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To highlight a common interest shared across the essays published in *sail* 25.1 (Spring 2013), I designated the issue “Indigenous Performance.” For *sail* 26.4, I return to that designation to highlight once again what is clearly becoming a central focus in Native American literary scholarship: how individuals, communities, nations, and texts of all kinds do not passively represent Indigenous identities but actively perform versions of indigeneity that respond to the particular needs, desires, and circumstances of both audiences and performers. As in the earlier issue, the essays brought together here explore a wide range of Indigenous performance strategies engaged for an equally wide range of rhetorical and political purposes; as important, they demonstrate those strategies operating across a wide range of specific contexts.

The issue begins with the script for a performed essay that includes stage directions and cues for sound and projected images. Actor, director, and theater scholar Michael Greyeyes first performed the piece in 2013 before an international audience of scholars, practitioners, and activists gathered in London for a symposium on indigeneity, performance, and globalization. In his narrative of personal growth and formal education, Greyeyes relates his experience as a Native actor asked to play iconic Native characters created by non-Native writers, especially his portrayal, early in his stage career, of Chief Bromden in the play adaptation of the popular novel *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest*. Greyeyes demonstrates how his dramatic embodiment of Bromden and his necessary exploration of Bromden’s mental illness and confinement to a mental institution contributed to his own growing critique of the institution of the settler academy and, specifically, the colonial politics of its curriculum and canon.

The articles that follow continue this exploration of the critical
effects of analyzing, embodying, and performing—or choosing not to perform—Native roles desired or assigned by settler culture. Peter Bay-
ers investigates how Luther Standing Bear constructs a viable contem-
porary Lakota masculinity in his 1928 autobiography My People the
Sioux by creating an idealized model of “traditional” manhood in his
portrayal of his Lakota father, a model that appeals to the desires of
non-Native audiences but is nonetheless useful for himself and, poten-
tially, other Native men. It is this idealized model, Bayers argues, based
in Standing Bear’s early childhood experiences of his father before being
sent away to boarding school, that enable him to survive his experiences
of assimilative settler institutions and the imposed ideals of non-Native
masculinity. Next, Colleen G. Eils takes up David Treuer’s 2006 work of
metafiction The Translation of Dr. Apelles in order to explore Treuer’s
critique of the assigned role of the Native translator as a transparent
conduit of “authentic” Native culture. Rather than provide the desired
reading experience of unmarked authenticity, Treuer invites readers
into a nuanced performance of dissimulation, one in which they must
actively participate. By subtly and strategically displacing non-Native
stereotypes, Eils argues, Treuer disrupts the idealization of Native iden-
tities for non-Native consumption through a politics and a performance
of sophisticated literary aesthetics.

Finally, Drew Lopenzina brings the issue full circle with a criti-
cal review of the April 2014 reenactment of the wedding of Pocahon-
tas and John Rolfe, believed to have occurred at Jamestown, Virginia, in
April 1614, on the four hundredth anniversary of that (supposed) event.
Rather than write from the perspective of a performer, Lopenzina writes
from the complementary perspectives of a member of the witnessing
congregation-audience that attended the reenactment and a scholar of
US colonial literature and history. He is thus positioned to situate the
highly charged, contemporary performance of Pocahontas’s assent to
non-Native marriage—and all that she and that marriage have come to
stand for in settler culture—within their multiple historical, consumer,
and media contexts. In doing so, Lopenzina reveals the multiple ironies
of the ongoing idealization of Pocahontas in US settler culture and the
ongoing suppression of the reality of settler violence in both the past
and present. Like other performances of Indigenous identity within the
context of settler celebration, this version of an embodied Pocahontas
evokes not only her fascinating presence but also her inevitable absence.

Chadwick Allen
Inside the Machine

Indigeneity, Subversion, and the Academy

MICHAEL GREYEYES

This performative keynote address was originally performed on October 25, 2013, at Royal Holloway College/University of Notre Dame, London, UK, as part of the conference “In the Balance: Indigeneity, Performance, Globalization” organized by Helen Gilbert.

I once played Bromden.

Chief Bromden.

Created by Ken Kesey in his 1962 novel One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest and subsequently made into a play by Dale Wasserman, and then famously transformed into a film directed by Miloš Forman.

The image of this man, Will Sampson, is iconic. His portrayal of Chief Bromden in the film is legendary.

Interestingly, the work is known for the epic battle between the protagonist, R. P. McMurphy, and Nurse Ratched, but both the play and the book that inspired it featured Chief Bromden as the narrator. It is Bromden’s point of view that frames the entire journey of the men in the State Hospital and provides us with the portrait of McMurphy.

What is noteworthy here is that Bromden is crazy.
[There is a shift in the actor. Confusion clouds his eyes; he speaks in a huskier voice, clearly terrified.]

Papa? They’re foggin’ it in again. Somethin’ bad is gonna happen, so they’re foggin’ it in.

[The audience hears the sounds of machinery, grinding and metallic.]

There! You hear it, Papa? The Black Machine. They got it goin’ eighteen stories down below the ground. They’re puttin’ people in one end and out comes what they want. The way they do it, Papa, each night they tip the world on its side and everybody loose goes rattlin’ to the bottom. Then they hook ’em by the heels, and they hang ’em up and cut ’em open. Only by that time they got no innards, just some beat up gears and things. And all they bleed is rust. You think I’m ravin’ ‘cause it sounds too awful to be true, but my God, there’s such a lot of things that’s true even if they never really happen! (Wasserman 8)

[The image of Sampson fades. The actor continues as himself.]

When I saw the film as a young boy, I was drawn to Bromden. The only Indigenous character in the movie, the only brown face visible. Much like the situation I found myself in growing up in a white suburb of Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, in western Canada. Of course, my family was connected to our communities to the north and west of the city, in Battleford, Muskeg Lake, Prince Albert, Poundmaker, and Sweetgrass, but I found myself—like Bromden—surrounded by that which was not me.

[Sing-song.]

“One of these things is not like the other?”

Part of my early identity was framed by difference. This is a trope that I would return to again and again.

But in a weird twist, my journey brought me from Saskatchewan through the worlds of classical ballet, through Hollywood, and then for nearly eight years to northwestern Ohio. Middle America. And Kent State University, where I pursued my graduate degree.

The Theatre Department at Kent State ran Porthouse Theatre, a professional theater company that performed each summer at the Blossom Music
Center in the Cuyahoga Valley. In 2002 I was cast as Bromden—the six-and-a-half-foot Indian giant—in their remount of the Wasserman play.

I’m six-foot two-inches, 220 pounds. [Aside.] Nearly sixteen stone for you traditionalists.

And I was the only Indigenous person in my program.

[Beat.]

I believe I was a natural fit for the part.

Not simply because I look like the character. But, for a long time now, I’ve been inside the machine, too.

[As Bromden, but somewhat matter-of-factly, almost detached.]

There’s a shipment of frozen parts come in downstairs—hearts and kidneys and brains and the like. I can hear them rumble into cold storage down the coal chute. A guy sitting in the room someplace I can’t see is talking about a guy up on Disturbed killing himself. Old Rawler. Cut both his nuts off and bled to death, sitting right on the can in the latrine, half a dozen people in there with him didn’t know it till he fell off it to the floor, dead.

What makes people so impatient is what I can’t figure; all the guy had to do was wait. (Kesey 102–03)

[An urgent whisper!]

You’re inside the machine, too! But you just might not know it.

[The actor continues.]

Kesey’s novel distorts the traditional storytelling omniscient. We are conditioned to trust our narrators. They’ve been through it, we reason. They wouldn’t lie to us. But at least we know they’re sane. Bromden isn’t. His mind is full of hard, cruel images. The novel suggests where those images come from—his time in the army, from boarding school . . . [beat] from Maitland Street . . .

My school was an old Quaker church in the middle of downtown Toronto, 105 Maitland Street, near the area known as Cabbagetown. The National Ballet School—one of the world’s finest training centers for classical ballet.
It was here they taught me to speak. *En quoi. Devant. En arrière. Pizhal-sta.* “Lengthen your spine!” I learned their grammar and the aesthetics embedded in it: Symmetry. Refinement.

[Beat.]

Conformity.

I like to say that my cultural identity—my Indigenous one—was unimportant to them. It didn’t matter that I was brown. I wasn’t singled out. [With a sly smile.] They didn’t like any of us! And the technique was light years beyond the capacities of our young bodies. It was an unscalable mountain that we pitted ourselves against daily. Week after week. Month after month. Year after year.

In such a crucible, we were either forged with stainless steel spines and calloused feet, or we got melted down and shipped home.

[The image of the ballet school fades.]

Due entirely to the support of my family, I was successful. I graduated from the school in 1984 and danced with the National Ballet of Canada, then with the company of Eliot Feld in New York City. I danced on the great stages of the world: the Met, the National Arts Centre, the Royal Opera House. But outside the window of my profession, my chosen institution, another path beckoned.

