations that create “men,” Chal recognizes that to be part of the group demands a set of *actions* and *performances* of his gender identity. Part of that charade involves slapping backs and talking loudly in order to be counted “a good scout” by the “men.” However, Chal is “annoyed with himself because he had been too shy to speak to the people in room” (160). While the narrator attributes Chal’s discomfort to his shyness, Chal himself attributes it to his inability to perform white cultural expectations when he states “I wish I didn’t have a drop of God damn’ Indian blood in my veins” (160). Chal begins to believe that indigeneity marks him as different and that his racial identity influences his gendered expressions. Carol Hunter notes that Chal sees himself as “a ‘misfit’” (“Protagonist”328). While Hunter changes Mathews’ language from queer to misfit, she accurately notes that “The fraternity’s artificial social demands were demeaning to his self-concept; consequently, he become inhibited because of his inability to imitate the other young men. He felt ‘dejected’ because he could not understand their emphasis on grades, nor their allusions to women” (Hunter “Protagonist”328). In contrast to white heteronormative masculine performances, Chal increasingly sees himself marked by his relationship with queer Indigeneity.

Chal’s sense of emasculated identity continually surfaces, influencing his attempt to self-police his actions. Following an impromptu meeting with his professor, Mr. Granville, Chal arrives at the conclusion “that he was soft and unfit and he and urge to put himself into condition. He had the idea that an individual, like a nation, ought to be prepared for war. He would get up in the mornings and look at his tall, darkish body in the glass, and each morning he thought he would something about it” (187). Continually

Chal vacillates with identifying with a queer identity, only to reject the subversion of white heteronormativity. Chal's belief in his "softness" occurs after his day with Mr. Granville, a space in the novel when he felt a connection with another "queer" man.<sup>xxi</sup> However, he promptly rejects that identification by rejoining the football squad and then announcing that he intends to enlist in the army. Mr. Granville encourages Chal to join the air corps, but Chal had "got into condition again by scrimmaging with the varsity and running along the river road with the track men" (189), so despite identifying once more with Mr. Granville, Chal successfully negotiates any fear of emasculation by self-constructing an exterior persona of masculinity and athleticism.

While in the air corps, though, Chal again must negotiate his racialized identity and the hierarchy of masculinity within the ranks. Like the earlier fraternity initiation ritual, Chal confronts a man who uses his authority in order to create dominance. One day Chal meets "a small man with a first lieutenant's bar, and bright new wings on his tunic, just under his flying coat" (197). In the ensuing passage, the lieutenant upbraids Chal for not saluting his senior officers. The narrator reveals the lieutenant's physiological motivation as a desire "to see on Chal's face defeat and submission as well as appreciation of his status as first lieutenant in the flying service of the United States army" (198). The lieutenant wants acknowledgement of his authority while also witnessing Chal's submission. The juxtaposition between appreciation and submission suggests a homosocial link between Chal and the Lieutenant's relationship and that of Chal and Harking. In both scenes, Chal's racial identity becomes a point of tension. While certainly subtle, this becomes clear when the Lieutenant states "'If you hear me, say somethin--don't set there with your finger in it'" (199). Readers may recall that when

Chal was at Indian school, the superintendent makes a similar command, demanding that Chal and the fellow classmates not act “like a lotta wooden Eendians outside a cigar store when [the teacher] tries to teach yu something (25). It is possible that Chal’s cultural values collide with white expectations. The narrator certainly suggests that the superintendent and potentially the Lieutenant believe that Chal’s actions reflect a lack of respect and inability correctly to perform settler colonial, white expectations. Chal constantly believes that his actions mark him as queer, leading him continually to attempt a mimicry of white masculine expectations. Chal’s increased polarization between whiteness and Indigeneity result in a pathology of identity. Chal attempts to reject any notion of Native identity, only to have that repressed identity surface, leaving him unable to move forward.

Chal is not the only man who does not perform standard American notions of masculinity and is marked as queer in the text. Despite Chal and Dr. Granville’s similarities, Mathews marks Chal’s queerness as different because he is Native. When Chal meets Dr. Granville, Chal feels like he has met a man like himself. Dr. Granville radically defies expectations of hardness and “masculinity.” In both speech and address, Dr. Granville is different from the other men Chal had known:

He fascinated Chal with his *beautiful words*. English that flowed *softly* and was almost *lyrical*. At least Chal though it was lyrical when compared with the voices of other people. Because of this and because of Mr. Granville’s reticence and his *queer* actions, Chal had been drawn to him. They said at University that he was queer because he took long walks by himself, wouldn’t accept dinner invitations, and lived by himself in an old stone house with just an old housekeeper. . . . He

wore short pants like the old knickerbockers the boys used to wear, and *gay stockings*, and his shoes were thicksoled things. (emphasis added 172)

Masculinity in the text has been marked by hardness, roughness, and potential violence. Dr. Granville defies such a vision of masculinity. Dr. Granville goes further with his softness and “queer actions.” Up to this point in the text, we have seen masculinity as a social construction of cohesiveness, and Dr. Granville, instead, positions himself as a romantic loner, wearing clothes that mark him as different, such as gay stockings.<sup>xxii</sup> By the 1920s and 1930s, the word gay was already becoming linked with homosexuals (“Gay” Etymology N. Pag.). Collectively, Dr. Granville’s description leaves little doubt about the subversive quality of his character. Chal sees his professor as queer because later he ruminates about “what the men at the house would say if they could see him having afternoon tea with ‘Goosie’ Granville” (190-1). According to Jonathon Green, in *Cassell's Dictionary of Slang*, the word goosie by the 1960s would come to define the passive member of a homosexual relationship, but even by the 1920s meant an effeminate or homosexual man (629).

Mathews further queers Granville, by feminizing him by his interests in flowers. When he meets Chal on a walk he remarks about a particular yucca he is studying (211). Chal later recalls

Major Granville striding up to him carrying a flower, and about General Allenby studying the flora of Palestine in the middle of the greatest war in history. .... He thought for some time of these things, and he finally came to the conclusion that England must be a kind of slow country without any ‘get-up-and-go’ like Americans. Americans were too busy doing things to waste their time on flowers.

He guessed the reason why he had liked Major Granville, and the idea of a great general writing a book on flora, was because he was queer himself. (216)

Chal defines Granville in relation to his own expectations of masculine performance, identifying that “he was queer [like] himself” (216). While Chal links himself with Granville as “queer” outsiders, Chal marks their difference in significantly diverse ways. Granville’s queerness is a combination of his professorial demeanor, coupled with the possibility of his homosexuality. Chal certainly demonstrates fascination with other men and exhibits homosocial/homoerotic desire. And while Chal will submit to the sadistic homoerotic ritual of initiation, his queerness seems to be the direct result of his own Osage identity, and it is specifically that Native element that bears most sharply in terms of Mathews’ discussion of queerness.

#### Mimicry in *Sundown*

Chal increasingly marks himself and is marked as queer in *Sundown* because of his inability to perform white masculinity. Chal’s belief is not unfounded as readers have seen his teachers, superiors, and even dates attempt to police his actions, encouraging and at times demanding that he adopt white cultural expectations of masculinity. Such discipline leads Chal to mimic white gendered performances, deciding “that he was going to be like other people” so he could gain respect and dignity (103). Throughout *Sundown*, mimicry is an undercurrent in the novel. When he is a schoolboy he is chided for his Native identity by white boys who “began simulating warriors and dancing round and making the tremolo. They sang, ‘hunika shay, hunika shay,’ which they believed to be some Osage word” (54). And we have also seen that Blo performs a mimicry of Otherness linked with Indigeneity. The boys’ mimicry at school along with his

patronizing schoolteacher,<sup>xxiii</sup> according to Hunter, “humiliated Challenge during his formative years. . . . In pointing out the social pressures that Challenge’s generation experiences by unfortunately being caught between Indian and white cultural values, Mathews shows that the effects created deep inferiority complexes in many of that generation” (Hunter “Historical”70). To combat this, he “attempts to be a white man by selecting the ‘right clothes’ and buying an expensive car . . . to cover up [his] internal confusion through outward appearances” (Hunter “Historical”71). The greatest emphasis on mimicry is Chal’s own attempt to perform whiteness, as Hunter articulates. In his attempt to “be like other people,” Mathews’ demonstrates that Chal’s overriding desire is to “fit in.”

Homi Bahba’s own work on mimicry reveals the potential of survival through mimicry. To open his essay “Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse,” Babha quotes Jacques Lacan, who states that the “effect of mimicry is camouflage” (85). *Sundown* points to the belief that mimicry as disguise leads to survival. Before tackling the potential for mimicry as resistance, in this section of this chapter, I will develop how Chal “camouflages” himself through mimicking colonial expectations of straightness and thereby masking himself as white. Throughout the novel the narrator states that Chal attempts “to be like the others, and he was unhappy when he felt that he was not like them” (141). While Chal understands that his performance only makes “him aware of his uniqueness,” “Outwardly at least he attempted to live” like his white peers (144). Part of his performance includes distancing himself from his Osage companions. When he learns that his Osage peers will leave university to return to the Osage reservation, Chal felt relief “of much responsibility, and the fear which seemed to be with

him always; the fear that they would do something wrong. He had enough to do to *adjust himself*" (emphasis added 112). While his friends "had gone back to the blanket," Chal chooses to stay at school because he "believed he wanted to be a substantial citizen in that community. ... He would be a business man and amount to something" (154). Such passages point to Chal's ongoing self-criticism over his racial and cultural identity and his attempt to construct a new white persona.

Part of Chal's performance of whiteness includes the mediating influence of women to perform his new persona. Women in the text perform a dual role for Chal. As we see in *Cogewea*, women operate to legitimize homosocial desires while alleviating fear of homoerotic potential in those relationships. On some level, figures like Blo could function in the text in similar ways, but Chal's relationship with women also point to how *Sundown* presents women in Chal's life as reflecting and disguising his Native identity. When Chal first meets Blo, the narrator states: "She smiled at Chal, but he saw immediately that it wasn't deep. ... He put his finger in his collar to let in some cool air, and he wondered if he looked all right. At the last impressions of his face in the mirror that evening, he had seen a bronze face in the black-and-white; the white making the bronze stand out, and he wondered if it wasn't too dark" (117). Blo is the first relationship with a woman that Chal has in *Sundown*. Their relationship reveals the unease Chal feels over his "bronze" skin, a signifier of his indigeneity. His concern seems not to stem from appropriateness of his dress, but rather his ability to pass as white. But part of Chal's racial unease also includes performance, as he agonizes over how he shook Blo's hand. In early sections of *Sundown*, Chal broods over his inability to perform what he believes to be notions of whiteness. Later when Blo calls to invite Chal on a date—an

inversion of social expectation in which Blo plays the dominant role by initiating a date with Chal instead of the standard gender coding where a man asks a woman on a date—Chal chides himself for “talk[ing] like a fool--guess she thought he was a fool, all right, talkin’ that way. Why couldn’t he talk like the others” (148). Such interior perspectives reveal that Chal’s concern over his racial identity includes how he looks but also how acts and how he speaks.

While Chal’s experiences with Blo reveal his own insecurity over his identity and performance of it, he later becomes more adept at mimicry, using his sexual relationship to mask his “queerness.” While Chal often fails in his racialized performances, a topic to which I will return later, in a short amount of time, he begins to feel more confident in how he acts. The narrator explains, “He was more civilized now and more knowing, and he was ashamed of his recent past” (152). In his early days at University, Chal becomes increasingly occupied in a fantasy world, where he becomes “an elegant man of the world” (153). While in his early dreams the fantasy world included the potential for his Osage community and his place within that community as “He even visualized a great feast and dance held in his honor by the Osages ... he decided to leave the Osage part of it out. He didn’t want to call attention to the fact that most of his blood was of an uncivilized race like the Osages” (153). By the time he joins the air-force, Chal is more adept at his performance. While serving as a pilot, he meets a woman older than him, Lou.

Chal uses his budding relationship with Lou as a means of negotiating heteronormative cultural standards. Chal’s Osage identity marks him as “queer.” However, his relationship with Lou enables him to mimic white straightness, to the point

that Chal even hides his Native identity. Chal always had a fluid racial identity. Blo's friends had commented that there was "Something Japanese about him when he smiles" (129). His very otherness and potential oil wealth made him attractive to woman; Blo notes that he "was good lookin' and rich, too" (130). While Chal is largely unaware of Blo and her friends' feelings about him, Lou clearly articulates her thoughts about Chal to him, and he engages in her conceptions of him. When they first meet, Lou asks if Chal is Spanish, to which he agrees because "He didn't want to destroy the thrilling situation" (203). At this point in the narrative, it appears that Chal has finally learned to negotiate heteronormative standards. No longer does the reader see Chal as "queer," which we can read as indigenous, but instead he has become straight and Spanish. As Emily Lutenski suggests, Chal's "identity becomes ambiguous to white observers when he is exterior to Osage county" (Lutenski 51). I would actually go further, though, in that while his racial identity is ambiguous, such racial ambiguity allows him to perform heterosexuality without a threat of queerness. Chal's relationship with Lou helps fuel his own perceptions of himself, using his relationship with her in order to construct an image of himself as separate from tainted indigeneity. Following an evening's date with Lou, the narrator reveals that Chal "felt very proud, and very important as he walked past the guard. ... He thought of himself as being separated by a great abyss from Sun-on-His-Wings and Running Elk, and from the village with the people moving among the lodges" (208). Recalling that Eve Sedgwick points out that women play an important role in meditating homosocial desire in erotic triangulated relationships, in *Sundown* women mitigate Chal's fears of "queerness," specifically as they help him assume a performance of white gendered masculinity. Once he initiates a sexual relationship with Lou:

he attempted to act in the matter as one of them might act when he assumed carelessness and reticence rather than naturally becoming boastful. .... The way the girls at the dances looked at him and the way they acted when he danced with them, filled him with self-assurance and he felt that he had begun to be gilded by that desirable thing which he called civilization. He was becoming a man among civilized men. He realized that his bronze complexion was one of the reasons why girls and women seemed to be attracted to him and he appreciated it as an asset. He kept his Indian keenness, though he could never make himself look at people except covertly. He saw many things in people's faces which they didn't know they were showing. (230)

Chal arrives as the epitome of an assimilated man. He has become the object of desire, hiding his Native identity, acting "as one of them." Chal has finally joined the group of "men," performing his role of heteronormativity, mimicking white expectations of assimilated Indian masculinity.

Despite the self-assurance Chal's relationship with Lou provides him, he never fully is able to negotiate the increasing polarization of his racial identity. On the one hand, *Sundown* is an expression of Chal's attempt to express a white masculinity in a society that perennially constructs his indigeneity as queer. Yet such a reading is largely unsatisfactory because it does not take into account Chal's own ruptures to that persona. Throughout the text, Chal never fully rejects his own ideas about his Osage identity. The narrator often calls attention to "a racial instinct" coming over Chal such as when he wants to drum (136), or his disappointment because he felt he "had somehow reverted"

(138). Even during his relationship with Lou, he concedes that it “would be a long time before he became really civilized” (224). What Chal does not realize throughout much of the text, is that in settler colonial imagining, he can never fully become “civilized.” Part of the text, then, is Chal’s attempt to negotiate this unsettling reality. Despite indoctrination into settler colonial ideologies, white society would never fully permit Chals entry into their white male elitist club. The sad part of the narrative is that throughout almost all of the novel, Chal himself never reaches that conclusion. Even towards the end of the novel Chal remarks, “He couldn’t get a job. No one would give a job to an Indian. ... he felt that he could get some respect if he had a job or was in some business for himself” (263). While Chal later concedes that even if he could get a job his dignity would not permit him to accept it, the important element is that he would never get a job because of his Native identity. Despite this realization, Chal longs to be like Doctor Lawes. In Chal’s mind “When he deigned to talk to anybody they felt flattered, and stenographers and girl cashiers giggled appreciatively when he thumbed them in the ribs and made suggestive remarks. Chal wished fervently that he could be more like Doc and the others” (281). Despite Chal’s development throughout *Sundown*, he still finds himself hemmed in by the racial boundaries imposed on him. Despite his mimicry and disguise, he seems unlikely ever to escape the pressures of colonial society.

