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POCAHONTAS'S PERPLEXING LEGACY: NOBLE NATIVE SUBJECTIVITY AND THE INDIAN PRINCESS.

A DISSERTATION APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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In this dissertation, "Pocahontas's Perplexing Legacy: Performing the Indian Princess," I analyze how Native American women performed the Indian Princess identity—a Western archetype of idealized indigenous femininity that was perceived as being allied with colonialism—employing what I term "noble Native subjectivity" to appeal to a non-Native audience. The introduction to my dissertation establishes the concept of "noble Native subjectivity," a corporeal expression of Native aristocracy modeled from the visits of the Indian Kings and Pocahontas to the British Royal Court in the early colonial period. "Noble Native subjectivity" communicated a disciplined interiority, manifested in observable bodily markers of nobility (including posture, bearing,

clothing, and speech), and I discuss how Native writers, musicians, and stage performers appropriated this trope to establish authority with non-Native audiences and advocate for Native enfranchisement. Other critics have discussed the rhetorical strategies used by Indian Princesses to appeal to a non-Native public; the distinctiveness of my study is its focus on the body as a site of conscious identity construction and resistance. Questions that have guided my research include: What are the opportunities for using gender performance in order to establish agency, and how do Native writers and artists utilize historically non-Native genres to interrogate or transform these norms? In its contribution to the field of Native American Literature, this project discusses works by authors such as E. Pauline Johnson, Sarah Winnemucca, Tsianina Redfeather, Zitkala-Ša, and Maria Tallchief, discussing oft-overlooked textual productions, including short stories, operatic librettos, and dance performances.

INTRODUCTION

"'She Much Exceedeth the Rest of her People': Pocahontas's Perplexing Legacy"

> And the LORD said vnto [Rebecca], Two nations are in thy wombe, and two maner of people shall be separated from thy bowels: and the one people shall be stronger than the other people: and the elder shall serue the yonger.(sic)
> --Genesis 25:23 (1611 *King James Bible*)

It is thought that when Matoaka (known also as Amonute, or more commonly by her nickname, "Pocahontas") was converted by her English kidnappers, Captain Samuel Argall and Reverend Alexander Whitaker, the name "Rebecca" was chosen for her at her baptism because of its allegorical significance. Like the Biblical Rebecca, Pocahontas was perceived as the potential "Mother of Two Nations," whose person and personal subjectivity would serve as a bridge from the Old World to the New World. In an impassioned letter from her future husband, tobacco planter John Rolfe, to Virginia Governor Sir Thomas Dale, the former beseeched Dale for her hand in marriage. Rolfe wrote that he wished to marry Pocahontas "for the honor of our country…the Glory of God…myne own salvation," declaring his love for the "unbelieving creature" who had so inspired his affections (Foreman 22). Critics have pondered who or *what* was the actual subject of Rolfe's devotion in this letter; Catherine Foreman writes in *Indians Abroad* that "it is difficult to judge whether [Rolfe] was captivated by the beauty of the Indian, or, as his fellow colonist [Ralph] Hamor wrote, wished to wed her 'for the good of the plantation" (Foreman 22). Whatever his intentions, Rolfe and Pocahontas were wed, and in 1616, she placed her foot on English soil, establishing herself as the paragon of Native American femininity both in the colonies and in the Old World.

Pocahontas—or Lady Rebecca—was introduced as the converted Indian Princess, and was both a figure of fascination and literal "proof" of Britain's colonial success in the New World. As Annette Kolodny describes, the "excitement that greeted John Rolfe's marriage to Pocahontas, in April of 1614, may have been due to the fact that it served, in some symbolic sense, as a kind of objective correlation for the possibility of Europeans' actually possessing the charms inherent in the virgin continent" (Kolodny 5). However, her identification as a foreign princess was not merely symbolic. Indeed, Pocahontas's marriage to a cultural outsider represented the triumph of Christianity over "paganism," and the implied displacement of Powhatan power structures. In a particular telling moment, due to a misunderstanding of Powhatan hierarchies, King James himself was highly "offended" that John Rolfe would be so presumptuous to marry a Native princess, and "made himself ridiculous by his displeasure." Apparently, the king was concerned that as the result of this union, Rolfe or his children with Pocahontas "might at some future date claim Virginia because of the royal blood of Pocahontas," leading King James' Council to deliberate whether or not Rolfe had committed treason against the Crown (Foreman 24). For Pocahontas, to be recognized as an "Indian Princess" was to be a semiotic as well as a *literal* key to the New World.

However, Pocahontas's ascribed power was entirely mediated through her familial ties to her father, the great sachem Powhatan, which were in turn interpreted by her captors and later, by the British Court, through the lens of their own power structures. Powhatan gender dynamics were conveniently ignored in favor of European social mores, and within this paradigm, Pocahontas was concomitantly stripped of any

communal or individual power she wielded within her own community and granted that of a Western "princess," whose autonomy and authority were subject to the whims of her father and later, her husband. Thus. while her designation as an Indian Princess was meant to confer respect (and fascination), it imposed foreign patriarchal limitations upon her. Cheryl Suzack and Shari Huhndorf describe that for Indigenous women, "colonization has involved their removal from positions of power, the replacement of traditional gender roles with Western patriarchal practices, the exertion of colonial control over Indigenous communities through the management of women's bodies, and sexual violence" (Suzack and Huhndorf 1). The kidnapping, conversion, marriage, re-naming, and exhibiting of Pocahontas as a Christianized Indian Princess illustrates how her Native body was reinterpreted in order to be used as a symbolic invitation to the New World. Thus, the Indian Princess becomes immortalized in colonial myth as the disempowered substitute for meaningfully empowered Indigenous women, politicized only to the extent that her corporeal self can be utilized as a tool for colonial interests.

Suzack and Huhndorf discuss how the pervasive disempowerment of Native women took hold, despite the fact that many Indigenous communities revolved around egalitarian gender dynamics, often characterized by matrilineal property rights and marriage practices. They explain how early "political and economic relationships between settlers and Indigenous communities favoured Indigenous men, betraying the colonizers' unwillingness or inability to recognize women's authority and disturbing established social patterns within these communities" (Suzack and Huhndorf 5). The Indian Princess figure (seen within the "histories" of Pocahontas and Sacajawea) fit well within this new paradigm, as her authority was colonially-sanctioned and limited to

acting as a conduit for the economic and political interests of a conquering European power. The Indian Princess's authority was also derived from Western ideas of nobility, and expressed through the corporeal discipline, dress, and behavior that was expected of a member of the aristocracy, however "savage" the society may be.

The "corporeal discipline" that I reference in this project draws upon Michel Foucault's argument that within societies, the individual is meant to exist not as an autonomous actor, but as a "subjected body" that is "caught up in a system of constraints and privations, obligations and prohibitions" (Foucault 26, 11). Individuals are acculturated into the body politic and become invested in its "strategies" of preserving existing power relations, acting upon one another, potentially through ideology and violence, but also through the banalities of social interaction (Foucault 26). From these mediations of power emerges "discipline," which constitutes a "political anatomy of detail" that identifies acting bodies as "docile" or undesirable, the latter designation requiring intervention on behalf of the society (Foucault 138). Within this context, discipline "arrests or regulates movements; it clears up confusion; it dissipates compact groupings of individuals wandering about the country in unpredictable ways" (Foucault 219). This project is particularly interested in how groups deemed to be "unpredictable"—specifically Native Americans—were viewed as needing to become "disciplined" and acculturated bodies through Western institutions of power, and how certain individuals recognized the importance of embodying docility as a means of eliminating colonial anxiety concerning their status as "productive" and "subjected" bodies within this political framework (Foucault 26).

In the context of this study, to be a "subjected" body is to adhere to Western conventions of feminine identity formation. As the Indian Princess trope is a product of the colonial imagination, her selfhood is divorced from indigenous epistemologies and instead reflects Euramerican norms of gender and class. As mentioned above, indigenous women's authority became eroded in the colonial contact zone, and they were subjected to the Western gender binaries found within the logic of conquest. To be cast in these roles was to be silenced, and emerge as either the "disciplined" Other (the Indian Princess) or the "unpredictable" Other (the "squaw"). No other gendered space for Native women existed within Western patriarchy, as alternatives could potentially contradict colonial dominance, and were therefore deemed unnatural. As Judith Butler writes, the "construction of gender operates through *exclusionary* means…through a set of foreclosures, radical erasures, that are, strictly speaking, refused the possibility of cultural articulation" (Butler xvii). To recast gender roles within indigenous communities was to limit the cultural and political power of Native women; however, those women who embodied the Indian Princess were granted a sense of symbolic authority within Western patriarchy, and therefore to perform this identity was to be granted a modicum of agency.

History has not been generous to the Native women who have embodied this problematic identity, too often casting them as betrayers of their communities and handmaidens of colonialism. However, this project seeks to complicate these definitions of the Indian Princess, and explore how Native women used this identity as a tool for advocacy and self-assertion in the face of colonial stereotypes. My study focuses on the auto/biographical performativity inherent to the Indian Princess identity. Specifically, I

am most concerned with the identity construction of the Indian Princess, and how Native women who publically portrayed themselves to be Indian Princesses presented a carefully-curated appearance to their non-Native audiences as a means of appealing to the latter's sensibilities. They embody what I refer to as "noble Native subjectivity," a corporeal expression of Native aristocracy that adheres to Western expectations of what was *considered* universal nobility (manifested in bodily discipline and appropriate behavior), interwoven with either tribally-specific or pan-Indian cultural elements. Specifically, this subjectivity is expressed through various forms of corporeal expression, including movement, dress, facial expressions, reflection of "appropriate" gender dynamics, and demonstrable fluency in Western paradigms of artistic and discursive practices. I further define "noble Native subjectivity" as the public portrayal of Indigenous nobility by a Native performer that is rhetorically crafted for a Western audience in order to establish rapport and, potentially, position the performer as an ambassador and trusted authority on Indigenous experience in a paracolonial setting.

The performance of "noble native subjectivity" was central to the success of the "Indian kings," Native leaders who traveled abroad in the early colonial period to parley with foreign governments, particularly the British government. Pocahontas made her debut during this time of transcultural exchange between tribes and European sovereigns; Native delegates from all over North and South America were often invited (or forced) to accompany explorers abroad, serving as "exotic' representatives of their respective nations. The Indian kings proved fascinating to peasant and prince alike, and despite the fact that none of them were "kings" in the Western sense of the word, they were presented as such, and "kings and queens received them as fellow sovereigns,

showering them with gifts of money, jewels, and clothing while entertaining them in royal style; philosophers, poets, and historians wrote of them; gala performances were staged at the theaters and operas of European cities for their entertainment" (Foreman xix). The presence of the Indian kings at public forums was widely advertised and sufficient to draw the teeming masses that were curious about the habits of the "savages" from the New World. These members of the Indigenous "monarchy" were commemorated in popular culture "as foreign in their language, dress, and habits, yet possessed of the dignity Britons associated with political leadership and elite social status" (Shannon 225). The performance of "noble Native subjectivity" proved to be an alluring and, above all, *necessary* element to ensure the success of their visits, as they sought to meet the foreign monarchs as their equals, rather than their overlords.

As seen with the traveling Indian kings, diplomatic relations between European and Native nations were played out through lavish rituals and displays of power, and the Indian kings were carefully surveilled and appraised by their European publics from the moment they set foot upon foreign soil. Timothy J. Shannon explains that Britons had preconceived notions about the dignity and gravitas their royal guests would possess, assuming European power structures and their contingent codes of conduct were universal, and that "the physical traits, manners, and habits exhibited by elites were transcultural because they were endemic to human nature" (225). The Traveling Indian delegations and their sponsors were well aware that such attention would be paid to them when they would formally meet with European monarchs, so they would spend days meticulously assembling, grooming, and perfecting their appearance and the art of their performance. In the case of the Cherokee "king" Ostenaco, who visited the British

court in 1762, his escort Lieutenant Henry Timberlake ensured that he and his retainers were "outfitted with clothing and accoutrements in 'the mode of their own country,'" meant to "convey their exotic background but also their genteel status: long linen shirts, leggings and moccasins, silver gorgets and armbands, wampum beads, and scarlet mantles trimmed with gold lace" (Shannon 228). The British public and Royal Court expected that Indian royalty would exhibit both universal, yet somehow racially-specific markers of nobility, so they focused on the minutia of the Traveling Indians' dress and carriage as evidence of their exotic yet aristocratic subjectivities.

The need for Native nobility to be not only defined, but also correctly performed according to the standards of outsiders to Indigenous communities is an overriding concern of this project, because from it, we can glean a clearer picture of how Native representatives consciously worked to appeal to and successfully negotiate with foreign powers within the colonial context. Philip H. Round writes that during formative years in the colonies, "Native negotiators would shift the terms of diplomatic engagement, forcing Europeans to accommodate or even adopt traditional tribal practices and protocols" (Round 250). The Indian Kings who traveled abroad had to adapt to the pomp and circumstance of court, and the "noble Native subjectivity" they displayed was not only a method of acclimating to their new environment, it could also be seen as a strategy to keep the terms of exchange as equal as possible, meeting as fellow dignitaries instead of subjugated representatives. An essential part of correctly performing this Native nobility was adhering to gendered constructions of appropriate behavior, which differed among the kings and queens, princes and princesses. Noble

Native masculinity was embodied not only in their dress, but also through peace-pipe ceremonies, and the presentation of gifts to the foreign monarchs.

While noble Native masculinity was conveyed through performing the assumed "universal" gentility of the upper class while also maintaining the exotic, "warrior-king" appeal, a Native woman's nobility, on the other hand, was far more contingent on her ability to mimic European feminine ideals; thus, the "Indian Princess" became the companion of the "warrior king" in the colonial mythology of Native people. According to Rayna Green, author of "The Pocahontas Perplex," Native women became yoked to limiting dichotomies of femininity, specifically that of the "Princess" and the "Squaw," both "defined in terms of [their] relationship with male figures" who sought to control or exploit them (703). While the "Squaw" is cast as a sexualized Other, the Indian Princess is her "civilized" (i.e. "white") inverse, possessing phenotypical and behavioral characteristics assumed to be endemic to Western cultures. This phenomenon is pervasive in cultural productions ranging from John Smith's characterization of Pocahontas all the way to the Disney film featuring Pocahontas; despite nearly five hundred years of separation, the Indian Princess remains the same: through her corporeal subjectivity, she is coded as being, above all, a "good Indian," and in order to be "good," she must submit to the colonial project. Gerald Vizenor identifies this "good" behavioral trope as "manifest manners," understood within the American paracolonial context as the "simulation of the *indian*," which requires the "the absence of real natives" in favor of "simulations of the tragic primitive" (Vizenor vii). The Indian Princess is such a simulation; specifically, she is meant to embody the land that is desired by Western society and, in turn, desires to be conquered. As the lore

surrounding Pocahontas demonstrates, the Indian Princess can have a powerful semiotic impact; Maria Lyytinen views the Indian Princess as the figurehead for the "legacy of painless 'history' in the early stages of European settlement in North America," constantly re-envisioned in various genres, but always playing the same part: that of the conduit for "civilization" in the New World (83).

Building upon Green and Lyytinen's conceptualization of the Indian Princess, I emphasize the performative aspect of the Indian Princess, focusing on how a Native woman *came* to be identified as an Indian Princess, and how she could maintain this persona. While North American history boasts a pantheon of celebrated and/or self-proclaimed Indian Princesses (of both Native and non-Native heritage), this project is interested in a select few Native American and First Nations women who conscientiously molded themselves as Indian Princesses as a means of establishing a sense of authority with a Western audience, and subsequently, advocate on behalf of Native nations. While the archetypal Indian Princess was a proponent of European conquest and desired to be possessed and shaped by its interests, the subjects of the following chapters—E. Pauline Johnson, Sarah Winnemucca, Gertrude Bonnin, Tsianina Redfeather, and Maria Tallchief—recognized the importance of Indigenous self-representation within a colonial context, and used their Western educational backgrounds in order to rhetorically craft this representation. Their mastery of Euramerican performative culture, including literature, oration, music, and classical dance, allowed them to adopt the recognizable and "respectable" persona of the Indian Princess to appeal to dominant society and to refute its dehumanizing assumptions of Indigenous people. Thus, they worked to reinterpret this identity—traditionally used to

subsume Native women's bodies into the colonial project of dismantling communities—as a means of communal preservation through bodily performance. The performative nobility of the Indian Princess, her "noble, Native subjectivity," was manifested in her dress, bodily discipline, and behavior, adhering to Western notions of aristocratic behaviors while concomitantly communicating a sense of inherent and romantic Native-ness. These performative parameters constitute the inherent ambivalence of this identity; it required a level of complicity with colonialism, while allowing Native American women to engage in shaping the political or cultural future of their tribes and nations.

An Indian Princess's "noble Native subjectivity" is expressed through bodily performance, which served as a testimony of her inherent superiority to other Native people. Elizabeth Grosz explains that a body is understood as "a signifying medium, a vehicle of expression, a mode of rendering *public* and communicable what is essentially private (ideas, thoughts, beliefs, feelings, affects)" (Grosz 9, emphasis mine). In essence, bodies reflect the effects of their acculturation and context, and in the case of the women this study focuses on, their respective social milieus involved systemic attacks on the physical personhood and/or sovereignty of Native nations in the United States and Canada. These attacks were supported (and still are) by negative stereotypes of Indigenous people that reduced them to a state of atavistic savagery in the public opinion; this in turn undermined their rights of self-governance and representation in the legislative decisions that were made concerning their own futures as people. I argue that the Indian Princesses discussed in this project capitalized on the semiotic power associated with this trope, and used corporeality to "render public" a sense of interior

discipline within Native bodies, using the markers of Western nobility as their guide. They understood that a "body becomes a 'text'" in the sense that it "is fictionalized and positioned within myths and belief systems that form a culture's social narratives and self-representations" (Grosz 119). Thus, the female orators, writers, musicians, and dancers I discuss used their bodies or the bodies of their characters as texts that offered a counternarrative of Indigeneity to supplant the arguably more damaging one, which validated colonial vice over Native interests.

It is important to note that in this project, the concept of "noble Native subjectivity" is viewed as a performative response to the needs of a Western audience; in this sense, I am not arguing about intra- or intertribal performances of hierarchical organization. Instead, I am discussing the recognition and adaptation of Western ideals of nobility by Native women, who utilized their knowledge of these cultural assumptions to craft performative identities in an attempt to appeal to *Western* audiences to accept them as credible and worthy representatives of Native people; representatives who, through their elevated status, could prove persuasive to an otherwise dismissive audience who believed the prevailing stereotypes of Indigenous people. Therefore, the definition of performative "noble Native subjectivity" in this dissertation *anticipates* the needs of a Western audience, reflecting the level of identity surveillance and racial inequality endemic to the respective sociocultural contexts in question. While some of the performers discussed in this project integrated tribal-specific practices, regalia, and ceremony into their works, others found it more effective to put forth a more pan-Indian, or even wholly Westernized performance as a means of ingratiating themselves to their publics.

We see this identity policing and appraisal in the Rev. Samuel Purchas's written accounts of his thoughts concerning the gentility of Rebecca Rolfe, aka Pocahontas. Purchas, who served as rector of St. Martin's Church in London during Pocahontas's visit, seemed surprised that the latter "did not only accustome her self to civilitie, but still carried herself as the Daughter of a King, as was accordingly respected, not onely by the Company, which allowed provisions for her selfe and her sonne, but of divers particular persons of Honor" (sic) (Foreman 24). Pocahontas conducted herself in a manner most becoming to the many eyes gazing upon her, and their surveillance of her and her mannerisms yielded what they wished to see: the civilized, yet exotic, daughter of a great king. According to Shannon, since it was "the performative dimension of kingship that mattered most," it was possible for any Indian, whether they were a member of the ruling class of their tribe or not, to "play the role, so long as he or she exhibited the right demeanor" (225). The public became increasingly concerned about the ability of commoners to impersonate a Native king; in fact, Shannon details the political 'demise' of a particular Cherokee Indian King, who made the fatal error of over-imbibing at a tavern and engaging in a brawl, resulting in the British public decrying him as an imposter. The importance of this performative aspect of nobility and its desire for an unattainable authenticity are not only paramount to understanding the success and failure of these Indian Kings to convince a Western audience of their authenticity, but are also central to the arguments this project pursues, focusing on the ways in which performative nobility is utilized by Indian Princesses after Pocahontas.

This performative paradigm of idealized Native femininity instantiated by Pocahontas during her time abroad contributed to gender-specific dichotomizing of

Native women. The Indian Princesses of the American imagination enacted these physical and behavioral attributes through emulations of white femininity, and demonstrated a desire to turn their backs on their Native savagery in favor of European civilization. Like other "good" Indians, the Indian Princess's merit is reflected in her willingness to subsume herself to the good of the colonial project. In this sense, the Indian Princess seems to merely reinforce white privilege by performing a mode of whitewashed Native nobility. In light of her ability to publically perform this "goodness," the Indian Princess is granted limited agency by European interests; she is deemed a worthy representative for both colonizer and colonized alike, ostensibly acting as an intermediary between the two, but privileging the former's position. Her enactment of an "appropriate" model of Indigeneity is translated into her being viewed by colonizers as an "authentic" Indigenous representative, whether or not such authority was actually granted by the tribe she claimed to represent. Thus, the Indian Princess becomes a palimpsest for European and American inscription and ascription; her performance of this particular Native nobility works to deflect or reinterpret colonial anxieties and instead validates their claims to racial superiority. As the lore surrounding Pocahontas demonstrates, the Indian Princess can have a powerful semiotic impact. In colonial myth, Pocahontas was the idealized wood nymph, the "virginal figure" who willingly abandoned her people and her culture for the love of a white man, and in doing so, became the "savior and protector of European immigrants," and became a symbol within "non-Native discourse that implies that the 'good Indian' is one who rejects her own people" (Wilmer 8).

Considering the troubling historical legacy of the Indian Princess, it is not surprising then that as a figure, she has a rather negative connotation for Indigenous peoples. However, while the stereotypical Indian Princess of myth endorses colonialism, many Native women demonstrate that occupying a troubling identity such as this allows a performer to *trouble* said identity. When considering the potential for subversion this construction offers, it is important to ask how Native women perform as Indian Princess in order to appeal to colonial interests. Such questions include whether this identity, which is meant to embody assimilation, can simultaneously appeal to a colonial audience's sensibilities *and* successfully critique the ideology of conversion and assimilation? If so, can we see these performances as acts of rhetorical sovereignty, as all of these women use "performance and storytelling as a means of positive self-expression and representation" in the face of colonial claims to the contrary (Wilmer 9)? Or are there inherent limitations to their contributions to anti-colonial discourse? This project seeks to answer these questions, among others, by investigating and discussing the myriad ways in which Indigenous women have utilized the noble Native subjectivity of the Indian Princess as a guise through which they could advocate for improved treatment of tribal peoples. I argue that when placed into praxis by a group of Native women spanning the nineteenth to mid-twentieth century, the Indian Princess identity became a rich ground for reinterpretation, and even subversion as orators, singers, and dancers enacted this identity, many of them representing Native interests by embodying a familiar trope to their audiences.

Because the Indian Princess identity is paradigmatic of what Philip J. Deloria terms "playing Indian"—performing Euramerican assumptions and desires concerning

Indigenous people, though usually enacted by white people—it creates a troubling intersection of Native and non-Native anxieties concerning who constitutes an "authentic" Indian. Moreover, the cultural capital found within the Native nobility of an Indian Princess, granting her legitimacy and the right to represent, meant that it was an attractive choice for Native and non-Native performers. For example, Cari Carpenter describes Sioux writer and advocate Gertrude Bonnin's (Zitkala-Ša's) surreptitious investigation of the true identity of "Princess Chinquilla," a woman from New York who claimed Cheyenne heritage, a claim Bonnin thought to be false. Of particular interest to Bonnin was Chinquilla's adoption of the appellation of "Princess," a term that Bonnin dismissed as inauthentic in a letter:

> Of all ranks and titles in genuine use among the Indians of the Old Regime, there is none that could be translated into "Princess," the nearest thing to it was to be a chief's daughter, and yet this was not comparable to "Princess." I have always associated "Princess" with vaudeville actresses, who were either Indian or pasing [sic] as such in order to attract their public. An example of this is the one called "Princess" Wah-let- ka. She is a fortune- teller, or, in my estimation, a "faker," and plays in cheap- run vaudeville houses. (qtd. in Carpenter "Detecting Indianness"148)

In this passage, Bonnin articulates several key issues endemic to the Indian Princess identity, such as its lack of tribal antecedent and its hackneyed interpretations by "fakers." However, the subtext of the Indian Princess identity was that because it was not part of the "Old Regime," it was easily coopted and exploited by people such as Princess Chinquilla (in Bonnin's opinion), who claimed to represent the values and interests of Native people without having an actual connection to them. Part of this danger lay in white performers' propensity to use the Indian Princess identity to reinforce European superiority, pandering to the hubris of white audiences. Thus, the

Indian Princesses that this project focuses upon are Native creators and performers who consciously performed this subjectivity in order to undermine stereotypes of Native people, rather than legitimizing the legacy of genocide against Native Americans.

However, since Indian Princesses are often accused of representing colonial norms through their performances, it is necessary to deconstruct how they attempt to embody assimilation without *arguing* on its behalf. The differences between these two performances are encapsulated in *Our Fire Survives the Storm*, in which Daniel Heath Justice argued that "*Assimilation*…is the wholesale rejection of Indigenous values and their replacement with Eurowestern values, either through choice, coercion, or violence," while "*acculturation*…[is] the adaptation of certain Eurowestern ways" within an Indigenous context, ultimately influencing culture without instigating a totalizing shift away from its core values and tenets (xvi). It is my contention that by embodying the problematic construct of the Indian Princess, Native women were able to exercise their agency in a way that otherwise would not have been afforded to them. Josh Bellin argues that many Native performers harnessed the power of the Indigenous "performative paradigm," because they recognized that these consciously-crafted "public acts of entertainment, ritual, and suasion" could do more than "simply reflect or represent cultures"; they could, "in the words of Rosemarie K. Bank, 'constitute cultures'" (6). Rather than merely mimicking the recognizable trope of the Indian Princess, these performers could use the authority bestowed upon the position to not only advocate for Indigenous rights, but to rearticulate what it meant to be Indigenous. In this sense, these Indian Princesses can in fact be seen as embodying acculturation, rather than assimilation, using their performances of a negative trope in useful and

symbolically significant ways. In this sense, they belong to what Deloria describes as the "secret history of the unexpected, of the complex lineaments of personal and cultural identity" that resist simplistic binaries "built around crude notions of difference and assimilation, white and Indian, primitive and advanced" ("*Indians in Unexpected"* 14). Instead of merely "playing Indian" back to their audiences, they adapted the Eurowestern construct of the Indian Princess, rearticulating its purpose to fit their own.

My analysis of Indian Princess performers begins in the 19th century with the works of E. Pauline Johnson and Sarah Winnemucca. The first chapter entitled "The 'Shell Flower' and the 'Mohawk Princess': Bodily Performance of Native Nobility" discusses the manifestations of "White Men's Indian" anxiety present in the written works of these two authors and self-proclaimed representatives of their tribal nations. Both women were greatly influenced by their fathers, who acted as intermediaries between white society and their respective tribes. Their daughters continued this work through their public entreaties for better treatment of Indigenous peoples and their written literature. I will be focusing on the latter productions, particularly Johnson's short story "My Mother" and Winnemucca's *Life Among the Paiutes.* In these texts, Johnson and Winnemucca use bodily performance to convey "noble Native subjectivity" in their respective writings, illustrating how their own or a parent's external actions indicated an inherent aristocratic interiority, one that would appeal to their Western audiences and augment their statuses as Indian Princesses.