[An image of the actor, as the character Tecumseh, from the PBS documentary film *Tecumseh’s Vision*, part of the landmark mini-series *We Shall Remain.*]

I believe that I was always an actor.

When I was a student at the ballet school, I’d tell people that I was not an actual dancer, but an actor involved in an eight-year performance art piece, in which I played a dancer.

I injured my leg, quite severely, in 1990 and had to take a year off from dancing. I stepped off the treadmill, got down out of my hamster-wheel.

It’s dangerous to give someone time to think.
It’s inevitable, really, that one begins asking questions. That’s why they got us runnin’. That’s why they extended the broadcast window for television. I remember when, in my country, the television channels—both of them—would go off the air at midnight. Grainy images of Mounties, the national anthem, the color bars.

The world quieted. The fog cleared. They don’t have to worry about that now.

The televisions never turn off. I email and get emailed in the middle of the night. We never sleep.

I remember one Christmas, Papa . . . here at the hospital. It was right at midnight and there’s a big wind and the door blows open whoosh! And here comes a fat man all dressed in red with a big white beard and moustache. “Ho ho ho,” he says, “like to stay but I must be hurryin’ along, very tight schedule you know.” Well, the Aides jumped him and pinned him down with their flashlights and gave him a tranquilizer and sent him right on up to Disturbed. They kept him six years, Papa, and when they let him go he was clean-shaved and skinny as a pole. (Wasserman 36)

Playing Bromden was very powerful for me. I understood his silences. I didn’t have to pretend that I was filling big shoes. Bromden believes he is a smaller, paler version of his father. I was performing in Sampson’s shadow. I got that smallness for nothing. But it was a focusing event for me. I’ve always played Indians. I don’t think I’ve ever been cast as anything else. I went back to university as a thirty-year-old actor to widen my craft and to engage with roles for which I would never reasonably be considered, given the issues of diversity in Hollywood. I went back for the classics: Shakespeare, Ibsen, Williams, among others. I didn’t really know what I was getting into.

And so, unbelievably, I paid to go back inside the Machine.

But my experience there was surprising. Extraordinary. Great professors: Rosemarie Bank, Terry Burgler, Yuko Kurahshi. I went to get a
practitioner’s degree, but it was the studies areas that caught me in their currents. Postcolonial theory, postmodernism. Derrida. Baudrillard. Foucault. Shohat. Stam.

My thesis was titled “Re-inventing the Indian: Subversive Performance in Film and Theatre.” Playing Bromden was a key part of my research. And I found myself caught between opposing forces: history, representation, cultural authenticity, and authentic performance—forces working against a naive approach to the role. In one scene the stage direction has Bromden drinking heavily during a party. I’ve been careful about denying to a predominantly white audience the image of myself, a brown man with long black hair, drinking heavily. Acting drunk.

Mmm. What to do? What to do?

In the end, I played the part as I felt he needed to be played. And my Bromden, in that scene, was the life of the party. Huge and bold and unafraid of what anyone would see or think.

He was free . . .

I was free.

And that peculiar journey took me back home to Canada, to York University. After I defended my thesis, I sent applications to twenty different schools. Only two responded [which I know is pretty fair in that job market], with York University in Toronto putting me on a short list. I drove up from Ohio to interview and taught a demo class.

Then the offer came: assistant professor, tenure track. Like many junior faculty, I literally had no idea what I was doing those first few years. I was the youngest person on the faculty. And I was the only brown face in my department. In the grand tradition of academe, I was saddled with one committee after the other, particularly the onerous ones that senior faculty had already cut their teeth on, years before. I was back on the wheel, runnin’ hard.

Midway through my tenure process, the world economy melted down, and a new breed of administrators moved into power at York and other institutions, at least they did so in Canada. They looked at the books scrupulously and asked why we were running in the red by several hundred thousand dollars per year.
Studio classes are expensive, they argued.

Small classes are a selling point, we countered! Our undergraduate reviews reflect this!

I have come to understand our short history in this way: Sometime in the 1950s or ’60s, practicing artists convinced the powers-that-be that fine arts can and should be taught at the university level.

And they got their open-toed sandals in the door.

And to be frank, it was great, and everyone came out ahead.

Fine arts practice and the methodologies used to teach it were approved by the Senates, and there was a tremendous demand for arts education. And universities were the better for it, especially when you could have serious-looking students holding cellos or standing at a ballet barre with their legs in developpé on the front covers of their brochures!

I mean, the Arts are great, just so long as the sons and daughters of the elites don’t end up actually doing it [in disbelief] for a living! But then in the middle of the recession, when the endowments began to run thin, the bean counters realized it was and always will be a money-losing proposition. It was time to kick the hippies out. They had a glorious run.

Whatever it was went haywire in the mechanism, they’ve just about got it fixed again. The clean, calculated arcade movement is coming back; six-thirty out of bed, seven into the mess hall, eight the puzzles come out for the Chronics and the cards for the Acutes . . . in the Nurses’ Station I can see the white hands of the Big Nurse float over the controls. (Kesey 140)

And so I joined with my colleagues in defending our programs, and the intentions of those programs, and their unspoken biases. Self-preservation was part of it certainly, but I honestly believed that our training, the basis of our curriculum, was worth saving. Then I was asked to teach a course on intercultural theater.

[The image of the white bars of light fades.]
I believe I was a natural fit for the part.

I had worked extensively with Native Earth Performing Arts, a major Indigenous theater company in the city. As well, most of the artists that we would study were my friends and peers, many of whom I had already worked with, or they had worked with my friends and collaborators. My *bona fides* for teaching such a course were exemplary. And for my students, having me, an Aboriginal man, at the front of the room, talking about colonialism, identity, the colonial gaze, and interculturalism gave my presentation of the material a clear urgency—an authenticity, if you will.

This raises an interesting point . . . I'll call it a flaw in the Machine. By asking me to teach something, I had to learn it well enough to impart it to others . . . And it politicized me radically. *[With eyebrow raised.]* It appears someone was asleep at the controls. Because this is what I began teaching them . . .

I borrowed from a brilliant reader titled *Theatre and Interculturalism*, written by my friend and colleague Ric Knowles. One afternoon, the students walked into the lecture hall to find these words projected on the screen:

**Whiteness Studies 101**  
Department of Caucasian Anthropology

*[Assuming the guise of an all-too earnest “Caucasian Anthropologist”—not a white anthropologist, but rather an anthropologist who studies Caucasians.]*

Good afternoon! Welcome to Whiteness Studies 101. My name is Michael Greyeyes. I'm an Associate Professor here in the Department of Caucasian Anthropology. My research includes Cultural Whiteness and White Dance Forms through History. I'm also a published author. Some of you may be familiar with my most recent publication: *What It Means to Be White*.

Now I'm sure you’ve noticed that I, myself *[placing a hand upon his chest], am not white. But please be assured that I have a great deal of expertise in this area. Not only do I have an MA and a PhD in Whiteness Studies, but my field work in this area is extensive. I have lived with White people my entire life. I have lived in their communities, worked alongside them. They’ve shared their sto-
ries, their mythologies. Opened their homes to me, initiated me
into theirs rituals, their ceremonies.

But this course examines far more than just this. We shall journey
to the very heart of Whiteness.

We shall ask: What is the unquestioned cultural frame?

Today’s lecture will cover The Culture of Whiteness, as well as
Whiteness as a Frame of Mind . . .

But let's begin with . . .

Significant Historical Events and Achievements of the White
People.

Starting with Architecture. Their influence on world architecture
is unquestioned.

[The lecturer changes slides, looking toward the screen behind him at the
Greek Parthenon against an impossibly blue sky.]

And where would we be, where would this venerable institution
be, without this invention?

[An early lithograph of two men standing at a printing press, with the caption:
The Gutenberg Galaxy Now Appears.]

White people initiated several cataclysmic social and economic
movements . . .

[A bleak charcoal drawing of a factory, with smoke spewing from the building’s
many stacks. A bridge in the foreground spans a river, undoubtedly polluted
and toxic, flowing before the factory. The caption reads: The Industrial
Revolution, 18th and 19th Centuries.]

As well as an array of ingenious devices . . .

[A drawing of a “Penny Farthing,” an early bicycle, with a gigantic front wheel
and small rear wheel.]

White people were intrinsically involved in various political
movements, including, for example, The French Revolution!

[He changes the slide, now showing Liberty Leading the People
by Eugène Delacroix, 1830.]
White culture has always celebrated the unique contributions of individuals, but it is when individuals come together, forming collectives and communities, that their achievements truly become remarkable.

This device [a 1950s tabletop radio flashes onto the screen] emerged from the work of many individual inventors, as did . . .

[We see a slide of the Hoover Dam, still under construction, with the caption Depression-Era Construction.]

And . . .

[We see a bright color advertisement for The Snuggie: a White woman lounges on her couch in a garishly red, fuzzy gown, reading a book, a tremendous smile on her face. An “As Seen on TV” sticker is emblazoned at the corner of the advert.]

[As the laughter of the audience subsides, the lecturer continues.]