What makes Chal’s character so potentially politically disruptive is his fluid identity. Even though Chal consistently resists, and in fact abhors, such a possibility, he still emerges as a complex figure who negotiates a list of perceived diametrically opposed visions of himself. While he seems to believe in an either/or binary between “primitive” and “uncivilized” (queer) Native, and white heteronormative assimilated man on the

other. Certainly, members of his own community reject the potential of hybridity, and yet it emerges an important discussion in the novel and allows for a way of re-reading Chal's mimicry as resistant. Chal seems concerned with legitimacy. As a man who went through colonial schools, such a view is not surprising. Readers catch glimpses of this even in moments that have little to do with actions of the novel. When Chal attends college the narrator remarks that Chal "could see in the distance the *bastard* Gothic of the Administration Building thrusting itself out of the plains" (emphasis added 154). The narration calls attention to lack of congruence between the architecture and the landscape, but it also potentially reveals Chal's unease with styles that are in flux and changing, such as Gothic revival building in Southern Oklahoma. Another example is that "he didn't like girls when they wore riding breeches, anyway--they looked clumsy and thick, and when they stooped they were ugly from behind" (135). Chal is also quick to judge young Native girls for wearing make-up, saying it is "barbaric" when they try "to imitate white girls . . . , and he didn't like their short skirts bobbing around their bony knees and their crow-black hair bobbed 'windblown' style" (256). The examples reveal Chal's concern with clear divisions, even though much of the novel is an expression of his attempt to masquerade and slip between compartments. I would propose that these scenes reveal gender and social constructions.

In *Sundown*, productions of race and sexuality potentially erode Chal's already fragile attempt to hold on to an assimilated gendered identity. Readers glimpse this when Chal takes a group of his white friends to an Osage traditional dance. The narrator articulates that the Osage "danced because they felt it impossible to give up that last expression of themselves; and though these dances at the village were only social dances

for their own amusement, they adhered closely to the ancient form” (252). However, Chal realizes that his friends would miss the significance of the dance because they expected to see one of the dancer “whoop suddenly or climb one of the poles and hang by his toes from a rafter” (253). While the audience would leave after a few minutes out of boredom, Chal knows that they will enjoy boasting, “I’ve seen ‘em stomp-dance” (253). The undercurrent of the scene is the modernist fascination with “primitivism” that was erupting following World War I. Deftly Mathews draws attention to the modern fascination with Native cultural productions even as he reveals that the dances themselves do not match the non-Native audience’s expectations.

Even while *Sundown* raises concerns with primitive cultural and representation, Mathews at times plays into concerns with purity and untainted cultural productions. The narrator makes claims that the Osage dance as the “last expression of themselves,” maintaining their “ancient form.” While Osage dancers certainly represent an important aspect of cultural continuance, the narrator is wrong in assuming that this is the last expression of themselves. In fact, such a view seems completely alien to *Sundown* as a whole, which includes legal, political, and physical resistance to colonial outsiders. The colonial pressure on “purity” surfaces throughout the text, specifically in the dance scene above. While Chal is there, he sees a visitor from the neighboring Ponca Nation dancing. While Chal notes that Osage dancers maintain a connection with their “ancient form,” the Ponca man:

danced frantically in his dyed long underwear. He stamped and twisted, and jerked his head fantastically; he did the black bottom, the Charleston, and other clownish tricks until Chal looked away in disgust, but he could

hear murmurs of approval from the visitors on the benches. The Ponca had been on the vaudeville stage, and he knew how to please white people.

(258)

The Ponca plays into the white audience demands for romantic primitive displays of difference. In fact, Chal's friends later claimed the dance "was romantic" (261). Chal, however, feels "disgust" at the production of the performance. Chal's disgust with the performance might stem from a realization that his own identity stems from performance and blurring and vacillations between white and Osage identities. Colonialism creates taxonomies of identity, but Chal confronts a mirror image of his performance, one that refuses easy compartmentalization.

The dance scene represents the complex convergence of different and even opposing narrative views of *Sundown*. As novel, *Sundown*, never creates a single narrative strain, instead having an ambiguous ending. What the scene presents is the fascination with primitivism that pervades modernism, and Chal's own vacillation and tension between "authentic primitivism" and assimilationist performance. Even though Chal feels disgust over the Ponca dancer, throughout the novel he himself has been performing a similar hybrid role, as he appropriates various expressions of whiteness and Osage performances. Following the dance, Chal begins thinking of the dance: "Suddenly he felt sentimental about the dance out at the village the other day, and he made up his mind that he would dance next time. He pictures himself in breech clout and moccasins, as the most graceful dancer in the Roundhouse. Suddenly he felt very important" (264). Whereas Chal throughout the novel expends his energy trying to adopt white standards,

by the end of the novel he has begun thinking about Osage cultural expressions he had rejected. This culminates when a very drunk Chal, dances naked in the Osage hills:

He danced wildly and his blood became hotter, and yet the terrific emotion which was damned up in his body would not come out; that emotion which was damned up and could not be expressed. . . . He was an Indian now and he believed that the exit of all spirit and emotion was the throat, just as the soul came out through the throat after death. He was in pain and he danced frantically for some sort of climax; that sense of completeness that consummates the creative urge; an orgasm of the spirit. But he couldn't dance fast enough, and his singing lacked the fire to release his damned up emotion. The dance became wilder and suddenly, in his despair, he broke the rhythm of his singing and yelled, but still the motion was choked in his body. He wanted to challenge something; to strut before an enemy. He wanted by some action or some expression, to express the whole meaning of life; to declare to the silent world about him that he was a glorious male; to express to the silent forms of the blackjacks that he was a brother to the wind, the lightning and the forces that came out of the earth. (296-7).

Following his performance, Chal realizes “there was no romance left” (300), yet the very theatrical nature of Chal's drunken dance seems to suggest there never was any romance but Chal's own attempt to live a fantasy of what he believes is Native manhood.

The duality at play in the closing sections of *Sundown* point that hybridity and cultural evolution reflect the direction of Osage continuance. While Mathews does not

create a singular message in the novel, passages like the Ponca dancer and Chal's own vacillating performance of identities complicate discussions of resistance, a position reiterated when Chal undergoes a ritual sweat. Before his intoxicated dancing, Chal had visited an Osage community who "lived their daily lives as the fathers had lived, dressing in their leggings, blankets and bandeau. .... They were now Peyote worshipers, which was a mixture of the old religions, Christianity, and the new belief in passivity and retribution" (266). Even while they represent a mixture of Osage and Euro-American values, the leader of the sweat launches into a warning about cultural plurality. The leader discusses the Osage and White man's road, saying there is a:

bad road which no white man follows—the road which many of the People follow, thinking it is the white man's road. People who follow this road say they are as the white man, but this is not white man's road. People who follow this road say that road of Indian is bad now. But they are not Indians any more, these People who follow that road. 'The road of our People is dim now like buffalo trail across prairie. We cannot follow this road with our feet now, but we can see this road with our eyes, and our hearts will go along this road forever. Even if our bodies are carried by our feet on this road that is not Indian road. There are few of us, whose eyes can see old road of our People, I believe. (271)

The leader will add that many Indian children have married white women, have started drinking and using drugs, and they are no longer Osage and they must be forgotten (273-5). Even while the leader claims "We live in white man's houses now, and our feet go along another road, but our hearts are on road that is dim.' ... All this seemed to be as a

dream to him and he wondered if time was actually going on outside in the night” (273-5), he later amends that the Osage “must use [their] time to fight our troubles. To fight that evil which comes on inside of us” (275-6).

I propose that the scene reflects an attempt to express changing Osage cultural identity. Even though the leader of the sweat espouses concern about Native survival, his sermon eventually leads to resistance—that the native participants must fight the evil inside themselves. Part of the evil he articulates is the mistaken belief in following a road native people *think* is the white man’s road. Throughout *Sundown*, Chal has attempted to follow this road, and so the leader’s speech seems especially pointed to Chal. Even though Chal completes the sweat, within a few days he once more feels “that he had been silly, mooning the way he had, and he felt ashamed of his emotions. . . . The talk he had just listened to was the talk of the strong, practical men who did things, while the Osages dreamed silly things in mystical dream-world. Men like Doc Lawes didn’t sit and dream; they got out and did things” (280). Of course, later Chal will once more adopt a Native position as he dances wildly. At the close of the novel, Chal is stuck between his own polarized views of his identity. In a conversation with his mother, Chal remarks that the invasive sparrows are as aggressive as even. In an attempt to gain her approval, he remarks that he will become a great lawyer who will fight settler colonialists just as he used to hunt and kill sparrows (310-11). His decision is a response to the Osage murder trials, where the Native lawyer, Roan Horse, championed Native resistance in his courtroom scene. Roan Horse stated that the federal government had done too little too late in addressing white murders of Osage people (307). In voicing his desire to be a lawyer, Chal is attempting to align himself with Native resistance. What sparks this

conversation is a sparrow that knocks a baby robin out of the nest to take its place. As the novel concludes, the mother robin is left to feed her remaining chicks and potentially the renegade sparrow (312).

While the ending of *Sundown* seems unsatisfying, it actually represents Mathews' brilliance in negotiating the pressures of settler colonialism. The metaphor of sparrow as settler colonialist robbing the Native robin is an apt depiction of the violent history of American colonialism. Carol Hunter observes that "The young robin symbolized not only Chal and his companions, of course, but a generation of young Indian men and women who were also lifted from the security of their Indian communities to be assimilated into white civilization" (Hunter "Protagonist" 333-334). However, just as the sparrow disguises itself in the robin's nest, Chal himself has been negotiating settler colonial society. Whether or not the reader believes that Chal will successfully negotiate law school and become a great orator is moot. Reader should remember that Chal notes that Osage people "had practiced deception in exactly the same way all life on earth practiced deception; in order to survive, either in war with enemies or for the purpose of food getting. But the trouble was, of course, that he couldn't see the importance of pretending when the purpose was not important" (143). Later Chal envisions "A panther, stretched along a limb with the leaf-shadows making even more effective his protective coloring, his eyes closing and opening and his ears lazily twitching, might thing in this manner" (286).

While modern readers might be less than pleased with Chal's actions throughout the novel, they still represent an important counterpoint of mimicry. Chal might adopt mimicry in order to fit in and hide his "queerness," and that mimicry fulfills two

demands. The first is that it ensures his survival; he survives the Osage reign of terror. But Chal's mimicry also points to performance as the basis for identity. Even though Chal himself fights his own "blood," the novel itself undermines such an essentialist position. Chal makes choices to act in ways he thinks are Osage and white, but both reveal the absence of any kind of essentialist identity. In foregrounding Chal's concern over queerness and masculine performance in *Sundown*, Mathews challenges dominant images of identity predicated on blood and biological determinism. In this respect Chal performs the greatest queer subversion, he reveals their arbitrary construction. While readers may wonder to what extent such knowledge informs Chal's life, it undoubtedly continues to assert the continued survival of both Osage people and Native American men and women in 21<sup>st</sup> century America, who continually negotiate paradoxical and complex historical, political, cultural, and personal identities and histories in overcoming colonial oppression.

## CHAPTER V

### “LAUGHING AT THE RIDICULOUS, [AND] THE ABSURD”; WODDY CRUMBO, MIMICRY, AND THE MODERN NATIVE ARTIST

I have shown how Native artists and writers often work within colonial frameworks in order to create and to undermine essentialist rhetoric about Native people. Mimicry offers a way for scholars to theorize how Native people can include and respond to stereotypes as potential resistance because mimicry reveals production and performance as the site for identity expression and not the prevailing emphasis on “blood” and biology that so often defined Native experience. Nowhere is that expression more evident than in the work and life of Potawatomi artist, Woody (Woodrow) Crumbo (1912-89). Despite a lasting legacy of art, including paintings, drawings, and a rich performance history, precious few scholars have seriously attempted to tackle the complex and often thorny life of Crumbo’s work and identity. The narrative of his life and work is willfully inaccurate, often resorting to trite stereotypes in order to construct a picture of a Native man whose identity and art mirror colonial expectations for both

Native people and artists. The ensuing mythology about Crumbo seems to paint a portrait of an “authentic” Native man attempting to connect, reconnect, and espouse a traditional view of Native people prior to first contact with settler colonialists. Such a position, however, does not take into account the often contradictory aspects of Crumbo, his work, and legacy. Scholars must negotiate how Crumbo at times reifies dominant ideas about Native Americans, especially in his performance and paintings that eroticize Native male bodies. Including discussions of Crumbo’s playful interactions with colonial images reveals ways Crumbo does resist colonial discourses and politics.

Critics-need to wrestle with the larger cultural arena at the time Crumbo painted and the larger art world in which he worked. Crumbo life and art converge as mimicking settler colonial stereotypes about Native people, replicating standard, stock images of Native people in regalia with elaborate headdresses and beaded clothing (see image 4). In this chapter I argue that Crumbo mimicry of primitivism operates as colonial resistance, by demonstrating identity as performance and not as racialized essentialism. His work plays with gendered representations of Native people, and a queer analysis of his work questions primitivist notions of Native American peoples. Viewers often conceive of Crumbo and his work as intentional representations of an “authentic” Native tradition, an idea Crumbo himself fueled. However, I believe evaluation of his work questions notions of authenticity, focusing instead on how performance and play in his work operate as resistance. Crumbo’s play with form and representation reveal a “queer” potential heretofore overlooked in his work.

#### Trickster Performance and Queer Mimicry

Non-Native aesthetics and stereotypes often defined native people and even though many Native artists felt constrained by these expectations, they often reified these stereotypes. Crumbo himself participated in reinforcing such frames. However, his art also suggests ways that he challenged those aesthetics and hegemonies, resisting established forms deemed acceptable for Native artists. Crumbo mimics stereotypes of Native men as cultural other (see image 1), but remakes these images (see image 2) and even utilizes his work to fashion his own indigenous persona (see image 3). Crumbo's work challenges assumptions of Native representations about culture and gender, opening a discussion about the way Native people historically worked within and against stereotypical expectations to create art in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

In *The Trickster Shift: Humour and Irony in Contemporary Native Art*, Allan J Ryan reminds readers that Native artists employ humor to create a discourse that playfully engages with other artists and larger audiences. Ryan states: "It is a discourse *among* tricksters, *about* tricksters, and even *as* tricksters, in the sense that the 'trickster is a comic discourse, a collection of utterances in oral tradition.' As once open-ended, unfolding, evolving, incomplete, the discourse is imagined in numerous verbal and visual narratives and multiplicity of authoritative voices" (xiii). Ryan suggests the anti-colonial ability of Native artists to undermine static definitions of indigeneity through humor. Trickster humor plays with and undermines compartmentalization of Native people. Play creates a symphony of polyphonic sounds constantly in flux and shifting based on the players and material employed. Instead of being locked literally into essentialized, compartmentalized notions of Native identity and cultural productions, the trickster

surreptitiously undermines imprisoning hegemonies and practices, craftily shattering such constraints without always leaving tracks.

Play and mimicry provide scholars with a way of negotiating Woody Crumbo's legacy. Scholars Lawrence Sullivan states that a "Trickster's character and exploits embody the process of ironic imagination. His dynamism of composition mocks, shatters and re-forms the overly clear structures of the world and the overly-smooth images of the mind .... In him the double-sidedness of reality reveals itself" (Sullivan qtd in Ryan 8). In a similar way, I wish to highlight the way Crumbo's irony complicates the stereotypical picture of Crumbo as a deeply spiritual Native American man who infused his Native aesthetics into his art. What emerges is a more accurate appraisal of an artist influenced by pervasive ideologies of his time; a man who employs stereotypes and playfully deploys them in order successfully maneuver Euro-American cultural demands.

Crumbo's resistance rests in his mimicry of primitive aesthetics instead of rejecting them. In reifying the image of native man as exotic/erotic, Crumbo restates the earlier images of Native peoples dominating the 20s and 30s, in fact that have always dominated discussions of Native alterity. Crumbo deploys stereotypes of "orientalist" native men for two reasons: (1) in attempt to show Native "authenticity" and (2) to market his works to a public that demanded stereotypical images of Native men. Crumbo's work also interacts with queer depictions of masculinity. His series of Eagle Dance Paintings position homoerotic portraits of male dancers, demanding that his viewers see his half-nude ambiguous Native male bodies as sights of erotic pleasure, fluidly playing with viewer's expectations.