The body becomes the site upon which nobility is manifested and through which it is enacted, and this nobility is attributed to both the education and internal discipline of the players in the texts. Thus their bodies were engaging in a form of mimesis, mimicking not their own traditions but the traditions ascribed to them by the dominant society. Johnson and Winnemucca's "noble savages" possess superior education and manners as a mode of "acceptable Indigeneity," predicated on the recognition work of their target audience. In this chapter, Indian Princesses are discussed and identified as "ambassadors," who mediate with colonial interests in order to preserve Indigenous rights. While there are limitations to the success of their respective projects—namely the sexual objectification they faced and their representations of an "authentic" Indigenous identity that more clearly represented colonial notions of authenticity—as ambassadors, they worked to carve out a space in which they could engage in intercultural dialogue and resist the monolith of misrepresentation that disempowered Native people.

I continue this ambassadorial trajectory with my second chapter, "The Indian Princess on the Opera Stage." This chapter will examine the operatic "careers" of Zitkala-Ša and Tsianina Redfeather. Zitkala-Ša used her knowledge of Sioux orature for *The Sun Dance Opera* (1913), while Princess Tsianina's own biography provided the story for *Shanewis* (1918), written by Charles Wakefield Cadman and with an English libretto by Nelle Richmond Eberhart. Both of these works were groundbreaking, as they featured Indigenous performers and, in the case of *The Sun Dance Opera*, transcribed Sioux melodies and ceremonies. The Indian Princesses, Zitkala-Ša and Redfeather,

acted as what Deloria identifies as "bridge figures" whose interest centered on modifying and controlling the public perception of Indigeneity.

In this chapter, I argue that Bonnin and Redfeather used their Western education—which was meant to assimilate them into white culture—as a vehicle of subversion and cultural preservation. Specifically, they presented themselves as "consciously-unassimilated," able to perform "civilization," but doing so in order to advocate on behalf of Native peoples and their cultural rights, rather than extolling the benefits of assimilation. Bonnin and Redfeather's musical training led them to the genre of opera, where they partnered with composers William Hanson and Charles Wakefield Cadman, respectively, and employed their statuses as Indian Princesses as a means of authorial credibility in their productions. The operas that were the result of these collaborations displayed the same "consciously-unassimilated" attitudes of their co-authors, manifested in Native female characters (also Indian Princesses) who act as lenses through which the dangers of cultural degradation and encroachment are reflected to the Western audience. In these productions, the Indian Princesses of the text are arguably avatars for their respective authors, and as such are meant to appeal to the sympathies and sensibilities of their audience. For the Indian Princesses who wrote the texts, opera gave them a new cultural venue in which they could potentially redefine Indigeneity and, in doing so, garner support from their audiences.

The redefinition of what it meant to be Indigenous was continued by another stage performer, Maria Tallchief. A member of the Osage Nation and America's first prima ballerina, Maria Tallchief's *America's Prima Ballerina* (1997) chronicles her journey as a performer, beginning with the "gimmicky" dances she and her sister

performed for tourists in Oklahoma, leading to her illustrious career as a ballet dancer. She was celebrated at home as well as abroad, earning the title of "Princess Wa-Xthe-Thomba," or the "Woman of Two Standards," from the Osage Nation. It is the spirit of this title of "Princess" that guides this chapter, "'How Can We Know the Dancer from the Dance?'" which is interested in the myriad ways in which Maria Tallchief used dance as a performance of her dual and, at times, dueling identit(ies), first as a pan-Indian style performer and later as a "prima ballerina who happened to be Native American." This chapter will demonstrate that as an Indian Princess—a trope associated with permissibility and conquest—Tallchief's varied performances throughout her life conformed to conceptualizations of permissible Native American "identities." These representations were weighted down by Western notions of authenticity and acceptability, described by Deloria in *Indians in Unexpected Places* as being centered in the "past rather than the present," on the nostalgia and nobility associated with Native American identity (91).

While Tallchief's book illustrates how her very presence in the world of ballet was subversive, her insistence that she be viewed as a "prima ballerina who happened to be Native American," indicates anxieties inherent within her hybridized identity, specifically her desire to neither mask nor manifest her Indigenous heritage in her career. However, as "America's first prima ballerina," Tallchief occupies a privileged space previously inaccessible to *any* American performers, let alone those of Native descent, and subsequently presented a counternarrative of Indigeneity to American and European audiences. Thus, I contend that Tallchief's performances are those of a "post-Indian princess," building from Gerald Vizenor's term "postindian," as she adapts her

Indian Princess performance from one of mimicking "permissibility" to dominant society, to creating her own cultural space for performance through her collaboration with the choreographer George Balanchine.

Ultimately, this project will demonstrate how Native women have worked to mitigate the effects of colonialism on themselves as individuals and their communities at large. The performers discussed in this dissertation engaged in the complex and often fraught discourse of identity politics, using the tools they adapted from dominant society in order to strengthen their ability to withstand the latter's ceaseless demands and provocations. Moreover, their adaptation of gendered assumptions of nobility enabled them to be compelling advocates for Native rights during a complicated era in American history, after Removal and the Indian Wars, but before the more "masculinized" American Indian Movement; their interventions were staged in a time of continued cultural assault that was largely unknown to the American public. By embodying this otherwise reductive identity, they were able to engage meaningfully in reshaping public discourse concerning Native people, discourse that proved to be important in the shaping of legislation that affected the livelihood and survival of Native people. As they demonstrate, Native self-representation is a method of "survivance," Gerald Vizenor's term for the "active sense of presence, the continuance of native stories," as "Native survivance stories are renunciations of dominance, tragedy and victimry" (vii). Through the Indian Princess identity, these women found a way to establish themselves as interveners in colonial myth-making and conveyors of Native stories, allowing them to contradict the notion that Indigenous people were politely disappearing into the annals of history. Thus, the seemingly destructive Indian Princess

paradigm became a tool of survivance, granting them access to the cultural venues that dictated whose stories were told and *who* was telling them.

CHAPTER ONE

The "Shell Flower" and the "Mohawk Princess": Bodily Performance of Gendered Native Nobility

> I have lived a long time with the white people, and I know what they do. They are people who are very kind to anyone who is ready to do whatever they wish.
>
> --Sarah Winnemucca Hopkins, *Life Among the Piutes*

In a letter to a friend, E. Pauline Johnson recounted an awkward encounter she had with author Graeme Mercer Adam in 1892. Adam was a celebrated cultural staple in Toronto and author of *An Algonquin Maiden*, a book which depicted the ill-fated cross-racial romance between an Indian girl and her Euramerican beau. In the text, the latter reluctantly marries the former, only to be disgusted by her mannerisms and appearance, and is ultimately freed of her when she dies while saving his life, leaving him to marry a more appropriate mate, described as a "creamy hothouse bloom who has no idea how to paddle a canoe" (Gray 149). Johnson found the book to be a wholly disturbing portrayal of Native women, who were depicted as uncouth and woefully unable to assimilate into "polite" society. Specifically, she was reeling over the "extraordinary things he *made* the 'Algonquin Maiden' *do*," and his descriptions of her as uneducated and animalistic, using terms such as "'dog-like,' 'fawn-like,' 'deer-footed,' and 'fire-eyed'" (Gray 149-50, emphasis mine). Johnson's misgivings about *An Algonquin Maiden* were more than mere annoyance at Adam's characterization of Native women; implicit within them were Johnson's anxieties that not only were these representations prevalent, but also that the ability to produce them was effectively estranged from her and other Native women's control. When Johnson and Adam

crossed paths at an "Evening with Canadian Authors," she set forth righting his perceptions of indigenous women, and in a jubilant letter to a friend, she offered an account of their interaction, stating that "I made him confess…that he had never met an Indian Girl and knew nothing about them" (Gray 150).

The practice of Euramerican authors writing Native female characters and making them "do…extraordinary things"— such as sacrificing themselves for the well-being of their unappreciative husbands—without having any meaningful knowledge of their subject was particularly common in the nineteenth century, the era in which Johnson and her near-contemporary, Sarah Winnemucca, were active in the literary circuit. Characters such as Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's Minnehaha in *The Song of Hiawatha* and Adam's Wanda from *An Algonquin Maiden* were represented as the noble, romantic Native woman to the colonial imagination; they functioned as beautiful, but necessarily tragic colonial tropes, rather than accurate representation of Native femininity. In their lectures and published works, Winnemucca and Johnson sought to refute these portrayals and to present more accurate accounts of Native people. However, verisimilitude proved to be complicated for these women as well, as their audiences had certain expectations for their performances, and they needed to acquiesce to a certain extent in order to preserve their audience and continue their advocacy. Both women were greatly influenced by the work of their fathers, who acted as intermediaries between white society and their respective tribes (the Piutes and the Mohawks) and continued this work through their public entreaties for better treatment of Indigenous peoples and their written literature.

With the publication of Winnemucca's *Life Among the Piutes: Their Wrongs and Claims* and Johnson's *The Moccasin Maker*, these "Indian Princesses" utilized autobiography and biography, respectively, to re-represent Native peoples. On the subject of Native autobiographies, David Brumble writes that "no autobiography is a 'true' representation of the self in any absolute sense," conceding that "self-written autobiography is at least the subject's *own* fiction, the subject's own conception of the self, and so it must always be authentic in this sense at least" (Brumble 11). For Winnemucca in particular, whose *Life Among the Piutes* detailed her experience as a scout and interpreter during the Bannock War, autobiography offered her a genre in which she could tell her story while crafting an ideal persona at the same time. Brumble writes that for Native authors writing their autobiographies, or their "*own* fiction" as he calls it, it is less important to be accurate than to use the genre as a chance to "explain just how it was that they came to be as they are, just *who* they are, and how they stand in relation to the forces that shaped them" (Brumble 5). In the case of Johnson's "My Mother," she appears to be telling the story of her mother's life, but instead uses this short story as an opportunity to craft her *own* story, creating an aristocratic identity for herself, what became her "conception" of herself. However, in Winnemucca and Johnson's auto/biographical accounts, they replicate the cultural language of savagism and civilization that split Native people into categories of acceptability as a means of establishing common ground or even a sense of authority with their audience, differentiating themselves from their less "appealing" or "trustworthy" Native counterparts. They crafted their own stories or the stories of their families in a way that

very carefully appealed to the influential white consumers of their works, who had specific notions of what constituted "acceptable Indigeneity."

While many critics have discussed the ways in which Johnson and Winnemucca crafted their personae as performing Indian Princesses, my study investigates how these women used the corporeal subjectivity and its observable modes of organization—including expressions, dress, and physical acts—to convey nobility in their writings. I contend that in their respective biographical works, Johnson and Winnemucca use the body, whether it is their own or the body of a parent, to create a "noble Native subjectivity" meant to appeal to the sensibilities of their audiences and to heighten their credibility as Indian Princesses. In their works, the body is intimately involved in producing this noble identity, as it functions as a series of markers of class and birthright inscribed upon its physical form. I will begin with Johnson's "My Mother," analyzing her characterization of her father, George Johnson (renamed as George Mansion in the story), whose body, behavior, and birthright subverts colonial assumptions of Native peoples, creating a portrayal of her father that reflected Western ideals of noble heritage. I contend that while "My Mother" is ostensibly a retelling of Johnson's mother's painful childhood and later happy union with George Mansion, it became a text that presented a literary rearticulation of Native masculinity for her reading public, for whom the popular image of the Native male was that of the romantic or brutal "savage." In "My Mother," Johnson created a portrayal of a Native man of esteemed birth, who fit within the parameters of gentility in Western society, evidenced by his self-conduct.

While Johnson's protagonist is a relatively uncontroversial characterization of Native nobility, Winnemucca's is far more subversive. In the second part of this chapter, I shift my focus to Sarah Winnemucca's autobiography *Life Among the Piutes*, discussing Winnemucca's description of her service as an interpreter and scout to the U.S. military during the Bannock War. I argue that through Winnemucca's account of her actions, she performs the role of an Indian Princess while concomitantly crossing its gendered boundaries. In her autobiography, Winnemucca adopts the role of assistant to the army, but she does so on behalf of her own people, and, in doing so, she rhetorically deploys the noble persona to forge alliances and, at times, takes on a more stereotypically masculine and active role in the conflict to prevent further bloodshed and suffering. Thus, she is able to use the inscribed nobility of this identity to position herself as not only interculturally literate, but also adds an element of "male-sanctioned" androgyny to her identity as an Indian Princess, allotting her more agency. Ultimately, for both of these authors, embodying this identity allowed them some control over the means of identity production and the possibility of successful advocacy on behalf of American Indians and First Nations people. Moreover, it also enabled them to offer critiques of Euramerican society with a sense of credibility, given they were deemed to be "superior," and therefore worthy, representatives of their race.

Like many other Indigenous female performers at the time, Johnson and Winnemucca found that the trope of the Indian Princess was the most appealing feminine personae for them to portray. They embodied the "noble Native subjectivity" associated with Indian Princess, ensuring that their public identities (and those of the subjects of their auto/biographies) conveyed a sense of innate superiority, as though

their external "acceptability" indicated a disciplined and respectable interiority. For example, Johnson resented popular literature's stereotypical representations of Native American females, who were portrayed as having "never had any education and was described by a variety of clichés, such as 'dog-like,' 'fawn-like,' 'deer-footed,' 'fire-eyed,' 'crouching'" (Gray 149). Thus, her public performances were crafted to refute these stereotypes that cast Native women as feeble-minded and animalistic, and instead used "noble Native subjectivity" to appeal to her audience. To accomplish this, she combined the performative subjectivities of an educated Victorian woman, and a powerful and inherently aristocratic Native woman who recited tales of "fearless Indian warriors and women prepared to kill, or urge their sons to kill, in revenge for ghastly crimes" (Gray 155). She would begin her public lectures dressed in proper Victorian apparel, and then she would transform into the "Indian Princess," donning pan-tribal regalia and decrying the treatment of Native people. By performing both idealized Victorian femininity and a more assertive, yet still noble Native femininity, she would convey a sense of authority and gravitas to her audience, establishing herself as a respectable ambassador for Native people to Western society.

Unfortunately, attempting to play an ambassadorial role placed many nineteenth century American Indian and First Nations women writers in the paradoxical position of being accused of appealing to the "paternalistic sympathy" of white society, while at the same time being perceived as "savage" in their expressions of rage and resistance against said colonial patriarchy (Carpenter 5). In order to replace colonial reductions of Indigenous identity and to humanize Indigenous people, Johnson and her contemporaries still had to cleave to what were considered acceptable markers of

"authenticity," reflecting back the very tropes they sought to question. This is not to say that Native people lack hierarchical organization within their social structures, but rather that it was necessary for Johnson and others to adopt the Western lexicon of nobility and its manifestations in order to appeal to their audiences. Thus, Johnson and Winnemucca adopted the persona of the "Indian Princess," catering to Euramerican fascination with Native Americans and their inculcated deference to aristocracy.

On its surface, the Indian Princess served an important purpose within a colonial framework: as an ideological tool, she can be seen as speaking on behalf of her people because of her elevated station, and used as a mouthpiece to exculpate and excuse the violence of conquest. During Johnson and Winnemucca's lifetime, nineteenth century dramatic works about Pocahontas portrayed a "chaste and virtuous princess whose 'civilized' and 'un-Indian' features are emphasized in contrast to the savage, bloodthirsty Indians" (Lyytinen 80). Other princesses fictionalized within written works, Wild West shows, and art "clearly represented a sexualized, exotic 'Other' from the wilderness of the New World," and "were constructed to please the male colonizer's gaze" (82). Beginning with Pocahontas in the "New World," Indian Princesses were concomitantly canonized as the chaste handmaidens of Euramerican expansion and recipients of colonial lust, as they represented the land explorers wished to dominate. Moreover, Indian Princesses were coded as being more attractive ("whiter") than their less "noble" Indigenous female counterparts.

To enact this identity, there was a requirement to maintain a balance between what were assumed to be markers of inherent, Native nobility which could only be passed through a biological lineage (earning the designation of a "princess" in the

European sense of the word) and demonstrating this prestige through actions that indicated a recognition, a learning of, and performance of Euramerican values. Thus, the interiority and "subjectivity" of the Indian Princess was constructed as a reflection of ostensibly inherited traits and an appreciation for uninheritable, but performable, traits; while she can never be white, she can perform "whiteness" successfully if there is preexisting, inherent Native nobility present. We can see this construction at work in the documented responses to one of Winnemucca's public performances, in which a reporter observed that "the princess spoke English fluently, was modest, and thoroughly alive to the injustice which has been inflicted on her people"; another found her to be a "perfect lady, [who] speaks English with great power, is very attractive and modest, and has always made herself most *acceptable*" (Qtd. in Sorisio 44, emphasis mine). In these remarks, we see an initial recognition of her status as a "princess," but it is her "modesty" and fluency in the English language that make her "acceptable" to her audience, as they appear to demonstrate deference to European customs. For Johnson, her credibility was established by her manager, Frank Yeigh, who would introduce her to audiences as "the Indian Poetess" whose "ancestors were one of the fifty noble families who helped organize the Iroquois Confederacy in the fifteenth century—a federation, he solemnly explained, which was almost as old as that of Switzerland" (Gray 151). Johnson's "interiority" is linked to a long-standing, noble tradition, thus, like Winnemucca, it is assumed that her lineage allows her to perform "whiteness" successfully.

The idea of "acceptability," of demonstrating identifiable correct behavioral, linguistic, and physical attributes to a Western audience is the cornerstone of the Indian

Princess identity. What gave this identity its semiotic power was not limited to the initial act of Pocahontas appearing to choose John Smith over her own people—his dubious interpretation of the event, which informed later European versions of the tale—but extended to its many iterations within popular culture for the benefit of a Euramerican audience. This identity and its constraints have their genesis in the colonial imagination, but it was their adoption and dissemination by Native and non-Native performers for their own purposes that imbued it with its continued manifold significance. Judith Butler tells us that "performativity must be understood not as a singular or deliberate 'act,'" but is instead "the reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects that it names," usually understood as an unconscious recreation of earlier "performances" (Butler xi). However, Joshua Bellin argues for a conscious, self-aware mode of performativity, what he terms the Native American "performative paradigm," within a colonial environment. He explains that for many Native entertainers and advocates, their "intentional public acts of entertainment, ritual, and suasion do not simply reflect or represent cultures but…'constitute cultures'" in the face of colonial co-optation and misinterpretation (6). Public performers such as Johnson and Winnemucca found that the "noble Native subjectivity" of the Indian Princess was a useful vehicle for influencing the opinions of their audiences, to offer them a new framework for understanding Indigenous people, thus re-"constituting" their cultures.

While both Winnemucca and Johnson were celebrated lecturers, their use of the body as a performative text was not limited to their physical performances. Instead, their written works made use of the body as a site for inscription and interpretation, one

that they manipulated to suit the desires of their audiences and the subtext of the performance itself. Elizabeth Grosz positions physical bodies as the "very 'stuff' of subjectivity," and that this subjectivity is the result of acculturation, rather than biological organization. Grosz explains that bodies resist preconceived ideas of being "ahistorical, precultural, or natural objects in any simple way; they are not only inscribed, marked, engraved, by social pressures external to them but are the products, the direct effects, of the very social construction of nature itself"(Grosz ix-x). This "construction" Grosz describes is reflected in Johnson and Winnemucca's continued reiteration of a set of attributes that connoted nobility in their written and physical performances, part of their Native "performative paradigm." Grosz continues that as a site of culturally-inscribed corporeality, the "body becomes a 'text' and is fictionalized and positioned within myths and belief systems that form a culture's social narratives and self-representations" (Grosz 119). Johnson and Winnemucca worked to reappropriate Native bodies from the Western "myths and belief systems" that dictated and suppressed Indigenous people's ability to represent themselves.

For Johnson and Winnemucca, playing the Indian Princess required them to engage in bodily recognition work, or the "mimicry" of white conceptions of Indigeneity. Drawing from Homi Bhabha's concept of "mimicry" in a colonial setting, Philip J. Deloria argues that instead of merely pandering to colonial expectations, "Indian mimicry of Indianness back at white audiences made it clear that there was both a shared sense of expectation and a critical Indian intelligence at work" (Deloria *Indians in Unexpected* 130). In this passage, Deloria implies that "Indianness" has little to do with accuracy and more to do with white ideas of "authenticity." This can be seen in the

Indian Princess identity, a performative paradigm that did not have a specific antecedent within Indigenous nations; instead, she was an amalgamation of attributes drawn from Smith's account of Pocahontas, and the Indian Kings who traveled abroad in the 17th century. The latter established the performative parameters of "Native nobility" and its ability to be demonstrated, while the former gave this paradigm a more "feminine" touch, creating the foundation for what constituted appropriate female Indigeneity. Johnson and Winnemucca carefully crafted their own public identities to fit within the Indian Princess paradigm, mimicking Euramerican conceptualizations of "Native nobility." Performing as Indian Princesses did grant these women a measure of agency within the settler-colonial context, yet it was counterbalanced by the degradation that accompanied the identity; ultimately, the Indian Princess identity provided Johnson and Winnemucca a complex method of dealing with colonialism by engaging in rhetorical performance as a strategy for positive recognition by Euramerican audiences.

E. Pauline Johnson was born in 1861, to George Henry Martin Johnson and Emily Susanna Howells, a Mohawk chief and his English wife. She grew up on the Six Nations Reserve in Ontario, and like her father, she was given a dual education, tutored in Mohawk culture by her paternal grandfather, John "Smoke" Johnson, and Anglican educational norms by her mother. Her dual cultural literacy was an alluring factor for her audiences, who found her shift from the "cultivated," Anglicized woman in an evening gown to the buckskin-wearing "Mohawk Princess" to be a fascinating and enthralling experience. In her introduction to *The Moccasin Maker*, LaVonne Brown Ruoff establishes that Johnson—performing as the "Mohawk Princess"—was on the

vanguard of ushering literature into the "frontier towns of Canada," and enjoyed success in *fin de siècle* Canada (Ruoff 8).

Johnson's "My Mother," a chapter from *The Moccasin Maker,* appears to be entirely an exercise in identity production. *The Moccasin Maker* is a series of short stories, many of which question prevailing representations of Native Americans while offering alternatives to replace them, including her own mixed-race identity, an identification that she argues enhances, rather than detracts, from her noble heritage. Ruoff points out that Johnson's mixed heritage led her to capture the interest of audiences in "Canada, Great Britain, and the United States," where people enthusiastically "read her work and attend[ed] her public performances" (Ruoff 1). In these performances, Johnson alternately portrayed a proper Victorian woman and a "fiery Indian maid," appealing to her audiences' dualistic assumptions of ideal Native femininity (Carpenter 10).

At the time, Johnson was on the lecture circuit, the Mohawk nation was facing problems with encroaching settlers, who were trafficking whiskey and timber through their land. Johnson's own father, George Johnson, was well-known for his attempts to halt these activities, and in "My Mother," protagonist George Mansion undertakes the same advocacy and, like Johnson's father, is also attacked on multiple occasions for his crusade against the Euramerican perpetrators (Ruoff 7). To appeal to the sensibilities of her audience, Johnson crafts several portrayals of unexpected nobility in a savage land, demonstrating that Native people, particularly those of "noble" birth within their nation, possessed the same interior discipline and social mores as their genteel European counterparts. In "My Mother," this nobility is conveyed through the bodily

performances of Johnson's own parents, Emily Susanna Howells Johnson and George H.M. Johnson, renamed in the text as Lydia Best Mansion and George Mansion, respectively. The reader is introduced to Lydia, the hapless, youngest child of a tyrannical father and conniving stepmother, her own mother having died when she was young. Delivered from her father's Puritanical wrath by her sister Elizabeth, she joins the latter and her new missionary husband, Mr. Evans, to travel into the wilds of Canada where he preaches to the Mohawks. When they arrive, Lydia meets George Mansion, the son of a Mohawk chief, who is immediately introduced as a suitor worthy of Lydia's affections.

George Mansion's worthiness is communicated through Johnson's consistently detailed descriptions of his idealized corporeal subjectivity in the text. When George is introduced to Lydia (and the reader), she is surprised and impressed by the "lad of seventeen, lithe, clean-limbed, erect, copper-colored, [who] ran swiftly down the steps, lifted his hat, smiled, and assisted the ladies to alight" (Johnson 30). George's carriage is impeccable; his manners and Johnson's attention to the minutiae of his actions reveal an aristocratic politeness. Through George Mansion's characterization, Johnson bridges the gap between herself (the daughter of the great man she memorialized in the text) and her audience, demonstrating that they shared attributes and interiorities that were similar, and she attempted to do so by drawing parallels between their understandings of history and class structures. It is through the bodily performance of George Mansion of her father's avatar in "My Mother" that we can locate Johnson's project to humanize and, ultimately, elevate her father, her nation, and subsequently, herself in the eyes of a

white audience, imbuing them with a sense of credibility that would lead people to listen to and accept the veracity of her statements.

In “My Mother,” Johnson painstakingly employs class representation as a method of mitigating the space separating her from her audience along racial lines; clothing, carriage, and comportment became markers of nobility in the text, both in the white as well as the Native characters, exhibited on their corporeal selves. During her introduction to George, Lydia notes that he “was Indian to the fingertips, with that peculiar Native polish and courtesy, that absolute ease of manner and direction of glance, possessed only by the *old-fashioned* type of red man of this continent” (Johnson 30, emphasis added). The thorough and descriptive manner in which George is introduced through the markers of his physical form—his hygiene, and his carriage—as a well-educated and upper-class male contradicts Lydia’s assumptions that he would be uncouth or savage. Rather, his “peculiar Native polish” is presented as being inherent in descendants of First Peoples, alluding to a well-cultivated *interiority*, as George’s body exhibits admirable traits of “economy, efficiency of movements, [and] internal organization” and therefore is coded as being “disciplined” (Foucault *The Birth of the Prison* 137). According to the norms and values of the audience, George’s body is presented as non-threatening (non-subversive) and pleasant to behold, replacing the image of the wild and feckless savage that might haunt the imaginations of the reader.

Moreover, the fact that George is “old-fashioned” aligns him with the storied families of Lydia’s home country, steeped in familial history and untainted by what were perceived to be the rougher effects of intercultural exchange; George is an idealized synthesis of the best of both “worlds,” the old and the new. What is made

apparent in this passage is that being a gentleman and being an Indian are not mutually exclusive; in fact, this Indigenous man is endowed with a "peculiar polish," an inimitable quality that not only distinguishes him from white men, but does so in a way that does not diminish his genteel status.

Lydia is quite taken with George and declares to an amused Elizabeth that he is not only "splendid," but also that "he *is* a gentleman. He looks it and acts it. I believe he *thinks* gentlemanly things" (Johnson 31, emphasis original). George's manners not only distinguish him from those of an ignoble "savage," they elevate him to that of a gentleman, and attest to the quality of his thoughts and character. George is a constant and welcome presence in the Evans home, and demonstrates he is a composite of the "best of both worlds," with his hunting prowess and perfect English. Later, he is again elevated in Lydia's eyes when she sees him during a traditional Mohawk ceremony wearing the clothing of his tribe with the same "ease" with which he wore "ordinary white" clothing. In fact, as she gazes upon him in his regalia, Lydia is forced to conclude that "he had gone a little beyond her, perhaps a little above her," an interesting observation that belies her assumed superiority (Johnson 34).