In the first part of the semester, we’ll explore the rich and varied history of White People, their culture, population, society, law, and art.

[The next slide appears showing an oil painting of a Viking ship with rows of oars extending from its sides. A large caption above it reads Emigration. The lecturer regards the image.]

White people have an extensive history of emigration and settlement. There are White people on literally every continent in the world!

This is a picture of a typical White male.

[An aged silver-print image of a white man, circa late nineteenth century, with slicked hair, parted in the middle, and a huge, bushy handlebar mustache.]

Dance.

[An Edward Degas painting of two white ballerinas at the barre, replete with Romantic era tutus and satin pointe shoes.]

Music.

[An oil painting of J. S. Bach with a starched white wig, holding a piece of paper with bars upon bars of musical notation. We hear the strains of Baroque music.]
Aahhh. Marvelous. This music is so wonderfully complex. Beneath its driving and insistent rhythm lies a veritable symphony of musical lines, startling counterpoint, and invention.

[The music fades.]

But White people are not simply craftsmen and artists; they also enjoy a physical lifestyle in both organized sports and leisure activities.

[A sepia-toned photograph of four dashing white men from the 1920s, with knickers, cardigans, crisp white shirts, and ties. Reminding us of the “lifestyle” advertising from Hollister and Abercrombie & Fitch.] An example of their domestic life.

[Another color lithograph of a typical American family from the 1950s. A tall, blonde wife, a dark-haired husband in a suit jacket, with V-neck sweater and tie, three young boys with horizontal-striped shirts, and a young blonde girl in a pink dress, with white socks and black Mary Jane style shoes, in their kitchen, with an open fridge, packed with food. They’re all laughing. A small terrier-style dog appears to be barking merrily.] [Beat.] Of course, I would be remiss if I did not mention that NOT ALL the activities of White people contributed to the greater good.

[A stark, black-and-white image of Adolf Hitler riding in a car, saluting a seemingly endless column of his troops. The lecturer takes a moment to allow the unsettling and suddenly somber mood to lift.] Here is a typical White wedding.

[An image of the Royal Wedding of Prince William and Princess Kate, he in full regalia, she in a stunning gown, sitting in an open, horse-drawn carriage, beaming. Men on horseback can be seen riding alongside the carriage, their costuming equally resplendent. A big caption on the photo reads: White People.] [A new slide appears with the title: Deconstruction. The “Caucasian” lecturer is now put aside.] [The actor takes the audience through an unpacking of what they just witnessed, discussing:
Topsy-Turvy: a reversal of a typical lecture on “ethnography,” during which you became vividly aware of the lecturer’s identity and point of view;

The cultural frame was no longer “unquestioned,” no longer hidden;
it was, in fact, under scrutiny;

My frame of reference was Eurocentric (i.e., Europeans = White people);
Examples of European history, and by extension the European influence on American history;

Highly curated images;

Constricting the discussion of a complex array of phenomena, literally thousands of years of history, into a mere sixteen images;

A condensation/reduction of an incredibly diverse matrix into a monolithic statement of fact (e.g., “White people play golf”).

[A new slide appears.]

Whiteness Studies

Ric Knowles, further, adds “that whiteness studies reverses the ethnographic gaze, racializes whiteness, and investigates the invention of ‘normal.’” (Knowles 50)

It asks “where whiteness comes from, how it became the ordinary, neutral fallback position from which ‘others’ could be viewed and judged.” (Knowles 51)

[A final slide appears, asking the audience to remember . . .]

Whiteness . . . cannot be taken for granted as:
Neutral
Invisible
“Unmarked”

“Unaccountable” (Knowles 53)

[The final slide fades from the screen. The actor continues as Bromden.]

The glass came apart like water splashing, and the nurse threw her hands to her ears. He got one of the cartons of cigarettes with his name on it and took out a pack, then put it back and turned to where the Big Nurse was sitting like a chalk statue and very
tenderly went to brushing the slivers of glass off her head and shoulders.

“I’m sure sorry, ma’am,” he said. “Gawd but I am. That window glass was so spick and span I com-pletely forgot it was there.” It took just a couple of seconds. He turned and left her sitting there with her face shifting and jerking and walked back to the day room to his chair, lighting up a cigarette.

The ringing that was in my head had stopped. (Kesey 155)

The budget woes have not lessened at my institution; they’ve only gotten worse. But now my perspective has shifted, realigned itself. If this thing has to go down, then perhaps it’s time. It is, after all, 2013. Much has changed since these departments opened for business, and the rate of change today is very swift.

But while everyone else in my department was seemingly focused on the lack of funds, the hiring freeze, and other budgetary responses, I was looking at what we were teaching.

I brought my concerns to my colleagues, beginning with the “Origins Project.” This project was created to address the fact that our department had very little diversity in the curriculum—all Western, all white, all the time. “Origins” asked the participants to study a particular world culture, specifically its origins mythology, and to use it as a starting point for a collectively devised work. I had always thought the work that was produced was weak, in some cases embarrassingly so—but I had no vested interest in challenging it. After all, we produce—using Peter Brook’s definition—a lot of “deadly” theater in the Academy. But everything had changed for me, and in one meeting I just said it aloud: “It’s racist. We can’t let it continue in any way.”

The R-word.

Stunned silence is the best way I can describe the response. I felt obliged to continue, “We might as well call it the Colonial Project.” One of my colleagues ventured, with a frown, “How so? I don’t understand.” Well, I answered, it’s completely in line with the larger colonial movement, in which the West “mines” world cultures for their ideas, symbols, stories, natural resources, and even people for the West’s economic, political and cultural benefit.
Gulp.

It got axed.

But I couldn’t stop there. I began conversations about play choices, faculty hiring, and lack of diversity in the classrooms, in the hallways, in our department meetings—with anyone who would listen. Why was our department so white, in an institution that is so amazingly diverse?

It was interesting to see where my colleagues began aligning themselves. A few surprises certainly, but sides were created when I started to question canonicity. You see, when Whiteness is marked and its neutrality challenged, when the Emperor is told what’s up, the limits of tolerance become quite evident, quite quickly.

[Shocked.]

That guy is asking us to retool the factory! I’ve built my whole career on the use of this particular wrench. I mean, honestly, it seems late in the game to suggest such wholesale changes. Babies, bathwater, and all!

I teach movement to the actors in our conservatory. I teach Viewpoints improvisation, the vocal and physical technique of Tadashi Suzuki, the dance technique of Jose Limón, and until quite recently classical ballet. In a very recent meeting I announced I’d no longer be teaching it to the actors—ballet in a five-week module has always been a joke, even though I’m probably the best ballet teacher the department will ever have. It is also the most easily identifiable part of the Eurocentric canon and training platform upon which our department is founded.

And the interconnectedness of such a curriculum is pervasive. When I announced I’d no longer teach ballet, my colleagues questioned that choice, as ballet was a very good way to formalize our twenty-first-century-students’ bodies for their work investigating Restoration drama, for example. It’s one pin connected to the next, one bolt holding up the strut on which five other things are built. Pull that one pin, that one connector, and the whole thing is imperiled.

[Beat.]

Exactly.
I don’t understand why we are still doing Restoration drama at all. That’s personal preference, admittedly, but if Restoration drama should go the way of melodrama and Gregorian chanting, I won’t need to gather with friends to toast its demise. It’s why I left the National Ballet of Canada so many years ago. I understand intellectually the “enduring” power of the classics, but standing in a wig, with buckles on my high-heeled shoes and lace hanging in festoons from the cuffs of my shirt, didn’t seem to make all the years of grueling labor seem so necessary, seem relevant.

In fact, I’ve only just realized that I’m fracking my own department. I didn’t intend for this to be the case. I wasn’t lying when I joined the faculty, and for a long time now I have been waiting in the shadows to strike. But as I wrote this keynote, I realized that I am the “Indian” Manchurian Candidate. I didn’t know that I was meant to blow up my program! Or at least try. My true consciousness was buried, and then something triggered me, and the hijacker, the shooter was reawakened.

You see—I am Bromden.

I was hired to teach ballet, and my bona fides were impeccable. I was already broken. Reprogrammed. They’d hooked me by my heels long ago. And all I bled was rust.

My pedigree was unquestioned because it was borne from the so-called neutral and unmarked foundation from which my colleagues, themselves, had emerged. Imagine in my job interview for York, stating that my primary intention was to teach the students traditional Grass Dancing as the foundation for their physical work. I wouldn’t have been on the short list very long, no matter my skin color! The value or merit of classical ballet is unquestioned. Grass Dancing could produce many of the same benefits—stamina, flexibility, reducing unwanted tension in our students’ bodies—but it would not have reordered or reprogrammed them to stand around in fair Verona in the desired way.

Does my desire to do any of this betray the trust of my colleagues, many of whom I call friends? Does it denigrate their lifelong study and support of the canon? Does it negate and mock their wish to pursue it still, make it their practice?