Crumbo deploys a mimicry focused on homoerotic positioning of Native men in order to engage with stereotypes, images, and questions of authenticity. Mimicry calls into question the privilege of power that police Native people and cultural production, according to Homi Bhabha. In “Of Mimicry and Man: the Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse,” Bhabha suggests that “mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other as a *subject of a different that is almost the same, but not quite*” (126). The idea is that a subject exists as almost the mirror image of the colonialist but because of the subject’s racialized identity cannot perfectly mirror that image. Of interest for discussions of Crumbo is Bhabha’s articulation of mimicry and representation:

Mimicry emerges as the representation of a difference that is itself a process of disavowal. Mimicry is, thus, the sign of a double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation, and discipline, which “appropriates” the Other as it visualizes power. Mimicry is also the sign of the inappropriate, however, a difference or recalcitrance which coheres the dominant strategic function of colonial power, intensifies surveillance, and poses an imminent threat to both “normalized” knowledges and disciplinary powers. (126)

Mimicry calls into question the arbitrary notion of colonialist hegemonies, for in mimicry a subject *performs* a position that calls into question the legitimacy of continued colonial power. Mimicry calls into question the very discourse of power that creates it. Bhabha reminds us:

Those inappropriate signifiers of colonial discourse .... The identity between stereotypes which, through repetition, also become different ...

are the nonrepressive production of contradictory and multiple beliefs.

They cross they cross the boundaries of the culture of enunciation through a strategic confusion of the metaphoric and metonymic axes of the cultural production of meaning. (130)

Bhabha's point is that identity is always already fluid, and no essential quality exists that differentiates one individual from another: "Its [mimicry's] threat ... comes from the prodigious and strategic production of conflictual, fantastic, discriminatory 'identity effects' in the play of a power that is elusive because it hides no essence, no 'itself'" (131). While Bhabha is concerned with depictions of colonial people who mimic white, Euro-American standards, I believe that Crumbo's mimicry of colonial stereotypes functions analogously with Bhabha's theories. Crumbo's images mimic expectations of Native otherness. In re-claiming and deploying stereotypical images, Crumbo *performs* the stereotype, revealing the creation of Native otherness in American consciousness. Judith Butler reminds readers that drag performances "dramatize the signifying gesture through which gender itself is established" (x). Crumbo plays with stock depictions of Native people, mimicking his audiences' expectations for a primitive other. Butler also argues:

According to the understanding of identification as an enacted fantasy or incorporation, however, it is clear that coherence is desired, wished for, idealized, and that this idealization is an effect of a corporeal signification. In other words, acts, gestures, and desire produce the effect of an internal core or substance, but produce this *on the surface* of the body, through the play of signifying absences that suggest, but never reveal, the organizing

principle of identity as a cause. Such acts, gestures, enactments, generally construed, are *performative* in the sense that the essence or identity that they otherwise purport to express are *fabrications* manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means. That the gendered [and racial] body is performative suggests that it has no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality.

(136)

For Butler, identity is created through “a *stylized repetition of acts*” (140). By playing with mimicry, Crumbo reveals the external semiotics of race, opening a space for political resistance in his work and life. Just as the colonized subject is expected to re-create an impossible vision of “appropriate” subjectivity, Crumbo’s own performances reveal the arbitrary nature of essentialist discourses of race and culture.

Mimicry reveals a strategy for interpreting Crumbo and his work, but scholar’s need to wrestle with Crumbo’s environment. In the 1920s and 30’s American culture increasingly demanded representations of a primitive Other. What emerges is a cultural moment analogous to 19<sup>th</sup> century European fascination with orientalist representations. We have already seen such an operation in operatic and literary depictions. Crumbo demonstrates a link between orientalist discourse and primitivism in that both illuminate the tension between colonial expectations and the market for Native images in at least two ways: (1) a site for sexual commodity and (2) a desire for representations of the Other as primitive. Edward Said observes that economic consumption of the Orient also included sexual consumption. Both figuratively in the imagination of readers of oriental literature and literally in the erotic ventures of colonialists, the “east” became a pleasure-

dome for erotic and sensual escapades unavailable in the “west.” Those “Eastern” bodies became available in architecture, art, ballet, opera, et al, created spaces that tempted Westerns to consume stereotypical oriental bodies. In discussing orientalism—that body of work that creates “The West” by the creation of “The Orient”—Edward Said points out the constructed sexual and erotic quality of the Other.<sup>xxiv</sup> Just as the East lucratively benefited western nations, it also served as a site for unbridled sexual dominance in colonial empires. According to Said, “the Orient was a place where one could look for sexual experience unobtainable in Europe” both metaphorically in art and literature but also literally as travelers would tantalize the readers in their constructed narratives. (190). Through frank erotic art and literature, the sensual/sexual aspect of orientalism “Became as regulated and uniform as learning itself” (190). The hegemony of orientalist eroticism was part and parcel with the intellectual and philosophical works associated with orientalist learning and research. Oriental sexuality became inherent and universal, a standard commodity available to mass culture, “with the result that readers and writers could have it if they wished without necessarily going to the orient” (190). In Said’s view, the oriental body could be consumed simply by reading about it or by viewing it.

Said proves useful in re-evaluating Crumbo’s work because he includes the possibility of colonial homoerotic fascination with depictions of “Native” male bodies. Said lists a host of bodies open for the colonial gaze, including “harems, princesses, princes, slaves, veils, dancing girls and boy, sherbets, ointments, and so on” (190). Said mentions masculine and feminine bodies that presumably western men (and perhaps women) could consume without necessarily raising homophobic alarms of decadent perversions. Native Americans became a group that American people as a whole could

look to analogously to what Said says orientalism supplied an “experience unobtainable in” Modern society.<sup>xxv</sup> Native bodies became stylized as sites for pleasure, as we see in the Native American operas produced in the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the movies being produced, the art erupting on the scene, and even modern dance as it evolved in the 1920s. Ruth Denison, Martha Graham, Isadora Duncan, and Ted Shawn often employed primitive elements in order to create their work. Ted Shawn’s images of Native American dancers shaped the consciousness of American dance and art and thus bear an important background for understanding Crumbo’s own performances and representations.

#### Dancing the Erotic Stereotype: Ted Shawn and Native American Dance

Historic depictions of Native Americans often eroticize Native Americans, but by the 1920s and 30s a fully-fledged sensual rhetoric and aesthetics of non-White American bodies proliferated American artistic spaces, creating an artistic stage that Crumbo would himself perform upon. At the center of this growing discussion and proliferation of Native primitivism and orientalism is the work of Ted Shawn. Looking at Shawn’s work contextualizes performance and racialized identity, recurring motifs in Crumbo’s life. Ted Shawn championed forms of modern dance that shaped American dance throughout the 20 and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, relying on a host of sources to create his work that included some level of ethnographic work of American Indians of the southwest (Murphy 112). Shawn often employed Indian dance forms to create and authenticate his dance agendas, and his original work highlights the growing homoerotic and primitive interest in Native Americans. In *The People Have Never Stopped Dancing, Native American Modern Dance Histories*, Jacqueline Shea Murphy states:

Shawn auditioned for Ruth St. Denis's company by staging himself as an Aztec youth. St. Denis's own 'Orientalist' approach to American dance was in full swing at the time, part of the general passion for the exotic in dance at the turn of the century that accompanied the project of U.S. imperialism that flourished at the time . . . . Her response to Shawn's Aztec impersonation was to declare, "This is the best male dancing material in America!" and to offer Shawn then and there a position in her company. (120)

The exotic quality and sources of Shawn's dance excited not only St. Denis but also a growing market demanding exotic new performances.<sup>xxvi</sup> During their time together, Shawn developed a set of dances inspired by the Hopi Indian Eagle dances.

Shawn would study ethnographic literature on Native dance and travel to the southwest in 1923 to gather firsthand information, including his research on creating an erotic depiction of Native American dance. Shawn synthesized the day long rituals, dances, and prayers into a "two-minute piece [that] evades the cultural, religious, and healing aspects of the Eagle Dance" (Murphy122). At the conclusion of the dance, two white hunters shoot and kill the eagle, a point that Blackfeet/Chippewa dancer and choreographer Rosalie Jones maintains "was pure vintage early modern dance in the genre of Anna Pavlova's famous 'dying swan'" despite donning red-face and indigenous garb (qtd in Murphy 122).<sup>xxvii</sup> In a photograph of his "Hopi Indian Eagle Dance," viewers can see the homoerotic fascination with Shawn as the primitive Other. In the image, Shawn wears little more than a thong to cover his genitalia. Bare-chested, he wears a series of what looks like Pueblo necklaces and moccasins with some form of

cloth tied around his upper-calves. Contorted in a pose that places his body at an angle turned away from the viewer, Shawn's body seems strangely androgynous. Here is a figure whose smooth skin and supple muscles, taught as the dancer stand nearly en-pointe, emphasize the curves of his body and the arc of his Eagle Wings. In a different arena, one might assume a cabaret like dance would ensue, with the dancer tantalizing the audience with a strip-tease performance. Furthermore, Shawn demurely gazes down and to the side in a highly stylized act of submission that is more traditionally associated with stereotypes of feminine body language.

These images fall directly in line with the larger cultural production of Native American male dancers that provide a rich context for Crumbo's work, especially since Crumbo's own Eagle Dancing paintings seem oddly reminiscent of Shawn's dances. Paying attention to this trend provides important work in re-evaluating Crumbo's life and work specifically because Crumbo deploys similar colonial primitivist eroticism. In many respects, he even heightens it. In his Eagle paintings, contemporary scholars may well wonder at the inspiration of his work. Historically, critics pointed to his role as a dancer as the answer. However, such a view seems to overlook that Crumbo's audience might have seen other "performances" of Native dancers (such as Shawn or even earlier versions of Buffalo Wild West). In light of the cultural productions of indigenous performativity dominating the early years of Crumbo's life, we would do well to revisit and reinterpret Crumbo's own role as a dancer within a discussion of the semiotics of racial performance.

Emerging Issues in Native American Art

Crumbo began painting and exhibiting his work at a time in art history when public fascination with Native American art exploded both domestically and internationally in the 1930s. While his career would span many decades, his work at times engages with, responds to, and reifies the ongoing debates, controversies, and expectations that surrounded Native American artists as a whole. To understand the cultural production of Crumbo's art, critics should consider the history of Indian painting in relationship to ideological structures of Indian aesthetics and identity.<sup>xxviii</sup>

By the time Woody Crumbo began to train as a painter and display his work, Native American painting had been carefully created and constructed by a mixture of teachers, anthropologists, and ethnographers, which Crumbo mimicked in his art and performance. At the heart of this creation are two well-known and often hotly debated figures: Dorothy Dunn (1903-1992) and Oscar Jacobson (1882-1966). Dorothy Dunn created a Native American art studio at the Santa-Fe Indian School with such illustrious students as Allan Houser, Joe Hilario Herrera, Oscar Howe, and many others. Oscar Jacobson taught at the University of Oklahoma and his students included the Kiowa Six and even Crumbo after his early training with the Kiowa Six's teacher, Susan Peters. Dunn and Jacobson believed in a style of Native painting that would serve as the benchmark of "authenticity" for decades to come. Dunn is quite vocal in her own writings about what constitutes true Native American art. While Jacobson published scant writings in comparison, he also served as a guiding force in the emerging field of Native American painting. Re-visiting Dunn's writings reveals the impact her teaching had in the creation of primitive Native painting, and while Crumbo never studied with her, scholars should not overlook her influence on the larger art market and Crumbo's own

painting. Crumbo collaborated with artists who were trained by her and Dunn maintained a strong relationship with Jacobson, suggestive of an ongoing collaborative exchange. Also Crumbo's dancing had taken him to Santa Fe, so by the time he was painting the murals in 1940 he was absolutely familiar with the studio style, according to art historian and critic Christine Nelson (79).

Jacobson canonized the flat two dimensional style of early 20<sup>th</sup> century Native American painting as the benchmark of indigenous easel art, which Crumbo employs in many of his paintings. Crumbo often upheld and even taught this style to his students.<sup>xxix</sup> Dunn and Jacobson were part of a growing trend in American art circles that was concerned over the threat of Native Americans losing their cultural identities. In 1940 the maelstrom exploded when *Art Digest* published an anonymous editorial entitled "The Vanishing Idiom." The writer argues that Native American art students were being unjustly taught European styles of art, and that "Dr. Willard Beatty, in charge of the Educational Division of the U. S. Indian Service, feels that the teaching of painting in Indian schools should follow realist European lines" (29). The author expresses concern over departures from "authentic" and "Traditional" styles of Native painting. The writers say that a number of individuals disagree with Beatty: "Those who love Indian painting for itself do not agree with Dr. Beatty," further inviting American artists to launch a protest to the Federal Indian Arts and Crafts Board (mentioning among others John Collier) (29). The piece concludes by saying that *Art Digest* received a pamphlet by John Sloan, *Before and After*, that provides "a convincing demonstration of the plight of the Indian art student in Indian schools" (29). The pamphlet provides an insightful look in the ennui surrounding Native American Art and fears of its contamination, ideas that

certainly influenced Crumbo and his work.<sup>xxx</sup> *Before and After* expresses wide held expectations for Native American painters and their art. The tenor of the argument stems from a belief in an aesthetic and technical difference between Native American “traditional” art and its Euro-American counterpart, and the basis for that work stems from the writings and observations of individuals such as Dunn and Jacobson and its reification in the work of artists like Crumbo.

#### Native Art as Primitive Visual Performance

When analyzing Crumbo’s work, scholars should realize that teachers like Dunn and Jacobson paradoxically advocated primitivism in their students work while also espousing such primitivism naturally occurred because of the race of their students. Crumbo would successfully manipulate such personal and visual expectations by performing difference. Dorothy Dunn codified and canonized the requirements of “Authentic” Native American painting, creating a litany that various white writers, teachers, and artists repeated including Crumbo. Dunn’s litany and training influenced at least two generation of Native American painters. The writers of *Before and After* rely in part on Dunn’s litany to discuss authentic Native painting, which includes such criteria as unrealistic lines and painting from memory instead of models or landscapes. In a biographical sketch of Hopi artist Quoyavema (c. 1900), Ina Sizer Cassidy makes additional reference to Native painting as having a limited perspective (44.) In a piece written for *The American Indian, II* magazine just a few years later, Alice Corbin Henderson maintains that native artists “do not use European perspective,” and as result “[t]heir composition follows the primitive or Oriental patterns” (23). Dunn’s own history of her contribution to Native American art and teaching, published in *El Palacio* in 1951,

states that authentic Native American paintings would be marked by the absence of modeling, perspective, and foreshortening (341). She also makes reference to Mrs. Susie Peters and Oscar Jacobson's role in the creation of the Kiowa School of painting, which used bolder colors than the Santa Fe school but employed a similar litany of requirements for claiming authenticity, and these were teachers who would greatly influence Crumbo's own legacy (342).<sup>xxxii</sup> In 1958 for the newspaper *Oklahoma Today*, Bill Burchardt follows the same trajectory for judging the authenticity of Native American traditional painting. In his rhapsody of Indian art, he claims that "the Indian artist never needs a model . . . . There is no need for a preliminary sketch, or to retouch the finished work, for they have seen the completed painting in their imagination before they began. Their flat paintings almost come alive" (19). Such writings are by no means an exhaustive account on the litany of Native American art authentication. Rather these examples provide a glimpse into definitions of Native American art as primitive that influenced Crumbo and the art market buying his work.