In fact, she almost seems surprised to find George even more of a noble (and attractive) figure in this context, in which he emerges "tawny-skinned, lithe, straight as an arrow, the royal blood of generations of chiefs and warriors pulsing through his arteries, his clinging buckskin tunic and leggings fringed and embroidered with countless quills" (Johnson 34). Watching George dance only intensifies Lydia's romantic feelings for him, and she notes that "from his small neat moccasins to his jet black hair tipped with an eagle plume he was every inch a man, a gentleman, and a

warrior" (Johnson 34). Here Johnson makes an interesting rhetorical move, considering her audience: through the class anxieties of her "English rose" protagonist, she effectively makes a case for the apparent superiority of the Indian man over the well-born white female. In this moment, George is elevated by his class and his race, and Lydia feels unworthy in comparison to his historical and "royal" lineage. Through her description of George's affective presence, Johnson employs the rhetoric of royalty familiar to her white audience and filtered through the perception of the Euramerican female. George's embodied heritage is not only distinguishing, but is also posited as being superior to Lydia's racial and cultural heritage.

However, the language used to describe George is steeped in colonial norms. George is highly idealized in this scene as a "man, a gentleman, and a warrior," and his strict performative "noble Native subjectivity" leaves him subject to the pitfalls of authenticity and racial purity that Johnson herself, as a mixed-race woman, appears to be attempting to overcome. His characterization of being "straight as an arrow" conjures not only his identity as a warrior, but also references the untainted nature of the "royal blood" that courses through his veins, the blood of "generations of chiefs and warriors." As a representative Native character, George is not allowed complexities or mitigations; his nobility must be absolute, and must adhere to the preferences of the audience. Louis Owens writes that

> European America holds a mirror and a mask up to the Native American. The tricky mirror is that Other presence that reflects the Euro-American consciousness back at itself, but the side of the mirror turned toward the Native is transparent, letting the Native see not his or her own reflection but the face of the Euro-American beyond the mirror. (Owens "As If An Indian," 17)

In this scene more than any other in the text, George's performative identity as an "authentic" Indian is emphasized; however, it is communicated through the gaze of a white female. Thus, the characterization belies the surveillance of Native identity, as Lydia's gaze idealizes and sexualizes him as a "noble savage," and her desire acts reflection of George's worth. The "mask" Owens references above is one that has been "realized over centuries through Euro-American construction of the "Indian" Other," and which dictates that

> [i]n order to be recognized, and to thus have a voice that is heard by those in control of power, the Native must step into that mask and *be* the Indian constructed by white America. Paradoxically, of course, like the mirror, the mask merely shows the Euro-American to himself, since the masked Indian arises out of the European consciousness, leaving the Native behind the mask unseen, unrecognized for himself or herself. (Owens "As If An Indian" 17)

George's "noble Native subjectivity," meant to liberate him from damaging assumptions regarding indigeneity, is in fact the "mask" Owens describes, an enactment of Native identity that is rooted in Western epistemologies. Through her romanticized characterization of George Mansion, Johnson manifests the strictures of not only the genre of domestic literature, but also those of her social milieu. The limited cultural and political agency of Native people in nineteenth-century North America left writers such as Johnson in a conundrum: to be read, one must adhere to the expectations of their audience, one with a limited interest in Native American cultures written for a *Native*, rather than Euramerican, audience in mind. In this sense, Johnson's use of "noble Native subjectivity" as a means of asserting Native superiority allows her to write an "alternate identity" that subverts the "trope of the Indian convert or Noble Savage submitting body and soul to the European colonizer." Instead, her text presents an

idealized Native body who, through his nobility, has the cultural capital to successfully enact "public protests against cultural and territorial imperialism and social neglect" (Mielke 3). George Mansion's performative nobility is ambivalent, liberating him from negative stereotypes while simultaneously reflecting mainstream ideologies.

This trope of royalty and its manifestations in George continues as he makes the painful decision to abdicate his hereditary title as chief (which will be passed to his cousins, the Straight Shots, who lack his "noble blood") so that he can marry Lydia. He finds himself drawn to her "sweet, homeless face of great beauty, lips that were made for love they had never had, eyes that had already known more of tears than they should have shed in a lifetime," all testaments to her perfection of character and deservedness of his sacrifice, despite the pain it will bring his family (Johnson 42). In an interesting moment, the ambivalence George's mother feels about her son's difficult decision is communicated through her expressions and statements: "she shook her head mournfully, but her dark eyes would flash at times with an emotion that contradicted her dejected attitude" (Johnson 41). In this moment, George's mother, an influential and well-respected woman within her tribe and the source of the hereditary honor he is discarding, wrestles with an "emotion born of self-exaltation, for had she not mothered a *man*—albeit that manhood was revealing itself in scorning the ancient traditions and customs of her ancient race" (Johnson 41). What is clear is despite George's loss of his rightful title, his mother admires her son's fortitude, and believes that he will never lose sight of the lineage he represents and the education provided to him by his parents.

The impact of this motherly moment of doubt and pride is indeed a profound and risky move by Johnson, since "the Indian reformers of the late nineteenth century

most certainly believed that the salvation of the tribes meant the sacrifice of the savage to Christianity and *civilization,*" the latter assumed to be attributed only to Europeans (Powell 66, emphasis mine). Here, it is clear that the ostensibly "savage" nation is in fact an ancient and worthy race of men, as demonstrated by George, whose appeal is that of a gentleman from an aristocratic background, rather than an exotic specimen of Otherness. Within this emotional "flashing" of eyes and expressions of dejection, the audience not only empathizes with the mother's pain but is also able to judge her own merit in how she views her son through this lens of honor and inner strength.

George's mother is not the only family member that disapproves of their union. When Lydia travels to Ottawa to marry George, she stays with her less charitable sister and the latter's clergyman husband, who decry the marriage and denounce George as unfit to marry her. Amid their protestations that Lydia is debasing herself by marrying him, Lydia defends George, explaining that his love for her has estranged him from his parents, since she is "only a white girl," an "untitled commoner to his people," to which her sister angrily retorts "*Only* a white girl...*You,* a *Bestman,* and an English girl?" (Johnson 50, emphasis original). The incredulity in her sister's response appears to anticipate that of her audience, who may recoil at the idea of an interracial marriage, particularly between a Native man and an "English rose." Moreover, Lydia's surname "Bestman" appears to be a literal testament to her own superior heredity. Thus, she isn't just a white girl who wishes to marry a Mohawk chief; she is among the "best" of white women, who chooses to marry outside of her own racial and cultural sphere.

Unfortunately, Lydia's sister does not share her appreciation for George's noble qualities, and is aghast as Lydia continues to assert George's superiority to not only her,

but other ostensibly "estimable" representatives of white culture. Lydia insists that while George "may have savage blood in his veins…he has grasped the meaning of the word 'Christianity' for more fully than your husband [a clergyman] has" (Johnson 52). In fact, Lydia presents an effective class-based argument against her sister's disparagement of George's worth when she declares him to be "an *Indian,* who can give me not only a better home than this threadbare parsonage of yours'— here she swept scornful eyes about the meager little, shabby room" (Johnson 49). Lydia accuses them of being spiritually and financially impoverished in comparison to George, which lowers them further in the perception of the reader, while subsequently elevating George's status for what he can provide Lydia. Thus, nobility becomes more than just a set of traits; it is tied to wealth and prosperity as well, as George's wealth exceeds that of ostensibly worthy Euramericans.

When Lydia is cast from her sister's home in the city for being engaged to an Indian, she flees to the home of a British major and his wife, a "gracious, whole-souled English lady," who offer her shelter and support her choice to marry George. When the estimable major and his wife meet George, they are immediately taken with him, specifically his physical appearance, finding "his fine dark face eager, tender and very noble" to behold (Johnson 56). Aside to Lydia, the major's wife declares George to be a "perfect prince—he's just as royal as he can be! I never saw such manners, such ease. Why girlie, he's a courtier!" The major echoes her sentiments, adding that, "I haven't an officer on my staff that can equal him" (Johnson 56). That day, George's noble manners and carriage win him a "white father" and a "white mother" in the shape of the major and his wife, who are juxtaposed with Lydia's estranged sister, thus representing

the best and worst of Euramerican culture, respectively, and revealing its hypocrisies (Johnson 57). As such, these characters appear to be rhetorically useful, "created in a manner that is consciously and selectively representative with a specific (dominant) audience's needs in mind" (Powell 64). The major and his wife are endearing proxies for the audience, approving of the match and viewing the two fine young people as equally worthy of one another. Thus, Johnson's target audience might feel a greater sense of affinity with the honorable couple, and adopt their view that the marriage between Lydia and George is an honorable union, rather than an abomination.

George's refinement makes him a worthy match for Lydia, whose gentleness and virtue complement his "aristocratic lineage that bred him a Native gentleman" (Johnson 48). This is clear after their wedding when George falls gravely ill, allowing for reconciliation with his mother, who forgets her previous disapproval of their union. Johnson writes that when George's mother first arrives to help nurse him, she "glanced swiftly at the bed, but with the *heroism of her race* went first towards Lydia, laid her cheek silently beside the white girl's, then looked directly into her eyes" (Johnson 67, emphasis mine). In this moment, George's mother recognizes that Lydia is a worthy match for her son, and forgives the transgression of denying him his birthright to marry her.

However, while this scene appears to be about a mother's acceptance of an interracial couple's marriage, Johnson's addition of the phrase "heroism of her race" into this moment of reconciliation is striking, as it appears to legitimize the anger she felt toward their union. Unlike Lydia's sister, whose racism caused her to denounce the marriage, George was next in line to be chief, and forsook his birthright to marry Lydia,

a self-described "untitled commoner," justifying his mother's disapproval of their relationship (Johnson 50). Again, George's nobility is invoked and compared to Lydia's, and while she is a perfect English rose, she lacks the storied heritage George possesses. Therefore, I argue that his mother's acceptance of Lydia becomes a benevolent, rather than redemptive, act on the former's part. Her approval becomes another opportunity for Johnson's audience, through Lydia's lens, to experience the "noble Native subjectivity" of her indigenous characters.

A short time later, George and Lydia welcome their first child, a son. When Lydia gazes upon the baby boy, she sees the synthesis of their cultures in his countenance, which bears the:

> undeniable physique of the two great races from whence he came; all the better qualities of both bloods seemed to blend with his small body…his grey-blue eyes held a hint of the dreaming forest, but also a touch of old England's skies…only the exquisitely soft, pale brown of his satiny skin called loudly and insistently that he was of a race older than the composite English could ever boast; it was the hallmark of his ancient heritage—the birthright of his father's son. (Johnson 62)

Their young son's body, particularly his skin and eye color, becomes a text, inscribed with the values of both cultures, yet distinctly favoring his father's. The emphasis here is on the inheritance of the "ancient" and most-ingrained traditions, and George's culture can boast of a past "older than the composite English" could. As seen in this passage, Johnson posits the child's superior qualities as being inherent to the "ancient" race of his father. This moment constitutes one of Johnson's strongest assertions in favor of Indigenous recognition, as the baby himself becomes an argument (one that resonates "loudly and insistently") for the acknowledgment of the Mohawk's historical *and* current presence in Canada. Not only does the description of this child

seek to refute any myths of European right to land and resources, but in it he also embodies the best of both worlds, indicating a successful synthesis of the "noble" traits to be found in both Mohawk and British cultures, yet distinctly favoring the former. I would also argue that in highlighting the beauty of this infant, Johnson is enhancing her own prestige as a mixed-race woman, contradicting ideas that her lineage is an act of miscegenation that lessens her nobility.

However, the issue of "miscegenation" is clearly present in this description of the child. Like his father, he is "born with pride of race and heritage," distinguished by their ability to "face the world with that peculiar, unconquerable courage that only a fighting ancestry can give"; yet he is also described as possessing "the best of both worlds" (Johnson 71). It is clear that while Johnson is attempting to craft a positive portrayal of Indigeneity, she employs the same language of savagism and civilization that was used in order to subjugate Native people and strip them of their political agency. Mainstream ideologies inform her choices in the subjectivity of her characters, and what her audiences see reflects back to them are their own cultural values, manifested in another race of people, rather than the values of the latter. The audience is not asked to question their own complicity in the dismissal of Indigenous social structures in favor of Euramerican norms, but only to marvel that a Mohawk man could perform them with the same self-possession and discipline as the finest English gentleman. In this sense, despite Johnson employing the rhetoric of the "fighting ancestry," this heritage is filtered through a Euramerican lens, continuing the dichotomy of a "good Indian" vs. a "bad Indian," rather than spurring a genuine intercultural dialogue.

As a "good Indian," George's political star begins to climb, and he becomes an advocate for Indigenous rights and an outspoken opponent of the illegal logging and liquor trades going on in Mohawk territory. While George's life becomes more public, Lydia's becomes more private, and she takes over as the leader of her domestic sphere, educating her children and cultivating within them a properly hybridized moral and intellectual foundation, although she focuses heavily on their father's cultural inheritance. They reflect the "shades of his disposition…hints of his bravery, and she always spoke of these with a commending air, as though they were characteristics to be cultivated, to be valued and fostered" (Johnson 85). In passages such as this, Johnson emphasizes the primacy of George's heritage through the familial choices of Lydia Mansion, who often clearly favors George's lineage to her own. Through the behaviors and subjectivities of these two characters, Johnson creates a dual attack on the assumed superiority of white society: Lydia, the quintessential "angel of the house," explicitly privileges George's background to her own on more than one occasion, and George Mansion's portrayal as the inherently noble and virtuous father and martyr often places him in an elevated position to the white men he encounters.

George not only possesses an innate sense of noble Native subjectivity; he is also well-versed in his wife's cultural practices, effortlessly integrating them into a seemingly coherent bicultural performance of nobility, though primarily rooted in Western paradigms:

> [he is] a man polished in the usages and etiquette of her own people, who conducted himself with faultless grace, who would have shone brilliantly in any drawing-room…a man young, stalwart, handsome, with an aristocratic lineage that bred him a native gentleman, with a grand old title that had come down to him through six hundred years of honor in warfare and the high places of his people. (Johnson 48)

At times, Johnson's effusive descriptions of George begin to sound propagandist in nature, and he appears to function more as a rhetorical strategy than just a beloved father. In this passage, we see that George's "aristocratic lineage," rooted in his "grand old title," enables him to effortlessly inhabit any social sphere he enters with grace and aplomb, in a manner that no white character, not even Lydia, can match.

While Lydia, ostensibly the subject of "My Mother," is a worthy match for George—in temperament, intellect, and humility—much of this worth is communicated through her perception that George is "a little above her." Lydia is an ideal Victorian wife and mother, and Johnson uses Lydia's appeal as a rhetorical appeal; her devotion to her husband and children is appropriate behavior for a nineteenth century woman, but Lydia performs this behavior with an interesting twist. From the moment her children are born, Lydia "instilled into them…that they were of their father's people, not of hers," and "English though she was, made it her life service to inspire, foster and elaborate within these children the pride of race, the value of that copper-tinted skin which they all displayed" (Johnson 69-70). As a Victorian woman, Lydia is responsible for the private, domestic sphere, which includes her children's education. Amy Kaplan argues that "domesticity should be understood as a referent not only of home but of home*land*, and as such, a vital component of nationalism and imperialism," referring to the white women who controlled the domestic space as the "arbiters" of civilization (qtd. in Carpenter *Seeing Red*, 17). In this sense, we can see that Lydia clearly chooses one "civilization" over the other, and her decision that her children will possess a great sense of racial pride, specifically pride in their father's race, constitutes an overtly political act within her domestic sphere.

George himself continues to be a testament to the grandness of his racial legacy, and his ability to correctly perform Anglican customs reinforces this grandeur, as a person of lesser inheritance might not be able to do so. In fact, George Mansion's bicultural literacy, his "fluency of speech, his ceaseless war against the inroads of the border white men and this lawlessness among his own people" attracts the attentions of the Canadian government, and he becomes a constant presence in legislative meetings. When he appears before them to testify and advocate on behalf of the Mohawks, he is always adorned "in his native buckskin costume, and his amazing rhetoric, augmented by the gorgeous trappings of his office and his inimitable courtesy of manner, won him friends and followers among the lawmakers of the land" (Johnson 71). George Mansion becomes a popular public figure, recognized by his own people and white society alike for his for his inestimable nature. The Mansion home becomes a place where "men and women of culture, of learning, of artistic tastes, of congenial habits" gathered, a place of "refinement and much luxury" (Johnson 83).

Despite the happiness of their home, George Mansion's desire to protect his people from the encroachment of settlers and their contingent vices, namely alcohol, caused a great deal of strife for the Mansion family. Like Johnson's own father, George Mansion suffers brutal physical attacks at the hands of a "lawless set of ruffians" in the whiskey trade, who wished the great man dead so that they could continue their "scoundrelly trade" unimpeded (Johnson 75, sic). George's martyrdom is complex, as he suffers in order to protect his people from the designs of the whites and, to a degree it appears, from themselves and their weakness. Carpenter argues that George Johnson's, and his avatar George Mansion's, role as the "firm disciplinarian of a

wayward people accords with popular conceptions of the 'civilized' (that is, Christianized) Mohawk versus the more 'primitive' Indian." Thus, according to Carpenter, George Mansion becomes a "male counterpart to the 'fiery Indian maiden'" Johnson performed, and he is imbued with the "'good' anger that affirms his aristocratic, noble status" (Carpenter 60). Rather than displaying an impetuous, violent anger attributed to Native men by dominant society, George's anger is righteous, and comes from his heightened sensibilities, rather than from a "savage" interior.

George and Lydia's relationship is described in idyllic terms in *"My Mother*," as their shared inherent virtue makes them ideal (and idealized) partners. Johnson describes how they complemented one another, and "never grew old, never grew weary, never grew commonplace" (Johnson 83). They enjoyed the continual stream of splendid guests that graced their home because of its reputation as a haven for thought and "refinement," and "ever talked of and acted for the good of the Indian people who were so unquestionably the greatest interest in their lives, outside their own children" (Johnson 83). And when George Mansion passes away, he does so as a martyr; his noble sacrifice to keep his people safe from the machinations of white greed are manifested in the injuries he sustained fighting the bootleggers, and "he slipped away from [Lydia], a sacrifice to his fight against evil on the altar of his nation's good." Among his final words is a declaration of his final resting place, which "'must be by my mother's side'…so his valiant spirit went fearlessly forth." (Johnson 83-4). In death, George is drawn back to his mother, who stands out as the most powerful influence on his success as a chief, a husband, a father, and a great man. And when Lydia dies, she follows the "Great Messenger" to be reunited with "the father of her children in the land

that holds both whites and Indians as one," a sentiment that appears as an appeal to her who, as Christians, should accept Indigenous people as their brethren (Johnson 85).

In telling her "mother's" story, Johnson actually constructed her father's and, subsequently, her own identity as an aristocratic member of an ancient race. Implicit within "My Mother" is an argument for not just enfranchisement, but for respect for the Mohawk people as they struggled to assert themselves against the colonial government. Philip J. Deloria argues that "the key ideologies describing Indian people—inevitable disappearance, primitive purity, and savage violence, to name only a few—have brought exactly this kind of uneven advantage to the social, political, economic, and legal relations lived out between Indian and non-Indian Americans" (Deloria *Indians in Unexpected* 10). "My Mother" offered an alternative idea of Indigeneity to her readers, who could perhaps assist her in creating a more "even" balance of power within these sociopolitical and sociocultural exchanges. The text's establishing of her father's noble Native subjectivity contributed to Johnson's own identity as an Indian Princess, playing into her audience's preconceived notions about nobility to gain their respect and attention. Therefore, despite its title, "My Mother" offers a portrayal of a noble and respected father, a man admired by Native and white society alike, and whose behavior, appearance, and carriage made him ever the (Native) gentleman.

Like George Mansion in "My Mother," Sarah Winnemucca collaborated with colonial forces in order to advocate for the rights of her nation; however, Winnemucca worked directly with the United States Army to end the Bannock War. In *Life Among the Piutes: Their Wrongs and Claims,* Sarah Winnemucca employed noble Native subjectivity in her enactment of a particular kind of Indian Princess: the scout and

interpreter. This particular Indian Princess trope was immortalized by Sacajawea, whose story has been appropriated and reinterpreted by colonial history, which casts her as being delivered from the "backwardness and savageness of her own people" through her relationship with Meriwether Lewis and William Clark (Pillow 13). Indeed, Euramerican proponents of assimilation perhaps viewed Winnemucca's use of her Western education and the assistance she provided to the U.S. Army as proof that she was being "improved" by the colonial interventions. However, Malea Powell cautions us to remember that Winnemucca and other public Indigenous figures were forced to "weigh carefully the price of convincing Euro-American audiences of the worthiness of their 'cause' against the risk of both alienating their own people and reinscribing dominant ideas about the dependency of Native peoples" (Powell 64). The written account of these events *Life Among the Piutes,* reflects the complexities of Winnemucca's social milieu and her attempts to work within its confines.

Sarah Winnemucca ("Thocmetony, or Shell Flower") was born in 1844 to Chief Winnemucca ("Poito") and his wife, Tuboitonie. Her people, the Northern Piutes (or as they referred to themselves, the Numa, or "people"), occupied a vast expanse of land stretching through parts of Nevada, Oregon, and California, and her grandfather, "Captain Truckee," had assisted settlers across the Great Basin, and therefore was considered a friend by the white people he encountered. For his efforts, Truckee was gifted with a letter from Captain John C. Fremont that declared him to be an ally to the settlers and that he should be well-treated by them. This became Truckee's most prized possession; he referred to it as his "rag friend," and he believed the letter possessed

magical powers that connected all whites and allowed them to communicate with one another.

However, young Winnemucca did not share her grandfather's admiration of his "white brothers," and instead was terrified in their presence, believing them to be cannibalistic and cruel (a fear that was somewhat confirmed by the misfortune of the Donner party in the winter of 1846-7). In fact, one of Winnemucca's earliest memories involved the aftermath of a skirmish between white settlers and the Piutes, during which her uncle, one of Truckee's sons, was killed. Believing that white settlers were in pursuit of them and that they could not escape them on foot, Winnemucca's mother buried her and one of her cousins in the ground and covered them with brush, and "told us if we heard any noise not to cry out, for if we did they would surely kill us and eat us…Oh, can anyone imagine my feelings buried alive, thinking every minute that I was to be unburied and eaten up by the people that my grandfather loved so much?" (Winnemucca 11-2). As the encroachment of settlers on Paiute land continued and more confrontations took place, Winnemucca's fate became further imbricated with that of her grandfather's "white brothers," and through her continued contact with white society, she developed her written and oral communication skills in English, a proficiency that would come to define not only her career as a lecturer and advocate, but also her identity as a Paiute "Indian Princess."

When Captain Truckee passed away, the settlers needed a new intermediary between themselves and Piutes, and his son became the new "Chief Winnemucca." In her biography of Sarah Winnemucca, Gae Whitney Canfield explains that Sarah was instrumental in positioning her father as a chief, despite the fact that the Piutes did not

typically have a head chief who represented them. Sarah recognized the role her grandfather played in assisting their people when it came to their dealing with settlers, particularly in regard to what he *represented* to them as a chief, a position of influence, and perhaps most important, recognized privilege within a Western paradigm. According to Canfield, "Old Winnemucca would be a well-known chief to white society, but this was partly because of Sarah's insistence that he was such a personage" (Canfield 30).Through her work as interpreter, Sarah took the opportunity to enhance her father's rank, and contingently, her own; as the daughter of a chief, with her understanding of white society and its assumptions, Winnemucca was able to position herself as the Indian Princess and her father as the king, whose authority was to be recognized and respected.

This was not the only time Winnemucca may have embellished herself or her family's background; she also claimed to have been educated at the Academy of Notre Dame, a prestigious girls' school in San Jose, CA, despite the fact that there is evidence she and her sister were denied entrance due to their racial heritage. Canfield explains that Winnemucca may have stretched the truth in this instance "because she thought that it would strengthen her in white society," and points out that it was a "credit to her individualism and character that she became culturally assimilated and educated by her own determination and persistence" (Canfield 31). Unfortunately, Winnemucca's tenacity did not imbue her with the pedigree an elite education would, so this potentially became another rhetorical styling of Winnemucca to enhance her positioning and, subsequently, that of her people.

It was during the Bannock War that Winnemucca's rhetorical prowess and multi-linguistic skills emerged as being integral to her Indian Princess identity. In *Life Among the Piutes,* Winnemucca described pattern of white settler and agents inciting violence through their destructive and venal behavior. She bemoaned the fact that the "government does not take care to send the good men; there are a plenty who would take pains to see and understand the chiefs and learn their characters, and their good will to the whites. But the whites have not waited to find out how good the Indians were" (Winnemucca 51). Instead, many tribes were being victimized by their agents, who would confiscate their crops and rations to augment their own personal wealth, often allowing the people they were sent to assist to starve, and Winnemucca's writing offered scathing indictments of these malicious government officials. As Ruoff explains, "Winnemucca, like the slave narrators, reverses the gaze by reminding whites of their own brutality," and that these "narratives emphasize how the conquest of Indians, like the slave system, destroyed the morality of whites" (Ruoff 216).

In her critiques of the reservation system in the text, Winnemucca rather brashly expresses her distaste for Christianity, specifically for the agents who extolled their religious beliefs while cheating, and in many cases, starving the people they were sent to assist revealed more about why she felt comfortable working for the army. In comparison to the abuse wrought by agents, she addresses her reasons for assisting the army, mainly that she hopes that they will intercede on behalf of her people: "[i]t is said that I am working in the interest of the army, and as if they wanted all this care. It is not so; but they know more about the Indians than any citizens do, and are always friendly. Nobody really knows Indians who cheat them and treat them badly" (Winnemucca 93).

Winnemucca clearly linked the corruption of the agents to the agitation that caused the Bannock War, but extolled the virtues of the army as an alternative source of governance over the affairs of Indigenous people. Here she lodged a scathing critique of the systemic corruption that was destroying tribes across the nation, questioning the judgment of the US government rather than embracing it. In this passage, Winnemucca concomitantly decried one form of governance over the Indians while advocating for a less problematic alternative. In much the same way, her statements called into question the assumptions that she was an unabashed assimilationist, instead leaving room to interpret her as an Indian Princess who adopted the persona as a means to a survivable end for her people.

To be interpreted as an Indian Princess, Winnemucca had to cast herself as a worthy Indian maiden whose words and deeds could be trusted by her audience. This required that her *conveyance* of her tales reflected her audience's expectations for an appropriate performance that adhered to current gender and racial constraints. Critics have argued that much of *Life* works to build her credibility as a source of truthful information concerning the affairs of the Piutes and their "wrongs and claims"; indeed, Winnemucca explicitly calls attention to how her status as a full-blooded Indian Princess (her father was Shoshone and her mother Paiute) made her more trustworthy than other Native interpreters whose versions of events may contradict her own. She states that she is "sorry to say these Indian interpreters, who are often half-breeds, easily get corrupted, and can be hired by the agents to do or say anything" (Winnemucca 91). While Winnemucca does recount several examples of interpreters working on behalf of the agent instead of their own people (such as her cousin Jerry), her declaration that

many of them are “half-breeds,” and therefore less credible, is noteworthy. The designation of the other interpreters as “half-breeds” becomes a statement of their *in*-authenticity in comparison to her own authenticity as Indian Princess, a title not only earned through her inherited status but also, ironically, through her performance of white social norms. Malea Powell discusses the incoherence in the

> tactics Winnemucca uses to authenticate and authorize herself as that most contradictory of subjects—a civilized Indian—which she does partly by embracing the Indian princess image in her public performances and partly through a textual presentation of herself in *Life* as a literate practitioner of Euro-American cultural discourse at the same time she clearly represents herself as Paiute. (Powell 69)

In order to incite positive change, Winnemucca had to embrace the dissonance of performing the Native nobility that would cause her to be deemed “appropriate”; a person who was worthy of taking part in the discourse that decided the fate of the Piutes, and Native peoples in the United States.