My response comes from Ken Kesey.
In the novel, the moment when we realize that Bromden is beginning to heal, to stop that ringing in his head, is the night he finds himself alone, looking out through the bars of the hospital. [Underlined by the author for emphasis.]

Looked out the window and saw for the first time how the hospital was out in the country. The moon was low in the sky over the pastureland; the face of it was scarred and scuffed where it had been torn up out of the snarl of scrub oak and madrone trees on the horizon. The stars up close to the moon were pale; they got brighter and braver the farther they got out of the circle of light ruled by the giant moon. (Kesey 128)

For me the “stars” are the work and the art produced by the members of my community, their brilliance only apparent once I had removed myself from the false and glaring light of the Moon. By immersing myself in their processes, their protocols, their energy, I have begun a reawakening and a defogging. By doing so, I have reordered my canon.

At the top of the list come new works:

*Almighty Voice and His Wife* by Daniel David Moses,

*Pimootewin* by Tomson Highway,

*Tombs of the Vanishing Indian* by Marie Clements.

These are just a few of the works that I aspire to. This is the new canon, the new mountain I seek to climb. You could pay me a million dollars, and I still wouldn’t want to direct *Hamlet* . . . .

[He stops for a moment, actually realizing what he just said. Then with the air of a politician, backtracking at one hundred miles per hour, he continues more contritely.]

Okay, let me rephrase that.

*[Beat.]*

I’d *take* the million dollars, *certainly*, and then devise a new work about a small town! And then fund another fifty new works, for audiences starved for something else, anything else!
I am not alone in wanting to see the very foundation of the Academy shift. Both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students and artists want to see themselves, their interests, their politics reflected in the curriculum we offer. As one of my colleagues asked me in a recent meeting, if I no longer believe that this model can be sustained or championed—what do I suggest to replace it with? I said I didn't know, but that the discovery of that new path would excite me for the next twenty years.

In closing, I would like to recall the memory of Malcolm X. In his autobiography, he describes an all-too-brief engagement with Islam. For him to embrace Islam beyond the definitions and history of the Nation of Islam meant, I think, a slow unraveling of his hatred. In doing so, he moved toward a richer, more complex understanding of his religion and his purpose as a human being.

For me, there is a significant parallel—I've lived for a long time in the Machine—and this, too, has required a slow unraveling of the colonial mentality, extricating myself . . .

[with a growing fierceness]

. . . from its grammar, its narrowness, and its arrogance.

[He regards the audience intensely.]

I played Bromden once . . .

and that was their first mistake.

[The actor, finally free, steps back from the podium.]

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author wishes to thank Ken Kesey and Dale Wasserman, whose work I have quoted liberally in this address, as well as Ric Knowles, whom I also quoted in my Whiteness lecture and wish to thank for his role in my reawakening. I also thank Helen Gilbert for inviting me to present this keynote address.
WORKS CITED

Forman, Miloš, dir. *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest*. United Artists, 1975. Film.
“I wanted to watch my father, because, as I have said before, he was my ideal” (79). This passage—from Luther Standing Bear’s autobiography *My People the Sioux* (1928)—refers to a moment in Luther Standing Bear’s childhood as he watched his father prepare to capture wild horses. Standing Bear’s sentiment—that his father was his “ideal”—permeates his autobiography as he recounts his childhood, boarding school experience, and postschool life. In fact, *My People the Sioux* underscores the centrality of Standing Bear’s relationship with his father and its role in the shaping of his Lakota manhood as he negotiated the challenges of the dominant culture and its gender expectations as it worked to “civilize” Natives through such policies as the Allotment Act of 1887 and the creation of Federal boarding schools. ¹ Though white advocates of assimilation expected Natives to be fully compliant to Euro-American gender norms, Natives themselves often had a more complicated response to this goal. Such is the case with the Lakota writer Luther Standing Bear, who worked to find ways to maintain traditional Lakota male gender norms as he adjusted to the historical force of assimilation. Though assimilationist policies and institutions often caused devastating psychological trauma on Natives, particularly on boys and girls who attended boarding schools, Luther Standing Bear was not traumatized by his boarding school experience at the Carlisle Indian Industrial School. For Standing Bear the key to maintaining this psychological stability was his close identification with his father. *My People*, in fact, is carefully structured to first establish how Standing Bear absorbed Lakota masculine norms from his father before he was immersed in Euro-American culture. As the narrative progresses and Standing Bear describes his transition to and education at Carlisle, he describes how his father continued to play
a key role in how he measured himself as a Lakota man, a dynamic that continued throughout his life. As My People illustrates, Standing Bear’s relationship with his father provided the cultural anchor that allowed him to proactively sustain a distinctly Lakota manhood despite the pressures of assimilation efforts on the part of Euro-America. My People the Sioux is carefully designed to appeal to the sensibilities of a white readership, as Ryan Burt and Daniel Moos have both argued. Burt states that Standing Bear’s central goal in the narrative is to dispel white stereotypes of Natives as bloodthirsty savages (629). According to Moos, Standing Bear takes liberties with his early life in order to idealize Lakota life before “contact” to appeal to his white audience’s romantic conceptions of Plains Indians and to portray himself as someone who has successfully “bridged the gap of pre-contact and post-contact culture” (189). I argue, however, that Standing Bear’s autobiography is also a window into how the transition into the “post-contact” era was not necessarily a one-way street for Native peoples. His idealization of his life under the tutelage of his father is constructed to underscore how Standing Bear’s manhood was not only shaped by Lakota cultural expectations before “contact,” but also how his upbringing prepared him to negotiate the “post-contact” world in accordance with those expectations.

As a student at Carlisle, Standing Bear was subjected to a curriculum that was designed to eradicate any vestige of Native cultural identity. Specifically, the superintendent of the school, Captain Richard Henry Pratt, hoped that “[i]n an isolated institutional setting, [he could] destroy what he termed ‘savage languages,’ ‘primitive superstitions,’ and ‘uncivilized cultures,’ replacing them with work ethics, Christian values, and the white man’s civilization. In sum, Pratt created Carlisle as a space to take ‘the savage-infant to the surroundings of civilization’” (Trafzer, Keller, and Sisquoc, “Origin” 13). Though eradicating “savagery” was the goal of Indian boarding schools such as Carlisle, Native children did not necessarily succumb to this assault on their respective heritages. As David Wallace Adams explains, the success of the assimilation process at boarding schools was not seamless; rather, “the acculturation process itself could involve various forms of selective incorporation, syncretization, and compartmentalization, . . . for Indian students were anything but passive recipients of the curriculum of civilization” (Education 335). And based on her analysis of boarding school student writings, Amelia V. Katanski argues that “[a]lthough they did not possess unlimited
freedom to self-identity, or to be simultaneously utterly traditional and utterly assimilated, most of these students had some degree of agency to choose when and how to exercise various identities within their repertoires” (8), including their gender identities as boarding schools worked to regender Native children in accordance with the norms of the dominant culture.

In keeping with Euro-American gender expectations, boys at the schools were taught to be laborers or agriculturalists, and in classic Victorian fashion Native girls were taught to be homemakers, seamstresses, domestic workers, or perhaps teachers.4 As Renya K. Ramirez writes, “The boarding schools’ purpose [. . .] was to insert patriarchy into tribal communities and to socialize children to believe in patriarchal gender norms” of Euro-America (28). Adams writes that “[w]hen [the boarding school experience] was all over, the onetime youthful specimens of savagism would be thoroughly Christianized, individualized, and republicanized, fit candidates for American citizenship” (“Beyond” 36) as proper Victorian men and women. In the case of Native males, once they graduated and returned to their respective reservations, it was expected that they would leverage their individual skills to compete in the market economy as heads of their nuclear families. As Joel Pfister has argued, Euro-American methods to “kill the Indian” to “save the man” meant that for Native boys, “[m]anliness was scripted in exclusively capitalist terms: competing in the marketplace, laboring in prescribed fashion at particular occupations, and supporting oneself independent of the government. No other cultural invention of manhood was credited” (Pfister 62).5 Pfister may be technically correct that no other version of manhood “was credited,” but Standing Bear’s My People the Sioux illustrates that other options could be exercised.

Luther Standing Bear’s narrative is compelling for what it suggests about the complex ways in which many male Native students may have maintained elements of a traditional gender identity despite the enormous pressures of assimilation. In making this claim, I do not mean to make a sweeping generalization about how Native boys in the late nineteenth century reacted to their boarding school experiences. After all, “Native Americans, past and present, assess the boarding school experience differently, but many themes emerge that offer an introduction into the student’s world in transition from reservation life to the institutionalization at boarding schools” (Trafzer, Keller, and Sisquoc, “Origin”
17), which in Standing Bear’s case means that he leveraged his understanding of Lakota gender expectations to frame and shape himself in his transition from a traditional Lakota upbringing to the expectations of Carlisle. In fact, in large part the first twelve chapters of My People the Sioux are framed to illustrate the formation—under his father’s guidance—of Standing Bear’s Lakota manhood, which in turn frames how to read Standing Bear’s boarding school experience. Standing Bear’s “father played a tremendously significant role in My People” in terms of “authenticating” his Lakota identity for his white audience, as Ryan Burt has pointed out (630), but I argue that his father also played a key role in Standing Bear’s successful negotiation of his boarding school experiences as a Lakota adolescent, an experience that for many Native boys was traumatizing. His close identification with his father, who, through example and ritual, carefully transmitted Lakota gender expectations to his son, gave Standing Bear the tools to not only reframe his experiences at Carlisle through a Lakota lens, but also to establish a distinctly Lakota identity in his post-Carlisle years.