In order to be deemed authentic, Native painters artists like Crumbo had to mimic the expectations of teachers like Dunn and Jacobson. Dunn and other teachers such as Oscar Jacobson established the benchmarks for defining Native American traditional painting and created a genealogy that justified its creation and continued enforcement. Dunn worked diligently to maintain the standards she believed defined Native art. Native artist Allan Houser (1914-94) objected to Dunn, claiming that "she trained us all the same way. You either paint like this . . . or it's not Indian art" (qtd in Nelson 77). Houser recalls that when he wanted to study realism and anatomy, Dunn said "if I was going to do things realistic[ly] [to] take the next bus home" (Nelson 77). Dunn believed in an

unbroken continuum between ancient Native Americans and contemporary Native painters. She used this theory to rationalize her disciplinary standards for teaching Native American painting and decorative arts. Dunn took great pains to establish connections between prehistoric Native art and contemporary standards. Relying on her own archeological and ethnographic research, Dunn happily claims that modern critics easily can see a relationship between early Pueblo wall paintings, sand-paintings, and modern Indian paintings, using the wall paintings from a 14<sup>th</sup> century Kiva at Kuaua near Bernalillio as evidence for her position.<sup>xxxii</sup> Dunn argues: “The techniques gives an entirely flat and two-dimensional appearance with the exception of the occasional naturalistic indication of a deep concavity” (334). Citing two other historical sites, Dunn continues that Pueblo artists in Awatovi and Ka-waika-a “produced two hundred and forty murals ... done in a full palette of earthcolors and are laid on flat in outlines areas with no attempt at light and shade” (335). Henderson also claims a similar relationship between Modern Native painting and primitive Native art; he states that

primitive art exists in the Southwest today as it did in prehistoric times—in the pictographs and wall paintings on rock or canyon and wall paintings in caves, in the geometric designs of pottery, baskets, textile, and in the highly symbolic altar paintings in Kivas, sand paintings in front of the altars in Hopi Kivas and the most more elaborate ones used in the rituals of the Navajo Indians. (Henderson 24)

Dunn, and other white ethnographers and historians, utilizes these examples to provide an ethos for demanding students to follow her litany of requirements for Native painting.<sup>xxxiii</sup>

Dunn's studio is hardly the only artistic space that demanded Indian artists to maintain a recognizable Indian aesthetic in art. In a 1945 editorial on Native American artists, Alice Corbin Henderson takes a progressive stance on sovereignty of Native people in transitioning "from the tribal to an individual from of art" (27). She adds that Native people "should be able to do the same in all things, without relinquishing their own heritage but adding to our own" (27). Henderson's message is painfully clear that Native artists must supply primitive art for American culture: Native American art should add "to our own" by not "relinquishing their own heritage." Henderson authorizes Anglo-American authority over Native Painters, demanding Native painters retain primitive styles. In her article she mentions that Native children were forbade from painting Indian subjects, but "the tide of sentiment has already turned [as] evidenced in the irate letter of one U. S. Congressman, who wrote, 'Who wants to go west to buy a picture by an Indian of three red apples on a plate'" (27). Such rhetoric reinforces a binary between white consumers purchasing and controlling the Native Artist as cultural Other. The only thing the public wanted from Native artists were depictions of primitivism, certainly not still life paintings—or any other paintings that are not easily recognizable as Native American—regardless of their aesthetic value. Such a belief is evident when Henderson prohibits Native students from any paintings not deemed authentic (with primitivism as the gage of authenticity). While such works might seem academic and separate from Crumbo's own painting, such a stance misses how Dunn and to a certain extent Jacobson influenced and shaped Native painters and the art market. In order to be a successful painter, Crumbo would have to adopt and align himself with their standards.

#### Racializing Native American Art and Performance

Not only did Crumbo have to mimic primitivism in his art, but he also had to mimic that primitivism in his life as the public clamored for a relationship between art and racialized biology. Like Crumbo, Native American artists were carefully groomed as champions of primitive culture so that their art became part and parcel of racial performances as primitive artists. Lest scholars be tempted to make light of the continued colonial bent of Art education in the 30s and 40s, Dunn's own writings bespeak the new form of colonial education emerging in Modern America: enculturation and retroactive indoctrination of primitive aesthetic expectations onto Indian artists. In discussing the murals Native American students were encouraged to paint for her Studio, Dunn argues that the work galvanized students and encouraged their classmates to strive harder as artists. The work served as "incentives toward *ideology* as well as *performance*" ("Influences" 4 emphasis added). To meet the ideological and performative ends, Dunn provided students with "[f]ine prints from a newly published portfolio of Indian painting. . . . Works of established Indian painters were observed in the Museum of New Mexico. These were paintings to understand and honor, and to project into related progressive phases, but never to copy. Great collections in the Laboratory of Anthropology were a steady inspiration and source of motif" ("Influences" 4), and she would get other examples of art from other regions for her students when needed, who then "integrated traditional and invented motifs from facts gather from textbooks" into their own work ("Influences" 5). Unknowingly, Dunn's own call for ideology and performance provided the cultural space for a young Crumbo to emerge and use mimicry to undermine the static notions of art and identity Dunn and others disseminated, which I discuss below.

To create a wholly, primitive racial Other, the American public demanded visual and public performances of Native identity, which Crumbo successfully manipulated. While Native artists found their work authenticated by White consumers, they also had to address their own racial identities. Native art was seen as an expression of their racial identities, even if public performances uneasily gestured to an absence of such essentialist claims. Crumbo had to negotiate the pressure to perform his Native identity and look the part, mimicking racial expectations of a Native artist. Burchardt's editorial gestures to racial aspects of Native artists when he writes, "Traditional Indian painting is flat, two-dimensional, showing its ancient Asiatic heritage" (15). Burchardt establishes a link between Native American primitive art and Orientalism. In discussing the Asiatic link between the two styles of art, Bruchart recounts the belief that America was settled by nomads crossing the bearing straight bridge (15).<sup>xxxiv</sup> Comparisons of Oriental and Native American art shared a belief that racial biology creates both art and its aesthetics. Dorothy Dunn makes this clear when she quotes Doctor Hewett's discussion of Cresencio's work "as distinctly racial as is Japanese art ... a unique racial product" ("Development" 340). Such a discussion establishes the rapid racialized discussions about Native American and even Asian art. Burchardt concludes his editorial with rhetoric increasing pointing to a racial essentialist trait as the *raison d'être* for Native American painting: "Even the most progressive Indian carries in his soul a lingering nostalgia for the days of his grandfathers' glory. He likes to paint the hunt, the games, and the dances that embody the religious rituals of his race" (qtd in 21). Alice Corbin Henderson, in her article "Indian Artists of the Southwest," made correlations between Oriental and Native American painting in order to demonstrate the "primitive" racial

elements both share. Henderson claims that “one characteristic of the work of the modern Indian artists was that from the very first, and very largely today, they do not use European perspective. Their composition follows the primitive or Oriental pattern” (23). While Henderson’s employment of Oriental and primitive as synonyms is an oversimplification, the general tenor of her piece illustrates how primitive rhetoric fashions a racial aspect of Native American painting in the modern period. Henderson notes the complexity of the term primitive and provides her own definition for the term in relation to art as meaning “the art of a truly *archaic* people, *apart from and out of touch* with our modern civilization—before, that is, the idea of imitation, or realism, has entered their image-making world” (emphasis added 21).<sup>xxxv</sup> Native artists paint from a “racial feeling” that arise from a collective experience full of magical rituals and theories of power and spirit, according to Henderson. In his own fashioning of his identity and larger than life narrative, Crumbo seems to have manipulated such pervasive demands of Native artists, mirroring the demands of his public.

Early painters seemed to have already capitalized on their viewers expectations of difference to market their work, which Crumbo would also utilize. In such instances, Native artists established some flexibility in their work. Modern discussions about Native American painting often relied on this underlying ideology in order to establish Native American art as representing a wholly Other group. An early example is the 1922 editorial on one of the first Native American painters, Hart Merriam Schultz (Blackfeet 1882-1965), who also went by the name Lone Wolf. While Doris Ostrander Dawdy claims he employs a “technique . . . not traditionally Indian” (10), the editorial takes great pains in establishing the racial component of Schultz and how it influences his art. In an

anonymous 1922 editorial portrait of Schultz and his work in *Current Opinion*, the unnamed author claims that Schultz “loves both his art and his race” (104) before launching into a physical description of Schultz as a man who “is more than half a foot taller than the average man, is as dark as a native of southern Italy, as straight as a lance, beardless, high cheek-boned, deep-eyed, ebony-haired” (104).<sup>xxxvi</sup> The piece utilizes Schultz’ physicality to establish his (Native) artistic ethos. Despite venturing afield from traditional styles, Schultz emerges as “a pupil of nature” (105), because he fits racial expectations for Native painters. Crumbo himself would rely on his physical performances as a Native man in engendering similar interest in his work, mimicking visual and racial expectations that challenged essentialist claims about Native people.

To understand Crumbo’s mimicry and his ability to play with racial and gender expectations, scholars should recognize that his public demanded primitive aesthetic public and artistic performances. While the public theorized that Native art should express primitivism, the ongoing debate about pedagogy undermines such claims. Teachers like Jacobson and Dunn argued that they preserved the racial aspects of Native artists. Politician John Collier makes a similar claim in a speech he gave in 1934 discussing the government’s policies towards teaching art to Native students. Yet such work actually underscores that visual performance is tied to education instead of racial instincts. Collier provides critical insight into perceptions of Native peoples:

Wherever, in our Government schools which are no longer trying to destroy Indian art, the children are permitted to draw and paint to utilize merely their conscious and unconscious native material, not misguided by white teaching or any teaching, there appear by hundreds, by thousand,

pictures and designs like in spirit and in firmness of technic to the things done by famous Pueblo and Kiowa artists. (6)

Without naming Jacobson or Dunn, Collier represents them as bastions of a primitive authentic Native tradition, instead of “misguided teaching.” Collier claims that when Indian children are left alone they rely on “their conscious and unconscious native material” (6). Such language implies a biological essentialist claim of racial aesthetics, aesthetics both conscious and *unconscious*. Lest the reader miss this important racial component, Collier later states, “The facts, which I am reminding you of, are independent of any theories, and they show that the unconscious creative bent of the Indian, which across thousands of years, in more than a thousand highly differentiated cultures, forged itself into strong and unique beauty, was not successfully killed by the government’s policy” (7). The art of Native Americans is the result of an “unconscious creative bent” that belongs to their racial difference. While Collier’s language emphasizes the history and survival of Native Americans, his prose betrays a racial ethos with which to make his emotional appeals.

Dorothy Dunn makes similar arguments when she bemoans the stereotypical elements that she witnessed emerging in Native American painting. Dunn cries:

Currently there is a prolific and technically excellent, yet considerably stereotyped outgiving from the well-established painters in the Southwest area. Aside from the work of a few artists, the tendency to experiment has frequently led outward to the art schools rather than into an appreciative exploration of the almost unlimited possibilities of native art. It may be interesting to note whether the academic influence can be effectively used by painters resourceful enough to

combine it with their own rich source materials ... However, not acquired academic knowledge can replace the spontaneous expressions of released *natural talent* which continues to draw upon the depths of its own heritage.

(“Development” 348 emphasis added)

We should not miss the irony of Dunn decrying stereotypical and rote Native American painting, considering that her own pedagogy enforced and created the frameworks for such stagnation. Dunn’s antidote to this conundrum, however, is revelatory in that she implies the *natural talent* of Native artists will be the salvation against mechanical stereotypes in Native paintings. And this natural element was at the core of her curriculum. Reflecting on her own pedagogy in the third person, Dunn writes, “Her guidance was through question, suggestion, discernment, and self-reliance. Her role was somewhat like that of a gardener encouraging *natural growth* to a flowering devoid of weeds” (“Influences” 5 emphasis added). Employing a synecdoche of plants flowering, Dunn analogously plays the part of a gardener enabling the racial flowering of creative output from her students by encouraging their “natural growth” and “natural talent,” growth and talent that Dunn places diametrically opposite a binary of academic, taught, and cultured aesthetics. The overwhelming racialization of Native American art and artists plays a significant role in Crumbo’s own oeuvre, as he negotiates the demand for racial and aesthetic expectations as a Native painter. Crumbo mimicked such expectations in his own life and even queered such expectations in his art.

#### Crumbo’s Life and Work

Within such racial and artistic expectations, Crumbo emerged as a painter often mimicking and performing the expectations for Native artists. Crumbo’s work and life

fascinates as much as it offers a host of playful contradictions. The scant biographical work on Crumbo depicts a romantic Native figure who plays into his larger than life mythos. In a posthumous article from his Alma Mater, an anonymous writer rhapsodizes over Crumbo and his grave:

A venerable cedar casts its shade over artist Woody Crumbo's grave, the whirl of cicadas and the muffled roar of traffic on nearby I-40 constant in the white-hot afternoon. As bursts of birdsong ring from the Oklahoma woodlands that surround the small country cemetery, scenes from the artist's life rise in the mind's eye like shimmering heat waves into the summer sky. A dark-haired boy, pocket knife in hand, carves a flute from a reed that had grown strong and straight in a creek bottom. A handsome young man moves to the rhythm of the Eagle Dance, quivering his costume wings in imitation of a fledgling eagle. The artist, confident in his vision, paints with deft hand a proud, blue spirit horse. The scenes fade. ("League" N. Pag.).

The writer paints a romantic portrait of a young man with flourishes from Crumbo's legacy. The biopic states, Crumbo was "[a] deeply spiritual man ... [who] dedicated himself to portraying the cultures of American Indians, preserving their ancient traditions and advancing their economic stability" ("League" N. Pag.). Crumbo directly contributed to this view of himself and his art as D. C. Hines notes in his essay on Crumbo legacy. After providing a brief biographical sketch of Crumbo's life, Hines quotes Crumbo:

The Indian has much to offer in spiritual ideas. It is the Indian concept that everything is kin to God and to himself. We are coworkers with God ....

Everything has a spiritual quality, a reason for being. The creator projects himself into the object he creates; the object, then, whatever it might be, has a spirit. ... I have projected my spirit into each work. You look at it, my spirit looks back at you and speaks to you. (N. Pag 4)

What is lacking in such a picture of Crumbo and his art, is the playful quality that saturates both, his mimicry and resistance to conformity. As the trickster like figure he was, the author from his Alma Mater mentions he “always had twinkle in his eye” (“League” N. Pag). While at times he certainly played into stereotypes, he also manipulated his image and productions. Crumbo’s mimicry disrupts dominant expectations for Native artists, performers, and people, revealing performance and not racist essentialist claims as the site for identity.

Crumbo was quite adamant about rejecting colonial artistic inhibitions and even political injustices, even while he often worked and recapitulated those disciplines and ideologies. Crumbo’s life “spanned the decades from the birth of what at first was named Contemporary American Indian Art to what is now often called Traditional Native American Art” (“League” N. Pag.). But Crumbo would claim, “Through my painting, I hope to raise the reputation of American Indian Art to as high a standing as fine art ... to make it of national and international importance” (Crumbo qtd in Hines N.Pag). Crumbo also sought to establish sovereign rights of Native communities such as when he helped the Tigua Pueblo Indian tribe get federally recognized near El Paso, Texas (Hines N. Pag.). Crumbo’s life and work then should point out that despite often working within the confines of stereotypes his legacy included political and artistic resistance. Crumbo states “Before our own American Indian art started in the very late 1920s and ‘30s, the Indian

was painted as the white man saw him.... Afterward, the Indian began to paint as he saw himself. Today, we paint everything from dramatic dancers to gentle woodland scenes to squaws quietly grinding corn. We paint *our* life” (“League N. Pag. 1 emphasis added). While Crumbo often painted images that played into dominant images of Native people as primitive Other, his images open a space for discussing his work within a queer paradigm, specifically by playfully and subversively wrestling control of representation from white portrayals.

Crumbo’s work is often associated with “traditional” Native Paintings. The unnamed author of “League” discusses Crumbo’s style as “Traditional,” referencing his two-dimensional style and lack of perspective (2). In Crumbo’s lifetime such standards were also used to gauge his authenticity as well as other Native painters. In an anonymous review of one of Crumbo’s exhibitions in 1937, the author states that Crumbo’s “paintings are all of Indians in their historically correct costumes. They are done in the flat one-color style that has always characterized the Indian art. The poses of the figures are nearly always of some phase of one of the dancer and are *painted authentically by Crumbo*” (“Rare” 73 emphasis added). While I revisit the importance of this quotation to performance and dancing below, I wish to point out that the general tenor of the writings is that Crumbo’s art is authentic; that it represents a racialized demand for Native art as seen in his “flat one-color style that *has always* characterized the Indian art”; and they represent “historically correct costumes.” Of course the irony of this statement is that such expectations of Indian art were not even 40 years old.