To accomplish this, Winnemucca appeals to her audience’s sensibilities through her gendered recognition work, including her own explicit attempts to act in a manner that was congruent with Western, upper class notions of femininity in nineteenth century America. In these cases, Winnemucca appears deferential to the patriarchal power structures that were meant to dictate her actions. In one instance, she returned from a trip to Washington, D.C. to the Malheur Reservation— where the Piutes were living—and found her people destitute and starving at the hands of their corrupt agent, William Rinehart. The Piutes begged her to speak on their behalf to the military and the U.S. government, to which she replied “if it were in my power I would be too happy to do so for you, but I am powerless, being a woman, and yet you come to me for help.

You have your interpreter; why does he not talk for you?" They responded that this interpreter, her cousin Jerry Long, was corrupted by the agent, adding that they knew Winnemucca was "the only one that is always ready to talk for us. We know our sister can write on paper to our good father in Washington if she will" (Winnemucca 140). In this passage, Winnemucca's self-portrayal is humble and deferential, though it is interesting to note that Rinehart had previously dismissed her from her position as interpreter due to what he perceived to be her insubordination. Winnemucca simultaneously casts herself as an "appropriate" woman and a skilled and forthright representative of her people. As an educated Indian Princess, Winnemucca is an ideal ambassador, possessing the hereditary pedigree and necessary cultural tools to present their case to the U.S. government.

The Piutes were not the only group suffering under the "care" of a corrupt agent; their neighbors, the Bannock Indians, were facing a crisis that ultimately led to the Bannock War. Brigadier General George Crook discussed the unraveling situation with the Bannock Indians in an article in *The Omaha Herald*, describing them as being driven to war by the actions of unscrupulous agents. Crook remarked that the Bannocks were in dire straits, having "never been half-supplied" by their agents, "starvation [was] staring them in the face" (Canfield 135-6). The thorough dehumanization of the Bannocks at the hands of their agents created a situation ripe for conflict, and according to Winnemucca, the rape of a young Bannock woman girl was the final straw. After her attacker was killed in retribution by a Bannock man named Tambiago, white authorities demanded that their chief hand over the guilty man, and then arrested the man themselves, confiscating the Bannock weapons and horses. Winnemucca and her

brother, Natchez attempted, to intervene and re-establish peace between the whites and the Bannocks, but to no avail, as more and more tribes including the "Piutes, Shoshones, Umatillas, Cayueses," among others joined the Bannocks in a confederacy to rid their territory of settlers (Zanjani 148).

After her attempts to act as a mediator, Winnemucca was asked by Captain Reuben Bernard to accompany him and act as his scout in the ensuing conflict. Bernard explained that he needed her assistance, as he could "get no Indian to go with me for love or money," to which she replied, "Yes, captain, I will go and do all I can for the government, if Gen. O. Oliver Howard wants me" (Winnemucca 150). In this exchange, Winnemucca appears to be unequivocally allying herself with the government and, by extension, Euramerican society and interests over those of Native people. This surface level analysis of her role as "Indian Princess Guide" to the US Army seems to continue the tradition of Indian Princesses before her—such as Pocahontas, Sacajawea, and even La Malinche—who not only appear to have assisted in the facilitation of the conquests that nearly eradicated Indigenous people in North America and Mexico, but also "provide[d] a narrative about the colonization of indigenous peoples that alleviates guilt from the white imagination: it was an 'Indian maiden' who opened the way West" (Pillow 5). While critics have questioned the roles these women are assumed to have played in conquest, they still exist in many minds as Indigenous women betraying their own people for the sake of European expansionism. However, Winnemucca's intentions never wavered from the well-being of the people she worked to represent, both the Piutes and the Bannocks. Sally Zanjani writes that Winnemucca "never doubted her

course of action" in assisting the army, because she believed that working for them was the most expedient path toward peace for the Piutes (152).

Later, Winnemucca led a group of scouts after the Bannocks, a trip in which she gave the "orders" to her men. After asking her scouts whether they should head to the Malheur agency or follow the trail left by the Bannocks, she qualified her question by stating that since they were the men, they "can decide better than I can." They responded that not only was she more familiar with the territory they were in, but also that "if we say go this way or that way you would blame us if anything should happen, and another thing we have come with you and are at your command. Whatever you say we will follow you" (Winnemucca 156).

The above exchange that Winnemucca recounts in *Life* is presented without further commentary, yet constitutes a multilayered performance in which Winnemucca appears to be adhering to her Indian Princess identity. As an Indian Princess, Winnemucca is meant to perform "Indianness" according to white conceptions of Indigeneity by reflecting its tenets back to her audience, allowing her to be fetishized as an ideal Native woman. Moreover, the Indian Princess's relationships with white men "not only situate her as different from other Indians, and thus deserving, but they also reaffirm enlightened white male status by reinforcing white male rationality and authority" (Pillow 6). Winnemucca's performed acknowledgement of the assumed superiority and ability of the men with her to make decisions functions as a twofold rhetorical appeal to her Victorian audience. First, through her performed deference to their judgment, she shows an understanding of Euramerican norms, not wishing to appear unfeminine or aggressively forcing her will upon others. In this sense, she is

"thinking white," but while an Indian Princess is meant to "think white" through a synthesis and acceptance of white values, Winnemucca demonstrates how she "thinks white" in order to appeal to white audiences. Secondly, in recounting the enthusiastic *invitation* for her to intervene and make decisions for the community or group she is representing, she is allowed to exhibit more assertive attributes without threatening the bedrock of patriarchal interests or risking appearing ignoble.

There are, however, moments in which Winnemucca approaches her role as a leader more assertively and acts with greater demonstrable courage than the white men in her company. In one example, Winnemucca and her men are riding in pursuit of the Bannocks, and as they near the hostiles, she suggests that they make camp to rest their horses and eat before continuing. When the soldiers express their misgivings about the idea, and she realizes that they are nervous at the thought of engaging the Bannocks in combat, and responds that "[i]t is of no use to be afraid; we have come to see them and see them we must, and if they kill us we have to die and that is all about it, and now we must have something to eat" (Winnemucca 156). In this exchange, Winnemucca "pulls rank" over her men not only as their Indian Princess guide, but also asserts herself as their military leader. In this moment, Winnemucca shifts her gendered discourse from passive (deferring to the input of the men around her) to active, insisting that they defer to her and her assessment of their circumstances.

Winnemucca's adoption of a more assertive, masculine persona continues along with her service to the army. Winnemucca's gender-bending participation reached a head during a battle between the Bannock confederacy and the US Army. In the beginning of the confrontation, Winnemucca recalls hearing the antagonisms of Oytes,

a Paiute who had joined the Bannocks, and how she felt compelled to engage further in the skirmish: “the bullets were whistling all round us, and the general said to me and Mattie, ‘Get behind the rocks, Sarah, you will get hit.’ I did not feel any fear. I asked the general to let me go to the front line where the soldiers were fighting…I put the whip to my horse, and away I went to where the Gatling gun was placed” (Winnemucca 176). In this exchange, Winnemucca not only disregards the general’s attempt to exercise control over her body as a means of keeping her safe, but also takes an active role in the battle, without fear of the consequences. Often in stories that feature the ideal Indian Princess, part of her desirability is her willingness to utterly subsume herself into the colonial project, an act that becomes literal when she “dies tragically, perhaps in a self-sacrificial act” (Baringer 46). However, Winnemucca undermines this paradigm by not only surviving the battle, but also by working to ensure the survival of both the infantrymen and the Piutes.

Winnemucca’s narration of the conflict also gave her the opportunity to position herself as nobler than her white counterparts on the battlefield. She described how when she ventured down to the front line, the white “citizen scouts” who had volunteered to assist the army were cowering from the gunfight. According to Winnemucca, these “volunteers” who had clamored for the “extermination of [her] people (with their mouths only),” since they appeared to be loath to pick up a gun, “had all fallen to the rear, picking up horses and other things which were left on the battle-field” (Winnemucca 177). Not only were the white scouts cowardly; they were taking advantage of the chaos, showing themselves to be opportunistic and dishonorable. From her position writing as the indispensable Indian Princess scout to the US Army who

proved her mettle on the battlefield, Winnemucca can critique the unseemly behavior of her white counterparts, potentially revealing to her readers that Native Americans were falling victim to the machinations of white avarice, rather than engaging in wanton violence against settlers.

After her deliverance of captured Piutes, including her family, from the Bannocks, Winnemucca writes that the ordeal "was the hardest work I ever did for the government in all my life...Yes I went for the government when the officers could not get an Indian man or a white man to go for love or money. I, only an Indian woman, went and saved my father and his people" (Winnemucca 164). Her repeated reminders that she undertook arduous tasks while being "only a woman" with a woman's assumed physical limitations, served as much to augment her own credibility as they did to demonstrate the extent to which she was devoted to her own people. Once Winnemucca reunited with her father, she describes how she informed her father and the delivered Piutes of the battle and its atrocities, such as the murder of the Piutes' sub-chief, Egan, and the brutal scalping of a blind Indian woman. Upon hearing her tale, Chief Winnemucca admonished the men around him as cowards in comparison to daughter:

> Where is one among you who can get up and say, 'I have been in battle, and have seen soldiers and my people fight and fall? Oh! For shame! For shame to you, young men, who ought to have come with this news to me! I am much pained because my dear daughter has come with the fearful things which have happened in the war. Oh yes! My child's name is so far beyond yours; none of you can ever come up to hers. Her name is everywhere and every one praises her. Oh! how thankful I feel that it is my own child who has saved so many lives, not only mine, but a great many, both whites and her own people. Now hereafter we will look on her as our chieftain, for none of us are worthy of chief but her, and all I can say to you is to send her to the wars and you stay and do women's work, and talk as women do. (Winnemucca 193)

In Chief Winnemucca's impassioned speech, he not only highlights Sarah's transcendence of gender roles in the conflict, but also, in praising her accomplishments, he elevates her beyond her designation as an Indian Princess. In her work for the government, Winnemucca did not betray her own people, but instead worked to save them. Moreover, Chief Winnemucca declared her to be the only one whose actions made her "worthy of being chief," as the remaining men were too cowardly to attain the position.

Unfortunately, Winnemucca also faced the limitations of being an Indian Princess, even one so lauded by the U.S. Army: while she was granted a sense of rhetorical authority that permitted her to advocate and act on behalf of her people with a degree of success, she lacked the real authority to improve their material conditions. After the battle, the Piutes were sent to the Yakima Reservation in Washington and left to fend for themselves under the stewardship of a corrupt agent, Father Wilbur, who was content to let the Piutes starve. Wilbur threatened to have Winnemucca jailed for her decision to report the injustices her people were suffering at his hands. In response, Winnemucca "jumped on [her] war-horse," castigated him for his hypocrisy and cruelty, and declared that "hell is full of just such Christians as [Wilbur]" (Winnemucca 239). Rather than embracing the tenets of Christianity as deliverance from her people's paganism, she often derided the pastors and "praying agents" as the most despicable representations of white society. Her position as an Indian Princess allotted her some latitude to be subversive, pointing out the hypocrisies of Christianity and its practice among the Piutes. In doing so, she called the underlying justification of colonialism into

question, implicitly asking her reader to consider who the real savage in these scenarios was.[1]

In their respective texts, both Johnson and Winnemucca crafted gendered performances that both appealed to and subverted the assumptions of their audiences, resulting in complex and, at times, incoherent performances of Indigeneity. Cari Carpenter addresses criticisms waged against writers such as Johnson, wondering if this is indirectly requiring authors of mixed heritage to reject their "complicated approach to writing, representation, and resistance, as well as the complexity of their identities themselves," and asks that "instead of trying to fix her into a rather narrow assimilated/nonassimilated divide, we should concentrate on her tactics of survivance" (57). While there are limitations to the success of Johnson and Winnemucca's respective projects—their representations of an "authentic" Native identity that often more clearly represented colonial notions of authenticity than lived Native culture— as ambassadors, they were able to carve out a space in which they could engage in intercultural dialogue. Through these auto/biographical textual performances of noble Native subjectivity, Johnson and Winnemucca were able to enact Indigenous self-representation within the confines of colonial surveillance, and fight for the survivance of their nations. While the genre of "sentimentalist auto/biography" offered these Indian

[1] Not only did Winnemucca reject the agents and their actions, she even questioned the effect Christianity had on other Native people, whom she referred to as "Civilized Indians." She bitterly narrated how the "Civilized Indians" who worked for the agent at Yakima and were sent to escort the Paiutes up to their new reservation "did not come because they loved us, or because they were Christians. No; they were just like all civilized people; they came to take us up there because they were to be paid for it" (Winnemucca 209). This passage undermined the discourse of assimilation and presented a contradictory idea of what it meant to be "civilized," also subverting the role she was meant to play as an Indian Princess, making way for colonialism, rather than questioning it.

Princesses a prime venue to appeal to a sympathetic audience, my next chapter will explore how their Red Progressive counterparts set the stage for their own interventions; the opera stage, to be exact.

CHAPTER TWO

The Indian Princess on the Opera Stage: *Shanewis* and the *Sun Dance Opera*

Charles Wakefield Cadman, an early twentieth-century American composer, considered himself to be a foremost expert on Native American music and worked to integrate—or as he put it "idealize"—the "gleanings of primitive vocal utterance" into his own musical compositions (Eberhart and Cadman 3). In one of his many effusive writings on the subject of adapting Native American songs for Western audiences, he offered the following advice to any aspiring composer interested in the genre:

> One should, if possible, be in touch with the Indian's legends, his stories and the odd characteristics of his music, primitive though they may be, and one should have an insight into the Indian emotional life concomitant with his naïve and charming art-creations. And while not absolutely necessary, a hearing of his songs on the Reservation amidst native surroundings adds something of value to a composer's efforts at idealizing. (qtd. in Levy 91)

Despite the clearly paternalistic tone of this statement, Cadman prized his ability to "idealize" Native music, to translate its "charming art-creations" to fit the tastes of a discerning white audience curious about the culture of America's Native inhabitants. Indeed, Cadman and his contemporary, William Hanson, considered themselves to be essential to the preservation and idealization of Native American musical tradition, a tradition they assumed would fade as soon as the last of Native societies disappeared into American mythology. In their respective quests to produce and publish works that reflected their zeal for the "primitive" music of American Indian tribes, they found themselves aided by their very own Indian Princesses: Tsianina Redfeather Blackstone (aka Florence Tsianina Evans) and Zitkala-Ša (aka Gertrude Bonnin). But while these

Indian Princesses were also invested in the preservation and dissemination of Indigenous music, they had their own goals for the projects: to show Western audiences that Native people and their traditions had endured the centuries of genocide and cultural suppression inflicted upon them by conquest.

The Redfeather-Cadman and Bonnin-Hanson collaborations took place during the so-called "Progressive Era," marked by myriad of "social and legal controls" imposed on Native Americans, ostensibly for their own good, which impeded the "ability of Indian people to speak and act for themselves [and] created a crisis of enormous proportions, a very real threat to the ability of Indian people to survive the pressures being brought to bear on them" (Maddox 8).[2] The prevailing attitude toward Native people was that of "self-congratulatory paternalism," extolling the benefits of Indian boarding schools that removed children from their homes, depriving them of cultural and familial ties, in order to assimilate them into white society as manual laborers and domestic workers (Maddox 11). This desire to absorb Native nations into the body politic and erode their sociocultural practices rather ironically coincided with an equally intense desire from ethnologists and anthropologists to "preserve" vestiges of these cultures as relics of America's past. As a relatively new nation, America's own cultural moorings were still rooted in its European past, and its artists worked to establish a wholly "American" literary and musical tradition, and in turn, an American national identity.

[2] The relationship between Indians and white society in early twentieth-century America was characterized by the latter's "good" intentions concerning the welfare and needs of Native people. Many nations had been ravaged by the Dawes Act and allotment, which had dissolved tribal communal land holdings in favor of individual allotments, a "plan partly devised in hopes that the federal government would thereby acquire any unassigned reservation land" (Pisani 244).

The anxieties of American identity production were also reflected in Frederick Jackson Turner's *Significance of the Frontier in American History*, and its emphasis on Western expansionism as the "culture" of America. According to Turner, the frontier constituted the "line of most rapid Americanization," a place where "[t]he wilderness masters the colonist," and sees him transformed from European to "Native" in order to survive in his new environment (Turner 4). The fear and fascination surrounding the frontier influenced "legions of artists and thinkers whose efforts were colored by its endorsement of Manifest Destiny, [who] could never fully escape its twining of progress and nostalgia" (Levy 8). As the frontier began to "close," and the relocation of Native Americans from the East into Indian Territory was complete, the trials and tropes of the frontier remained crucial to American identity. In response, American artists, particularly its composers, were forced to re-invoke the West in their works "by idolizing, exaggerating, and stereotyping. In short, they made myths" (Levy 14). These myths allowed the spirit of the West to become accessible to a modern audience, "reconnecting" them to an invented past.

An essential part of this American mythology was the subdual of Native Americans through westward expansion, and their ascribed status as America's exotic Other inspired composers to integrate Native musical markers in their works. Michael Pisani describes how in the twentieth-century, composers viewed Native American musical elements as possessing a desirable the "sense of 'authenticity,' in part as a result of the anthropologists' work, but also in part as one attempt to fill a spiritual void created by the nervous energy of modernism" (sic) (Pisani 3). The idea of the "Indian" offered reprieve from the very thing American society was meant to exemplify and

what, in modern consciousness, made it superior to Native communities: the inexorable march of progress toward the end of the frontier, and subsequently, the end of the American spirit. "Indianness" was seen as not only romantic, but antithetical to the frenetic pace of modern society; thus Indians represented a link to America's past, and were meant to concomitantly disappear as a people and be nostalgically invoked when desired. For example, in Cadman's musical body of work, "western folklore functioned more like other types of exotica," and he habitually "minimized the importance of anthropological accuracy and disavowed overtly political messages" in favor of the identifiable and "uncomplicated" stereotypes (Levy 15). The music produced by these "mythmakers" codified a convenient and carefully curated history of America that extolled the march of progress, rather than meaningfully acknowledging its human cost.

Within this paradigm, "Indianness" was viewed as a wholly performance-based identity, one associated with easily-configured tropes rather than complex, variegated subjectivities that constituted Native American presence in the United States. The act of negatively "character-izing" Native people enabled governmental and cultural bodies to continue denying agency and selfhood to Indigenous populations, making decisions for the latter's "well-being" based on these figurative representations instead of their lived reality. Thus, Lucy Maddox explains that it became the duty of Native speakers, Indian intellectuals in particular, to "position themselves on the literal as well as the figurative stages of American public life, through strategic moves, as a way of both inserting their embodied selves into the national consciousness and establishing their claim to a place

on those stages" (5).[3] The opera stage became a tenable space for Native activists to work with the "Indian composers"—usually white male composers who possessed a nostalgic interest in Native American culture—who wanted to tell their stories. This chapter examines how two prominent Indian Princesses, Tsianina Redfeather and Gertrude Bonnin, paired with "Indian composers" Charles Wakefield Cadman and William P. Hanson in order to create their own representations of Native life on the opera stage. These partnerships constituted an implicit bargain for both, combining the particularities of each member's talents and connections in order to secure a production and, subsequently, attract a crowd.

Bonnin and Redfeather's cultural capital was expressed through their embodiment of the "Indian Princess" identity, casting themselves as worthy and authentic representatives of their respective tribal communities. In their public appearances, both of these women showcased their "Indianness" through the framework of their Western education, often attempting to occupy two distinct cultural selves at once as a rhetorical device. For example, during her time on the *Indian Music Talk* circuit, Redfeather would regale her audience with her classically-trained voice while wearing white buckskin, a move that appealed to the audience's desire to see a "romantic" representative of a dying race. However, I contend that Bonnin and Redfeather's attempts at cultural co-habitation enabled them to present themselves as

[3] There were primarily two versions of the "show Indian" that Native people could embody: the Wild West show Indian, and the "intellectual Indians." Native people travelling with Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show were able to escape the confines of reservation life and continue to live in their traditional manner abroad, albeit for the benefit of fascinated European audience members. "Intellectual Indians," on the other hand, often found that in order to be considered "authentic," they had to don the proverbial "literary headdress," conscientiously embodying positive stereotypes of Native people as a means of establishing their credibility as speakers (Maddox 5).

"consciously-unassimilated," demonstrating that they had the knowledge and training to enact the "civilization" thought to have been bestowed upon them by the beneficence of white society, yet they chose to employ it for their own cultural preservation, rather than as a tool of conversion for other Native people. Their cultural capital as Indian Princesses granted them access to the genre of opera, and when they paired with their respective partners, William Hanson and Charles Wakefield Cadman, to write and produce their operas, this "consciously-unassimilated" attitude pervaded the works. Although these operas deal with the question of contact in markedly different ways—*Sun Dance* features only Native characters, while *Shanewis* is a musically and racially hybridized affair—I argue that these texts share an anxiety of cultural permeability and racial insularity that mirrored their reality at the time.

Ironically, Bonnin and Hanson's *Sun Dance Opera* eschews any interference from white society and focuses instead on a particular community, the Sioux, preparing for the impending Sun Dance ceremony. The action revolves around a love triangle between Winona and her sweetheart Ohiya, and the interloper Sweet Singer, who desires Winona for himself. *Sun Dance* focuses heavily on cultural performance, from the courtship of Winona and Ohiya to the latter's participation in the Sun Dance, as certain characters are rewarded for their adherence to these norms, while others (specifically Sweet Singer) are punished for violating them. *Sun Dance* presents a healthy and self-regulating community, whose rules and practices preserve their moral integrity and eliminate vice and malfeasance from the group. While *Sun Dance* takes place away from Western society, *Shanewis* is loosely based on Redfeather's own biography, telling the story of a young Oklahoma Native girl who is whisked to the city

by a wealthy benefactress, Mrs. Everton, to receive vocal training. She captures the attention of Lionel, who unbeknownst to Shanewis is engaged to Mrs. Everton's daughter, Amy. Lionel and Shanewis fall in love, and the pair travel to Oklahoma to introduce him to her family and ensure his devotion to her. However, Lionel's relationship with Amy is revealed, and Shanewis's jealous foster brother kills Lionel in a fit of rage for his betrayal of Shanewis.

At the center of these tensions are the Indian Princesses of the text, arguably avatars for Redfeather and Bonnin, who contributed to their respective librettos. These Indian Princesses, specifically Winona of the *Sun Dance Opera* and Shanewis of the eponymous opera, embody Western conceptions of ideal Indigenous femininity, what I term as their "noble, Native subjectivity"; moreover, their romantic entanglements not only guide the plot development, but carry a greater relevance for their community. As Indian Princesses, Winona and Shanewis occupy a superior position within their tribes, manifested in their birthright, their beauty, and their behavior; this trifecta of demonstrable superiority marks them as "nonpareil" among their kinsmen, and in these works, marks them as targets for external interests, in the form of untrustworthy outsiders vying for their affections. These outsiders are Sweet Singer, a Shoshone scoundrel in *Sun Dance Opera*, and Lionel, a philandering white man in *Shanewis*, both of whom are shown to be duplicitous and unworthy of the love of their respective Indian Princess. It is through their romantic intrigues with these "interlopers" that the tensions concerning cultural boundaries are explored in these works, as these relationships function as microcosms of larger issues of preservation and containment in the face of colonial encroachment.

Bonnin—who wrote under the pen name Zitkala-Ša— was born on the Yankton Sioux Reservation in 1876, the daughter of a white trader and a Yankton-Nakota named Ellen, whose tribal name was Tate I Yohin Win, or "Reaches for the Wind" (Hafen, "Introduction, xiii). At a young age, Bonnin convinced her mother to allow her to go East to the land of "red, red apples" to attend boarding school. She was accepted at Earlham College in Indiana, where she became a celebrated writer of fiction and non-fiction (including *American Indian Stories, Legends, and Other Writings*), as well as a "showpiece Indian, developing prize-winning skills as an orator, a violinist, a pianist, and a singer," (Hafen xvi). To her audiences, Bonnin presented herself as a "representative" of a "pan-Indian consciousness for which [her] specific Sioux identity provide[d] authentication" (Maddox 127). Moreover, her musical training and desire to assist the Sioux arguably influenced her choice to collaborate with composer William F. Hanson, a self-proclaimed Indian expert, on the *Sun Dance Opera* (1913).

Despite her painful memories of her years at boarding school, Bonnin put the education she received there to work, albeit primarily *against* the system that trained her. Bonnin's orations often dealt with the American government's continued assaults against Native political and cultural survival, highlighting the hypocritical moorings of policies concerning American Indians. Bonnin often spoke out against the corruption of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, "boldly condemn[ing] the American people for their constant use of force and intrigue in the conquest of the red-man-inherited and occupied territory" (Hanson 69), and offered scathing critiques of the very Indian boarding school system she had initially desired to attend. In *American Indian Stories, Legends, and Other Writings*, Bonnin describes how she had flourished as a young girl at home on the

reservation, absorbing the lessons and stories that guided Sioux child-rearing practices, until she persuaded her reluctant mother to allow her to attend an eastern boarding school (Zitkala-Ša 84). However, Bonnin quickly found that the mythical land of red apples was not what she had imagined, as her experience at Carlisle was humiliating, punitive, and lonely. Bonnin was, at times, a passionate and public critic of the Indian boarding school system. She once declared that she would

> never speak of the whites as elevating the Indian! I am willing to say higher conceptions of life elevate the whole human family—but not the Indian more than any other. Until Col. Pratt actively interests himself in giving college education to Indians I cannot say his making them slaves to the plow is anything other than drudgery! (qtd. in Lucy Maddox 146)

Despite her misgivings about the Indian boarding school system, Bonnin recognized that she could use her educational background to her advantage, as her Western cultural pedigree augmented her credibility when she spoke to white audiences, and enabled her to persuade them to be concerned about Indigenous issues.

Bonnin's identity construction as a well-spoken, highly-educated Indian Princess made her a particularly compelling public performer. Hanson, who collaborated with Bonnin to write and produce the *Sun Dance Opera*, described that when she performed in public, Bonnin "always appeared in her gorgeous full dress of buckskin, beads, and feathers," her hair neatly braided, and her "[t]ales of red man lore, traditions, culture, and romance were always interesting and won sympathy and appreciation for her people, the original Americans" (Hanson 69). While Hanson conveys the romanticism of Bonnin's self-portrayal, his characterization hints at the core of Bonnin's performance: to advocate for Native peoples and attempt to enlist the assistance of influential white Americans. Her enactment of the Indian Princess identity

enabled her to tackle complicated and often uncomplimentary topics that, coming from a less "ennobled" viewpoint, may have alienated her audience. According to Hanson, Bonnin's style as an orator was "modest, but her stage presence was commanding" (Hanson 69). The seeming contradiction of "modest" and "commanding" demonstrates the rhetorical spectrum the Indian Princess is allowed to employ; if she first performs the idealized femininity and cultural knowledge associated with a "princess," she also wields authority over her audience, who are obliged to listen to and consider her claims. We can also view this in Hanson's assertion that her "voice was musically charming and convincing," so convincing, in fact, that even "her boldest statements and accusations" of governmental malfeasance and encroachment "were never publicly challenged" by her audience (Hanson 69).