The centrality of Standing Bear’s father as his masculine ideal is established from the first pages of My People. After briefly explaining the context of his birth in the first two paragraphs of the narrative, Standing Bear devotes the next section of the first chapter to recounting his father’s “coup tale,” and how his achievement led to the acquisition of his father’s name, “Standing Bear.” For Plains Indians “counting coup on the enemy was considered a great act of bravery” (Thom 53). Hertha Dawn Wong explains, “On returning from battle with fellow warrior-witnesses to vouch for his words, the warrior would narrate his martial accomplishments to his community. This was a way to keep the community informed about its warriors and for the narrator to articulate his personal experience and his new standing in the tribe” (26), and a means by which a Native man affirmed his masculine identity (see Thom 24). In his recollection of his father’s coup tale Luther Standing Bear explains that in a skirmish with the Pawnee, his father and other warriors touched a Pawnee, who in turn wounded all the men. According to Standing Bear, as the first to touch the Pawnee warrior, his father recalled, “[a]t the next council Chief Two Strikes proposed me as a chief, because I was brave enough to face the enemy, even if that enemy was ready to shoot me. So I was accepted and elected as a chief under the name of ‘Standing Bear’” (6). Standing Bear’s recollection of his father’s
deed—an implicit validation of his father’s Lakota manhood—is powerful in and of itself as a marker of Standing Bear’s respect for his father.

But chapter 1 is also designed to ground Standing Bear’s Lakota masculine lineage, a lineage that he will honor through his own actions. After his father’s coup story, Standing Bear explains how his father gave him a gift of bows and arrows and then taught him how to use them. Standing Bear writes, “Some day, [my father] said, he would like to see me go on the war-path and earn my own credits. So I kept my bow and arrows near me all the time, as it told of my father’s bravery, of which I was very proud, as every one in camp knew my father had been wounded in battle” (9). The bow and arrow is quite literally a symbol of Standing Bear’s father’s expectations for him as a man—to honor the gift is to honor his father’s manhood, a manhood he is expected to replicate.

When Standing Bear uses his bow and arrow successfully to shoot a bird, his father once again honors his growth toward manhood by giving away a horse. The story is then followed by a tale of Standing Bear’s participation in a deer hunt with other boys, which proves successful when one of the boys shoots a deer. Given that “‘Ota Kte,’ or ‘Plenty Kill’” (Standing Bear’s name as a boy) participated in the hunt, his father has the “camp crier” announce that Standing Bear “had brought home his first meat,” and he gives away yet another “pony.” The chapter concludes with Standing Bear remarking, “My father felt so proud of me that he was happy to do this” (12). The ritual of the “give away” not only honors Standing Bear but also signals his future Lakota male role as a provider who will practice generosity as a masculine virtue (Brave Heart 179). As the Yankton writer Ella Deloria underscores in her Speaking of Indians, which details the devastating effects of the reservation system on Dakota culture, males who practiced generosity and self-sacrifice were held in high regard by the community (68). And as she writes in her ethnographic novel Waterlily, these virtues were “what men lived by,” for their “social standing and reputation hinged on it” (32).

The first chapter, then, both begins and ends with stories that affirm acts and virtues of Lakota manhood. That Standing Bear begins his autobiography and devotes the first chapter to Lakota manhood—a manhood that is modeled by his father and his father’s validation of Standing Bear’s own manhood—underscores the importance of masculinity to Standing Bear, as well as provides a lens through which to understand the trajectory of the autobiography. That is, My People the
Sioux is a carefully crafted remembrance of Standing Bear’s boyhood that works to firmly establish his identity as grounded in Lakota expectations of manhood as he leads up to his carefully scripted description of his departure for Carlisle.

Indeed, as Standing Bear continues to detail his traditional upbringing as a Lakota male in the early chapters, he makes explicit references to “manhood” in order to underscore the stakes of his relationship with his father—for instance, remarking, “One day, when I was playing outside, my father called for me. I went home with him, and he gave me a horse and all the things necessary to make a man of me” (28). Standing Bear also devotes a chapter to his first buffalo hunt, which, like his first hunt as a child, is symbolically framed by his father’s gift of a new bow and arrows for the hunt (60). After this tale Standing Bear states: “[M]y father always talked to me as if I were a man. Of course, I now felt that I was big enough to do a man’s work” (61). The centrality of his father’s validation of his identity is again underscored when Standing Bear remarks that his father “was so pleased that I had tried to do my best” after coming upon Standing Bear as he was skinning a buffalo (65).

Structured around his relationship with his father, chapter 7 is in part devoted to Standing Bear’s first experience on a war party, another key ritual in the formation of Lakota manhood, one that symbolized his initiation as one of the tribe’s “Wiscasa was ak” or “strong men,” responsible for protecting the tribe (Brave Heart 179). In preparation for a raid on the Ponca, Standing Bear recalls that his father told him, “Son, I wanted you to come with me, because I wanted you to do something of great bravery or get killed on the battlefield,” and he goes on to explain that he wants Standing Bear to ride into the Ponca camp unarmed, carrying only a long stick (75–76). His father continues that after a man comes out of his lodge, “Touch that man with your stick, then ride through the camp as fast as your horse can run. I will be behind you, and, if you pass through without any harm, you will be the youngest man that has ever done such a thing, and I will be proud of you” (76). If Standing Bear were to “fall in their midst,” he must “keep [his] courage” (77). He finishes with, “That is the way I want you to die. I will be with you, my son” (76). According to Standing Bear, this moment had a powerful impact on him. He explains, “This made my heart beat so loud I could hear it, and the tears came into my eyes; but I was willing to do my father’s bidding, as I wanted so much to please him” (76). As it turns out, the
raid was called off, and Standing Bear was prevented from acting on his father’s request, which made Standing Bear feel “ashamed for having to turn back without even seeing an enemy from a distance,” and that he “had to go home without having taken a chance of getting killed” (76–77). In the latter part of the chapter, subtitled “Wild Horses,” the depth of Standing Bear’s identification with his father is underscored repeatedly. Preparing to capture wild horses, Standing Bear remarks, “I was watching every move he made. I noticed that every little while he would whip up his running-horse, to ‘warm him up,’ as a white man would express it. Whenever my father did this, I imitated him” (78). Later he writes, “I was not paying much attention to what the other riders were doing, as I wanted to watch my father, because, as I have said before, he was my ideal” (79). The chapter concludes with, “Even though I never had the opportunity of catching any wild horses, I can at least say that I know how it is accomplished. It was my father’s wish that I learn all about our people and their way of living, and to learn all I could while I was young” (81). The broad cultural knowledge—a knowledge that is passed from father to son—is at the same time a knowledge that is in large part framed by his father, Standing Bear’s “ideal” of Lakota manhood.

The chapter that bridges Standing Bear’s “pre” and “post-contact” years and codifies the masculine ideals passed from father to son is devoted to an ethnography of the Sun Dance. At the beginning of this chapter Standing Bear claims that he witnessed what was perhaps the last Sun Dance ever held, an event that occurred “[a]s [he] started for Carlisle Indian School in the fall of 1879” (113). That Standing Bear explicitly links the Sun Dance to his departure for Carlisle is crucial to understanding his transition to Carlisle and its impact on his masculinity. In one sense, the “last” Sun Dance can be read as an explicit symbol signaling the end of Standing Bear’s traditional life—and by extension his role as a male in that life—given that the Sun Dance was the most important and sacred ceremony in Lakota culture. At the same time, this strategically placed chapter implicitly affirms the extensive lessons he had learned about Lakota manhood through his relationship with his father. Standing Bear calls the dance a “sacrificial” act to “Wakan Tanka” (113), an act that renews the Lakota people and their interdependent relationship with the land and cosmos. Penelope Myrtle Kelsey writes, “It is anpetu wi [the masculine principle] who is celebrated each August in the Sun Dance” (94). Standing Bear describes in detail the Sun Dance
rituals that affirm Lakota masculinity. He explains how once the site of the Sun Dance was selected, warriors would “attack” the site through an “imitation charge on the camp” (114), perform acts of “coup” after the selection of the sacred pole (115–16), and “attack” an “effigy of a man made from the limbs of trees” (116). Standing Bear witnessed the culmination of the Sun Dance when male warriors would have their breasts pierced by bone, which were then attached by rawhide to the sacred pole. As Standing Bear remarks, “friends or relatives of the young brave would sing and praise him for his courage” as he danced to “tear out the wooden pin fastened through his breasts” (121). The ultimate goal of the Sun Dance is for warriors to display their willingness to courageously sacrifice themselves for the community—a key marker of Lakota masculinity. Standing Bear concludes this chapter, “As I have many times related in my story, I always wanted to be brave, but I do not think I could ever have finished one of these Sun Dances” (122). That Standing Bear points out that he “always wanted to be brave” echoes the masculine values transmitted to him by his father, and sets the stage for his description of his time at Carlisle. His gesture of doubt about his own ability to participate in the ritual at first glance might seem to reflect his own unease about his masculinity. But this passage is very much in keeping with Lakota masculine virtue in that it affirms that Standing Bear is properly humble. At the same time, the passage does not foreclose the possibility that Standing Bear would be capable of enduring the ritual given that he, as he will show his readers, has affirmed what he sees as his distinctly Lakota masculine achievements in his life subsequent to witnessing the Sun Dance.