However, Crumbo resisted accepted views of Native American art history, and his own words largely contradict the white accepted view of Native American painting. In

1978 Crumbo stated that Native American had “little or nor true [fine] art” despite paintings on hide, pictographs, and the like. Crumbo would add in reference to such early depictions, “[c]ertainly such efforts represent the Indians *innate* ... love of beauty and need to preserve history and identity, but it would be hard to argue that this was art for art’s sake” (emphasis added Crumbo qtd in Hines). Hines adds that it was only in the 1920s and 30s that Native American artists like Crumbo began to “incorporate tribal traditions, symbols, and legends in their art” (Hines N.pag). Crumbo and Hines’ words together articulate strong rejections of the kind of litany and continuum that teachers like Dunn and Jacobson proposed. Despite Crumbo’s tenable exception with rhetoric of Native American painting’s authenticity and his own subtle forms of resistance in these paintings, Crumbo’s work often is carefully positioned in relationship to primitive racialized standards of Native American painting. In a tribute to Crumbo published by the *Gilcrease Magazine* in 1989, Margaret Teague wrote:

Today’s American Indian art is a *natural* extension and evolution of ancient drawings and carvings. ... Its most recognized characteristics are that it is two-dimensional and that it retains the silhouette treatment of figures. Frequently, there is little or no indication of foreground, horizon, or perspective, hence no indication ... of distance or depth. Painted surfaces are flat, with ... shaping and shading ... achieved through fine lines. (qtd in Hines N. pag.)

While largely manufactured in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and championed by Oscar Jacobson and Dorothy Dunn, contemporary critics can see how Crumbo is forced into the litany used as the benchmark for traditional Native art for nearly 100 years.

Yet, critics of Crumbo already recognized the advancements he was making in Indian painting, playing with accepted norms for Native painters. In an editorial of Crumbo's work and life in Taos, New Mexico, Nan Sheets notes that he is most interested in "the advancement which he [Crumbo] has made in his painting. Instead of making the small, intimate *tempra* [sic] paintings as has been his method in the past, he is not doing large oil canvases. He uses the Indian theme and paints in the traditional two-dimensional manner but often builds up the figures with layer upon layer of pure pigment" (69). Sheets attempts to place Crumbo in the genealogy of "authentic" Plains Indian artists. Even though he takes great pains to establish authentic ethos, Sheets cannot help noting the way that Crumbo was already manipulating artistic expectations, shifting from traditional modes of representation for Native artists, mediums, and styles. One way that Crumbo manipulated the art market while in Taos was through his silk-screen making. Employing a group of Pueblo workers, Crumbo created silk screens of many of his works, which enabled him to mass-produce his works for a much larger audience at competitive prices (Hines N. Page 3). Mass-producing art on silk screens defied white expectations for Native artists, but Crumbo believed that "Everyone could break from this break tradition" as Robert Perry argues (176). In these small, subtle, yet important ways, Crumbo asserted his own ability to fashion his artistic outgrowth.

Woody Crumbo's work highlights ways that he fully encapsulates a trickster persona, playing with the expectations of Native artists. Like other famous Native artists—such as the Kiowa Six—Crumbo grew in fame under the guidance of Oscar Jacobson. Unlike the Kiowa Six, though, Crumbo took a more active role in his work and how he would sell it. Oscar Jacobson often would purchase his Native students' art work

at 10\$ apiece. According to his biographer Robert Perry, Crumbo, relied “on his charisma” to sell his work to the public at higher prices. Crumbo would turn in unfinished work for final assignments, earning the equivalent of a passing grade, and then he would finish the work at his home to sell for higher prices than the 10\$ Jacobson paid (84). But Crumbo’s ability to forge new areas in Native art often limited his commercial and artistic development. Max Evans points that when Crumbo began to explore oil based paint, previous galleries rejected his paintings because they said they were “non-Indian and non-traditional” (in Perry 14, and Perry 185). While Perry sacrifices accuracy for emotional appeals—he argues that Crumbo’s “broad education never sacrificed the ancient forms” (185)—he is right in pointing out that “unknowledgeable” judges “were trying to control Indian artists” (185).

Crumbo was aware of the expectations of white audiences and its effect on Native artists, a fact that he criticized in both his art and his rhetoric. In the 1937 editorial “Rare Art Secret Is Held by O. U. Indian,” the anonymous author notes that Native artists “have too long turned out their work according to the dictates of the traders and merchants which whom they dealt” (73). It is unclear if the writer is criticizing the white consumer of Native producer for a “lowering in the standards of Indian art and craft work” (“Rare” 73). Crumbo’s own words provides little help, initially, when he states ““The Indian must not lose his true art instinct just to please other people”” (“Rare” 73). While Crumbo’s rhetoric of Native people’s “true art instinct” betrays his interaction with racialized expectations of essentialist Native identity, his words suggest a questioning of the predatory relationship between white consumers and Native artists, a relationship that

Crumbo would depict in scathing irony and sarcasm in his work, such as his cartoon “The Land of Enchantment.”

### Crumbo’s Challenges to Native Art Expression

Crumbo was not above launching his own critiques of art movements, even in areas not directly related to Native American painting and art. When abstract art started surfacing in the years that Crumbo lived in Taos (1948-1953), he became quite vocal in his belief that it represented a low point in American art (Perry 174). According to Crumbo’s biographer, Crumbo approached the superintendent of the Taos Day School with a proposal for an experiment in abstract art. Doyle provided Crumbo with space on school grounds in order to create a series of abstract paintings. “Woody cut pieces of canvas, tacked them on a shed wall, and loaded shotgun shells with different colors of paint. Then he aimed the shotgun at the canvas and blew it full of colors. ... [H]e laughed about developing a new modern art form known as ‘Shotgun Paintings’” (174, 179). Some of the paintings “were considered to be quite good,” and Crumbo considered submitting them to an art show if a modern art show came to Taos in order to show “that anyone with a little imagination could do abstract art, even without talent,” according to Perry (174). Such anecdotes provide a rich tapestry for understanding the humor and trickster like quality of Crumbo. Critics should not overlook Crumbo’s style and his ability to play with Western art markets and consumer expectations.

Far from isolated occurrences, Crumbo often had the ability to depart from standard expectations and subvert white expectations for Indian artists. In the 1930s, Crumbo along with “Allan Houser (Apache), Gerald Nailor (Navajo), Stephen Mopope (Kiowa), James Aichiah (Kiowa), Velino Herrera (Zia Pueblo)” worked on murals for the

Department of the Interior building in Washington, D.C. as part of the New Deal relief work for artists during the depression (Nelson 70).<sup>xxxvii</sup> Harold Ickes, the then secretary of the Interior, took an eager interest in the creation of these murals due in part from he and his wife's interest in Indians (who would build a home near the Navaho Reservation). Upon a recommendation by John Ankeney, who served as a member of the Section of Fine Arts Advisory Committee, Ickes contacted Oscar Jacobson for names of artists for the project of painting murals. Jacobson was the link between those artists who were already working on projects in Oklahoma and those receiving offers to work for Federal projects (72). On the mural project, the painters had very little personal and artistic freedom. Jacobson recommended that Dorothy Dunn "supervise the Indian artists" because her "school was considered to be the first federal recognition of Indian painting" (Nelson 73). As seen earlier and articulated by Christine Nelson on her work on the mural project, Dunn maintained that

Each artist . . . should represent only his own tribe and all plans should be checked for authenticity from the very beginning. She advised that one controlled master palette in regulated tones be used for all the artists and, finally that the work be constantly coordinated since, she warned, artists were likely to indulge in individual caprice and deviate from a unified plan. (Nelson 73)

While Nelson reminds readers that Jacobson is a complex figure whose attitude exhibited "paternalistic racism," he did help organize exhibitions of Native artists (74). Nelson points out that Mopope and Auchiah painted in styles "derived from the influence of their white art teachers" (74); and in quoting Brody, Nelson reminds her readers that

“Virtually every Indian artist born between 1915 and 1940 was trained at the Studio or by Studio alumni or was critically influenced by techniques developed by Studio painters” (qtd in Nelson 76). Despite experiencing forms of coercion and policing, the painters found subtle and ingenious ways of resisting white expectations. Allan Houser sneaks in his own resistance by having one dancer wear jeans, in another work shoes instead of moccasins, and yet another a figure smokes a cigarette (Nelson 77); Herrera creates designs that while looking authentic contain no sacred emblems (78), and Crumbo would even tell off Icke when he criticized his depiction of a horse (79). Despite such subversions, though, all the painters in the end “cooperated with the Section of Fine Arts’ criticisms” partially because they desperately needed funds (80).

The artists subtly found ways to maneuver around their white patrons’ expectations, especially Crumbo who later launched a critique of white consumption of Native art. While working on the mural project, Nailor had been criticized for a design that featured a “white tourist attempting to buy an unfinished Navajo rug,” which was deemed an “inappropriate” subject for the project (79). It is likely that Crumbo would have known about this experience, and in 1945 he painted a cartoon surprisingly similar in subject and tone, called “Land of Enchantment.” In the cartoon, a white family attempts to purchase what appears to be a Navajo rug. With deft humor, Crumbo launches a satire on white consumption of Native art. The sign in the painting, which also bears the name of the piece, serves a dual role. On the one hand it calls attention to the irony of Native life as enchanted. Here the white consumer appears to be wealthier than the Native sellers, which makes the viewer question how enchanted life is for the Native artisan given the historically poor and abject conditions of countless Native people. In his

article “Reversing the Gaze: ‘the Whiteman’ as Other,” Sam Pack points out the economic role of the consumer, who “is obviously a hearty consumer of all things Indian, as indicated by the turquoise jewelry adorning her neck and wrist” (296). The sign also calls attention to the wistful consumption of Native artifacts by white consumers. Such buyers hailed anything primitive as the antidote to a disenchanting view of the world and culture. However, as Pack points out, Crumbo repositions the role of the white audience and consumer against and over a Native artist. The painting viciously caricatures the white couple, between a dowdy, thin white male, a rather nerdy boy, and an obese woman whose “tight-fitting attire all draw attention to her as an object of display” (296). Crumbo’s humor and critique of the art market emerges in the relationship to the painting. White consumers laughably attempt to consume Indian object, searching for a lost land of enchantment through the collection of mementos from a racialized other.

While “Land of Enchantment” serves to represent Crumbo’s critique of white consumption of Native object, Crumbo relied on that art market often to make a living. In order to sell his work, Crumbo often relied on performing a role of Native artist. Crumbo’s legacy and identity speak of his ability to traverse the lines between racialized artist and performer. In one such example he playfully rejoined an impertinent query as to whether he was a “thoroughbred Indian” or not, by stating, “I wouldn’t know .... I hung around the barns often enough, but I never got a pedigree” (Perry 98). The market for Indigenous art often relied on the racialized aspect of its creator in order to create and generate the market for merchandise and art. Crumbo did not always fit the expectations for Native painters especially as he often moved between polarized expectations such as performing in regalia and then being a savvy businessman.

Crumbo's marketing strategies also relied on playfully manipulating the ideologies of his buyers and their racist expectations. Crumbo knew how to manipulate space and his works to their best advantage. When Max Evans first saw Crumbo's work he states, "I walked in [the] place, No one was there, but the room was filled with pictures of Indian dancers. A large blue horse seemed to block my path. . . . I was in a hypnotic trance as my eyes feasted on the blue horse, painted in layers of oil that seems to prance out of a spirit world"; Evans would add that Crumbo had effectively created an art show that "was great theatre" (qtd in Perry 169). Crumbo utilized the effect of his often outrageous paintings in order to drive up their prices. Crumbo had left the safety of "traditional" art in favor of large oil paintings because he could sell them at a higher cost, manipulating colors and expectations in order to create an environment that generated interest and expectations (Perry 168). After creating his own shop, Crumbo employed a similar technique to sell Indian jewelry. He displayed the jewelry "in cases for tourist to see," but he also had Max Evans' Wife, Pat, walk around the store wearing jewelry with price tags, becoming "a walking display case" (179). Unlike other shops that only displayed works, Crumbo's technique seemed to work in that "[s]ales became frequent and profitable" (179).

Perry makes note of Crumbo's playful ability to sell his work by theatrically manipulating his buyers. Unlike in "Land of Enchantment," Crumbo takes center stage in his ability to control white tourists. Max Evans was having difficulty selling his work, and Crumbo in characteristic fashion said he could teach him "a few tricks" (180). His tricks were to leave unfinished art on an easel, waiting for the right tourist to come in and look at the art. While they would look at his art, he would finish the last brushworks on

the painting while being observed. Crumbo's advice worked, and Evans "sold his first oil, and a salesman was born" (180). Crumbo would also perform the expected role of Native artist as primitive Other by playing his flute. Evans recalled launching a show in rural Texas, which he thought "was going to be a wasted effort"; however, Evans continues, "Woody pulled out his wooden flute and started playing that symphony. They were mesmerized. After the first rancher pulled out his money, the rest followed. All my oil paintings sold. Even in big towns, I rarely sold one. Crumbo sold 15 to 20 lithographs and etchings. It had to be magic to do this well" (Perry 181). The symphony Evans references is by white composer Thurlow Lieurance, a man with whom Crumbo toured and danced for in his theatrical works. Given the general familiarity with Lieurance's compositions as "Native" music, it becomes clear that Crumbo could employ a variety of genres in order to create a stylized portrait of Native American identity, manipulating his consumers into buying his work. Crumbo recognized the complex and even contradictory relationship between white patrons and consumers and Native identity. Crumbo once argued that "Without white man's curiosity and tendency to save the Indian culture, it would be gone. ... [T]he Indians wouldn't be trying to protect their culture if [these] people hadn't come" (245). While we should be cautious in placing too much emphasis on such a jaded, consumer driven approach to Native culture and identity, his statement provided an important lens in understanding how he saw his own relationship between himself as a Native artist and his white audience.

#### Crumbo's Eagle Dancing Paintings

Crumbo's work often offers a surprising look into the primitive handling of Native Americans in mainstream American art. Looking at the collection of Eagle

Dancers (images 1-3) as an example opens up such a view. In the images we see a positioning of the body, reminiscent of statues from India. In all three images, Crumbo paints the male body in figurations vaguely reminiscent of figures deployed in the earlier work of such as artists as The Kiowa Six who had also studied with Jacobson. However, in Crumbo's paintings and subsequent silkscreens, the body of the dancers takes precedence. Crumbo exaggerates his figures often highly stylizing the masculine physique by emphasizing the muscular form of each figure. Images 1 and 2 are the most acute examples. Image 2 is a masculine figure, taking a dynamic and aggressive posture. With his arm raised and taut muscular lines, the dancer appears to be ready for battle as much for a dance. Crumbo also includes a number of lines on the dancer's legs that look like tribal marking or tattoos, vivid swaths of color that mark the figure with precise and highly stylized triangles and zig-zag etchings. Taken as a whole, the fierce outline of the man's profile, his muscular physique, uncontrolled and coiffed long hair, raised arms, and slices of color dominating his body emphasize an almost primitive aspect of the dancer. Despite the fiercely almost destructive like element in this image, the next image (image 3) is inversely feminized. The dancer's is gendered ambiguously. Crumbo provocatively places a G-string below the dancer's navel, which threatens to slide off the wide hips of the dancer's figure. The dancer's hair also carefully covers the dancer's upper torso, intensifying the ambiguity of this dancer. By portraying the male body in such an ambiguous way, the paintings function as a site for erotic desire repressed and denied in Euro-American mainstream society. All three depictions of the dancers share an emphasis on the male body as a site for erotic pleasure. But the paintings also demonstrate that viewers rely on complex set of racial and gendered codes to identify the dancers, which

Crumbo plays with and even at times withholds in different iterations of the dancers. Crumbo seems to participate in manufacturing and catering to colonial expectations about Native people, creating an American form of orientalism analogous to 19<sup>th</sup> century European expectation and aesthetics about the “orient.” But when seen in relation to his own performances, such paintings suggest ways that we recognize its content as mimicry and disruptive of colonial imaging of Native people.