Bonnin clearly adhered to her audience's expectations of a lyceum speaker. Hanson's fellow academics also became acquainted with her and her lecture style. Among them, Professor Alice Louise Reynolds from the Brigham Young University English Department reported that Bonnin had "a charming personality, and…a real message for our American citizens" (Hanson 70). Reynolds did not expound on the content of the message itself, but was clearly taken by the poise and "charm" Bonnin demonstrated in its delivery. Additionally, Professor N. L. Nelson, Reynolds's colleague in the Brigham Young University English Department, lauded Bonnin as "one of those rare spirits whom God sends, now and then, among lowly peoples to lift them to higher planes" (Hanson 70). In this statement, one of the core values of the Indian Princess is manifested: her innate superiority compels her to deliver her less aristocratic kinsmen from savagery into civilization. As implied in Nelson's statement, only a select

few are capable of such a feat, and specifically the Indian Princess is uniquely qualified to do so, because of her ascribed desire to emulate Western cultural norms. Moreover, the above characterizations of Bonnin are explicitly gendered, and it is this precise "appropriate" femininity that appears to make her comments palatable for a white audience. In essence, her feminized "noble Native subjectivity" gives her greater latitude to offer pointed criticisms directly at her audience without them feeling threatened or "publically challeng[ing]" her. As discussed in the introduction to this dissertation, the limited political power of the Indian Princess made her a less threatening and more sympathetic figure to Western spectators.

Along these same lines, Nelson hailed Bonnin as a "full blood Sioux educated in the best Indian schools…gentle, refined, modest to a fault of the spiritual ideals of her own people" (Hanson 70). In this statement, we see how race and culture seem to clash within the Indian Princess identity; while the Indian Princess desires and successfully mimics Western civilization, her racial heritage, her blood, must be "untainted" and "un-mixed." Several texts, particularly those written by white authors, emphasize Bonnin's status as a "full-blooded" Sioux; in *Sun Dance Land*, Hanson described his fellow composer Bonnin as a "full blood Sioux already well-known as an authority on Indian life" (Hanson vi). While there is no definitive record of Bonnin herself publically invoking her "full-blooded" status, Bonnin was shrewd enough to recognize the cultural capital such designations afforded her, including her repeated assertions that she was a descendant of Sitting Bull. Indeed, the latter assertion itself *contradicted* the idea that Bonnin was pure Yankton Sioux, since Sitting Bull was Hunkpapa. Thus, Bonnin appears to have "calculated that mainstream Americans 'lumped all Indians together

and did not distinguish among the various tribes in the Sioux federation" (or any tribes in general), and would fail to question assignations of her biological "purity" or her own claims of descending from the famed Hunkpapa leader (Davidson and Norris xiv).[4] Here, we can see how Bonnin recognized white society's lack of real knowledge about Native Americans and used their assumptions to craft her identity as an Indian Princess; her pure blood ensures that she is an "authentic Indian," and that is she well-versed in her own traditions, but her interior subjectivity is concomitantly open to being Westernized.[5] In this way, the Indian Princess becomes an abstract and unattainable entity, embodying what Louis Owens refers to as a "constructed absoluteness," a "more narrowly defined kind of authenticity" (Owens 20). Her "untainted" blood grants her the credibility to represent her people, while her performative fluency in Western culture grants her the credibility to do so for a Western audience.

Hanson concludes that Bonnin's "work at the Indian schools and at the New England Conservatory of Music had given her dramatic assurance" that made her such an engaging public speaker (Hanson 69). I would argue that Bonnin's acculturation to

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[4] Circe Sturm argues that within a settler-colonial context, pressures exist to portray oneself as an "authentic" representative of indigeneity, untouched by the complications of heterogeneous racial makeup. As a result, indigenous identity formation tends to replicate the "dominant ideologies in its own discourses and structural forms…going so far as to invoke biological difference and 'natural' superiority to create the sense of unity deemed necessary for a collective, national front" (16). While Sturm was writing about the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma, she points out that during colonization, Western conceptions of "race, class, gender, and culture spread throughout the world, providing ideological justifications for national sovereignty" that were predicated on ideas of "territoriality, biological purity, cultural homogeneity, and status stratification" (17).

[5] Louis Owens discusses the fears associated with blood purity, writing that to the colonizer, the "mixedblood is a mirror that gives back a self-image with disturbing implications," and that the "instinct of the dominant culture, facing evidence of its own uncontained mutability, is to rewrite the stories, eradicate the witness, and break the mirror" (Owens 25).

Western forms of expression not only gave her a sense of confidence when it came to encountering her audiences; it also granted her *access* to these audiences, who were invested in the Indian boarding school model and wished to have their beliefs validated by the "showpiece Indians" who performed their newfound "civilization" for the former's benefit. While the style of Bonnin's performance fits the lyceum setting, she was able to use her Indian Princess rhetorical authority to address the atrocities being committed against Native nations.

Bonnin's Indian Princess authority made her an ideal partner for Hanson, a Mormon music teacher who in his "Acknowledgements" to *Sun Dance Land*, writes that he "opportunely" became acquainted with the Bonnins as they worked with the Ute tribe. Hansen fancied himself to be a budding expert on Sioux culture, and felt that as an enthusiast, it was up to him to preserve the culture he perceived as dying out in the face of civilization. Hanson's rather vainglorious approach is revealed in his Introduction to *Sun Dance Land*, in which he indirectly identifies himself as a savior of Native culture:

> This writer's ambitions were further augmented when he realized that the unrecorded aboriginal songs, the rituals, and the habits (the National culture) were doomed to oblivion in the natural processes which were rapidly allowing the policies of the white man to have complete power and domination of America. The field of research was challenging, and the necessity for immediate action was imperative. The writer was convinced that he had been born at the right time: he must not procrastinate. (Hanson 2)

In this passage, Hansen (or "the writer") establishes himself as a savior to Indigenous people, as if he alone could preserve their cultural songs and rituals, which he describes as "childlike, imaginative, sincere, and nature-loving," and therefore worthy of remembrance (Hanson 1). Hanson and his early-twentieth century contemporaries were convinced that "Indian cultures would soon vanish from the earth,

[and] felt it their right, if not their responsibility, to borrow what they saw as distinctive characteristics from Indian tribal musics" (Pisani 228). Hanson admired what he considered to be the untainted nature of the Utes he encountered, and through his interactions with them, fancied himself a scholar of their cultural customs. He spent a great deal of time transcribing their songs and creating a catalogue of material. In reference to his fascination and work with the Utes, Hanson relays his various nicknames given by friends, including the "Research Addict," and "The Indian Man." Apparently, the latter name was often accompanied by an inquiry as to whether he was a full-blooded Indian, as, he adds, "his tan skin was dark enough" (Hanson 2). Through his Introduction to *Sun Dance Land,* Hanson reiterates his sense of "belonging" to the project, and his credibility as a researcher and a source of "authentic" information on the tribe, blissfully oblivious to the problematic position he held in relation to the material.

Bonnin was another source of credibility for Hanson and provided him greater access to community members, such as a man he referred to as "OLD SIOUX, the 101 year old hero of Custer fame and a full cousin of the warrior Sitting Bull." Old Sioux was a "ward" of the Bonnins, and had lived as a "recluse for half a century" before he lived with the Bonnins and worked with Hanson (Hanson vi). Bonnin not only introduced Hanson to key figures who provided him with material for his project, she also influenced Hanson to shift the focus of his opera. Hanson had initially sought write an opera that portrayed a Ute springtime ceremony known as the Bear Dance, but Bonnin convinced him that the then-banned Sun Dance ceremony should be included instead," and thus the *Sun Dance Opera* began its journey toward the stage (Smith 202).

At the time Hanson and Bonnin were collaborating on the opera, the Sun Dance and other religious ritual dances had been banned by the US government since 1881, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs had limited the performance of religious rituals by Native peoples to "agricultural fairs as a sort of a commercial sideshow," stripping the dances of their cultural significance (Hafen, "Cultural Duet" 105). By restaging the Sun Dance for an opera, it moved the performance from being a gimmick to being the subject of a high cultural art form, potentially enhancing a more desirable audience's understanding of the profundity of Indigenous religious practices. P. Jane Hafen explains that "[o]pera, literally the plural of opus or 'works' of artistic expression, provides a holistic context that represents varied and complex manifestations of culture" (Hafen, "Cultural Duet," 103). It would seem that the genre of opera granted Bonnin the opportunity to communicate the gravity of the Sun Dance, a possibility that did not exist in side shows or fairs.[6]

The *Sun Dance Opera* takes place on a Sioux reservation and follows the love story of Ohiya and the object of his affections, Winona, who is the chieftain's daughter and who returns his love. However, a Shoshone interloper named Sweet Singer is also vying for Winona's hand. It is quickly revealed that Sweet Singer was banished from his people for blasphemy, committed by handling sacred love leaves which he not only lacked the authority to even touch, but then used to ensnare the devotion of a Shoshone woman whom he subsequently abandoned. Winona spurns Sweet Singer's declarations

[6] According to Hafen, adapting the Sun Dance to the stage was a risky decision, particularly since Native people view the "public revelation of sacred practices as a sacrilege." Hanson and Bonnin "attempted to alleviate these concerns by focusing on an intertribal love triangle set against Sioux ritual practices rather than on the Sun Dance itself" (Hafen "Cultural Duet"132-3).

of love, just as the Shoshone maiden, having followed him from their home, appears and vows to take her revenge upon him. In her despair, the Shoshone maiden joins the "quarry witches," supernatural beings who exist on the periphery of the town and who have the power to take men's lives by etching their likeness on a rock in the quarry. These conflicts come to a head during the eponymous Sun Dance, and Ohiya ultimately emerges victorious with Winona by his side, while Sweet Singer faces the consequences of his past transgressions when he is summoned by the quarry witches to join them, as his image was etched into a rock by his wronged Shoshone love (Hafen, "Cultural Duet," 106-8). As Sweet Singer is "transmuted," Ohiya and Winona join her father in the center of circle, and the final scene closes with the following description in its libretto: "deeds of valor, of victory, with the grace of the eagle and with its fierceness; the strength of the bear; the stealthiness of the fox and the cunning of the coyote; all are pantomimed as enthusiastic chaos rules. Religiosity supreme!" (Hanson 175).

Much of the action that takes place in the *Sun Dance Opera* revolves around Winona, the beautiful and virtuous daughter of the Chieftain of the Dakota tribe. Winona's behavior and birthright paint her as the Indian Princess in the opera. She is described as the "most beautiful of Sioux women. In bead work none excel her. With deft fingers she weaves the colors of the rainbow into new and wondrous flowers. She is wild as the nimble faun, and as gentle" [sic] (Hanson 136). Winona is both ideal and idyllic, adhering to her own cultural norms while embodying those of paradigmatic Western femininity. Act I opens in a picturesque setting, with a "hurrying mountain river, dappled with the myriad suns upon its rippled sheen." Winona, the Chief's beautiful daughter, is gathering water and "confid[ing]" her attraction to the Sioux

brave Ohiya to the river. She meets him on her way back to her camp, and "makes a pretense of passing him by" (Hanson 135), only to have him abruptly demand to know whether or not she has become acquainted with Sweet Singer, whom Ohiya does not trust and suspects is attempting to woo Winona. After she reassures him that Sweet Singer is just a friend of her brother's, Ohiya finally lets her pass, coyly asking if she might be returning for more water later. Winona smiles and departs, only to turn and "wave her shawl to him and to chant her Indian love call, 'I stand in the West: I beckon with my shawl: Pray come to me" (Hanson 135). After this exchange, Ohiya is convinced of her love for him, and promises to prove himself worthy of her at the impending Sun Dance.

In this scene, Winona is seen communing with nature and engaging in "modest" conversation—both in length and nature—with Ohiya. She is not brazen in her responses to him, nor does she act in a lascivious or wanton manner with him. Even her "love call," which may be construed as more forward in its expression of interest, has a sense of ritual and gravitas; it is an assent to be courted in a culturally appropriate manner befitting her position as the chieftain's daughter. It is an invitation for Ohiya to demonstrate his worthiness to her, to the rest of the tribe, and most importantly, to her father, who will make the final decision concerning her future husband. Ohiya recognizes this, and declares "I'll win Winona for a bride. And so to win her, I must become a BRAVE—a *worthy* brave" (Hanson 136, emphasis mine). By adhering to appropriate standards of courting, Winona demonstrates a mastery of her "noble" traditions and the self-possession to control her impulses, attributes that will "earn" her a suitor that can demonstrate his worthiness.

Later that night, Ohiya gathers his friends and they perform a "love serenade" for Winona outside of her family's lodge. Winona is inside doing beadwork, "ever guarded by her indulgent parents and her adoring little brother and sister," when she hears their love song, and upon leaving the lodge, she finds Ohiya playing a flute he made for the occasion, surrounded by his friends dressed in customary white for his "engagement time." Winona is enthralled by the performance, which also captures the attention of a "host of witches and fairies of ancient lore, [who] crowd about her." The men depart, and she "beckons to all the phantoms of the night" to pay heed to her prayers to keep Ohiya strong and safe during the impending Sun Dance, beseeching the "quarry witches" to spare his life and not etch his likeness into their rocks, a death sentence for any Dakota man (Hanson 148-9).

This scene not only continues the courtship between her and Ohiya, but also emphasizes the importance of following tradition (as established in the opera) during the development of the relationship. Despite his fear that Sweet Singer has also set his sights on Winona, Ohiya does not perform his love serenade to her until he has completed the flute he made for the occasion. Only then does he formally declare his intentions with the assistance of his friends. He departs from the scene without a reply or kiss from Winona, preserving her virtue and the gravity of the performance. In *Sun Dance Land,* Hanson recounts how the Bonnins told him that Indigenous peoples "did not know immorality until after the white invasion," and that that young people's affairs were strictly governed by "selective customs; and was not accompanied by the brazen love-petting exhibitions so often seen today" (Hanson 70). The courtship of Ohiya and Winona illustrates the Bonnins' claims, offering Western audiences a glimpse into how

these “selective customs” functioned. Moreover, this relationship offered a counterpoint to the stereotype of Native people being devoid of civilization or “real” cultural framework, guided only by their urges toward their own damnation. Many of the exchanges between Winona and Ohiya occur without any chaperones, and yet they maintained their propriety even in the most clandestine of settings.

Sweet Singer seems to have no sense of propriety, and he reacts to Winona’s clear preference for Ohiya with a sense of entitlement and vitriol. Sweet Singer approaches Winona after declaring his interest in marrying her to her father, and upon realizing that she has brought refreshments for Ohiya should he become fatigued during the Sun Dance, Sweet Singer begins to rail against her choice, promising to subject Ohiya to the longest song and cause him to fail to finish due to exhaustion. During his tantrum, Winona “stands mute,” and after “chiding him with an angry eye and with a shrug of the shoulders in disfavor,” she leaves him to his jealous anger (Hanson 158-9). Winona’s refusal to fall victim to Sweet Singer’s charms reveals her as not only superior to him, but in perfect control of her emotions and reactions. Just as she adheres to custom in her interactions with Ohiya, despite her attraction to him, so does she remain dispassionate and unmoved when faced with Sweet Singer’s petulance and jealousy. She embodies the stoicism associated with the “noble savage,” in perfect control of her selfhood and reactions.

Sweet Singer is not only a despised interloper in Ohiya and Winona’s relationship, but he also illustrates the dangers of breaking with tradition and disrespecting customs that serve as the cornerstone of Native communities. Sweet Singer was banished from Shoshone society for meddling with “sacred love leaves” and

for maliciously using them to seduce a young woman, only to abandon her when his malfeasance was discovered. This young woman pursues Sweet Singer to his new home among the Dakota, and she stands in stark contrast to the "winsome Winona, the Sioux Maiden," whose beauty and position makes her an admirable figure. The audience first sees the Shoshone girl when she wanders into the camp from her search for Sweet Singer, a desperate and pathetic display. Her "long hair hangs loose and unbraided," her robe "torn and her feet are bleeding," and she sings mournfully of her love for the inconstant Sweet Singer (Hanson 155). Winona and her father enter the scene and seem to take no notice of the girl, who appears to have been rendered invisible as a result of Sweet Singer's cruelty. After Winona silently rebuffs Sweet Singer and departs, the Shoshone Maid reveals herself to him and begs for him to return her love: "I have defied our rules of modesty. I have forsaken my own teepee (sic)…I could not but follow you…At last, dear Singer, I have found you. Tell me what I yearn to hear. Say you are glad to see me" (Hanson 160-1). Sweet Singer refuses her once again, and in her grief, she begs the "Pipe-stone witches" to make her one of them. To Sweet Singer's horror, she is transformed into a witch right in front of him, and flees with her new sisters to the quarry where they live, vowing to make him hers eventually.

The danger that Sweet Singer poses to women is clear in his interactions with Winona and the Shoshone maiden. He degraded the latter and led her to break with all customs and make herself a pariah, far from home and those who love her. Even though she is pursued by kinsmen, she is cursed by her love for Sweet Singer and feels that she can never return home. Sweet Singer is not only inimical to women; he is inimical to their societies as well, undermining the frameworks that guide behavior for his own

gain. Critics such as Catherine Parsons Smith argue that the opera itself elides the complications of post-contact relationships between whites and Native peoples, and instead the love triangle "addresses differences and rivalries among Sioux, Ute, and Shoshone individuals (this is almost certainly Zitkala-Ša's choice)" (Smith 201). However, I view Sweet Singer's behaviors—particularly in regard to the women he attempts to win—as being analogous to those of an archetypal white colonial male, subtly manifested in Sweet Singer's identity as an "intertribal interloper." Sweet Singer is cunning and has little regard for tradition, as evident in his willing misuse of the "sacred love leaves." He is willing to undermine his community, to ruin young women, and to usurp the "worthy" brave in the pursuit of Winona, the Indian.

Indeed, Hanson once described how Bonnin "boldly condemned the American people for their constant use of force and intrigue in the conquest of the red-man-inherited and occupied territory," and Sweet Singer employs these tactics in his dealings with the Sioux, coveting Winona and her position within her tribe (Hanson 69).While Sweet Singer is Shoshone, his destructive tendencies and capricious cruelty demonstrate the dangers posed by cultural and racial outsiders to Native women, acting as a metaphor for Bonnin's underlying concerns about the treatment of the Sioux by white society. Much like Densmore, the literary "squaw man" from Mourning Dove's *Cogewea,* who wooed the title character in a bid to rob her of her assumed wealth, Sweet Singer is a perfidious and destructive presence. Sweet Singer's desire to win Winona drives him to divulge to her that he is prepared to cheat during the Sun Dance: as the designated singer, he promises to sing a much longer song when Ohiya dances, forcing Ohiya to succumb to exhaustion and collapse before the song is over. While the

nature of the Native love triangle was "certainly" Bonnin's choice, it is possible that she hoped to concomitantly convince her audience of the enduring validity of Native ceremonies and how the interference of outsiders could complicate or even destroy these traditions.

That Sweet Singer is willing to misuse his role as a singer in the Sun Dance to eliminate Ohiya from the competition for Winona's hand is a grave misdeed. Moreover, while Sweet Singer is staying as the guest of Winona's brother, the latter is unaware of the threat Sweet Singer poses to the harmony in the community. Rumors begin that Winona may prefer this stranger to one of her own nation; in one scene, Ohiya's mother interrupts this gossip, insisting that "Winona will find a brave among her own people. She will not be carried away by a stranger—a Shoshone, who by merest chance is guest at our chieftain's lodge" (Hanson 138). Here, the emphasis appears to be on an intertribal rivalry, and Winona, as the "Indian Princess," transitions from being a symbol of noble, Native femininity to being its literal manifestation. Her choice in husband will affect the heritage of her children, and therefore, the future of the Sioux. Hafen explains that the story and score of *Sun Dance* were the result of a confluence of "Hanson's colonial admiration for American Indians and Bonnin's desires to validate her own cultural heritage" (Hafen "Cultural Duet" 127-8). The Indian Princess's clear choice to spurn the advances of the untrustworthy interloper in favor of her "worthy brave" turns the usual script on its head, "validating" Sioux culture. The Indian Princess is meant to either leave her culture or work to elevate it, according to the norms of Western society, and in *Sun Dance*, Winona does neither. Instead, she embodies the trope while embracing her own heritage, demonstrating to Western society that nobility

can be found in Native traditions and practices. In colonial myth, the Indian Princess validated colonialism and Western superiority; in *Sun Dance,* she rejects the outsider in favor of her own people and customs.

The *Sun Dance Opera* was performed twice in Utah, first in Vernal in 1913, and then in Salt Lake City in 1914. In the latter performance, "fragments of the Sun Dance…were enacted by Native Americans—specifically Utes—who were residents of the neighboring Uintah-Ouray Reservation, for a largely white, Mormon audience." This particular performance highlighted the clash between Hanson's romantic, Western gaze and Bonnin's desire for a more realistic and relevant portrayal of current Native life, as glimpses of this ceremony, with "their powerful religious significance, were sandwiched among more traditionally Western operetta-like scenes depicting a romantic triangle" (Smith 200-1). Discussing the intersection of the "West" with operatic traditions, Catherine Smith explains that The *Sun Dance Opera's* early success "depended much more heavily on [Bonnin] than would have been the case for the usual librettist," as the latter supplied important cultural details to Hanson. Smith adds, though, that Zitkala-Ša's role in crafting this opera was "emphasized as an element of the opera's simultaneous authenticity and its exoticism" (Smith 203). Despite the integral role Bonnin played in writing the libretto for *Sun Dance*, Hanson merely included her name in the program notes, rather than giving her the recognition she deserved for her cultural contributions. Though he later acknowledged the essential role she played in the production, Hafen asserts that Hanson can be viewed as "an Indian lover who attempts to consume Native ritual through his own cultural views," more invested in his "own self-representation" as cultural savior than the truth (Hafen

"Cultural Duet" 109). Thus, the program itself becomes an act of colonial omission, relegating Bonnin from an active role to a passive one, and recasting her as the submissive Indian Princess assisting a worthy white male in his quest for dominance over her own culture.

Bonnin remained silent about her contributions to *Sun Dance*, never publicly addressing her involvement in the project. Based on her history of lectures and advocacy, it seems probable that Bonnin agreed to be part of the team writing the opera due to the "early discussions of the Society of American Indians about how to counter the destructive stereotypical 'wild Indian' images common to popular Wild West shows" (Smith 199). This meant reverting to the other face of the Native identity dichotomy: the noble Native subjectivity that characterized the Indian Princess and her "worthy brave." However, in this attempted refutation of the "wild Indian" whose body must be displayed or destroyed for the good of the colonial project, the "romantic Indian" was emphasized. While Winona and Ohiya's relationship was a microcosmic representation of a harmonious and cohesive community, it did not reflect the vehemence and passion of Bonnin's denunciations of white encroachment, though as I have argued, this topic was broached in a more subtle manner. Bonnin's true motives are yet unknown, but Hafen speculates that opera was a natural extension of Bonnin's performative training, while "the public performance was a political gesture, as it demonstrated the viability of Sioux life and traditions" (Hafen "Cultural Duet" 109). In stark contrast to the Wild West Shows, the opera framed Sioux religious practices in a positive light, and the Western audience consumed the visual and aural "evidence" of

the Sioux's inherent dignity, perhaps making them more amenable to the Red Progressives' viewpoints concerning the treatment of Native peoples.

Unfortunately, the work's romanticism outweighed its didacticism, as early reviews of the opera did not necessarily reflect a new awareness of the plight of their Native neighbors. One audience member, the aforementioned Professor N.L. Nelson, wrote a review of the opera for *Deseret News*, a local Provo newspaper. He enthusiastically endorsed the work, divulging that the performance "enhanced his 'understanding' and assuaged his 'deeply embedded' Western guilt" (qtd. in Smith 206). The production did not fare so well in New York, where critics pointed out the "awkward disconnect between the 'ethnological' and the 'popular' sections of the production." Smith writes that the notable difference between the nature of these reviews "had less to do with the critics' relative musical sophistication…and more to do with their relative distance in time and geographic location from the usual sites of the Native ceremonies" (Smith 206). Both of these reviews reflect the utter disconnect that existed between white society, its expectations of Native Americans, and the lived experiences of Native Americans. While one reviewer felt that the production liberated him from his colonial guilt, another noted the disjointedness of attempting to shoehorn Native ceremony into a Western art form, refusing to view the ceremonial portions as part of a lived experience, rather than vestiges of a primitive society that were more appropriate for study than art.

Finally, in a later edition of the *Sun Dance Opera*, Hanson included Bonnin in his "Acknowledgements," naming her a "full collaborator in recording and producing the *Sun Dance Opera*," and acknowledging that she "skeletoned the story" (Hanson vii),

though it doesn't appear that Bonnin was interested in being acknowledged for her involvement. Despite the opera's shortcomings, and Hanson's apparent narcissism in bringing it into fruition, the production did attempt to humanize the Sioux, showing them at work, at play, engaging in sacred ceremony, in love, and demonstrating their "social standards" to a Western audience. Winona is central to this showcase of Sioux hierarchies and civilization; not only does the central love story revolve around her, the Indian Princess, the social practices do as well, highlighting her paramount importance as a cultural figure within her own community and the community watching her story unfold. As a paradigm of ideal Native femininity, Winona serves as an unofficial ambassador to her listening audience, appreciated for what she embodied in the past, and demonstrating what Native people embody in the present.

While the *Sun Dance Opera* seemed to present a snapshot of Sioux society "undisturbed" by colonial contact, *Shanewis: The Robin Woman* delves into the complications of post-contact Native life, and the love triangle (or square, in reality) presented in this piece. *Shanewis*, produced shortly after *Sun Dance Opera,* was the result of collaboration between Tsianina Redfeather, a Creek-Cherokee singer, and the composer Charles Wakefield Cadman. The other Indian Princess discussed in this chapter, Tsianina Redfeather, had a different path toward the opera stage. Florence Tsianina Evans was a Creek-Cherokee singer born in Oklahoma in 1882, whose musical talent "caught the attention of the first Congresswoman" to serve in the newly-minted state of Oklahoma, Alice Mary Robertson. The latter became Redfeather's patron, sending her to Denver to study music. While there, Redfeather met Charles Wakefield Cadman, an American composer who shared William Hanson's perhaps misguided

"enthusiasm" for preserving Native American musical traditions in a manner they felt was most appropriate. She became the star of Cadman's *Indian Music Talk* shows, singing romantic "Indian" songs. Later, their collaboration resulted in an opera entitled *Shanewis: The Robin Woman*, a tale based on Redfeather's own biography and adapted to suit the expectations of the Western opera stage.