As My People unfolds, Standing Bear transposes this knowledge to his new setting in Euro-American culture to counter any notion that his transition to boarding school life meant that he was blindly subscribing to Richard Pratt’s goal of “killing the Indian to save the man” at Carlisle. Standing Bear’s narrative, in fact, is similar in its goals to that of other Native writers of the era such as Charles Alexander Eastman. As Erik Peterson argues, in his writings Eastman worked to create cultural continuity between his traditional Native upbringing (in this case Dakota) and Euro-American culture (150), an argument that is also made by Kelsey, who writes that “Eastman had a specific agenda in terms of asserting Indigenous equality and Dakota nationhood in the face of assimilation” (45). In terms of Eastman’s assertion of Dakota masculinity in particular, I
have argued elsewhere (Bayers) that he maintained his Dakota masculine identity by creating parallels between Dakota masculine norms and those of the Euro-American culture. Similarly, Standing Bear’s notion of what it meant to be Lakota was not intrinsically tied to a static notion of culture; rather, Standing Bear worked carefully to frame his experiences within Euro-American culture through what Kelsey would argue is a distinctly “tribal worldview,” which is to say “a way of knowing and understanding predicated upon an identifiable number of qualities specific to a tribal group” (12). Importantly, “these qualities” can “change and transform over time” but are still “unique” to that tribe (12).

As Standing Bear describes the process through which he decided to attend Carlisle, he is careful to link this transitional moment to his relationship with his father. Recalling the context of his decision to go east, Standing Bear recounts an encounter he had with some white men and a white woman, and how an “interpreter told us [Standing Bear and a friend] if we would go East . . . [we could] learn the ways of the white man” (124), which he disparagingly frames as little more than “‘sweet talk,’ especially when these interpreters were paid by the Government for talking” (124). Challenging any notion that his decision to go east was predicated on his rejection of Lakota manhood, Standing Bear continues: “My mind was working in an entirely different channel. I was thinking of my father, and how he had many times said to me, ‘Son, be brave! Die on the battle-field if necessary away from home. It is better to die young than to get old and sick and then die.’ When I thought of my father, and how he had smoked the pipe of peace, and was not fighting any more, it occurred to me that this chance to go East would prove that I was brave if I were to accept it” (124). But Standing Bear’s decision as to whether to act on his desire must be sanctioned by his father, who, along with Standing Bear, meets with the party of whites and the interpreter. His father asks him whether he wants to go east, to which he replies yes, after which they depart for home. During this journey, his father remains silent, and Standing Bear questions whether his father fully approves of his desire, as he wonders whether his father thinks he will “betray” “my own people” (125). Whatever misgivings he may have had, Standing Bear’s father nonetheless performs a ritualized act of a giveaway to sanction Standing Bear’s departure for Carlisle. As Standing Bear writes, his father “invited all the people who lived near by to come to his place” (125), a dry goods store that his father owned.
“He got all the goods down off the shelves in his store and carried them outside. Then he brought in about seven head of ponies. When all the people were gathered there, he gave away all these things because I was going away East. I was going with the white people, and perhaps might never return; so he was sacrificing all his worldly possessions” (125). That Standing Bear’s father honors him with a giveaway as he prepares to depart for Carlisle explicitly links this moment to the other giveaways of his “pre-contact” upbringing recounted earlier in the narrative, moments that signified masculine achievement as Standing Bear was tutored in the roles and values of Lakota manhood. This moment clearly signifies that Standing Bear’s impending description of his journey east was to be filtered through a Lakota cultural lens, one that would reinforce his male role in Lakota culture.

As a result, it is not surprising that on one of the early stages of his journey east—a steamboat ride—Standing Bear recalls, “It did not occur to me at that time that I was going away to learn the ways of the white man. My idea was that I was leaving the reservation and going to stay away long enough to do some brave deed, and then come home again alive” (128). Once again, his perspective is specifically framed by his father’s teachings. Standing Bear remarks, “If I could do just that, then I knew my father would be so proud of me” (128). Standing Bear reinforces his father’s teachings in his description of his arrival at Carlisle. He again explains that his trip east was to illustrate his bravery to his fellow Lakota (135). Later he recounts a scene in which he and his fellow students are to select an Anglo name listed on the blackboard that will be sewn on the back of their shirts. Standing Bear explains that “[w]hen my turn came, I took the pointer and acted as if I were about to touch an enemy” (137), a moment that parallels his father’s coup tale at the beginning of My People. As Amelia V. Katanski points out, this gesture is “an assertion of Lakota identity in a threatening moment” (12), or more to the point, it is an “assertion” of Standing Bear’s Lakota masculinity.

Up to this section of the narrative, Standing Bear describes his relationship with his father—and the lessons he internalized from him—confidently, clearly affirming their relationship and its lessons. However, in a moment of seeming crisis that undermines his father’s teachings, Standing Bear describes his feelings when his hair is cut by the Carlisle barber:

Right here I must state how this hair-cutting affected me in various ways. I have recounted that I always wanted to please my
father in every way possible. All his instructions to me had been along this line: “Son, be brave and get killed.” This expression had been moulded into my brain to such an extent that I knew nothing else.

But my father had made a mistake. He should have told me, upon leaving home, to go and learn all I could of the white man’s ways, and be like them. That would have given me a new idea from a different slant; but Father did not advise me along that line. I had come away from home with the intention of never returning alive unless I had done something very brave.

Now, after having had my hair cut, a new thought came into my head. I felt that I was no more Indian, but would be an imitation of a white man. And we are still imitations of white men. (141)

If taken at face value, this passage marks the moment in which Standing Bear is cut off from any semblance of Lakota manhood. His father, the key figure in the development of Standing Bear’s male Lakota identity, has seemingly failed Standing Bear as he is abruptly “no more Indian” to the point that his new masculine identity is little more than an “imitation of a white man.” Given his deep emotional relationship with his father, a relationship predicated on shaping the very core of Standing Bear’s identity as a Lakota man, one might expect this moment to have traumatized him. Standing Bear recovers from this moment, however, by continuing to closely identify with his father’s traditional teachings while simultaneously claiming that “we are still imitations of white men.”

After this passage, Standing Bear quickly recuperates his relationship with his father by situating him within the arc of progressive ideology. Standing Bear remarks, “I now began to realize that I would have to learn the ways of the white man. With that idea in mind, the thought also came to me that I must please my father as well” by becoming his interpreter, or by being his father’s bookkeeper at his store (147). Standing Bear then recounts his father’s visit to Carlisle, explaining that when his father arrived, all the boys at the school enthusiastically greeted him to the point that Standing Bear “had to fight my way through to reach him. He was glad to see me, and I was so delighted to see him” (149). During the visit, his father explained to Standing Bear that he wanted his son to “learn all [he] can” and that he “will see that your brothers and sisters follow in the path that you are making for them,” and that he
wanted him to “speak like these Long Knife people, and work like them” (151–52). To this, Standing Bear comments, “This was the first time my father had ever spoken to me regarding acquiring a white man’s education,” relieving any anxiety he had about failing his father. He claims: “it meant so much to me. He was so serious in his conversation along this line that I felt quite ‘puffed up’” (152). In his father’s validation of his education, this moment might be initially read as his father’s—and Standing Bear’s—final capitulation to Carlisle’s goal of shaping Native boys to fit Anglo masculine norms.