Crumbo utilized his own role as a Native performer and dancer in order to create an image of himself as an “authentic” Native man and artist, including being photographed in regalia standing before one of the paintings of *Eagle Dancer*.<sup>xxxviii</sup> Of the many images Crumbo produced, his *Eagle Dancing* paintings intersect with his own life and work. The role of dancing plays an important role in how Crumbo performed his racialized identity, but it also how he manipulates those performances to fashion himself as a Native artist. Male Indian dancers saturate Crumbo’s work, but Crumbo would return to the Eagle Dance images in many different media ranging from watercolors to oil and even silkscreen prints. Crumbo painted at least three paintings of Eagle Dancers (images 1-3) and taken collectively they demonstrate the eroticism of the male form that influenced much of Crumbo’s work, especially the male Indian body. However, Crumbo would also deploy these images in constructing his own image (image 4) as an Indigenous artist, using his own performances to create an aesthetic ethos that justified his claim to authentic native history, culture, and art.

#### Crumbo Performs the Primitive Other: Thurlow Lieurance and Crumbo

Often Crumbo’s legacy is tied not just to his painting and their subject matters, specifically his depictions of Native people wearing “authentic” costumes and dress and

his own work as a performer and traditional dancer. Biographical discussions of Crumbo often shift between overviews of his work and his work as a performer. In a short biographical sketch of Crumbo that accompanied his painting of a deer for *American Indian Art Magazine*, Jeanne Snodgrass King reminds her readers that Crumbo's "other artistic activities included touring with a symphony as an interpretive dancer for the compositions on an Indian theme; directing a troupe of Indian dancers on a tour to reservations"; his silk screen work; and flute making and playing among others (64). It would appear that Crumbo's legacy as a dancer and performer at times almost threatens to eclipse his work as an artist. In fact, the two seem often to legitimize the other. Even Nan Sheets editorial on Crumbo, mentioned above, begins with Crumbo's work as a dancer before concluding that "It is not the work he has done with the dance group that interests us, but the advancement which he has made in his painting" (69). Despite saying he is not interested in Crumbo's dancing or his troupe, Sheets' inclusion of that information creates an ethos of Crumbo's Native authenticity and relationship with traditional values.

Crumbo's role of performers emerges when he started to work with white composer Thurlow Lieurance in 1933. According to D. C. Hines, Lieurance was "the first person to record Native American music, hauling Edison recording paraphernalia by wagon to various reservations during the early 1920s. ... Crumbo helped Lieurance in his continuing efforts to record and preserve Indian drumbeats, melodies, songs and chants" (2). The legacy of working with Lieurance often overshadowed Crumbo's work in the ensuing years and decades. In an anonymous editorial in *The Oklahoman*, the writer discusses Crumbo as only one of three individuals who can make the Native "Weird

Flute” (“Rare” 73). The piece continues with a discussion of Crumbo making flutes for Lieurance: “Crumbo has just finished one of a set of the historic instruments that he is making for Thurlo [sic] Lieurance, famous Indian composer and orchestra director, who wrote, ‘By the Waters of Minnetonka’” (73). The piece also has a picture of Crumbo “in his native ceremonial regalia,” carefully positioning the editorial in relationship to Crumbo’s work as a “Painter who Depicts Costumes” (73). According to the second editorial, “while going to school[,] Crumbo delved deep into the lore of his people. He learned their dances, and their primitive arts and crafts. In 1933 Crumbo took his dance troupe, which he had organized and taught, on a government sponsored trip to all of the Indian reservations except those along the Pacific coast” (730). In the summer he worked at a camp teaching Indian dancing and crafts. In 1935 “he and his dancing partner won the national inter-tribal dance contest at Gallup” (73). Hines’ biography states that when Crumbo was at Wichita State University Crumbo worked with Thorlow Lieurance “interpret[ing] native songs and chants for recordings and le[adding] a group of Native American dancers on a tour of reservations” (N. Pag). It was during this time that Crumbo learned about Native dance, music, and traditional customs, according to Hines (N. Pag). Later Crumbo would return to New Mexico to train “a group of 14 young Pueblo boys in their native dances. The result of his training ... made this group the most popular dancer in the region. ... Dressed in full Indian costume, he explained to his audience the meaning of the dances to be presented” when they performed one night (69). Most work on Crumbo’s early life focuses on his role as a traditional dancer, a point maintained many times in the Gilcrease’s catalog published in relationship to the museum’s showing of Crumbo work.

Although Lieurance's music deployed stereotypical "Indian" sounds, language, and images, he successfully employed Native Americans to mount his productions, including Crumbo. Thurlow Lieurance traveled to reservations collecting and recording Native American music, which he allegedly incorporated in his own compositions. Largely known today for his (in)famous "By the Waters of Minnetonka," Lieurance would employ a wide assortment of noble savage stereotypes in his compositions.<sup>xxxix</sup> In an editorial written for *The Daily Journal-World* of Lawrence, Kansas that followed one such program in March of 1931, the author writes of the "thunderous applause" that followed the work by the "young tribesman, sitting in the audience, [who] listened with almost fascinated interest" to his Symphonic poem, *Minisa* ("Indian Symphony" 1). The writer is quick to point out the young men's enthusiastic participation in singing "By the Waters of Minnetonka" (1). In an interview with the reporter, Lieurance argues that "the young Indians who heard it showed that they understood and appreciated "*Minisa*" (1). The editorial writing is quick to point out that Lieurance recorded hundreds of Indians songs, [and] is regarded as a leading authority on music of the American Indian" (1). However, Lieurance own words suggest that he radically changes Native music to suit Western musical sensibilities and expectations. What emerges is a complex but carefully orchestrated narrative of Lieurance as the protector of American Indian music and culture, including an aside of his collection of nearly 40 "interesting Indian and ancient flutes" in his collection that he included in his productions (1). Lieurance relied on Native arts and artisans, and his own ethnographic research to stage his shows but, as the editorial suggests, he also relied on reaching out to his Native audience, including them in

his performance of Native identity as a means of creating “authentic” cultural productions.

The interaction between Crumbo and Lieurance sheds invaluable light on Crumbo’s ability to mimic white expectations, playfully manipulating colonial standards of Indigeneity. Woody Crumbo met Lieurance in the early 30s. Crumbo’s biographer, Robert Perry, points to the naming of a bridge by American Indian Institute Wichita East as the start of Lieurance’s relationship with Crumbo. The students named the bridge Minisa, a name that Lieurance “supplied from the title of his original symphonic poem,” a work already included in Lieurance’s performances (65). The day of the bridge’s dedication culminated in performance of part of that work followed by “Tribal dances and songs” (65). Woody Crumbo was one of the dancers at that event and Lieurance invited Crumbo to participate in his performances following this meeting. According to Perry’s biography:

Woody taught him [Lieurance] to understand the meaning of the Indian music by performing the most difficult dances with grace and skill. The ancient Potawatomi eagle dance has arc-like convolutions of the wings, the hummingbird dance has a quick tempo and swift gyrations, the deer dance has natural animal-like movements, and the subtle flute dance is dignified. Lieurance’s concert tours soon included Woody dancing Eagle dance. (67)

Perry’s description of Crumbo’s dancing betrays an inherent sexualization of the movement akin to the kind of stylizing that an audience might associate with other Native performances such as Ted Shawn’s dancing. The descriptions of convolutions, gyrations,

and animal-like movements call to mind a plethora of primitive images that saturated American culture in the modern age.

Lieurance employed Native performers for his concerts but often relied on sexualized/stylized native stereotypes for his choreography. But Crumbo began to subvert those performances. Vernon MacNeil would record Crumbo's fellow performer, Scott Tonemah, descriptions of the concerts:

Lieurance came on with "The Waters of Minnetonka." He would play that through according to the music, and then when it came to the part where that solo comes in, Crumbo would play a tune. We danced to their orchestra. It was beautiful for those days. They didn't have anything like that and Crumbo knew how to put on regalia. I think that was the beginning of other kids learning how to put on beautiful things when they performed. Before, they asked you to put on a war bonnet and G-string and that was all. Woody said, 'Now that is not fun, putting on a G-string and dancing just a few feet from everybody. (qtd. In Perry 67-68).

What emerges from this anecdote is a stark similarity to the exotic depictions of Native dancers by Lieurance like Ted Shawn. Until Crumbo began to dance for Lieurance, the Native dancers wore revealing costumes like what Ted Shawn and his later dancers wore. While Crumbo would downplay the sexual aspect of the dance in his own performances, in his paintings he still relies on sexualized images of the Eagle Dance. While I have not found conclusive evidence that directly links the two men together, given their musical, ethnographic research, and the larger interest of Native Americans dominating the years of the 20s and 30s, it is highly probable that Lieurance and Crumbo both knew of

Shawn's work. Regardless, it is quite clear that the public had grown accustomed to a specific kind of native dance performance, performances that centered on the spectacle of exotic, almost naked young Native men.

#### Crumbo's Subversive Mimicry

The relationship between Crumbo's own performance in these productions, the larger cultural productions of Native Americans in dance, and Crumbo's own deployment in his work point to the need of a sustained discussion of stereotyping and its mimicry in Crumbo's work. Crumbo takes a lead in encouraging his fellow performers to reject "minimal tribal dress" in favor of "full Native costumes," according to Perry (68). Although most writers would undoubtedly employ regalia instead of costume, I believe that Perry's term actually calls greater attention to the constructed aspect of Crumbo's performances. In American society, non-Native men like Ted Shawn and Native men like Woody Crumbo performed social expectations about Native identity. While the art world attempted to create a mythology of Native people as primitive people, the performances of primitivism actually highlight the arbitrary nature of such racial ideologies. Native artists, such as Crumbo, learned that to succeed they needed to perform expectations about what constitute indigeneity. In the *Eagle Painting*, the viewer confronts a standard set of signs that enable the viewer to read the work as "Indian." Yet Crumbo plays with the images, blurring the boundary between the sexes of the dancers. Upon closer analysis, the reader confronts his/her own standards of racial and sexual judgments to analyze the texts of the painters. The viewer must encode the race and gender of the subjects predicated on stereotypical semiotic markers and not a tangible expression of racial essentialism.

In a similar way, Crumbo himself played with his audiences' expectations. In both his paintings and performances, the viewer confronts what Judith Butler notes regarding sexual difference: "acts, gestures, and desire produce the effect of an internal core or substance, but produce this *on the surface* of the body, through the play of signifying absences that suggest, but never reveal, the organizing principle of identity as a cause" (136). In order to construct himself as Native and in order to reveal his art as Native, Crumbo plays with his viewers' expectations, revealing "a *stylized repetition of acts*" at the heart of racial and sexual difference (140). Butler also adds that "As both *discursive* and *perceptual*, 'sex' denotes an historically contingent epistemic regime, a language that forms perception by forcible shaping the interrelationships through which physical bodies are perceived" (114). The unease that surrounded Crumbo's racial identity coupled with his playful adoption of many persona, undermine static notions of Native identity. Even when he mimics social expectations regarding Native people, Crumbo undermines the basis of colonial power: the belief in some essential difference between colonial and colonized subjects. Crumbo could adopt a variety of images to suit his own needs, undermining any semblance of a unified, primitive subject.

Crumbo's life and art suggest a complex relationship with representation and a man unafraid a playfully performing conflicting and paradoxical identities. From scathing critiques of predatory art markets, to works that reveal the colonial signification process of identity, along with playfully performances to sell his work, Crumbo's legacy reveals an often hilarious depiction of a man unafraid to push political and artistic conventions. At times Crumbo works within colonial frames, but his legacy includes myriad ways he undermines those foundations. Crumbo dared to wrestle control of his art, championing

new forms and media in his work. In this chapter, I have shown that contemporary viewers should analyze Crumbo's work, realizing his intersections with colonial imaginings while also suggesting that within those frames his work reveals spaces for resistance. Even though Crumbo himself plays with primitive images and identities, his work and performance open spaces for seeing the pressures facing Native artists in American history. Recognizing the complex history underpinning Crumbo's work and his aesthetic choices frees critics from further encoding Crumbo in a legacy fraught with trite racial stereotypes. Instead, focusing on mimicry and performance presents a richer, humorous, and playful depiction of a man working against colonial pressure who paradoxically and subversively shaped Native American art.

Image 1

(Piersen Gallery N.Pag.).



Image 2

(“Beyond the Curio” N. Pag.).



Image 3

( My Gilcrease Daytrip N.Pag.).



Image 4  
("Woody Crumbo" N. Pag.)



Image 6  
(Shea Murphy)



Image 5 (Ted Shawn and His Men Dancers, Ponca Indian Dance).  
("Ted Shawn." N. Pag.).



## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION

In 2013, the Gilcrease Museum of Tulsa, Oklahoma launched an exhibit of Woody Crumbo's paintings. The title of the exhibit was "Bending, Weaving, Dancing: The Art of Woody Crumbo." It was the first time I ever saw his work "in the flesh," and I felt mesmerized by his rich colors and the sheer size and volume of his work. I found his depictions of Native dancers some of the most complex images of Native American masculinity I had seen, even while their frank eroticism and difference seemed to connect with pervasive stereotypes perpetuating Native Otherness.

Over the course of the next year, I explored Crumbo's complex life, narrative, legacy, and art. Combing obscure literary references in archival collections, I became more knowledgeable about Crumbo and his work. At times his contradictions frustrated me; however, I was even more distraught by the ways scholars resorted to trite, simplistic, and stereotypical explanations for his works. I began to notice that while Crumbo delighted in playing with images of himself and performance, few scholars

negotiated the implications of that play. In a *Tulsa World* editorial regarding the 2013 showing of Crumbo's work, James D. Watts, Jr. notes how "Crumbo's expertise at capturing the beauty and energy of Indian dances and dancers comes from his own career as a dancer, at one point leading a tour of dancers from various tribes to perform around the country in the 1930s" (N. Pag.). Such insight will hardly surprise readers of this work, as I, too, address the relationship between Crumbo's paintings and his dance performances. In the editorial, though, Watts includes curator Carole Klein view that "There's almost a theatrical aspect to a lot of his paintings" (wtd in Watts N. Pag.). Klein's observation speaks to Crumbo's own staging of his work, and the ways he manufactured and manipulated his image as an artist and Native man.

Crumbo's work is theatrical, and part of this project suggests that performance enables political and aesthetic resistance. Whether it is Hebo in Zitkala-Ša's *The Sun Dance Opera*, Zitkala-Ša herself, Cogewea, Mourning Dove's eponymous heroine, Chal in Mathews' *Sundown*, or Crumbo, Native performance challenges colonial representation. While each of these figures plays with colonial, romantic stereotypes of Indigenous American peoples, they challenge governance over their gendered and racial identities.

In modern America, Native stereotypes focused on depictions of the Noble/Savage. These "primitive" images proliferated America news, literature, art, film, music, and other venues. Native people were coded as Other. Yet, Native people found ingenious and playful ways of interacting and subverting such images. Humor often marks Native art, a point that Allan J. Ryan argues. Ryan sees Native artists creating a trickster tradition and discourse that is "open-ended, unfolding, evolving, incomplete"

(xiii). Part of that trickster tradition might include performance. As Michelle H. Raheja notes, a Native American performer who mimics colonial stereotypes “creates acts that operate ambiguously, acts that open themselves up for further reading and interpretation” (21).

I locate performance as resistant by first focusing on ways each text interacts with white Euro-American heteronormativity. Critics like Beth Piatote and to some extent Mark Rifkin, Qwo-Li Driskell, and others, note how sexual governance is part-and parcel with colonial violence against Native American people. Despite such impositions, though, in each example I address, readers glimpse gender subversion. My queer analysis suggests ways that scholars read political resistance in the text, but I also extend such work to suggest that queerness intersects with Native American racial performance, which provides a useful methodology for negotiating the complex history of Native American resistance and public and aesthetic performances, a move that suggests potential de-colonial historical re-evaluation of historical Native people. In Modern America, Native American peoples negotiated complex and at times contradictory subjective positions. Addressing performance of racial and gender identity presents a clearer picture of the hardships and triumphs of Indigenous people, noting ways they undermined and resisted colonial images even while they playfully mimicked colonial America’s expectations for a primitive Other.

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## End Notes

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<sup>i</sup> For a complete and exhaustive list of musical compositions relying on Native characters, themes, or musical figurations see Michael V. Pisani's "A Chronological Listing of Musical Works Composed Since 1608" at <http://indianmusiclist.vassar.edu/>. This list was initially to serve as an appendix for his treatise on American Indian Subjects, *Imagining Native American Music*, but the sheer number of works proved too large for the work.