The opera was loosely based on Redfeather's personal experience of being "discovered" as a talented singer by a wealthy white patron, and endeavored to represent the anxieties of cultural encroachment and permeability felt by both Native American and white societies. Pisani argues that as a cultural production, music "establishes, reinforces, and redefines the cultural margins of even 'imagined communities,' serving to establish boundaries between various peoples and nations" (Pisani 6). In most cases of early twentieth-century music, it was meant to reinforce nationalistic pride and pander to white Americans' ideas of themselves as a nation; however, *Shanewis* delves into the unequal cultural permeability that existed between Native nations and white society and illustrates the consequences of white encroachment on Native people. Moreover, while *Shanewis* features many markers of Western operatic tradition, it introduces a protagonist who both embodies and complicates this cultural flux, departing from preconceived roles for "exotic" (read: tragic) female characters.

Like William Hanson, Cadman was a vocal proponent of adaptation as a means of saving Indigenous songs from fading into oblivion, writing "tirelessly about the importance of studying and preserving Indian music and about rendering it in a more palatable Western guise, thereby keeping it in the public realm (Pisani 267). Cadman's

interest in translating Indigenous musicology for a Western audience, what he referred to as "idealizing," led him to establish his "Indian Music Talks" show. After discovering Redfeather, she became a fixture in his show, augmenting her notoriety and his pocketbook. In a letter to a friend, Cadman described the audience's enthusiastic reception of the young singer: "people went crazy over her. I realise that it is on account of her lovely personality and winning way and her '100% Indian' nature that helped the thing out, yet I must say that vocally she was more than adequate" (Levy 108). Cadman was fortunate that his audience was drawn to Redfeather, as his "financial situation in the mid-1910s was haphazard, and Tsianina's revitalization of the Indian Music Talk was the composer's saving grace" (Levy 109). Appropriately, and adhering to the legacy of the Indian Princess, Redfeather was able to deliver a white male from his own detriment.

Redfeather performed under the moniker of "Princess Tsianina," and her invocation of the Indian Princess identity contributed to her popularity as a performer. Redfeather would take the stage dressed in "white buckskin with colorful beadwork and moccasins," an outfit that her audience took as a sign that Cadman was a beneficent manager and had "allowed" her to "choose her own repertory and costume" (Levy 109). Redfeather's status as a "show Indian" and an Indian Princess necessitated an attachment to a Euramerican manager, a white male in charge of her performances, who could concomitantly guide her through white society and exhibit her as a noble vestige of a disappeared people. She was expected to simultaneously embody an atavistic past and reflect civilization back to itself, reifying its self-perception of superiority. Reviews

of Redfeather's performances echo the complex, liminal status she occupied. One reporter wrote that Redfeather exhibited

> the fine, strong beauty of the aristocrats of her race—a voice that is haunting, appealing—and more than anything else, Indian. Always in her tones there is a plaintive note, the echoing faraway bird-like call of the voices of the primeval forest. The Indian songs she sings proudly, tenderly, sometimes sorrowfully, with a wistful note of pitying love for a vanishing race. (Levy 108)

This review and its emphasis on the practically spectral qualities of her performance ("haunting," "primeval," "vanishing") reflects the colonial imperative to relegate Native people to an isolated past, a rhetorical ordering that allowed for white encroachment on Native lands and experience to continue unimpeded. Another critic reiterated this tendency, commenting on "the discrepancy between the artistic evocation of a 'dying race' and the fact that Tsianina herself was very much alive" (Levy 109). Based on their observations, it appears that her audiences deemed the educated Indian Princess before them as the ideal eulogizer for her own race of people, able to gaze back upon where she had come from with appropriate combination of nostalgia and cultural distance.

While it may appear that Redfeather was merely playing into the expectations of her audience, her ostensible elegy to the "race" of Indians in America worked to disrupt the destructive "disappearing" of Native people. Adam Lifshey discusses the ways Euramerican conquest sought to override and over-write Natives out of existence in order to secure its monolithic future, instead resulting in a nation wrought by the "fluctuating, polyphonic, grotesque, and macabre experience of genocide" (2). In this paradigm of genocide, Native Americans are meant to be absent, erased from existence so that they are unable to disrupt the American national identity. Lifshey argues that the

"spectral appearances" that result from this erasure are meant to "compe[l] its witnesses to question a present, current, and assumed narrative by revealing it to be other than complete," and are inherently a "quest for justice, the deliverance of which may be impossible but which is nonetheless an obligatory task set upon the witnesses" (6). It is through Lifshey's lens of spectral absences that I argue that Redfeather's Indian Princess performances were meant to offer an "alternative narrative" of Indigeneity through a Western art form. Dressed in her finest pan-Indian regalia, Redfeather would perform Western operatic numbers, uncannily embodying noble Native and non-Native culture simultaneously, refusing to only occupy one cultural paradigm. Levy writes that when Redfeather appeared before an audience, "the *political* import of the event was clearer from the start. Reviewers were intrigued by her posture and costume, her skin color and facial features" (109, emphasis mine). I would argue that her performed hybridity was an essential component of her "political import," as she embodied the "disruption" Lifshey describes. Her artistic performance may have been perceived as an elegy for Native Americans, wrought with a "pitying love for a vanishing race," but it subtly reminded her white audience of the cultural and literal genocide that precipitated this assumed "disappearance." Conversely, her perfected "hybridity" undermined the myth that Natives had in fact "disappeared," and instead demonstrated how one could be both modern and an Indian simultaneously. Thus, Redfeather's embodiment of the Indian Princess, her "consciously unassimilated" performance, enabled her to embody one myth in order to disrupt another, more deleterious narrative.

Redfeather's Indian Princess performance carried over into *Shanewis*, not only because its story was similar to her own, but because of its echoing of her hybrid nature.

The libretto follows the story of Shanewis, a "beautiful educated Indian girl of musical promise," who is discovered by Mrs. Everton, a wealthy socialite from California. Mrs. Everton, recognizing Shanewis's singular talent, sends her to New York to receive voice lessons. Later, she brings Shanewis back to California to spend the summer with her and her daughter, Amy, who has returned home from abroad, prompting Mrs. Everton to throw a dinner party for the two young women, featuring Shanewis as the entertainment. At the party, Shanewis captures the attention of Lionel Rhodes, Amy Everton's fiancé. After her performance, Lionel expresses his sudden love to Shanewis, naming her "Enchantress" and "the Robin Woman," after the other-worldly subject of her song, who "calls springtime to the heart" (Eberhart and Cadman 4). Initially, Shanewis resists Lionel's professions of his love but, unaware that he is betrothed to Amy, reciprocates his affections on one condition: that he return with her to her home on an Oklahoma reservation, and visit her family to ascertain if he can accept her for who she really is, not just as the "Robin Woman" of his fantasies (Eberhart and Cadman 53). Lionel agrees, and once the guests depart, Shanewis sits alone in the dark, basking in the moonlight and "dreaming of the romance which has so suddenly come to her" (Eberhart and Cadman 4).

The second act takes place on Shanewis's reservation, during a summer pow-wow, an occasion librettist Eberhart describes as a "gay and brilliant pageant, the mingling of traditional, of transitional and of modern Indian life appeals to [Lionel's] strong sense of the picturesque." He is taken in by the scene, and the "ceremonial songs, even, move him strangely, so that his impulsive love for Shanewis grows stronger in the

vivid atmosphere, which belongs to her" (Eberhart 4).[7] As they enjoy themselves, they are approached by Shanewis's foster brother, Philip Harjo, who expresses his love for Shanewis and fervent disapproval of her attachment to Lionel, and presents her with a poisoned arrow, explaining that it was once used by an Indian maiden to seek revenge on her unfaithful white lover (Eberhart 4). This angers Lionel, who dismisses the arrow as a "useless keepsake," and reiterates his devotion to Shanewis (Eberhart and Cadman 105). Unfortunately, Amy and Mrs. Everton enter the scene and reveal that Lionel has been betrothed to Amy. Shanewis, incensed at his duplicity, abjures his love and tells him to return home, and declares that she will retreat to the forest to recover from his betrayal of her and Amy. But as Lionel retreats, Philip Harjo emerges from hiding and stabs him in the heart with the arrow he had offered Shanewis. Lionel dies in Shanewis's arms, and she mournfully closes the opera by declaring "Tis well. In death, thou art mine!" (Eberhart 4). The "Argument" is concluded by a parenthetical notation reading: "The sketch of the story was given by Tsianina Redfeather of the Creek tribe" (Eberhart 5).

In many ways, *Shanewis* follows the traditions of Western opera, including featuring an exotic woman draw into a complicated relationship with a white male. Shanewis's characterization as an Indian Princess is established before she even appears onstage. In the first act, as Mrs. Everton's guests wait in anticipation for Shanewis, they

[7] Shanewis's tribal affiliation is not explicitly identified in the text (though she is identified as a descendant of Tecumseh, and should likely be Shawnee), and the pow-wow appears to be constructed to fit the expectations of a Western audience, rather than presenting a culturally-specific portrayal. Indeed, Beth Levy writes that the "pow wow is but a backdrop for human and musical conflict; the layering of so-called jazz, faux-Indian chant, and operatic recitative; the juxtaposition of Osage ceremonial song and Italianate love duet" (Levy 123).

exchange assumptions about her performance. They wonder if her clothing will be made of "buckskin or of silk?" or if she is "beautiful," and "if she can sing?" (Eberhart and Cadman 14). Their chatter establishes the host of contradictory expectations placed upon Native female "show Indians," and how they might embody or fail to embody their "civilized" education. Mrs. Everton enters and asks her guests to set aside their preconceived notions, yet in her attempt to de-exoticize Shanewis, she succeeds only reifying their expectations. Mrs. Everton insists that Shanewis is "no alien nightingale, Fostered by tender, seaborn zephyrs…She is a native forest bird, Born of *our* mighty wilderness, Warmed by *our* fervent sun, Taught by *our* free winds and leaping canyon waters" (Eberhart and Cadman 15-17, emphasis mine). Mrs. Everton resituates Shanewis's exotic nature to be that of an *American* Indian Princess, one who belongs to and performs for an American audience. Rather than being a foreign guest, Shanewis is an American treasure, born and reared in its wilds, representing its romantic past, and its conquered lands, lands that many Native women had once owned through their traditions of matrilineal property inheritance.

Amy Everton echoes her mother's rhapsody of Shanewis's noble Native subjectivity when she shows a photograph of Shanewis to her fiancé, Lionel, proudly claiming Shanewis to be "a descendant of the great Tecumseh," and admiring her beauty. Unfortunately for Amy, Lionel responds to her photograph with fervent passion, declaring Shanewis to be "Beautiful! So straight, so tall, so lithe and slender! Years ago, in Arizona, I saw a face like hers, With the same proud eyes, The same white, flashing smile" (Eberhart and Cadman 18-20). Lionel's conjuring of an Indian woman similar in appearance to Shanewis, with the same "proud" and distinctive features is a seemingly

innocuous statement, yet demonstrates how the Indian Princess looms in the white male consciousness, manifested as a paradigm rather than a person. In these exchanges, we see the semiotic power of the Indian Princess, and how she is a conceptual persona for Native women who exhibit the noble Native subjectivity associated with her. Shanewis exemplifies this Indian Princess corporeality, entering the scene draped in "white caribou," and introduced by Mrs. Everton as her "lovely wild bird," whose "song will transport you, To forest solitudes, To prairie uplands, to mountain wilderness. She will reveal to you, A little of her Mother Nature's heart" (Eberhart and Cadman 22-3). Here, the role the Indian Princess plays within the twentieth-century colonial fantasy is clear: she represents escape from the exhaustions of modernity through her ascribed link to nature, and this connection is meant to offer access for non-Natives to this world. Annette Kolodny refers to the "yearning to know and to respond to the landscape as feminine" as the "uniquely American 'pastoral impulse'" (Kolodny 8), an impulse manifested in the Indian Princess. To feminize an unknown land is to render it passive and welcoming, rather than aggressive and hostile, thus the Indian Princess becomes at once a beacon of welcome and a repository for colonial anxiety. She romanticizes the scene, rendering it accessible and desirable, and erasing any meaningful opposition to Western interests.

Shanewis's performance appears to adhere to these expectations, as she begins to sing about the "Robin Woman, A lovely princess, An enchantress of a Northern tribe," who calls Spring back to the "barren lands" of winter, and beckons the birds to return from their winter migrations (Eberhart and Cadman 24). After her concert, Shanewis is approached by Amy and a besotted Lionel, both of whom heap praise upon

her. Shanewis humbly informs them that all of her talent is due to Mrs. Everton, who "took the wild bird from its forest home, And chang'd its sylvan notes to lyric airs. All that I am she made me, All that I do she taught me. As Heaven sees me here, I vow, Someday I shall repay her. At whatever cost, at whatever sacrifice, I shall repay her" (Eberhart and Cadman 38-9). In this exchange, it seems that Shanewis is personifying an Indian Princess and a "show Indian," displaying both her inherent noble Native subjectivity and her learned Western education. Moreover, her insistence that she owes her talent entirely to the beneficence of Mrs. Everton reflects what was expected in the performance of show Indians: an uncomplicated appreciation for the white benefactors who removed them from their homes and exposed them to Western society and educational training, which was thought to be worth whatever "sacrifice" was necessary.

Shortly after her conversation with Amy, Lionel steals Shanewis away and divulges his love for her, and it is in this conversation that Shanewis breaks from her ascribed identity and begins to exhibit her hybridized identity. Lionel calls Shanewis his "sweet enchantress! [His] Robin Woman! Calling the springtime to [his] heart," conflating the real woman in front of him with the idealized "enchantress" of her song (Eberhart and Cadman 42). Shanewis protests the suddenness of his affections, but after they share a song, she finds herself falling for him as well. However, unlike the mythical Indian Princess, who immediately desires to abandon or convert her own people, Shanewis's desire is to take her lover back home to the reservation. Concerned, she asks Lionel

> is happiness for us? I am a bird of the wilderness, I am a thrush of the woodland, Captive awhile to art and song, Yet true to my traditions. I love the wild life of

> the plains, The campfires of my people, The young companions of my childhood…Ah, if you think you love me, Go with me to my home, Learn to know my people. This sudden love may die!" (Eberhart and Cadman 53).

In this moment, Shanewis breaks with convention and reveals the extent of her hybridity: while she has been "captive" to Western song, she longs to return home to the traditions she left behind, and can only be with Lionel if he can accept this aspect of her identity. Rather than subsuming herself to Western society, she insists that Lionel learn about hers, and see if their love can withstand the cultural differences. Lionel enthusiastically agrees to her proposal, insisting that she "Take me to your people! Where you love, I love," and they agree to travel to her home in Oklahoma (Eberhart and Cadman 53).

Shanewis's insistence on returning home is an implicit demand that Lionel acknowledge her identity as an Indian woman, not just her performative identity as an Indian Princess. Pisani argues that Shanewis initially appears almost "too pure, too 'correct'" in observance of the polite social milieu, as if Cadman and Eberhart had constructed their Indian heroine "almost as a fairy creature, an idyllic woodland nymph summoned forth for the pleasure of high society" (275). However, Shanewis demonstrates that she is not merely the ideal/idyllic colonial fantasy, and that instead she is a

> young woman who is self-confident not in spite of, but because of her Indian background. Instead of appearing self-conscious, stoic, bewildered, resistant, intransigent, or any number of qualities usually superimposed upon Indian characters, she comes across as an ideal entertainer, one who knows how to use her voice to charm her audience and perform songs on topics that will please them. (Pisani 275)

In this sense, Shanewis is a radical iteration of the Indian Princess, one who appropriately performs this identity for a particular audience, yet refuses to sacrifice her cultural heritage. Her "charming" voice and disposition is pleasing not only to Lionel and Mrs. Everton's friends, but also to the audience watching the opera, who is also, implicitly, being asked to value Shanewis's home and the traditions she holds dear.

This home is the setting of the second act of the opera, a scene that epitomizes the multi-ethnic, hybridized cultural landscape of fin de siècle Oklahoma. The stage directions carefully describe the crowd, comprised of "full-blood Indians and half-breeds in ceremonial, mongrel and modern dress and white spectators in holiday attire." Festive "booths decorated in red, white and blue bunting occupy the middle ground," and ponies are hitched next to cars. Surveying this scene is "Shanewis, in red beaded buckskin, and Lionel in an immaculate and correctly cut white suit," the contrast between Shanewis and Lionel's sartorial choices undoubtedly meant to convey the stark differences between their two worlds (Eberhart and Cadman 75). Once the festivities subside and attendees begin to depart, Shanewis entreats Lionel to confess "What think you of my people? Do you still love your wild bird?" (Eberhart and Cadman 87). Lionel insists that he loves her all the more, rhapsodizing "Oh Bird of the Wilderness, Your wild note thrills the heart of me; Oh, nest upon my tree of love, And fill my life with melody, with melody…" (Eberhart and Cadman 87-90). Here, Lionel still appears to be idealizing Shanewis as an "enchantress" from a "wild" and romantic past, rather than a modern Native woman attempting to reconcile the hybrid nature of her identity.

Lionel quickly comes face to face with the complicated reality of Shanewis's background when the pair is approached by Phillip Harjo, Shanewis's foster brother and

a staunch adherent to their tribal customs. Harjo upbraids Shanewis for choosing an "alien lover," declaring that the "noblest of our tribe were proud to wed Shanewis; But the world first called to you, And then this man" (Eberhart and Cadman 101-2). Harjo continues, professing his long-held and secret love for Shanewis, and admitting that when she left to "learn the customs of a hated race, I hoped a cruel world would drive you back, Into my waiting arms. But while the Red Man waited, The White Man stole your love, as he steals all" (Eberhart and Cadman 102-3). Harjo then presents Shanewis with an ornate bow and arrow, explaining that it once belonged to a woman from their tribe who, upon discovering her white lover's duplicity, shot the latter in the heart with the poisoned arrow "tipped with death!" Thus, Harjo offers the arrow to Shanewis, and tells her "If ever one is treacherous to thee, Here is thy revenge!" (Eberhart and Cadman 104-5).

Harjo's vitriol toward the "hated" white race and their cruelty toward Native Americans sharply redirects the plot from a forbidden love to articulating the reasons as to *why* it was seen as forbidden. While Harjo is motivated by his love for Shanewis, he also refers to the dangers of intermarriage in the wake of the Dawes Act. By gifting her the arrow, he not only gives her a means of exacting personal revenge (should it be necessary) but also offers her the opportunity to mete out punishment for their inherited painful history. Lionel "carelessly" dismisses Harjo's denunciation and declares the arrow to be a "useless keepsake," that will never be needed, as Lionel is convinced of his love and fealty to Shanewis (Eberhart and Cadman 105). While Harjo may seem like a zealot the audience could dismiss as extreme, the way Lionel did, his eloquence

nonetheless reverberates in their ears, demanding that Native people be considered and their suffering validated.

Unfortunately for Lionel, Harjo's pronouncements at the inconstancy of the white man is reinforced by the arrival of Mrs. Everton and Amy, whose suspicions concerning Lionel's infatuation with Shanewis prompted them to follow him to Oklahoma in order to "save [him] from this folly." Mrs. Everton scolds Lionel and surveying the setting "scornfully" (according to the stage directions), demands to know if he feels "accustomed and "at home" in his surroundings (Eberhart and Cadman 106-7). Lionel reiterates his "immortal love" for Shanewis, to which Mrs. Everton, again scornfully, replies "Love! Love! So like a man! Along his path since time began, He leaves his trail of wrack and woe, His 'Lo I come,' his 'Lo, I go.' The hearts of women are his prey, Nor truth nor duty says him nay" (Eberhart and Cadman 107-9). She reminds him of how passionately he pursued Amy, and Lionel reluctantly concedes, apologizing to Amy for his fickleness. Amy will not forgive him yet, but declares that she will not hold Shanewis, her "little Indian sister, Who knew not of [his] broken faith," responsible for his actions (Eberhart and Cadman 111). While Mrs. Everton is addressing Lionel's betrayal of her own daughter, in the broader context articulated by Harjo, his treachery is seen as symptomatic and historically consistent, rather than a mere lapse of faith.

Amy intercedes, taking a new tact that reveals the anxieties of "multiracial" mingling, almost replicating the rhetoric used by Harjo: "I plead for you and for our unity of blood. Each race is noble when the line is clear, But mingled bloods defile each other; It is the law. Neither of you should allow infatuation, To blind your vision of the

right" (Eberhart and Cadman 112). Lionel again dismisses social norms in favor of his love for Shanewis, but this time the latter intercedes, demanding to know "How many have you loved before, To leave so lightly, As you left Amy? How can you expect happiness? Ah, happiness is not built on broken vows!" (Eberhart and Cadman 113). Pisani writes that Amy and Mrs. Everton's intervention forces Shanewis into the "painful realization of the impermeable class and racial divisions in American society" (Pisani 273). Their entreaties to keep their bloodlines "clear" to preserve the inherent and separate "noble" nature of each race echoes the anxieties of mixed-race couplings at the time.

But the purity of blood is not the only concern that their unity engenders. As Harjo previously stated, his hatred for the white race is grounded in their genocidal past. This is echoed by Shanewis, who "fingers the bow absently, gazing at it as if fascinated, her face expressing mingled pride, anger and sorrow. Soon she throws it far from her and it rattles to the ground" (Eberhart and Cadman 114). In her denunciation of Lionel, Shanewis wrestles with her ancestral inheritance and her Progressive education; she tells Lionel that while her "ancestress would have drawn that bow, And sent the poisoned arrow home, To your faithless heart," she is either "too civilized or too weak," and is unable to take her revenge upon him (Eberhart and Cadman 114-5). Lionel's attempts to appease her are futile, and Shanewis launches into an impassioned speech:

> For half a thousand years
> Your race has cheated mine
> With sweet words and noble sentiments,
> Offering friendship, knowledge, protection.
> With one hand you gave— niggardly,
> With the other you took away— greedily!
> The lovely hunting grounds of my fathers
> …

> What gave you in return?
> A little learning, a little restless ambition,
> A little fire water, And many, many cruel lessons in treachery! (Eberhart and Cadman 116-8).

In her repudiation of Lionel, Shanewis conflates him with white society, crafting an eloquent indictment of their history of "noble sentiments" that inevitably leads to catastrophe for Native people, including allotment. While her heart is broken, she sees his betrayal of her as deriving from a larger pattern of behavior, one that all white people are inherently complicit in replicating.

Shanewis continues, pushing Lionel toward Amy Everton and continuing her denunciations: "Take him—base example of a deceiving race! I surrender him to Amy, And thus repay my debt to you. Into the forest, near to God I go, To commune with my own soul, Within the solitude, And recover from this wound!" (Eberhart and Cadman 119-20). Shanewis's righteous anger toward Lionel and his treatment of her is seen as a microcosmic example of a larger history of deceit committed by white society against Native peoples. Her desire to retreat to the forest and sequester herself away from its grasp and "recover" departs from the usual and more literal "conclusion" of the Indian Princess, who often met her untimely doom in literary works of the time, including *The Squaw Man*. Instead, Shanewis uses her Indian Princess persona to fervently, but eloquently, enumerate the litany of historical atrocities suffered by Native Americans. Levy writes that "Shanewis recognizes no such separation of past deeds and present injustices; on the contrary, her monologue exposes Lionel's betrayal as one episode in a series of ugly acts that are but poorly covered by the mantle of Manifest Destiny" (120). Rather than embodying the superiority of Western society, Shanewis positions herself

against it, and in doing so, demonstrates to her audience the harm that their "civilization" has wrought upon her people.

Lionel realizes Shanewis will not be moved by his pleas and reluctantly retreats with Mrs. Everton and Amy. Suddenly, Harjo attacks Lionel with the poisoned arrow, stabbing Lionel in the heart: "Go, Messenger of Death! Seek thou his traitor heart! Avenge her and her race!" (Eberhart and Cadman 123). Harjo's retribution on Lionel is twofold, avenging both Lionel's duplicity to Shanewis and his status as a proxy for white society. Shanewis rushes to Lionel's side, and seeing that he is dead, mournfully sings "'Tis well, In death thou art mine!" (Eberhart and Cadman 124). Lionel's death not only atones for his betrayal, but also, in Shanewis's view, is the only way they can be together. The rigid social boundaries that blocked their love are negated in death, a death that repays Western society's "debt" to Shanewis and her people. Cadman had originally planned to stick to the grand conventions of operatic endings, namely, the suicide of his heroine, but instead tragedy befell Lionel, who was the target of Philip Harjo's poisoned arrow. Rather than ending with the death of an "exotic" woman, suffering because of the actions of a white male character, *Shanewis* punishes the colonial male for said actions. So while *Shanewis* followed many of the plot arcs found in Western opera, and featured traditional operatic dramatic elements, including "interracial love and poisoned arrows," it also "encompassed many of the important issues then confronting Indian people" (Browner 178), and did not shirk from identifying the damage wrought by colonialism.

In his Foreword to the score of *Shanewis,* Cadman was "keen to label *Shanewis* an 'American' opera rather than an 'Indian' one," insisting that "the story and libretto

bear upon a phase of present-day American life with the Indian in transition," rather than a "mythological tale nor yet an aboriginal story" (Levy 13). Cadman's anxieties concerning the labeling of his opera rather appropriately reflect the concerns of the titular character: the struggle with hybridity, and being caught between cultural contexts while pressured to pick one. This lack of cohesion resulted in generally negative reviews when *Shanewis* made its premiere at the "Metropolitan Opera on 23 March 1918," but did not prevent it from running the next year, "thus becoming the first American opera produced by the Met to remain in the repertory beyond a single season" (Levy 109). Later, it was restaged at the Hollywood Bowl, a performance that featured Redfeather in the title role and allowed her more influence in the casting and set designs. In this restaging, Redfeather's changes created a "heightened awareness of its own 'Indianness,'" featuring, in Redfeather's own words:

> Indian tepees covered the hills behind the platform. Indians on horseback rode down the trail. To the right of the stage was a campfire with Yowlache, a Yakima Indian, in breach [sic] cloth and with arms outstretched singing in a gorgeous baritone voice, 'Wah-to-ho—Rise, Arise. Life is calling thee.' It was a stunning picture (qtd. in Levy 122).

Levy explains that this scene Redfeather recounts "constitutes a significant reframing: here the Indian is indigenous, emerging out of the natural landscape. It is Mrs. Everton and her fancifully costumed guests who seem out of place" (Levy 122). Through her participation in the restaging of Cadman's emphatically "American" opera, Redfeather privileges Indigenous experience, and creates her own consciously unassimilable production.

In writing *Shanewis*, Cadman was "motivated by at least three factors: his personal experiences with Indian peoples, his 'idealizations' of Indian music, and his

desire to reflect something of the nature of modern America, in which, in his opinion, native America played an important part," while Redfeather "didn't want to romanticize the past but preferred, like DeMille in *Strongheart,* to explore the role of American Indians in contemporary American life" (Pisani 273). These conflicting desires of the two collaborators resulted in the opera being somewhat incoherent, reflecting the very society that they sought to dramatize. While Redfeather initially grappled with the pressures of "authenticity" in her contributions, and her position as a cultural "touchstone" for the project, she later wrote that "At the beginning of my career with Mr. Cadman I had a feeling it was all his, that the honor all went to him. I now agreed that he had done a lot of Indian music, but that the Indian had done a lot for him, too" (qtd. in Levy 121). Much like her proxy Shanewis, Redfeather came to the realization that perhaps those she felt indebted to were also in her debt as well, and that the nature of the relationship was not as one-sided as she once thought.