But this section of the narrative, as it turns out, does not simply register a “before and after” transformation in Standing Bear’s masculine identity. At the same time that he met the gender expectations of Carlisle, he still very much defined himself within Lakota cultural norms, a definition that remains codified through his relationship with his father. For instance, following his father’s approval of his education at Carlisle, central tropes of Lakota masculinity continue to be repeated as the narrative progresses, and they are carefully connected to Standing Bear’s identification with his father. For example, Standing Bear recalls that his father made him feel “puffed up,” and he remarks, “I wanted to please him in everything—even to getting killed on the battlefield. Even that I was willing to endure” (156). And soon after, Standing Bear recounts the story of how Chief Spotted Tail visited the school, and upon his return home he was murdered. Standing Bear remembers, “Of course we imagined he had been killed by the white people, and we began to think of war again. The big boys told us, ‘If the Indians go on the war-path now, we will all be killed at this school’” (156), to which Standing Bear reflected, “However, this suited me, as I was willing to die right there, just as I had promised when leaving home” (157). Standing Bear then explains that it was in truth a fellow Lakota who killed Spotted Tail, but he nonetheless concludes the chapter: “Sometimes we felt that we were in a very tight place, miles from our homes, and among white people, where we felt that at the least show of trouble we would all be killed; but we were always ready” (160). At another point, Lakota masculine values are reinforced when Standing Bear explains that the secretary of the interior visited the school, and that the secretary asked if the students, as promised, would like to return home after their three years at Carlisle. According to Standing Bear, “I did not raise mine [my hand]. I would like to have done so, but the words of my father seemed to come
to me: ‘Son, learn all you can of the ways of these Long Knives (white people) as they are so thick in our country.’ So I wanted to be brave and stay to please my father” (174), a sentiment he repeats on the following page, when he writes that he “was determined to be brave and ‘stick it out’” at Carlisle (175). As Standing Bear’s recollections underscore, his father’s traditional teachings about Lakota manhood were central to how he understood himself as he negotiated his schooling.

Though I read his school experiences under Pratt as an affirmation of his relationship with his father, Lucy Maddox has argued that the presence of Pratt in Standing Bear’s life posed a problem for him in his relationship with his father. Maddox writes, “What distinguishes his Carlisle narrative from other boarding school reminiscences is Standing Bear’s focus on the problem that seemed to worry him most—figuring out how to please, simultaneously, two men (who could hardly have been more different from each other) whom he admired and whose approval he very much desired: his father and Richard Pratt” (156). Maddox argues that Standing Bear saw his attendance at Carlisle “as an actual form of betrayal of his father” (156). At the same time, of course, Standing Bear’s betrayal of his father would have meant a betrayal of the values of Lakota manhood. While there’s no question that Standing Bear was concerned that he was betraying his father, given his need for his father’s validation of his decision to attend Carlisle, I argue that Standing Bear’s portrayal of Pratt carefully situates Pratt within his father’s teachings in order to counteract any notion that this was ever the case.

For example, Standing Bear explains that after he volunteered to remain at Carlisle, Pratt “then complimented me on my bravery in remaining to learn more” (175). Standing Bear then explains that Pratt arranged to have him work for famed Philadelphia department store owner John Wanamaker. Pointing to the stereotype of Native men as “lazy,” Pratt stated to Standing Bear, “Now you are going to prove that the red man can learn and work as well as the white man” (178, original emphasis). According to Standing Bear, Pratt later remarked, “Go, my boy, and do your best. Die there if necessary, but do not fail” (179). He even goes as far as to remark that at one point, “[e]very thought that passed through my mind seemed to end in that expression of Captain Pratt’s: ‘To die there if necessary’” (179–80). Standing Bear’s bravery in the face of death, imagined throughout the text as an extension of his father’s teachings about Lakota manhood, was seemingly co-opted by
his white mentor, Pratt. But it is difficult to imagine that Pratt—whose stated goal was to eradicate any vestiges of Native cultures—would have encouraged Standing Bear to imagine his impending journey to Philadelphia within the discourse of Lakota masculinity. Rather, I argue that Standing Bear’s depiction of Pratt is a rhetorical maneuver designed to insert Pratt within the recognizable discourse taught by his father. In other words, Standing Bear is not concerned about betraying his father by following Pratt’s desires when he goes to Wanamaker’s; he is in fact once again extending his father’s precepts as he negotiates the challenges of learning and working within Euro-American society. If there’s any question that Standing Bear was simply following Pratt’s wishes and not following his role as a Lakota male, he writes that following Pratt’s supposed words, “I felt as if I should burst out crying. I was not so brave that night, after all. If I had not cared for my race, all the strong impressions would have had no effect upon me, but the thought of working for my race brought tears to my eyes. You must remember that I was just a small boy at that time” (179). As this passage’s strategic location underscores, the decision to work at Wanamaker’s was clearly not about following Pratt’s desires; rather, in keeping with the values of Lakota manhood, Standing Bear’s actions are measured by their ability to serve his fellow Lakota, a virtue central to Lakota manhood.

His father’s approval of his education signals that Standing Bear had the license to extend the parameters of Lakota manhood despite the demands of progressive ideology or, if need be, he could “wear” multiple identities depending on the context. To “imitate” the white man, in other words, speaks to Standing Bear’s keen awareness of the constructed nature of identity. As Moos writes, “he is an imitation of white man, yet he is not white” (191). To Moos this trope reveals that “Standing Bear becomes less of an authentic individual identity and more of a trope,” even in his construction of himself as “Indian,” which is to say that he is doing little more than performing Indianness to meet his white audiences’ expectations (191). But I argue that Standing Bear’s remark that he was “no more Indian” is not an acknowledgment of some kind of performative inauthenticity; rather, it is his recognition that his pre–boarding school male self is no longer sustainable in its “old form.” Nonetheless, as his sentiments about his courageous readiness for death underscore, he can still adhere to recognizable masculine expectations of his Lakota tribal worldview as they are transposed to this new context.
In his assertion of Lakota manhood through his relationship with his father, Standing Bear was not without what one might argue are contradictions. As Standing Bear explains in his chapter 20, “Trouble at the Agency,” the Lakota debated whether they should accept the tenets of the Allotment Act, the goal of which was to give each male Native the opportunity to embrace the values of private property by farming his land and provide for his nuclear family. In accepting allotment Lakota males risked relinquishing their ties to their Lakota gender identity for, as Thomas Biolosi points out, they would “be forced to conform to a certain minimum definition of modern individuality. In this way, [Lakota males] would be constituted as social persons who could fit into the American nation-state and the market system of metropolitan capitalism” (30). Standing Bear explains that most Lakota leaders were against allotment, but that his father argued in its favor. According to Standing Bear, he was proud that his father was the first to sign the treaty (215–16). At the beginning of the following chapter Standing Bear goes as far as to say, “From the day my father signed the treaty, we all began to realize that we were to have something given us which was to be our own—and the thought of ownership gives any one a higher appreciation of life, regardless of how little that ownership may be” (217). And of course his various occupations, all of which he embraced—salaried teacher on the reservation, owner of a general store at Rosebud, rancher, performer with Buffalo Bill, Hollywood actor—seem to be straightforward examples of a manhood defined by “capitalist terms.”

Yet for Standing Bear’s father, and Standing Bear in turn, how Lakota manhood was shaped was not an either/or proposition as they faced the historical reality of assimilation through such policies as allotment. As the ceremony in which Standing Bear became an Oglala Chief illustrates, he—and according to his account his fellow Lakota—did not see his life as contradictory as he continued to ground his masculine identity upon his father’s example. Standing Bear recalls:

One of the old men then arose and recounted many interesting incidents about my father; what a brave man he had been, and not afraid to stand up for his people, but had fought for their rights.

Another of the old chiefs then spoke to me. He said, “We have made you chief because we feel that you will be able to take the place of your father.” He then told me all that the people would expect of me, and for me to do all I could for the sake of my people.
I told them I did not expect ever to be as great a man as my father had been, but that I would do all in my power to help my people at all times, regardless of where I might be. That was the oath I took when I became chief of the Oglala Sioux, the greatest Indian tribe in the United States.

The chiefs then began to sing a brave song, and all got up to dance. Now that I was one of them, I had to dance with them. (274)

The memorial to his father reinscribes Standing Bear’s deep identification with Lakota masculinity as represented by his father and his bravery, as well as his father’s dedication and sacrifice for his fellow Lakota. In what might at first seem ironic, Standing Bear’s allusion to his father’s commitment to “his people” references his father’s role in advocating on behalf of the Lakota in Washington, where, according to Standing Bear, he went frequently to “explain what was wanted for the benefit of the Sioux Nation” (168–69), which in his case meant asking for resources so the Lakota could farm their allotments. In other words, Standing Bear Sr. is praised by his fellow Lakota and Standing Bear for promoting a policy that was, from the perspective of the US government, antithetical to Lakota values. But this section of the narrative suggests that from Standing Bear’s perspective, adhering to allotment did not mean that a Lakota male was abandoning any semblance of Lakota manhood. If from the perspective of the US government allotment meant the erasure of the Lakota manhood as individual men worked to benefit themselves and their nuclear families only, to the Lakota an individual man’s success as a farmer meant nothing unless the entire tribe benefited as a whole from farming practices. Standing Bear’s becoming a chief is hardly a celebration of his conversion to Euro-American manhood; rather, it signals that his masculine achievement is consistent with the tenets of Lakota culture, a culture that was (and is) not frozen in time.