<sup>ii</sup> Zitkala Ša collaborated with William F. Hanson in creating the opera, and initially this collaboration might be seen to call into question Zitkala-Ša's contribution with its creation and performances. Complicating such discussions is the fact that following the first performances of the opera, Hanson would leave off Zitkala-Ša's name entirely. In her doctoral dissertation that addresses Native American performances in late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Katherine Liesl Young Evans suggests that criticism that distances Zitkala-Ša's role in the creation of the opera relies on the spurious foundation that texts emerge in isolation and without collaboration (252). As scholars, we need to be cautious about approaching the libretto of the opera as completely Zitkala-Ša's creation. Nevertheless, the overwhelming evidence suggests that she played an active role in the creation of the opera and its original performances. In her discussion of the opera, Catherine Parsons Smith quotes from a description of the opera penned by N. L. Nelson who was a colleague of Hanson's at Brigham Young University. Nelson claims that Zitkala-Ša:

furnished the missing links that made a story of the *Sun Dance*, she who revised his poems, phrase by phrase, so that they should truly reflect her people; she who criticized his music, wherever it departed from true Indian melody; she who furnished all the ideas for the magnificent costumes—the largest and perhaps the most splendid collection ever brought together; she who trained the dancers and singers so as to be true to the highest and best ideal of her people. (qtd in Smith 70)

While Smith notes that the musical style of the opera belies Nelson's glorious declaration about Zitkala-Ša's demand for cultural authenticity, Nelson's praise of Zitkala-Ša is not without merit. Subsequent revisions of the opera that do include Native melodies seem likely the result of Hanson's ethnographic gatherings. Yet it seems highly likely that Zitkala-Ša's experience in Western music and native culture were integral to the opera's creation and subsequent performance(s) (7). Smith further argues:

Based on the brevity of the early score and its pervasive weakness, *The Sun Dance Opera's* initial success must have depended heavily indeed on Zitkala-Ša, whom we may guess brought in the Indian participants, determined what they would do, prepared them to do it in the unfamiliar stage surroundings before a largely white audience, trained the chorus, and oversaw the costuming of the entire company. (12).

While clear demarcations about who composed and wrote what parts of the whole cannot be determined, the evidence seems to suggest that Hanson and Zitkala-Ša absolutely worked together in its creation. It is not surprising that Hanson would place her name as collaborator in its first performances. While not always acknowledging her role in *Sun*

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*Dance* opera in his later life, critics would remiss in avoiding it as part of Zitkala-Ša's oeuvre. To counter the sexist and colonial subsuming of Zitkala-Ša's role in the construction of the opera, I speak of her as the composer and writer. In no way I am trying to excise Hanson's role in the creation of the opera, but merely to call greater attention to the many and vast roles Zitkala-Ša played in order to bring *The Sun Dance* to fruition.

<sup>iii</sup> McClintock's own writings about these two photographs establish the importance of dress for the performance: "Natosi (Sun God) *in costume*, Putnam Griswold. He wore a war bonnet of magnificent eagle feathers and had a beaded disc on his breast for the sun; he carried a staff with buffalo horns on top" (Opera Collection N. pag.). Of Kirschhoff's portrait he adds:

Poia, tenor, Herr Kirschhoff *in costume*. War bonnet of eagle feathers and decorated with ermine tails. Suit of soft-tanned deerskin, decorated with bands of colored quill work, long f[r]inge hanging down and a breastplate of deer bones. His leggings with painted war signs which were characteristic of Blackfoot war costumes. ("Opera Collection N. pag." emphasis added)

McClintock acknowledges the "costume" of each man while simultaneously creating ethos for the representations for Kirschhoff's leggings as authentic. Yet the paradox is that while composers and audience alike clamored for authenticity, representations of Native people in opera (and other venues) resorted to trite stereotypes and outright fictive myths.

<sup>iv</sup> In a series on the opera, the Pittsburgh Orchestra highlighted a selection of pieces from the opera and provided a detailed history of McClintock and Nevin in the accompanying lecture notes, establishing ethos for their opera as well as explaining large motifs in the musical score. McClintock's autobiography is filled with tension, excitement, and romantic images of American Indian history. In his introductory material, he states that his guide had served under a variety of United States generals including Custer and that his guide was one of the few men to survive "Custer[']s Massacre" ("Opera Collection" 19). After initial research with the Blackfeet, McClintock claims that he was later adopted by the tribe and spent time researching the Blackfeet religion, history, culture, and music (19). Although he did not initially appreciate their music, eventually he came to the conclusion "that the beautiful motives of their loves songs, night songs, and wolf songs ... [were] like pure water from a mountain spring" (19-20). As a recurring thread in early ethnographic research, McClintock expresses concern that Native youth were being assimilated and losing interest in their culture, arguing that many of the younger Native men and women showed little to no interest in this style of music (20). As with other ethnographers and anthropologists, McClintock presents himself as a preserver of authentic Blackfeet music and culture. His language betrays a fascination with unspoiled "pure" Native culture while simultaneously placing himself and Nevin as preservationists of a dying culture legacy. McClintock narrates that he sang a number of songs for Nevin, told him stories he learned, and played gramophone recordings. Nevin provided to be "especially enthusiastic over a plaintive love song [McClintock] heard one evening in an Indian camp, when the flickering fires were lighting up the white lodges. It was sung by a young brave urging his sweetheart to come forth to meet him" (20). Nevin would use the

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melody as the inspiration for his opera, incorporating the song into the motif for the eponymous hero of the work: Poia (20).

<sup>v</sup> The notes state: “the roll of the tympani introduces the ridicule of the Indian throng, making jests of Poia’s sentiments. Mr. Nevin imitates the Indian drums . . . while the theme, suggested by the customary ‘hi-hi-hi-hi-hi,’ of the red men, carries the braves from the scene” (14). Following the chorus, Nevin turns to Poia’s theme, which is based on “a love song of the Blackfeet Indians,” presumably based on the melody that McClintock states Nevin so eagerly attended (14). Apparently the theme came from a short melody—only “fourteen bars long”—that McClintock gathered while doing ethnographic field work but developed extensively by Nevin to reflect “the crude style of the native Indian music,” which included “a background of ‘open fifths’” (14).

<sup>vi</sup> Published in 1911, the piano reduction of the score provides an elaborate plot synopsis that provides invaluable insight into staging of Native people in the opera and the tropes of indigeneity encoded into mainstream performances of Native people. Natoma is described as “a young Indian girl of pure blood. She is the last of her race, and has been the playmate and handmaiden of Barbara” (v). Despite such an introduction, the synopsis includes a discussion of the tension between Natoma and Castro who “upbraids her for spending her time with the white people, and exhorts her to come with him as the leader of her people” (vi). Modern readers will immediately recognize the contradiction between Natoma as “the last of her race” and a leader “of her people.” The tension then is between assimilation and resistance as seen through the struggles of Natoma. In the church scene, she initially sings of “the injustice to her people in the coming of the white man” before she then “calls upon the Great Spirit to give her strength and power to join her people and bring down the destruction of the strangers” (ix). However, the Priest reasons with Natoma, teaching her about Christianity, and she “Realizes that her life is ended, and that by putting herself under the protection of the church she will bring happiness to her idolized mistress” (ix). Natoma is effectively silenced by taking her vows as a nun.

<sup>vii</sup> Zitkala-Ša and Hanson relied on a variety of Native performers in mounting their production. In her dissertation “Stages of Red: Intertribal Indigenous Theater in Zitkala-Ša’s *The Sun Dancer Opera*. *Staged Encounters: Native American Performance between 1880 and 1920*, Katherine Liesl Young Evans suggests that such intertribal alliances and work serves as a sight of colonial resistance. Evans articulates that like the famous oration of Ocom who galvanized an intertribal community through his performance, Zitkala-Ša successfully accomplishes the same feat. Utilizing the stage enabled both Ocom and Zitkala-Ša to “ackloweldg[e] their colonized state and the need to pursue a collaborative action for change” (236). Evans claims that Bonnin dances between her Euro-American audience, commitment to her Dakota nation, and the larger intertribal Native community she worked with in order to castigate “the duplicitous dealing of the United States’ Department of Interior that robbed Native people of land and resources” (237). Evans does not wish to paint Bonnin as an individual who dissolves tribal boundaries, but rather that her call to action relied on collaboration across tribal lines to respond to the increasing threat of assimilationist government policies actively stripping Native tribes of sovereign rights (237). However, Zitkala-Ša will emerge as a powerful

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leader in “the national arena of pan-Indian politics” despite living relatively quietly in Utah. (Hafen 104). And Zitkala-Ša uses the opera and a large Native community to undermine Federal regulations and policies.

<sup>viii</sup> The history of the pipestone quarry was complex and revealed arbitrary Federal policy regarding Native Land. Historically “the Yankton Dakota claimed absolute title, while the United States government took the view that the American Indians had a right in the nature of an easement, an interest in land owned by another that entitles its holder to a specific limited use. Finally in 1926 the United States Supreme Court held that the American Indians held free title to the reservation land. The United States government had to make payment to the Yankton Dakota to compensate them for taking their lands.” (“Pipestone” N. Pag.).

<sup>ix</sup> I see this specifically in light of Zitkala-Ša’s own painful history. While she fashioned quite a successful life for herself because of her education, it quickly put her at odds with her own family. She would spend years traveling and fighting for Native rights, but never fully embracing a tribal home.

<sup>x</sup> Sabine Lang’s *Men and Women, Women as Men: Changing Gender in Native American Cultures* provides an excellent discussion of gender performance in Sioux bands, including a brief mention of *heyokas* in discussing *winkte*, biological men who claimed feminine gender identification (213). While most scholars see Sioux society as allowing for a variety of gender expression, Max Carocci provides interesting evidence that complicates such a belief in “Visualizing Gender Variability in Plains Indian Pictographic Art.” While I think Carocci deserves closer engagement, *Sun Dance* aligns with more accepted gender identity of the Sioux, which Zitkala-Ša seems to include in the opera.

<sup>xi</sup> A number of scholars have re-visited the *Sun Dance Opera*. Katherine Liesl Young Evans argues that utilizing the stage enabled Zitkala-Ša’s to “ackloweldg[e] [Native’s] colonized state and the need to pursue a collaborative action for change” (236). Evans claims that Bonnin dances between her Euro-American audience, commitment to her Dakota nation, and the larger intertribal Native community she worked with in order to castigate “the duplicitous dealing of the United States’ Department of Interior that robbed Native people of land and resources” (237). P. Jane. Hafen argues that *The Sun Dance Opera* provided a stage for Bonnin and other Native American singers and dancers to participate in rituals whose practices were forbidden by the United States government” (103). Additionally, Zitkala-Ša uses her classical music training “to affirm her Sioux cultural identity and to engage the conventions of popular culture. Hanson used his fondness for Indian people and his association with them in what critics would not recognize as an artistic colonialism. The result is an uneasy duet of two cultures” (103). Rosenna Hoefel provides a strong analysis of Zitkala-Ša’s life and ways she demanded “Indians’ rights to their own spiritual” sovereignty, which in passing Hoefel says occurs in *Sun Dance* (110). Catherine Parsons Smith’s research provides strong evidence for Zitkala-Ša’s major role in the creation of the opera. Despite excellent work, none of these

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writers have addressed Hebo or the opera's sustained interrogation of representation and gender expectations.

<sup>xii</sup> A point that resonates in the opera with emphasis on representation leading to fears of death in pivotal scenes in the drama.

<sup>xiii</sup> I am not suggesting though that Cogewea's queerness mirrors that of Frenchy and Dixie Canary. While their queerness seems to express same-sex desire, Cogewea's queerness is her ability to resist hetero-political policing of her body—in both her racial and gendered performance.

<sup>xiv</sup> While the novel does have moments of unease which I discuss later in this chapter, by and large, *Mourning Dove* crafts a novel with strong elements of local color, relying on humor to capture life on a Western Ranch. When I argue that this represents a radical rupture and departure from *Mourning Dove*'s narration, I am not overlooking how fraught the text is overall with inconsistencies, gaps, and extreme changes in tone and subject; however, this is the first time when the reader confronts a break within the central elements of the novel—to the plot development of the novel itself. Like many critics, I believe that many of the gaps of the novel represent McWhorter's incorporation of added material, using *Mourning Dove*'s novel as an attempt to decry the treatment of Native American people. Often, though, his voice falls to trite condescension in which he juxtaposes authorial denouncement of settler colonialism against larger concerns of erasure of "primitive" and "authentic" expressions of Native identity, thereby exposing his own biasness for complete alterity of Native people. When one removes such added material to the novel, Dixie Carter's presence and death could seem largely unnecessary to the general tone of the novel and its core development. By dismissing this scene, though, the reader misses an important exegetical development within the novel of queer identity.

<sup>xv</sup> Dixie Canary is known only through his nickname: "Because of his proneness to sing and trill Southern plantation melodies" (178). Dixie Canary is an outsider to the ranch for two reasons. The first is his southern identity. While it is true that "Silent Bob," another ranch hand also claims to be a southerner, he actually "hail[s] from the Mountain region of West Virginia" (36). Both Dixie Canary and Silent Bob are anomalies on the ranch where the other ranch hands herald from the West and/or mixed Indian ancestry. The other reason that Dixie Canary is an outsider is his education. In continuation of his description, the narrator says he was "Educated beyond his associates and possessing an exquisite voice, he rendered the evening campfire gatherings more cheery and it was not long before the singer was a general favorite with all" (178). His education, southern identity, and musical abilities signal his difference.

<sup>xvi</sup> Further distancing the possibility of homoerotic tension between the two men, the chapter links Dixie Canary with his horse in another strange relationship. As Dixie Canary dies he "fell back against the breast of the only Twilight" (184).

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<sup>xvii</sup> The relationship between Dixie Canary and the ranch hands are also subtly gendered through the emphasis on songbirds and his constant singing. In the elegy Bob writes that “Angils Drempt a Singing Voise,” which found its full expression in “Dixey Canary” (184). While literature is replete with notable example of songbirds linked with women (even in contemporary society, bird is a euphemism for an attractive woman), rarely do readers see a man in that position. While only male canary’s sing and become linked with coal miners, readers should not quickly dismiss the literary conceit of songbirds and femininity in English literature, a personification Mourning Dove must surely have known.

<sup>xviii</sup> Cogewea launches into a critique of dime store novels’ depictions of Native people, but her critique seems also to encompass and indict *Cogewea*. Just like *the Breed*, with its “few tribal phrases, supposedly the names of birds and animals,” *Cogewea* appears to mirror expectations of Native people as primitive people, wholly other. At time the text de-evolves into mythological lore of Native people, Native customs, rituals, and language, suggesting that the novel at times mimics social expectations about what “Indian” novels should contain in terms of plot and substance

<sup>xix</sup> At various stages *Cogewea* articulates a fear of Indian communities losing their cultural identity, and that articulation usually occupies colonial obsession with maintaining cultural difference and otherness. The text often criticizes change and development of culture as obscene and even immoral as readers observe at the Fourth of July dance. If, however, Native people should remain completely and wholly other, *Cogewea* allows for cultural appropriation by outsiders, appropriation that calls into question notions of culture as tied to racial or essentialist doctrine. Alfred most often speaks about adopting Indian culture to suit his own desire and needs. Readers know that his desire to “play Indian” stems from his mercenary intent to wrest control over Cogewea’s material asserts. Alfred states that he has “turned Injun and [is] ready to take [her] according to the ancient manner of [her] tribe” (102). Such rhetoric alongside dialogues between Cogewea and Alfred calls attention to a certain contrary depiction of race and culture in *Cogewea*, a queering of both, because in these examples culture can be adopted or jettisoned in accordance with an individual’s own desire. At one point Alfred attempts to ingratiate himself to Cogewea’s grandmother by visiting her wigwam, but Cogewea states that he must “Throw [his] veneered manners aside and be a real Injun. (97), and later Alfred expresses his desire “play true Indians” (99). Far from isolated occurrence, Alfred reiterates: “I love you to distraction! I am willing to meet you in every way that you desire. I will be Indian. Tell me more about your tribal customs. That marriage ceremony” (136), and Cogewea demands, “If you are to play Injun, you must fall in line! There are no side trails” (235). Literary critics quickly assume Alfred wishes to “play Injun” so that he can lay claim to Cogewea’s fortune and then can leave her without needing to secure a divorce unlike if he married her through American courts; however, Cogewea’s responses and reiterations seem to suggest a possibility that Alfred really could adopt Native culture. Considering that the text criticizes those Natives that adopt and change, readers must confront examples where the inverse does not hold true: White settler colonialist’s can adopt Native traditions and culture without any visible ramifications.