In the tradition of the Indian Princess, Bonnin and Redfeather ostensibly allied themselves with white men and adhered to the expectations of this identity in their public performances and appearances. However, as I have shown, these women utilized their literacy in Western civilization in order to gain access to otherwise inaccessible cultural art forms and their privileged audiences. By enacting their consciously-unassimilable identities, they both met their audience's expectations while demonstrating a refusal to be subsumed by them, exerting their own agency through their protagonist-proxies in their respective operas. While their works were not critical successes, they did constitute an unprecedented cultural coup for Native people, giving a new meaning to the term "show Indian" and demonstrating the inherent worth of

Native life and culture within a Western art form. For Bonnin and Redfeather (and the subject of my next chapter, Maria Tallchief), embodying noble Native subjectivity offered them an opportunity to "modernize" perceptions of Native Americans, showing that communities had in fact not disappeared, but persisted. In a reversal of the Indian Princess myth—which posits her as catalyst for Euramerican epistemologies to "improve" tribal nations—these consciously-unassimilable Indian Princesses use their Western education to educate a *Western* audience about their own shortcomings. In this sense, *The Sun Dance Opera* and *Shanewis* constitute a glimpse and a mirror, respectively, tutoring an unschooled civilization in the lived experiences of North American indigenous peoples.

CHAPTER THREE

How Can We Know the Dancer from the Dance? Maria Tallchief, the *Firebird*

> When I was George [Balanchine's] wife, I was convinced that being married to him created a certain constraint in my life because my public and private lives were intertwined. I believed that once we separated, things would be easier. But now I was beginning to realize that there was another personage with whom my life as a woman was bound up, and that figure was Maria Tallchief, prima ballerina.
>
> --Maria Tallchief, *Maria Tallchief: America's Prima Ballerina.*

In the above passage from her autobiography, the reader is privy to a pivotal moment in the life of famed dancer Maria Tallchief—the moment in which she ended her marriage to the choreographer George Balanchine, the man she credited for helping her develop the talent that led to her groundbreaking career. However, more than just the ending of a personal relationship (though they continued to work together at the New York City Ballet), it was the moment during which Tallchief recognized the futility of attempting to separate her public and private selves into different spheres, the moment she realized the true profundity of her "personage" as America's first prima ballerina. Perhaps one of the most acclaimed dancers of the 20th century, Tallchief's was a "star with truly American flavor," who ushered in a new era of ballet, and dispelled previously held notions of American dancers (Cockerille 115). At once Balanchine's student and muse, she acted as one of the artistic architects of an American ballet tradition, and through his tutelage, she mastered more than just his signature technical style. Balanchine taught Tallchief that for dancers, the performance did not end once one left the stage; he stressed that since public perception was essential to the success of a company, a dancer must conduct him or herself with attention to

decorum at all times to avoid detracting from the company's reputation (Cockerille 95). As one of his principal dancers, Tallchief felt even greater pressure to maintain her image, and success required her to be many figures bound up into one, coherent package: America's first prima ballerina, an Osage woman, a muse, a wife, a mother, and a Firebird.

In this chapter, I am particularly interested in how Tallchief navigated her hybridized identity as "Princess Two Standards," the title given to her in 1953 by the Osage Nation. The name "Princess Two Standards" was chosen by her grandmother to recognize Tallchief's success as a ballerina and her heritage as a member of the Osage nation, reflecting the hybridized nature of her identity (Tallchief 112-3). But while her Indian Princess title is meant to recognize Tallchief's accomplishments, the position itself is historically less a designation of actual *rank* within a power structure, and more of an identification of a cultural figure who represents her respective tribe to the publics she encounters. During her illustrious career, Tallchief did not just represent the Osage Nation, she represented indigenous North Americans on a worldwide platform, dazzling audiences in every continent with not only her talent, but her very presence on the stage. That a Native American was dancing principal roles in the most revered of balletic productions was enough to draw the interest of enthusiastic, though perhaps skeptical, audiences. Tallchief was aware of her "exotic" allure to spectators accustomed to watching European and Russian dancers, and while she never wished to deny her heritage, she did work to distance herself from the gimmicky or racist portrayals of Native people that shaped audience expectations. Unlike previous Indian Princesses, who would often pander to their viewers' desires to see an "authentic" Indian (based of

course on shallow mimicries of Native Americans), Tallchief refused to don the proverbial "pan-Indian headdress" in her career. Instead, she cultivated a persona that worked against these deeply-embedded assumptions, in order to be recognized first as a prima ballerina, and second as a Native American, understanding that by achieving the first, she could redefine the second in public opinion.

Keeping this in mind, along with Balanchine's insistence on maintaining a positive public image, I also argue that as a "postindian Princess," Tallchief offered *two* autobiographical forms to her audience: her written account of her life, and the performances that offer a counternarrative to her audiences' assumptions of Indigeneity. In other words, the more recognizable she became, the less she was able to extricate her personal and public selves. Who she was on stage *became* her autobiography to her audiences, shaped by her personal experience as much as by their expectations of Native Americans. While she never referred to her performances as being autobiographical, they offer a consciously-constructed counterpoint to long-standing narratives of Native Americans, particularly since she was very aware of the imbrication of her private and public personas as a prima ballerina. I will demonstrate this through an analysis of her written autobiography and accounts of her performances as a dancer. As a prima ballerina, Tallchief was a new kind of Indian Princess, one who attempted to distance herself from such romanticized ideas of Indigenous people.

However, to name Tallchief as a mere "good" Indian Princess would be to disregard the meticulous and purposeful nature of her identity construction, a process that earned her the name of "Princess Two Standards." As an Indian Princess, Tallchief realized early in her life to be aware of audience expectations, and this chapter claims

that Tallchief embodied the Indian Princess in her career as a dancer, performing manifest manners by ostensibly accepting and assimilating to the requirements of Western dance. However, as "America's first prima ballerina," Tallchief occupies a privileged space previously inaccessible to *any* American performers, let alone those of Native descent, and subsequently presented a counternarrative of Indigeneity to American and European audiences. Thus, Tallchief's performances are those of a "postindian princess," building from Gerald Vizenor's term "postindian," as she adapts her Indian Princess performance from one of mimicking "acceptability" to dominant society, to creating her own cultural space for performance through her collaboration with the choreographer George Balanchine.

As a postindian Princess, Tallchief negotiated the complexities of her hybridized status: as a member of a minority group, she faced denigration, but as a privileged member of this group, occupying a privileged space that was exterior to her own community, she demonstrated the permeability and mutability of high European culture by mastering an art form thought to be unreachable for people of "lesser" racial groups. While the figure of the Indian Princess was employed by colonial powers to strengthen the national identity of the U.S. in its inchoate stages of development, as a postindian Princess, Tallchief's performative subjectivity concomitantly embodied and undermined this myth. On the one hand, she presented audiences with the feminized "native nobility" that they associated with the Indian Princesses of popular culture; on the other, rather than adhering to the expectations of her audiences, she remade them, creating a new set of standards for herself and subsequent American dancers.

In her book, *The People Have Never Stopped Dancing: Native American Modern Dance Histories*, Jacqueline Shea Murphy discusses the "interrelations between Native American dance and the history and development of modern dance in America" (4). Murphy argues that Indigenous dancers' movements can communicate their communally-specific epistemologies and values, and that the medium of dance "can be a tool for accessing and addressing Native American personal and political history, even as it recognizes this history's inextricable blending with other histories and worldviews" (Murphy 22). Among these intersecting histories is the U.S. government's regulation and eventual ban on Native American religious dance practices in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These dances, particularly the Sun Dance, were seen as potentially inciting "warlike" sentiments in the practitioners, and were listed among potential "Indian offenses" that could result in a reduction in rations, or after multiple offenses, land the perpetrator of the dance in jail (Murphy 40). Extending this, Philip J. Deloria points out that dance became a point of contention in the eyes of white society because like hunting, dance "represented mobility." Specifically, "social dances asserted a particularly Indian form of leisure that stood in opposition to the agricultural production insisted on by white society," and "religious dances offered an even more visible threat, for they suggested a willful breaking away from the hold of church and civilization" (Deloria, *Indians in Unexpected Places* 27). Therefore, Native dance on American soil constituted an act of political and cultural resistance to the forces of assimilation; in essence, dance became an embodied refusal to disappear.

In this same sociopolitical moment, "show Indians" traveling abroad with Wild West shows were welcome to perform their cultural practices, including dances;

however, these dances were staged as "spectacles" for the consumption of a Western audience, stripped of their cultural significance and any "threat" they may pose to Western dominance (Murphy 23). Murphy writes that the popularity of these "Wild West" performances rested in their "staging of authentic Indians for non-Indian audiences," and in turn "codified for the public for years to come what a 'real Indian' was." Consequentially, this indirectly "authorized viewers—and non-Indian officials—as experts in judging Indian authenticity" (Murphy 59). To these audiences, when it came to dance, Indians were seen as merely copying the forgotten rituals of the past, restaged for their entertainment. By the time Maria Tallchief first donned a pair of toe shoes, the "authentic" Indian had been established in the minds of her audience, complete with limitations that provided the latter with a comfortable feeling of cultural superiority. But Tallchief, like the "show Indians" before her, discovered that a performative identity could grant access to a sense of agency that was otherwise denied her. However, it was this "show Indian" persona that Tallchief wished to distance herself from; she wanted to be a respected dancer, not a spectacle. The "Indian Princess" identity offered public figures, such as Tallchief, a means of appealing to an audience through a familiar figure, while also expanding their expectations concerning the abilities of Indigenous people.

When placed into praxis by Indigenous women in the 19th and 20th centuries, the Indian Princess identity became a rich ground for reinterpretation, and often, subversion. Native women began adopting this identity as part of their repertoire, performing as orators, singers, and dancers in pan-Indian garb, and often representing Native interests by "playing Indian" for their audiences. By embracing the positive

stereotypes associated with the Indian Princess, they were able to more effectively lobby for fair treatment of Native people. Despite the fact that the Indian Princess is meant to embody assimilation, Daniel Heath Justice differentiates between "assimilation" and "acculturation," arguing that the former is the "wholesale rejection of Indigenous values and their replacement with Eurowestern values, either through choice, coercion, or violence," while "*acculturation*…[is] the adaptation of certain Eurowestern ways" in order to secure the continuity of a community. Thus, acculturation can occur without instigating a totalizing shift away from a respective tribe or nation's core values and tenets (Justice xvi). These Indian Princesses, often accused of assimilation, can in fact be seen as embodying acculturation in order to gain and influence powerful white allies for their respective causes.

Justice's articulations of the difference between "assimilation" and "acculturation" as a tool for survival serve as a lens through which we can better understand Tallchief as a Native woman and a performer in a Western context. Maintaining the line between "assimilation" and "acculturation" proved to be tricky for many Indian Princess performers, including Tallchief, who found her personal and public subjectivities—another set of "two standards" for her to navigate—to be conflicting at times. Personally, as an Osage woman, Tallchief was proud of her heritage, but as a ballerina, she had to publically model the Russo-European paradigm of a female dancer. As a non-white dancer, this was an ideal that she was expected to emulate, to attempt to achieve, but never fully embody; to be, as Homi Bhabha describes, "*almost the same, but not quite*" as her fellow dancers, whose racial heritage was perceived as necessary to their success (Bhabha 122, emphasis original). Moreover,

to distance herself from unfair scrutiny and prejudices based on her racial and ethnic background, Tallchief had to distance herself from public perceptions of Indigeneity, trading the romantic and imagined "savage" for the "postindian princess" she was.

Maria Tallchief: America's Prima Ballerina chronicles her journey toward its eponymous title, as well as documenting Tallchief's effort to find a balance between the "two standards" of her identity. Moreover, her personal account of her life and career portrays Tallchief as she *desires* to be seen, as a "prima ballerina who *happened* to be Native American," rather than an "American Indian ballerina" (Tallchief 183). Tallchief recognized that the latter identity was burdened by limiting expectations, while the former was a space she could create for herself, as the first Native American or American ballerina of note. Her written autobiography, and the autobiographical performances it contained, became a way for Tallchief to participate in the construction of her own subjectivity, rather than being subsumed by colonial narratives. Brian Swann and Arnold Krupat discuss the adoption and adaptation of the autobiography by Native Americans, explaining that in the twentieth century, there came a group of Native American authors whose notoriety "came not because of their world-historical deeds or their status as bearers of their culture but, instead, because of their contributions to art" (Swann and Krupta xi). Swann and Krupat identify writers such as N. Scott Momaday and Leslie Marmon Silko as examples of the latter: prominent Native writers whose personal recollections reflect their artistic talents, rather than serving an ethnographic purpose.

Tallchief, who shaped a new American ballet tradition, is among these artists who became known for their individual contributions within a Western context. The

talent Tallchief exhibited in her performances became part of her selfhood, allowing her to communicate her own story to her audience, rather than relegating herself to preconceived narratives. Swann and Krupat argue that Native "writers should speak *for* themselves while they speak *of* themselves," whether or not they "adhere to some very different manner that we ignore to our impoverishment" (xiv). In this sense, I contend that Tallchief's performances communicated *for* her *to* her publics, creating a series of dramatic autobiographical performances that refuted narrow prescriptions that equated Indigeneity with a kind of atemporal atavism, divorcing it from invention or modernity.

As illustrated in the epigraph to this chapter, Tallchief actively engaged with identity construction during her career, cultivating her persona as a prima ballerina and ensuring that her reputation and her professionalism remained unquestioned, despite the emotional burden this continued performance required. Her body became another vehicle of autobiographical enactment, reinscribing her "new story" on national and international stages. Tallchief took advantage of what Deidre Heddon describes as the stage's "unique temporality, its here and newness, and on its ability to respond to and engage with the present," and challenged her audience to do the same by encountering her as a talented dancer in her own right (Heddon 2). Murphy takes the potential of the "unique temporality" of the stage a step further by focusing on Indigenous dancers in particular, asserting that "despite the physical effects of colonization, [their bodies] are a location of ways of being and knowing, helped in bodies and everyday movements. And movement practices—including contemporary movement practices—are a tool for locating and unearthing these ways of knowing" (Murphy 10). Tallchief's onstage performances affected her temporal moment, creating rifts in the stereotypes of Native

Americans as "disappeared" historical artifacts. Thus, Tallchief's autobiographical performances are those of a "postindian princess," who refused to engage with the simulation of "authenticity" desired by her audience.

Other dancers joined Tallchief in rewriting Native identity on the stage. Tallchief, her sister Marjorie Tallchief, Moscelyne Larkin, Rosella Hightower, and Yvonne Chouteau were known as the "Oklahoma Indian Ballerinas," a coterie of celebrated Native dancers who were born in Oklahoma and rose to fame during the mid-twentieth century (Anderson). Some of the women even danced together in the same companies. While all of these women displayed immense talent for dance and were internationally renowned, Maria Tallchief was a phenomenon in her own right. Born Elizabeth Maria Tall Chief (she later changed her name to "Tallchief") to her Osage father, Alexander Joseph Tall Chief, Jr., and Scot-Irish mother, Ruth Porter, Maria's family held a prominent status within their community. In her written autobiography, Tallchief recounts that when her father Alexander was young, oil was found on Osage land, and in a short time the wealth of the tribe (and her family) had increased exponentially. Her family lived comfortably and was well-respected; she recalls that "as a young girl growing up on the Osage reservation in Fairfax, Okla., I felt my father owned the town. He had property everywhere…[and] our 10-room, terracotta-brick house stood high on a hill overlooking the reservation" (Tallchief 4).

Tallchief's path toward her postindian Princess identity began early and with the help of her mother, Ruth Porter, who saw that the family's wealth was put to good use through the cultivation of Betty Marie (later Maria) and Marjorie's artistic talents. Thinking she was "grooming two musical dancing stars," Ruth enrolled the girls in

dance classes when Tallchief was three and a half years old, and soon after they were performing "Indian" dances at fairs. Ruth perceived traditional Osage dances to be too "lethargic" to truly capture the girls' abilities, so Maria and Marjorie performed patriotic routines that were "part ballet, part vaudeville—to 'Stars and Stripes Forever' and 'Glow Worm' at community events, county fairs, and rodeos." Tallchief writes that her costumes were particularly memorable, as she spent part of the routine garbed in "a costume my mother made by putting turquoise feathers onto her peach negligee," and later wore a cape that featured an American flag" (Tallchief 10). Their costumes, like their routines, were juxtapositions of American nostalgia and Americans' nostalgia for their "native" past, allowing the audience to watch Indian girls "playing Indian" (Deloria, *Playing Indian* 4-5).

Philip J. Deloria argues that for early Americans who desired to distance themselves from their European sociopolitical heritage, "Indianness provided the impetus and precondition for the creative assembling of an ultimately unassemblable American identity" (*Playing Indian* 5). Deloria's passage offers insight into the seemingly innocuous vision of a young girl dancing in her mother's nightgown. As an Indian Princess performing for a primarily white public, Tallchief presented "Indianness" as an "assembled" and easily accessed selfhood, one that not only reinforced the coherence of American national identity, but also negated the need for her audience to possess a critical knowledge of a tribe's epistemological and ontological structures in order to really "know" Indians (Vizenor 11). Their presence was a form of surveillance of tribes, as the girls' simulations of Indianness were interpreted as an accurate representation of Indians. In a modern take on the Wild West Shows of the

past, the Tall Chief[8] girls were charming spectacles for their audience: "real" Indians performing simulated Indian dances, devoid of any cultural significance.

The Vizenorian "simulations" continued, and in later routines, they moved past the feathered nightgown and onto wearing "fringed buckskin outfits, headbands with feathers, and bells on [their] legs." Her mother, feeling the look was incomplete, "spent hours putting [their] hair up in Shirley Temple curlers." Adding to the concept of "unassemblable" identity were the toe shoes that Maria Tallchief "wore under [her] moccasins," during the performance. The routine reached its climax with her "going center stage and twirling around, while Marjorie made a circle around [her] performing the no-handed back-flip somersaults that she was so good at" (Tallchief 15). The clandestine toe shoes became a fascinating metaphor for the routine itself, as Tallchief and her sister were not performing a "remotely authentic" routine, but instead were performing an identity that was a white construction of Indianness. On the surface, these appear to be clashing aesthetics, when in fact they accurately convey the comforting "Indianness" desired by the audience, an assemblage of pan-Indian and Americana attributes that allowed them to feel in control of the image, and therefore, not undermined by Indigeneity and its threat to the stability of their claims as Americans. However, their performance managed to be both a reduction of their identity and a sophisticated confluence of cultural mimicries and erasures; however, Philip Deloria explains that "Indian mimicry of Indianness back at white audiences made it clear that there was both a shared sense of expectation and a critical Indian intelligence at work" (Deloria, *Indians in Unexpected Places* 130). Rather than being

[8] Tall Chief was Maria's family name until she changed it to Tallchief during her professional career.

Indians in an unexpected place, they were Indians who performed an identity that self-consciously revolved around audience expectations, actively exuding charm, rather than posing a threat to Euramerican cultural dominance. Tallchief quickly grew tired of being treated as "gimmicky" and insignificant, and was glad when they mercifully outgrew the costumes, and "put those bells away for good" (Tallchief 15).

These rodeo performances constituted Tallchief's first experiences of being exposed to the expectations of a white audience, who preferred to view Indigenous identities as being "novel," and stripped of their cultural complexity. Indeed, being continuously put on display to pander to her white audience's expectations had a lasting effect on Tallchief, particularly on the way she desired to be perceived in her career. Looking back on her childhood routines, she writes that, "[a]bove all, I wanted to be appreciated as a prima ballerina who happened to be Native American, never as someone who was an American Indian ballerina. Perhaps I was being sensitive because of the way Marjorie and I had been exploited when we were young girls, performing novelty dances as some kind of gimmick" (183). At a young age, Tallchief learned that as a Native American, her identity carried the weight of Euramerican preoccupations, and she was loathe to waste her talent pandering to their anxieties and desires.

However, Tallchief did not wish to mask her identity entirely, despite the scrutiny it entailed. When the girls were still young, the Tall Chief family moved to California to access more skilled dance instructors. After training with famed Russian ballerina Madame Bronislava Nijinska, Maria signed on with Sergei Denham's Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo. Early into her career with the Ballet Russe, she was asked to "add an *a* to the end of [her] last name and call [herself] Tallchieva" in order to sound

more Russian, which was the fashion in ballet at the time. She refused, asserting that "Tallchief was my name, and I was proud of it" (Tallchief 27). Moreover, Tallchief was "sensitive to the subject" of changing her name, recalling how when she first moved to California, her classmates in her new school mocked her last name and "made war whoops whenever they saw [her], and asked why [she] didn't wear feathers or if [her] father took scalps" (Tallchief 14-15). But she reasoned that changing her first name seemed logical, since there were so many "Elizabeths and Bettys" in the company, thus Betty Marie Tall Chief became "Maria Tallchief" (Tallchief 27). Her refusal to change her last name to a racially and ethnically different one—simply by subtracting an "f" and adding "-va"—to benefit her career demonstrates that maintaining her connection to her Osage heritage, and not fully whitewashing her identity, was important to her.

The issue of her name was one of many struggles Tallchief faced in her early years as a dancer. During her time with the Ballet Russe, Tallchief contended with being doubly Othered by her contemporaries; to other ballerinas, she was both an Indian in an "unexpected place" and an Indian whose familial wealth did not adhere to their expectations, threatening their sense of Russian and European dominance in ballet. Unfortunately, Tallchief was right to be worried. She made her debut in the company in 1942, during a time when Russian dancers were celebrated, and the prevailing stereotype of an "American dancer was that of a thigh-slapping, gum-chewing tap dancer," not an artistically gifted performer (Cockerille 79). Moreover, Tallchief's fellow dancers treated her with disdain for not only being American, but for being a Native American with oil money. On tour, the dancers had little money to spend on essentials, so Tallchief's parents would send her a five or ten dollar bill every so often

to supplement her meager income, leading other dancers to gossip that she was successful in the company because her "father was a rich Indian and paying Denham to give [her] parts" (Cockerille 81). To offset this scrutiny, Tallchief tucked away the money, preferring to scrape by on what little they were given, causing her to lose a dangerous amount of weight and fall ill.

Tallchief admits that the hostile treatment at the hands of her contemporaries "and denied recognition of her individual potential because of her birthright left a lasting impression," so much so that throughout her career, she consciously worked to "present the antithesis of the negative image of the American dancer" (Cockerille 80). A rising star within a famed Russian ballet troupe, Tallchief exceeded not only the limits ascribed to her as a Native woman, but also those of the many European and American dancers who did not possess her talent. Thus, I argue that as a postindian Princess who refused to deny her Native American roots while also rejecting the negative stereotypes they entailed, she joined Deloria's "cross-tribal cohort" of "Native cultural producers—actors, singers, athletes, entrepreneurs, and warriors—who moved within white expectations, usually challenging and reaffirming those expectations at the same time" (Deloria, *Indians in Unexpected Places* 12). Her desire not to be seen as an "American Indian Ballerina" was less about her pride in her heritage, and more about her desire to resist the exoticization that she felt detracted from her dancing. That she preferred to be known first and foremost as a premiere dancer was reflective of her understanding of her audience, and her desire to reshape their expectations to fit the modern Native paradigm she presented.

Not all of Tallchief's anxieties concerning her public persona were the consequences of negative interactions with other, arguably jealous dancers; instead, the importance of constructing and presenting a professional identity as a dancer was ingrained into her by trusted advisors and choreographers. Early in her career, she received mentoring from the legendary dancer Alexandra Danilova, a woman who always "presented herself as the most glamorous person in the world." Tallchief remembers how Danilova frequently reiterated that as dancers they did not have the luxury of separating their public and private lives, so it was imperative that they "dress properly and maintain the same image [they] had onstage wherever [they] went" (Cockerille 86). Tallchief understood this as part of being a public figure, especially within a high cultural art form like ballet. George Balanchine, the acclaimed choreographer with whom Tallchief worked and, later, married, echoed this sentiment, stressing the importance of the "tradition" that was central to ballet. This was what he called the "whole picture," which included the "responsibility of knowing that if you didn't dance well the ballet would be no good and that if you didn't have the proper image offstage, you made a comment about the entire company" (Cockerille 95). Tallchief's reservations about being perceived as an "American Indian ballerina," partially stemmed from her desire to avoid complicating the "whole picture" Balanchine touted, and to prevent any distractions from dictating the trajectory of her career or the future of the company. To be a prima ballerina was to distance herself from being seen as "gimmicky" or exoticized, and the stage became a place for her to "rewrite" her identity under the gaze of a Western audience.

Unlike her European contemporaries, Tallchief's identity was inherently politicized and racialized, and she understood that the public for whom she was performing, in Deloria's words, "desired Indianness, not Indians" (Deloria, *Playing Indian,* 90). Her childhood exploitation had taught her the limits of the European and American imagination when it came to Indigenous peoples, and she did not wish to perform "nostalgia," nor "the melancholia of dominance" that her publics expected of her (Vizenor, *Manifest Manners* 25). Despite Tallchief's hope to be seen for her abilities instead of her racial background, she found herself faced with interest in both, whether this interest was subtly or overtly conveyed. When she made her debut for the Ballet Russe in New York, dancing the titular role in the *Chopin Concerto, New York Times* critic John Martin praised her performance and wrote that Tallchief was surely going to become "…somebody. She is well off the beaten track in ballerina types but she is a ballerina as surely as this is Sunday" (Cockerille 83). A few years into her collaboration with the George Balanchine, Tallchief had the singular honor of performing with the Paris Opera, and was the first American ballerina to do so in over a century. The Paris Opera was perceived to be the "cradle of classical ballet, to be ranked as one of its ballerinas or etoiles was a very great honor" (Cockerille 94). Tallchief's performance at the Paris Opera was critically acclaimed, but she recounts that despite the effusive praise, "something else besides my dancing intrigued them—my background. To them, I could have been from outer space. Those were the days when Indians were called redskins in movies and books, and the French took it literally" (Tallchief 73).

The French reaction to Tallchief's performance and personage indicate how "off the beaten path" she was in their eyes, and how surprised they must have been to encounter her instead of the pop-culture constructed "redskin." As a dancer, when Tallchief took on a role, she would "inherit" its lineage of previous performances, and "[was] compared to everyone who had ever danced that role." (Cockerille 89). However, her Parisian debut reflects a more unfortunate juxtaposition: boisterous praise for her performance, and equally enthusiastic exoticization due to her heritage. Unlike other dancers, Tallchief's predecessors were not only the popular dancers who had previously electrified audiences with their performances of principal roles, but also the "redskins in movies and books" that shaped the expectations of a public who had little to no contact with actual Indigenous peoples. After combatting her fellow dancers' contempt for her background, Tallchief now faced the fascinated European masses, who regarded Native Americans with a misguided romanticism. To Europeans, Tallchief was meant to represent "inevitable disappearance, primitive purity, and savage violence," yet here she was, present, modern, and "civilized" (Deloria, *Indians in Unexpected Places* 10). Through her performance onstage and public appearances, she presented herself as a postindian Princess, disentangled from these early simulations and their "evasive melancholy of dominance" (Vizenor, *Manifest Manners,* 11). In Tallchief, they could not see an iteration of the "authentic" Indian of popular culture; instead, they were faced with an Indian ballerina without a familiar/accessible referent, who appeared to be disconnected from the historical narrative of atavism and represented a new kind of Indian to them: a thoroughly modern one, one they could not themselves dominate.

Instead, she was the physical virtuoso who dominated a Western art form in the most recognizable arena of the art form itself.

Tallchief proved to be an intoxicating paradox to her European audience, who she described as being "curious about this exotic American dancer who'd made such an impression" on her public, and whose picture of her "being presented to the Swedish king" was running in all of the papers (Tallchief 74). Her time abroad was but a few decades removed from the Wild West shows, which enthralled European audiences with their displays of Native cultural practices (including dances) as "spectacles." Murphy describes how the shows were able to "contain the force and effect of Native dance practices not by disrupting, condemning, or outlawing them, but by staging them, thereby circumscribing them in the theatrical structures that officials and audiences saw as exciting, but safe" (Murphy 23). Tallchief, in many ways, reversed this paradigm of the show Indian; instead of creating a spectacle for a Western audience seeking a thrill in a "safe" space, she mastered a Western dance form, and "set the stage" for a new understanding of the capabilities of Native people. Indeed, there was nothing "safe" about her. The "autobiographical" dance narrative that she inscribed on each stage not only disrupted assumptions of Euro-Russian superiority; it intertwined the fate of the Old World balletic tradition with that of a postindian Princess, who found a way to navigate the confines of her context and exert her own agency.

Yet while she wished to distance herself from the "noble savage" referent that haunted her steps, the nobility Tallchief exhibited as part of her persona as a dancer was ironically reminiscent of not only the "Wild West" show Indians, but also the "Indian kings" who traveled to Britain during the mid-1700s and who—being introduced as

royalty and outfitted in a manner that was deemed representative of their elevated stations within savage nations— were expected to "exhibit the same graceful comportment, self-control, and gravitas that elevated European nobles above the rabble of their own nations." The "Indian kings" were commemorated in popular culture "as foreign in their language, dress, and habits, yet possessed of the dignity Britons associated with political leadership and elite social status" (Shannon 225). In these respects, Tallchief embodied many of these traits, these markers of "native nobility." She was a part of a prominent Osage family, and had enjoyed a comfortable lifestyle because of the wealth inherited from their headrights. This offered her access to Western art forms, such as ballet and piano, which were typically reserved for young people from upper class, white families, contributed to the class privilege that was integral to her success on and off of the stage. Her background granted her the noble Native subjectivity necessary to grant her access to the world of ballet. While an Indian King was considered a representative of a nation that was deemed "strategically important to British interests" and "visited the royal court as an equal, not as a supplicant," Tallchief was a cultural ambassador, gaining the admiration of foreign dignitaries abroad and representing Americans *and* Native Americans on the international stage (Shannon 228).

However, Tallchief struggled to escape these stereotypes without embodying them in the process. Her status as an international star and de facto ambassador did connect her to a romanticized paradigm of Indigeneity in the form of the Indian Princess, and while she worked to modify expectations, her identity was still tied up in the performance of a colonial understanding of noble Native subjectivity. Moreover, as

a prima ballerina Tallchief was coded in a hyper-feminized fashion; much like ballet itself, in which the ostensible delicacy of a performance belies the strength and rigor required to achieve it, Tallchief's persona required her to outwardly reconcile the incoherencies of her ascribed identity. However, the expectations that faced her were manifold and contradictory; while her audience associated her with Native stereotypes for which Vizenor argues there was no real cultural antecedent, they also desired her to perform an idealized form of *Western* femininity, that of a Balanchine ballerina.

For Tallchief, to be a Balanchine ballerina was to perform assimilation, to embody the hyperreal, idealized femininity he demanded of his dancers. In *Off Balance: The Dark Side of Ballet,* Suzanne Gordon describes how Balanchine molded many of the contemporary expectations of ballet dancers, including not only public image, but also physical appearance, such as the impossibly lean bodily proportions he expected his dancers to maintain. Gordon also pointed out that "if there is a standardized ballet look, there is also a standardized ballet color: white," a standard reinforced by none other than Balanchine himself, whom she quoted as saying that the "skin of a ballerina should be the same color as a peeled apple" (Gordon 97). It appears that to achieve Balanchine's "whole picture" of perfection, it was necessary to maintain uniformity and to eradicate distractions, whether they were behavioral or physical, and for the latter, there are few images more evocative, or more disturbing, than that of a "peeled apple." Thus, Tallchief had to grapple with the legacy of "redskin" stereotypes; on the other, there existed either the tacit or explicit emphasis on embodying "white" perfection, demanding that she "peel" away her "red" skin or any other exterior markers of an intercultural or racial hybridity. As a postindian Princess in an unexpected place,

Tallchief had to engage concomitantly in simulation and *dis*simulation in her identity performance. To meet the expectations of ballet, Tallchief had to evade one set of expectations held by her audience; as an Osage woman, she had to dissimulate her hybrid identity to distance herself from its contingent misconceptions, and this required that she simulated the racially "neutral" embodiment of a Balanchine dancer. In this way, we can see Tallchief struggling between Justice's notions of "assimilation" and "acculturation," desiring to adapt within a Western context without entirely erasing her heritage.

While it may seem that Tallchief was merely a victim of circumstances, to cast her as such would perpetuate the same dichotomies that I am attempting to explicate, and deny her any sense of agency over her personal subjectivity. Tallchief's experiences may have taught her that to keep the focus on her achievements and avoid feeling tokenized by her audience, she had to strictly perform "whiteness"—the ostensibly neutral and "depoliticized" identity enjoyed by her Euramerican colleagues—but throughout her autobiography, Tallchief continually reiterates her pride in her Osage heritage. Ron Carpenter argues that such a refusal to "privilege" one culture over the other, "nor balance them equally in situating herself among and against her shared cultures," is a form of "bicultural subjectivity" (Carpenter 1). According to Carpenter, this "biculturality" allowed for an Indigenous woman to employ her "bicultural resources to produce a new type of Indian, one that exceeds the prescriptive roles offered [to] Native American women by either culture" (Carpenter 2). Both of the "roles" she was expected to play were constructed with the interests of Western patriarchy in mind, but to view Tallchief as fully assimilated within these Westernizing

pressures is to reduce her subjectivity to an aggregation of external cultural forces, when in fact Tallchief was also able to exert her own subjectivity and influence onto the world. Rather than simply assimilating to Euramerican culture, Tallchief performed her "bicultural subjectivity" in such a way that she not only modified Western dance, but also Western ideas of Indigeneity.

Tallchief's career continued its meteoric rise, and as George Balanchine's collaborator, muse, and wife, she was instrumental to the creation of an American ballet tradition. Lincoln Kirstein, the son of wealthy Bostonians and an enthusiastic supporter of the arts, became friends with Balanchine after hearing of his talent as a choreographer from a mutual acquaintance. In his diary, he records that during a conversation, Balanchine had admitted that "America has always been his dream, even before he left Russia; he is now willing to risk everything for it" (Gottlieb 69). After a stint as a choreographer with Ballet Russe, where he met Tallchief, Kirstein's financial assistance provided Balanchine with the opportunity he had been waiting for, and Tallchief joined him when her contract with the Ballet Russe was up.[9] She was Balanchine's principal dancer when he founded Ballet Society, Inc., which later became the New York City Ballet. To Balanchine, Tallchief was more than a wife and principal dancer; as an Indigenous woman, she *was* America manifested, an original American who represented a link to the culture he adored and wished to emulate. Indeed,

> like many émigrés from Soviet Russia, Balanchine was politically conservative and enamored of the American scene. He wore cowboy shirts with pearl snaps, Western-cut suits, string ties, and turquoise bracelets. He was unashamedly patriotic…on July 4, he came on stage to announce that he had just received a

[9] Ballet Society, Inc. was Kirstein and Balanchine's second attempt at creating a company, the initial attempt having ended in disaster. For further information, see Robert Gottlieb's *George Balanchine: The Ballet Maker.*

> new composition from Stravinsky, and the orchestra played "The Star Spangled Banner. (Tracy and Delano 11)

Tallchief played a significant role in Balanchine's romantic notions of America and its rugged, Wild West allure. On more than one occasion, Balanchine informed Tallchief of his "fascination with [her] background," and "claimed that by marrying [her] he finally felt he was a real American," comparing their union to that of America's "first" couple, John Smith and Pocahontas (Tallchief 119). While Tallchief easily shares this anecdote in her memoir, Balanchine's delight at their designation as the "first" (chronologically and allegorically) couple of American ballet is indicative of the semiotic power of the Indian Princess. Deloria explains that "Indians represented images, emotions, and ideologies that signified Americanness," and the Indian Princess embodied access to that essentialized "Americanness" (Deloria, *Playing Indian* 103).

For Balanchine, Tallchief was his "key to the West," and he echoed the very fascination with her background that she had hoped to avoid in her career. As an Indian Princess, Tallchief embodied access to America, to a pristine space where his creative genius could flourish unimpeded, only able to be realized through her assistance. His partnership with Tallchief imbued him with a sense of cultural capital; by "casting" her as the original "Indian Princess" and himself as her chosen partner, he placed himself in an ideal position to establish a new ballet tradition in the unsophisticated "frontier" of American dance. Arlene Croce, the renowned dance critic for *The New Yorker* magazine, once wrote that ballet was "our civilization," and in true form to her role as an Indian Princess in Balanchine's company, Tallchief's bodily performance was integral in bringing this "civilization' to America (Gottlieb 5). However, a prototypical

Balanchine ballerina soon became the "model for the contemporary ballerina," and his collaborations with Tallchief and his other "muses" were viewed as producing the "most important work in twentieth century dance" (Tracy and DeLano 10). Through her performances, Tallchief was instrumental in creating the Balanchine techniques and dances that had an indelible effect on American dance traditions.

While Tallchief was an essential component in Balanchine's establishing of what would become the New York City Ballet, it would be unwise to ignore what Tallchief gained in her relationship to Balanchine, both as his wife and his star dancer. When Balanchine asked Tallchief to marry him, she was initially taken aback, since they were not in any way involved in a romantic relationship, and in fact hardly knew each other. When Tallchief voiced these concerns to Balanchine, he responded "that doesn't make any difference at all, Maria…We can get married and work together, and if it lasts, if it's only for a few years, that's fine. If it doesn't work, well, that's fine too" (Gottlieb 108). Tallchief soon warmed to the idea, but her mother voiced disapproval at the match, leading her aunt to convince the latter that it would be good, or at least strategically beneficial, for Tallchief to marry him, as Balanchine was known for identifying talented female dancers, marrying them, and turning them into stars (Cockerille 91).

It is tempting to claim that Tallchief's marriage to Balanchine was essentially a sham and arranged solely to further their careers, or to ingratiate him to American audiences, but to do so would be to limit her to the role of the Indian Princess of myth, who was merely the helpmate of colonial interests and wished to be subsumed by them. Instead, Tallchief was a postindian Princess, who mastered Western dance performance,

and then used her acquired skills to find success within a Western paradigm, all the while maintaining a connection to her heritage. Tallchief saw herself as playing an important role as Balanchine's partner; in her autobiography, she states that she recognized their marriage as symbolic in nature, and "stood as an acknowledgement that New York City Ballet was a kind of family" (Tallchief 140-1). While the idea of Tallchief and Balanchine creating a "family" hints again at the original Pocahontas myth—whose union with John Rolfe is perceived as "birthing" the new nation— to reduce Tallchief to the pawn in a European's game would be to erase her own ambitions as a dancer, and to her own contributions to the ballet tradition she assisted Balanchine in building. Tallchief did not merely assimilate to and perform Balanchine's style; as his student, she learned his signature style, but as his partner, she influenced and interpreted his choreography. Their union appeared to be artistically and mutually gratifying for a time, and ultimately produced the New York City Ballet, an institution that Dame Ninette de Valois, the founder of the Royal Ballet, claimed to be "the most significant manifestation of ballet in the United States" (Tallchief 135).

Rather than being absorbed into and reflecting Western culture, Tallchief made her own mark as a postindian Princess, redefining the role of a prima ballerina. While Tallchief worked to impress Balanchine and to help him maintained what she identified as his artistic genius, Balanchine's work and genius benefited Tallchief, whose celebrated performances of his ballets were what brought the public to their feet, and critics exalting their collaboration. In his new company, Balanchine revisited ballets he had previously staged abroad, but it was Tallchief who reinvented the dances through what became her signature style. Balanchine's choreography became a vehicle for

Tallchief's talent, and according to critic Robert Gottlieb, she was a force to be reckoned with onstage. In a review of her performances, Gottlieb writes that "Tallchief dominated *Orpheus* and triumphed in the difficult *Symphony in C*…[which] perfectly suited her strong and assertive technique, her absolute command of the stage, and no one has ever improved on her performance in this role" (Gottlieb 118). No shrinking violet, Tallchief became known for her mastery of technique, her work ethic, and her "empiricist" attitude toward ballet. Murphy writes that within performance studies, the act of dancing is seen as a form of "theorizing," as the "body is thinking, commenting, critiquing, investigating" (Murphy 10). Therefore, Tallchief's presence onstage and singular talent—which set her apart from a host of American, Russian, and European dancers—constituted an implicit critique of Western assumptions of who could be understand as a "modern" Indian.

These qualities were brought into fruition in Tallchief's breakout role as the eponymous "Firebird" in Igor Stravinsky's famous ballet; a role which established her legacy as a prima ballerina, as well as a postindian Princess. *Firebird* was created by Stravinsky for the Ballet Russes during their Paris season, and Balanchine restaged the ballet for New York City Ballet in 1949. The story was based on a Russian fairytale about a magical bird who possessed powers that proved to be a blessing and a curse for whomever possessed her, and Balanchine chose to restage it for Tallchief, to showcase her particular talents as a dancer. As part of his reinvention, he "speeded up the action, created new material, and, most important, unleashed Tallchief in an electric star performance that secured the company's future and certified City Ballet as a major force in the dance world" (Gottlieb 118). Francisco Moncion, who performed the role of

the Prince, added that "the ballet was made for Maria, and she went after it like a demon, with ferocity, as if possessed" (Gottlieb 119). In these preceding passages, we see her being coded in defeminized and animalistic language, as a "dominating," "assertive," "ferocious," and "commanding" woman; Balanchine allegedly once referred to her as a "tiger" in a conversation with dancer Robert Weiss (Gottlieb 117-8). Tallchief's "open and free" style of dancing contradicted the "more refined French style" audiences were used to in ballet, which ostensibly seems to adhere to the expectations of an Indian Princess, who could merely mimic civilization without ever fully achieving it. However, Tallchief's performance in *Firebird* resisted the dichotomy of "free" and disciplined dancing styles; her ability to conflate the two made her all the more alluring as a dancer. In fact, Tallchief's celebrated performance in *Firebird* came at a critical moment for Balanchine's company, helping to secure its future. *Firebird* premiered during the difficult early years of the New York City Ballet, a time that Tallchief associated with costumes arriving at the last minute and uncertainty as to how an American audience would respond to Balanchine's artistic vision (Cockerille 96). However, after its debut, Tallchief's performance catapulted the company from uncertainty into legitimacy as an institution.

The defining moment for *Firebird,* Tallchief, and the NYCB itself came in a pivotal sequence during Tallchief and Moncion's *pas de deux* (French for "step of two"). Balanchine created a step for which there was "no balletic term," one so physically challenging that it made Tallchief grateful for the tumbling classes she took as a child. Tallchief describes the movement as follows: "after the first arabesque [a ballet position in which the dancer is poised on one leg with the other extended behind],

turning to face Frank and giving him my hand, I performed a glissade, a traveling step. Then after a preparation, while he continued moving, I went flying through space and threw myself into his arms" (Tallchief 129). The first time Tallchief attempted this jump, she almost knocked Moncion down. But on opening night, when it came time to execute this movement that caused them such anxiety, Tallchief recalls how they turned out an immaculate performance: "standing upstage, I took a flying leap into Frank's arms. Suddenly there I was being held by him upside down, my head practically touching the floor. An audible sigh rose in the audience…It was as if they could barely believe what they had seen." Tallchief herself was astonished by her capability to complete such a feat in that moment, and realized that "she had become this magical creature, the Firebird, yet I knew I had become the Firebird because George had made me the Firebird. His genius had never been as clear to me as it was in that instant" (Tallchief 130-1).[10]

Much like the complicated jump that solidified her reputation as a dancer, Tallchief herself was also an innovative and exciting balletic element "for which there was no [preexisting] balletic term." While Balanchine creating a new paradigm of movement within ballet, she was creating a space for herself as not only America's first prima ballerina, but the first prima of Native descent. For Tallchief, the stage became a site of identity reinscription; a place where she could control her own narrative. Through her performance of "postindian" noble Native subjectivity, she was able to

[10] In a manner most fitting, John Martin from *The New York Times* wrote a paean to the accomplishments of the NYCB and its star in *Firebird*, rhapsodizing that "at this Thanksgiving season, let us acknowledge with gratitude that we have a ballet company of our own…What more one can ask of any company it would be difficult to say" (Robert Tracy and Sharon DeLano. *Balanchine's Ballerinas: Conversations with the Muses*. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983), 95.

demonstrate that Native people could exert their own agency and influence over Western institutions, rather than being absorbed within them. Heddon writes that "performance, as a medium, is particularly suited to a political agenda because it is capable of staging a direct and immediate address to the spectator" (Heddon 6). While Tallchief continually reiterated her desire to not be seen as an "American Indian ballerina" and did not wish for her racial identity to factor into assessments of her performances, I would argue that the desire to escape this phenomenon is itself a "political agenda," one concerned with resisting cultural commodification.

Balanchine had made Tallchief the Firebird, but Tallchief *was* the Firebird; a singular presence within the world of ballet, who took the role of a lifetime and made it her own. Indeed, the *Newsweek* review of *Firebird* lauded Tallchief as "so sure, strong and brilliant that it is doubtful if as superior a technician exists anywhere. She is so dazzling as the Firebird that she seemed almost not to need the support of her partner" (Tallchief 132). One can read this review as having a double meaning, referring also to her "partner" Balanchine, from whom Tallchief would later split and find further success as a prima ballerina. Tallchief had become a star in her own right, and while her acclaim was associated with Balanchine, it was Tallchief who was the "mistress of coming on stage like an electric current" (Tracy and DeLano 123). Her performances in *Firebird*, as well as in the other roles he choreographed especially for her, cemented the company's reputation as being in the vanguard of a new era in ballet, one that was *distinctly* American. Lili Cockerille describes that Balanchine and Tallchief's collaboration "created an alchemy that changed the tempo of classical ballet," and that his "star pupil, Maria became the prototype for a new breed of classical dancer—the

Balanchine ballerina (Cockerille 96). In this sense, Tallchief's influence demonstrates how Native Americans "have always participated in the *production* of modern discourse—and of modernity itself," rather than being victims to its inexorable march (Deloria, *Indians in Unexpected Places* 238). Tallchief was the first American Balanchine ballerina, and her work with Balanchine and the New York City Ballet created a new, inherently American ballet tradition that was internationally recognized for its innovation and exceptional, and dare we say, "unexpected" star.

Balanchine may have thought that he and Tallchief were John Smith and Pocahontas, respectively, bringing a cultural art form to the "uncivilized" American dance scene. However, while Pocahontas is credited with inspiring the Indian Princess paradigm, Tallchief can be appreciated for enacting a postindian Princess identity that offered her considerable agency within the confines of her sociohistorical moment. Tallchief was not the racialized "Mother of Us All"; she was a "shaper of images, a member of a cohort, a participant in politics of race and gender representation, an Indian person acting with intent and intelligence in one of many unexpected places" (Deloria 240). Tallchief used the stage and pen to not only "shape" her own image, but to participate in the creation of a new legacy for Native people. While Heddon argues that autobiographical performances run the risk of "prescrib[ing] to essentialist notions of self and identity, thereby further repressing or constraining us," I contend that Tallchief autobiographical performances disrupted "essentialist" racial misconceptions (Heddon 6). Tallchief never purported to represent all Indigenous people, but nonetheless, she was able to redefine social expectations.

"America's first prima ballerina" was not the only title bestowed on Tallchief during her life: she was twice named "Woman of the Year"—first by *Mademoiselle* magazine, then by the Women's National Press Club—and she was given the title of "Princess Two Standards" by the Osage Nation. These titles, particularly the latter, are more than mere accolades; they reflected the expansive and boundary-crossing nature of Tallchief's success, and the expectations of nobility, sophistication, and superiority that were ascribed to her by various audiences. To receive that level of recognition for her dancing was truly rewarding for Tallchief. When she was granted her title as "Princess Wa-Xthe-Thonba, Princess Two Standards," by the Osage Nation, and felt a different sense of pride and accomplishment in the recognition, she recalls

> I had always acknowledged my heritage… At the same time, proud as I was, it had always been important for me to have people understand that no concessions were ever made for me as a ballerina because of my ethnic background; the same rigorous standards that were applied to every Russian, French, English, or American dancer were equally applied to me. (Tallchief 183)

Tallchief is correct that no favors were done for her in her career; in fact, another set of standards, along with the "rigorous" standards for a dancer, were applied to her. As her name suggests (and the anxieties apparent in the passage above reveal), Tallchief was a postindian Princess, one who out-performed her assumed superiors, and who defied standards that attempted to dictate her abilities. She was more than an unexpected interloper, who did not merely mimic Western dance, but one who influenced its trajectory, and continues to be celebrated as a truly groundbreaking woman, a true woman of two standards.

CONCLUSION

In the introduction, I discussed Cheryl Suzack and Shari Huhndorf's seminal research on Indigenous feminism, and it is through their lens of feminism as a means of reasserting Indigenous cultural norms that I posit the Indian Princesses discussed in this work as Indigenous feminists. Suzack and Huhndorf view Indigenous feminism as a "rubric under which political and social organizing can and should take place," but eschew the notion of there being a monolithic and all-encompassing version of Indigenous feminism, since there are a multitude of Native communities being represented within it (Suzack and Huhndorf 2). However, the authors insist that while Indigenous women come from a variety of backgrounds with their own "cultural distinctiveness," they all share a "common colonial history, and [their] conception of Indigenous feminism centres on the fact that the imposition of patriarchy has transformed Indigenous societies by diminishing Indigenous women's power, status, and material circumstances" (Suzack and Huhndorf 3). With these tenets in mind, I have demonstrated that through their respective enactments of gendered noble Native subjectivity, the subjects of my chapters asserted themselves politically and culturally within the heteronormative, colonial contexts they occupied. They each rejected the double bind of racial *and* gendered marginalization, and found a means of securing their own performative agency, and in turn, an audience to listen to them.

While each Indian Princess discussed in this project remains distinct in her contributions to Western culture and canon, as a cadre they not only influenced modernity, but also demonstrated the importance of historical remembrance *and* reinterpretation. Writers such as Johnson and Winnemucca, educated within Western

institutions, used their genre to re-educate their audiences on the subject of Indigenous people, and highlight the latter's undeserved ill-treatment at the hands of settler-colonialism. Redfeather and Bonnin's "Indian Operas" placed Indigenous heroines at the heart of narratives that routinely punished the "exotic" woman by the end; instead their proxy "princesses" defied these norms, illustrating the struggles faced by Indigenous women while surviving to tell the tale. And Maria Tallchief's dual autobiographies refuted the longstanding assumption that Native people were unadaptable, and instead exerted such a profound influence over the world of ballet that modernity was forced to adapt to her standards. Through these cultural productions, these Indian Princesses refused to be silenced by the weight of colonial misogyny, establishing themselves as highly visible by "shifting their voices and cultural authority to the foreground and by reimagining their roles within and outside Indigenous communities" (Suzack and Huhndorf 9).

From these Indian Princess feminists, we can next explore the shift occurring among Native artists and writers, whose works are beginning to challenge the very boundaries and binaries of Western gender norms. Questions that will propel this inquiry forward include: What are the current opportunities for using gender performance in order to establish agency? How do race and in/appropriate gender norms influence this agency? And finally, how do contemporary Native writer and artists utilize historically non-Native forms and technologies to reassert Indigenous gender norms? Suzack and Huhndorf argue that "[w]hile activism aims to accomplish material social change, culture fosters critical consciousness by attending to the meanings of history and social relationships and imagining possibilities. Unsurprisingly, then,

Indigenous women's literature, art, film, and performance often addresses the same issues that preoccupy activists" (Suzack and Huhndorf 9). While I agree with the authors that Indigenous women's cultural texts are a site of transformative possibility, I would also include within this rubric of gender-centric decolonization the possibility of new, even more unorthodox Indian Princesses.

The visual works of Indigenous Canadian creators provide an exciting new frontier to discuss the true "significance" of said frontier, particularly in relation to historical memory and interpretation. For example, Cree "multidisciplinary visual artist" Kent Monkman uses various mediums to present counternarratives to colonial heteronormative his-story. Monkman's transgender alter ego "Miss Chief Eagle Testickle" cavorts through Monkman's visual productions, sporting a war bonnet and stilettos, usually engaging in homoerotic play with a Euramerican male. In a recent profile of Monkman in the *Toronto Star,* visual arts critic Murray Whyte praises Monkman's "queer-culture send-up of the foundational myths of western patriarchal culture," declaring them to be the "thin edge of his critical wedge, forcing open a more fraught conversation about the gross brutalities of colonial culture" (Whyte). In this sense, "Miss Chief" becomes a revolutionary Indian Princess who challenges viewers to "think queerly" about cultural survival.

Another revolutionary Indian Princess comes in the form of the protagonist Aila from the 2013 Canadian film *Rhymes for Young Ghouls*. Aila, the Mi'qmaq "weed princess" of the fictional Red Crow Reservation, bears little resemblance to the Indian Princesses of the past. Rather than attempting to ingratiate herself to Western institutional powers, Aila rejects them and works to evade their influence. When this

fails, she enacts an elaborate revenge plot against Popper, the sadistic Indian agent who torments her and her community. While Aila's role as the "weed princess" positions her to assist her community in their pursuit of the "art of forgetfulness," she soon becomes an anticolonial leader, and in turn, forces her Western audience to forsake their own "forgetfulness" and acknowledge the damages wrought by the residential school system in Canada. Thus, future explications of these visual works will demonstrate how Indigenous cultural producers are using Western genres to tell their own stories, "re-visioning" history as an act of cultural survivance.

As this project has illustrated, far from being a cultural monolith, the Indian Princess identity has evolved along with the Native women who have enacted it for the respective ends. While this identity is still popular among self-proclaimed descendants of a grandmother who was a "Cherokee Indian Princess," we can see that its performative elements have and continue to enable Native American women (and Miss Chiefs) to assert agency within colonial structures, and enact their own decolonizing projects. While Philip J. Deloria points out that colonial narratives have been built on the bodies of Native women such as Pocahontas, "engendering a peaceful narrative of cross-cultural harmony in which whites became indigenous owners of the continent through sexualized love and marriage stories" (Deloria, *Indians in Unexpected Places* 20), the subjects of my chapters complicated these stereotypes. In fact, Pocahontas herself complicates her own mythos: according to Helen Rountree, evidence exists that she encountered John Smith again in London as Lady Rebecca Rolfe, after believing him to be dead for nearly eight years. When he was presented to her, she abruptly left the room, leaving him to wait a few hours until she reappeared. When she did, "their

conversation quickly degenerated into recriminations on her part about his disloyalty to her father. Smith, the only source of information about the encounter, suddenly ended his account at this point" (Rountree 25). Pocahontas angrily confronted the very architect of the Indian Princess myth in North America, denouncing his "uncivilized" behavior rather than embracing him as her deliverer from savagery. Thus, it would appear that Pocahontas was a far more complex and "perplexing" figure than first assumed, enacting her own decolonizing narrative before her canonization as the "Mother of Us All." Clearly, the Indian Princess identity has provided Native women with the opportunity to construct their own counternarratives to colonial myths, taking control of public perception of Indigenous people, rather than relinquishing it.

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