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<sup>xx</sup> In “Tribes of Men” John Joseph Mathews and Indian Internationalism,” Emily Lutenski notes that while Chal begins a sexual relationship with Lou, she “has the masculine name ‘Lou’” (Lutenski 51). While Lou is a woman, her masculine name potentially serves to mark Chal’s ongoing fascinating with same-sex desire.

<sup>xxi</sup> Snyder reads ellipses and language in this scene as an ambiguous suggestion that the two men had sex (48). I find such work fascinating even as I am less interested in whether these “queer” men have sex with each other.

<sup>xxii</sup> The term gay would begin to connote homosexual men as early as the 1890s, with gay men using the term to reference their homosexuality by the 1920s (“Gay” Etymology Dictionary” N. Pag.).

<sup>xxiii</sup> Chal’s teacher is a white woman from the East, who “fell under the romantic spell of Fennimore Cooper” and decides to teach on the Osage Reservation (26). Based on romantic notions, she desires “‘to teach little Indian minds, . . . ‘To see them open like flowers on their own beautiful prairie.’ She had dreams of sitting with them in their teepees and helping the women with their babies—bringing to them the gifts of science, like gifts from heaven. . . . she still had the eyes of a zealot” (26). Once she arrives at the Indian boarding school, her romanticized notions collapse before her eyes. Reality radically departs from fiction and with it her own construction of Indianness; she “began talking about the East, and went back to Poe, but dropped Longfellow and Copper and horseback riding. Finally the standardized conviction that Indians were Indian seeped into her heart” (26). The narrator reveals, though, that the teacher still engages with “Orientalizing” Native peoples: “With poetic license, she made the reservation a little wilder than it actually was, and the Osages a little more wild and at the same time more gloriously intriguing. Several times she blushingly hinted at romance—the imaginary attachment of a handsome warrior for herself—and laughed with the others at the very preposterousness of it” (26-7). Even while the teacher no longer believes the romantic notions of “Natives” in standard American literary canonical works, she still reifies orientalist notions of Noble/Savage Native people as she authors a Romance to tell her friends.

<sup>xxiv</sup> Using Flaubert’s writings, Said argues that Flaubert “associates the Orient with the escapism of sexual fantasy,” a fantasy that can be bought (190). Said is quick to point out that sex was never “Free,” and that the eroticism of the Orient was one more tactic for colonizing the “Orient.”

<sup>xxv</sup> By the 19<sup>th</sup> century, we clearly can trace a trajectory of Oriental fetishism of both masculine and feminine bodies often portraying both as effeminate, subservient, and open for (sexual) conquest. Of course I do not deny that the inverse was also true: powerful representations of hyper masculine figures also proliferate in art, images that also speak of the same erotic othering of the “Oriental.” Although Said primarily focuses on European dynamics and consumption, the same paradigm exists in the Americas, gaining momentum in the modern era. American fascination with both African and Native American bodies become more pronounced in the 1920s. White patronage of African

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American artists, such as Carl Van Vechten, often facilitated almost predatory asymmetrical relationships at worst and at best resulted in the capturing of images that re-deployed racist stereotypes—such as the inherent animalistic sexuality and lasciviousness of “primitive” peoples--and fascination with their non-white bodies.

<sup>xxvi</sup> St. Denis and Shawn not only collaborated, forming a dance troupe together, but they also wed in 1914, though later they would separate (they would never divorce) and create their own dance companies with Shawn’s still in existence at Jacob’s Pillow.

<sup>xxvii</sup> Jones misses an important aspect of the dance: the gender dynamics of the piece. Pavlova’s dying swan meets her end presumably from natural causes, but Shawn’s Eagle dies at the hands of two white hunters. The general story borrows heavily from colonial narratives in which metaphorically indigenous people cannot survive the encroachment of modernity brought by white settlers. The dance also recasts sexual fantasies of rape and phallic dominance, echoing a long history of colonial fantasies that involve capture and consumption of exotic women. Yet Shawn’s dance employs a pas-de trois solely between men, a bold move that disrupts the mediation of homosocial bonds through a female body. Here the desire is for the male body in the guise of an eagle. The phallic quality associated with being shot by arrows and end of the dance that culminates with the Eagle as he “falters, staggers, finally collapses, gracefully, into the arms of two hunters, who drag it off into the wings” only heightens the homoerotic tension between the dancers (Murphy 122). Here we hear the echoes of Said’s point that orientalism provides a space for the consumption and perhaps even consummation of taboo erotic fantasies.

<sup>xxviii</sup> In *Native Moderns: American Indian Paintings, 1940-1960*, Bill Anthes makes a convincing and thoughtful treatise on the problematic relationship Native American artists had in the modern period between being fashioned both as champions of modernism and as primitive Others. His thesis articulates how the myth of Indigenous peoples as primitive foreclosed any possibility of their ability to produce “Modern” work. Instead, Native artists were pigeon-holed into closed compartments of “authentic” Native representations aligned with ideologies of primeval native cultures. If a number of artists—both Native and non-Native—were crying for “authentic” Native art, they often overlooked the very forced and hybrid history of Native American painting. During the modern period of 1930-1950, Native American artists actively played with notions of forms, culture, questions of authenticity, and appropriate genres for native artists to employ. As Anthes reminds us, “between the late 1930s and the late 1950s, these [Native] artists forged a hybrid modernity that challenged clear boundaries *between Indian and white art and culture*,” while simultaneously drawing attention to how “shifting notions of identity ... are fundamental to an understanding of American culture in the postwar period” (emphasis added xii-xiii). Of interest, too, is how Anthes points out the “cross-cultural relations between *Native American artists and their white patrons*” (4). Anthes is setting the scene for understanding not only the drive of policing Native Art but its very foundation as a created genre that emerged from a market of white expectations of Native identity, and it is these genres that bare critical relationship to Crumbo’s work. Anthes’ portrayal of Native American artists rejects a cornerstone ideology of Native American art: Native painters often traced a clear unbroken line

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between their contemporary art and historical art forms. Easel painting was a recent manifestation of Indigenous aesthetics, one that emerges in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>xxix</sup> Jacobson was not the only white artist instrumental in the creation of “authentic” Indian art. Dorothy Dunn, who created a studio at the Santa Fe Indian School, “trained a generation of Native American artists from 1935-1950” (Anthes 8). Along with Jacobson, Dunn canonized “the flat illustration style of ‘traditional-style’ Indian painting” (Anthes 7). Although two-dimensional painting of Native dancers, people, and the like may appear after nearly 100 years of evolution to represent an accurate portrait of Native art, as scholars we must understand that its genesis was carefully manufactured and carefully policed through a standard of art curriculum deployed at various Indian schools and colleges.

<sup>xxx</sup> I have been able to locate a mockup of the document, which begins with a letter written by Dorothy N. Steward, Gina Kneww, and Morgretta S. Dietrich who address “Friends of Indian Art” from the New Mexico Association on Indian Affairs. Sante Fe, New Mexico, July 5, 1940. In the letter the writers express concern over the “digression from the traditional style of Indian painting” they witness and ask for “aid in combatting it” (N. pag). They provide “visual graphic proof of our stand” by juxtaposing paintings representing traditional Native American art against those painted using Western techniques (n.Pag). While they acknowledge the growing interest in providing art instruction and work for Native artists—“murals in Government Buildings and illustrations in Primers were cited as evidence of the Indian Bureau policy of encouraging Indian Art”-- they argue that the examples of the primers provide “proof . . . that there is insufficient appreciation of the subtle difference between *true* and *mongrel* Indian art” (emphasis added, N. pag). The use of mongrel connotes a colonial fear of and fascination with the racial Other, an ambiguity not only between a demand for Native Americans to assimilate into mainstream white American society, but also the resulting fear of hybridity and erasure of racial difference and cultural markers. The writers demand that *true* Native paintings are beautiful because of “the artists’ natural feeling for space and design.” In their examples they highlight the adulterating “mongrel” aspect of Euro-American aesthetics evident by the use of shading, realism, perspective, and the lack of traditional symbols (page 2).

<sup>xxx</sup><sup>i</sup> Just a few years later, Dunn returns to the subject of Native American painting in an article for *The National Geographic Magazine*. In the article Dunn provides numerous pictorial examples of Native Artists who paint in “authentic” and “traditional” styles, including among others Acee Blue Eagle, Allan Houser, W. Richard West, Gerald Nailor, and many others. In her opening remarks, Dunn claims that “The Indian painter poses no models, follows no color theory, gauges no true perspective. He seldom rounds an object by using light and shade. Oven he leaves the background to the imagination. . . . The typical Indian painting is, therefore, imaginative, symbolic, two-dimensional. Its style may vary from seminatural to abstract” (349).

<sup>xxx</sup><sup>ii</sup> In an editorial about Native painter Joe H. Herrera (Cochiti and San Ildefonso Pueblo) for *Desert Magazine* in 1956, W. Thetford LeVinnnes also invokes the murals at Kuaua to

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create a Native painting continuum. The remains of the 14<sup>th</sup> century kiva contains a mural that has eighty-five layers of “life-size figures in full customer and color” (16). LeVignes uses this evidence to articulate how “The quite changelessness of Pueblo life through the centuries is strikingly shown in the similarities between these Kuaua murals and the paintings of present-day Pueblo artists such as Joe H. Herrera” (16). LeVignes concludes that Herrera, and his mother who is also a painter, “follow a tradition which began with the second century of the Christian era. As interpreters of the prehistoric way of life, they constitute one of the most unique mother-son teams of artists living today” (16).

<sup>xxxiii</sup> In keeping with an emerging style of primitive painting, Dunn was ensuring that Native art was visibly influenced by ancient work by teaching pictographic figures. The criteria for the studio betrays Dunn’s own romantic historicity of Native Painting. She notes:

according to the newly established policy of respecting Indian values, the objectives of the Studio were: 1. To foster appreciation [sic] of Indian painting among students and public; 2. to produce new paintings in keeping with high standards already attained by Indian painters; 3. To study and explore traditional Indian art methods and production in order to continue established basic painting forms and to evolve new motifs, styles, and techniques only as they might be in character with the old and worthy of supplementing them; 4. To maintain tribal and individual distinction in the paintings. (“Influences” 3).

Such a rigorous manifesto establishes the expectations of Dunn in the desire to maintain her own standards of Indian painting and art.

<sup>xxxiv</sup> Discussion about the “Oriental” aspect of Native American art was hardly new or without extreme controversy between artists, teachers, and the general public. Early in her career, Dunn would hotly dismiss such arguments, saying people claimed there was an orientalist and Persian influence on Native painting for nigh on forty years, but that close observation between the two will immediately dispel such beliefs and that “Far more valid and intriguing similarities to Indian art lie in certain precursory paintings of the Aegean civilizations and other cultures” (“Children” 7). Yet even Dunn would change her position by the 1950s, when she writes that “There are indications that northern and Asiatic art traits descended via the Northeast as well as more directly into the Plains and Southwest” (“Development” 1951, 332). While such a blatant contradiction in rhetoric may surprise and interest contemporary scholars, Dunn’s change in position actually makes sense in light of the establishment of racial taxonomies of both scientific and artists disciplines.

<sup>xxxv</sup> For Henderson, art is inspired by rituals and “is composed of a suggestion or symbol of thing plus the artist’s feelings about it. It is a *conception*, in his mind—not imitative. . . . The bare image arouses emotion, not only as regards fact—this is a man, this a bison, this the sun—but in connection with all the *combined racial feeling* toward a man, a buffalo, the sun, as symbols of life and force” (21). Henderson claims that a primitive artist feels no separation from a sign and its signifier: if s/he paints rain clouds, the rain clouds will come similarly to the belief that “to name a thing is to possess it” (21). In her

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discussion of primitive Native American art, Henderson boxes Native people into stereotypical and essentialist compartments.

<sup>xxxvi</sup> Schultz's paintings often depicted Western scenes of both cowboys and Native Americans in styles reminiscent of Thomas Moran (1875-1926). The author casually includes Moran's name in the piece, stating Schultz never had formal artistic training except for a "fortunate meeting in the Grand Canyon with Thomas Moran" (105). Yet according to a biopic sketch at the Meadowlark Gallery, "he attended Los Angeles Artist Student League in 1910 and studied in Chicago from 1914 to 1915" in addition to studying with Moran over a period of time ("Schultz" N. Pag.). Given the blatant denial of Moran's influence on Schultz work, the editorial points to an increasing racializing of Schultz, a move that others such as Dunn would later follow.

<sup>xxxvii</sup> Closed to the public and insufficiently preserved, the Murals in the South Penthouse of the Department of the Interior' were painted shortly after the building's erection in 1936. The then secretary of the Interior, Harold L. Ickes, commissioned Woody Crumbo, Gerald Lloyd Nailor, Allan C. Houser, and Velino Shije Herrera to paint "[a] total of three dozen murals covering 2,200 square feet" during the Depression (B5). Used during the 70s as storage and office space, "the murals disappeared under layers of paint and might have been forgotten if not for some photographs" before they were beautifully restored in 1995. Lewis, N. "Buried Treasure; American Indian Murals in Interior Department Restored." *The Washington Post* May 28, 1998; section: B5; (N. pag).

<sup>xxxviii</sup> In *Indian Play: Indigenous Identities at Bacone College*, Lisa K. Neumann points out that Crumbo toured with a group of "Indian boys" in 1933. Crumbo claimed that "We did Indian dances and ceremonials to show them what school Indians could do, that we could have a modern education but retain our Indian background" (172). Neumann then suggests that these tours formed the basis "for a series of paintings of Indian dancers, which he silk-screened and sold, accompanied by full descriptions of the dances' history and significance" (172). According to Neumann, Crumbo learned dancing through his various acquaintances. However, earlier she notes that "Crumbo had attended numerous Indian schools, had been a vaudeville performer, and had studied art under Oscar Jacobson" (170). In terms of performance, it seems highly likely that his early "vaudeville" work with Lieurance directly contributed to his knowledge of Native dance and Native culture. Such a view seems at least plausible when we compare the emerging depictions of those dances later by Crumbo. In his own depictions he plays with homoerotic depictions of Native men that were made famous by individuals like Shawn and Lieurance; in fact Crumbo's traveling dance troupe seems to fit well within the already deeply popular all-male dance troupe of Shawn.

<sup>xxxix</sup> The song depicts the love of two native people from separate clans who are forbidden to marry. In a narrative vaguely reminiscent of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, two young Indian lovers commit suicide after a failed attempt to run away together. The lyrics betray a colonial vision of Native people as deeply romantic and primitive. The lyrics

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themselves call into question the intelligence of Native people, with the singer pledging her life in incomplete, half formed sentences as indicative of the final stanza:

Hear thou  
My vow  
To live to die,  
Moon Deer,  
Thee near,  
Beneath this sky. (“By The Waters” N. Pag.).

Lieurance claimed to base his composition on a piece he heard sung by a Sioux in 1911. While not rejecting this idea, after hearing Lieurance’s own version, scholars may wonder how much of the collected material he included because of the very Americanized sound of the song. Regardless of the veracity of his claims, the piece would make Lieurance quite famous because it fell in line with musical expectations of Native American songs. He would later state: “What work I have since done has been due chiefly to that song. Thousands of people have heard it, clothed with the harmonizing which *our ears* demand; it is lying upon music Tables all over the land, has been sung by many of the world’s famous singers” (qtd in “Thurlow Lieurance Memorial Music Library” emphasis added). Many of those singers often donned Red Face or stereotypical Native costumes such as Lucille Ball and Carol Richards on the *I Love Lucy Show*. It is within the matrix of Lieurance’s colonial appropriation of native images, music, and people for his own art that Crumbo and Lieurance met and worked.