In the ensuing years, Standing Bear’s commitment not only to the preservation of Lakota masculinity but also—as his Land of the Spotted Eagle (1933) illustrates—Lakota culture in its entirety, became more radicalized. Standing Bear had spent considerable time away from Pine Ridge, moving to Hollywood in 1912 to act in motion pictures. His perspective regarding assimilation polices was upended in 1931 when, sixteen years after his last visit to Pine Ridge, he returned home from Hollywood and witnessed the crushing weight of US assimilation policies and their genocidal legacy.
Despite his now radical stance toward assimilation policies, however, the effects of those policies continued to plague the Lakota at Pine Ridge (and the greater Lakota Nation) throughout the twentieth century and still do today. In regard to US policies and their effects on father/son relationships in Lakota culture, Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart writes, “The erosion of fathering among Lakota men, in part the result of the destructive influences of boarding schools that undermined traditional parenting roles, has contributed to confusion among boys and a lack of clarity regarding the meaning of becoming wicasa was’aka [strong men]” (179). As Luther Standing Bear’s My People illustrates, not all boarding school experiences led to a boy’s confusion about what constituted wicasa was’aka, but only because of the deeply established traditional relationship between father and son, a relationship that left a lasting impression on Standing Bear and the shaping of his manhood. My People the Sioux, however, need not be a historical artifact only; for the Lakota it might be utilized as an important contemporary resource to help foster the already robust spirit of contemporary pan-Indian organizations such as the Native American Fatherhood and Families Association (NAFFA) and its sponsorship of its annual “International Native American Responsible Fatherhood Day.” First held on June 15, 2013, this day helps to affirm the centrality of the father/child relationship as part of tribal healing, sustainability, or both. For those Lakota men who participate in or embrace the goals of NAFFA, Standing Bear’s My People the Sioux is potentially a foundational Lakota resource that contemporary Lakota men can use to continue their work of sustaining or resuscitating traditional father/son relationships and their crucial role in affirming wiscasa was’aka and, in turn, the Lakota nation.

NOTES

2. Frederick Hale too has called Standing Bear “unabashedly romantic” regarding his early life (27).
3. As Katanski writes, “The combination of verbal skills and group identification developed in Indian boarding schools produced a range of texts—from legal briefs to congressional testimony to autobiographical narratives, poetry, fiction, and plays—that explicitly concern themselves with tribal and indigenous sovereignty” (9).
4. On the importance of gendering Indigenous children in the boarding schools, see in particular Trennert 112–49; Adams, Education 173–81; Child 76–80; Paxton 174–86. On the surveillance of the female body and boarding schools see Lomawaima.
5. For a detailed history of the efforts to transform Lakota men into capitalist citizens, see Biolosi.

6. See also Bayers, who points to the importance of the Sun Dance to Lakota manhood as described in Deloria’s *Waterlily* (56).

7. For a discussion of Carlisle and its promotion of its “before and after” ideology through photographs by John Nicholas Choate, see Herne 20–33. *My People* is a testament to the fact that though the gaze of the camera framed Carlisle student’s within the progressive arc of “civilizing the savage,” students like Standing Bear successfully resisted this narrative.

8. For instance, according to Standing Bear, his father remarked to the commissioner of Indian Affairs, “I want to ask that you will put one or two big stallions at each agency, so we can breed some big horses. We will have to have bigger horses if we are expected to do farm work” (168). Standing Bear goes on to write, “Whenever my father went to Washington he did not complain, but in just a few words he would explain what was wanted for the benefit of the Sioux Nation, or the Indians as a whole. . . . This happened over forty years ago, but the Sioux Nation is yet reaping the benefit of my father’s efforts” (168–69).

9. See Hale, particularly 31–40, for a discussion of Standing Bear’s radicalism. As Hale writes, “To a much greater extent than in *My People the Sioux*, white Americans are the imperialist villains of *Land of the Spotted Eagle*. Whereas in the former volume Standing Bear had alternatively praised and vilified them, in the latter book they serve as objects of his almost unqualified contempt” (37).

10. Of course, the boarding school legacy is just one of the mechanisms by which Lakota or Native fathers more broadly have been affected by genocide. In regard to Native fathers, Jessica Ball remarks that in Canada, “[c]olonial government interventions disrupted Indigenous families and communities and, along with ongoing social inequities, created unique challenges for Indigenous fathers. Removal of children from family care and of families from traditional territories, along with high rates of incarceration of Indigenous men, have produced a fissure in the sociocultural transmission of father roles across generations and created monumental challenges for Indigenous fathers’ positive and sustained involvement with their children” (29).

11. The second annual day was held on June 14, 2014.

WORKS CITED


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The Politics of Make-Believe

Dissimulation and Reciprocity in David Treuer’s
*The Translation of Dr. Apelles*

COLLEEN G. EILS

He felt scanned, read, and consumed, and he had no control over how they read him or what they told themselves about him. They could be saying anything. They probably were saying anything.

— Dr. Apelles

In the translator’s note that precedes *The Translation of Dr. Apelles*, the translator makes a curious appeal to his reader. He implores: “I hope you accept this offering, this book, this gift of beauty, and that you read it to the end. And then, turn back here and read it again” (2). The request might be dismissed as self-indulgent on the part of the translator and could understandably be forgotten by the end of the book, given the metafictional gymnastics that drive the narrative. Reading the novel again, however, allows for an understanding of the text that focuses on the politics of reading Native literature. The novel insists on its own fictionality in the service of Native intellectualism and survivance rather than affirming the value of love and self-realization for a Native man torn between cultures and understood through stereotypes, as academic and popular treatments of *Translation* suggest. Read against a legacy of appropriation and exploitation of Native translators, the novel points to a tradition of dissimulation as resistance to show the political potential of literary aesthetics. David Treuer (Leech Lake Ojibwe) depicts Native storytellers as sophisticated intellectuals capable of displacing existing centers of knowledge rather than simply bearers of culture.¹ In the final scenes of the book, Treuer has Apelles acknowledge his readers to implicate the audience in the novel’s theorization of reciprocal reading practices. Rereading the novel, therefore, entails participating in the novel’s
meditation on access, reciprocity, and the desires that shape what we know and believe.

The novel’s translator describes finding a “very particular book in a vast and wonderful library,” from which loose sheets, “covered with text in a language [he] did not understand” fell (1). While the translator focuses his efforts on translating the story on those loose pages—to do so he must find someone who reads the language to dictate the story to him—the form of the novel suggests the composite text he first opens: two separate narratives alternate by chapter for the length of the novel, as if pages of one were inserted into a bound copy of the other. The first narrative—which begins with the last sentence of the translator’s note—is a retelling of the Greek pastoral Daphnis and Chloe, in which two naive orphans find love and sexual fulfillment in each other through a series of coincidences. In the novel’s retelling, however, the Greek youths are written as Native characters Bimaadiz and Eta, and the story unfolds on Ojibwe lands in the nineteenth century.² The other narrative in the novel centers on Apelles, a forty-three-year-old Ojibwe man living in a major US city in the twenty-first century. Apelles works at recap, a library of retired books, and in his free time he translates obscure Native texts for publication in academic journals. In part because of his paralyzing fear of being reduced by stereotypes into a character in “a story like all the other stories about his people,” Apelles has lived a solitary, private life (203). Faced with increasing loneliness he likens to the feeling of a book without a reader, however, Apelles risks becoming a character and undertakes the project of translating himself “into a language that someone, somewhere, will want to read” by writing the story of his life and his love for his non-Native coworker, Campaspe (39).

The two narratives exist next to each other but do not explicitly intersect until the final pages of the novel when Campaspe steals the translation Apelles is working on—a story about their love—and loses it while at work at recap. Jealous coworkers then hide the manuscript pages in a copy of Daphnis and Chloe, where it is presumably lost forever, stored away with other “unknown and unloved” books (304). Just as the story seems to come full circle and solve the puzzle of the novel’s form by suggesting that the composite text, lost as it is in “a vast and wonderful library,” is the source material from which the translator creates Translation, the narrative ruptures: Apelles becomes omniscient and, as he reveals himself to be the story’s narrator, divulges that the story he
tells from the Translator's Note forward is “make-believe,” not an actual account of his life or, in the novel's vocabulary, a faithful translation (312). At the same moment, Apelles acknowledges his readers by looking upward from the page, noting “they [the readers] know me best of all” (313). In breaking narrative distance, Apelles not only draws attention to his audience's presence but also reverses the gaze implicit in the act of reading to implicate readers in the story he tells. Apelles is not a character-narrator who transparently relates the intimacies of his life or a “native informant” translating his culture, but a calculating storyteller who confronts his audience with his own fictionality to foreclose any possibility that his story might be mined for cultural truths. Turning back to the Translator's Note and beginning again, therefore, means contending with questions of access and the politics of how and why we read Native literature.

Apelles's insistence on the fictionality of his story and his recognition of readers' participation in the novel becomes political when read within a history of exploitation and appropriation of Native translators' work. Linda Tuhiwai Smith (Maori) explains that under Western imperialism, Indigenous peoples have been understood as natural “objects of research” subject to the “ethnographic ‘gaze’ of anthropology” (64, 70). Translators became key to early ethnographical research as what many researchers considered “native informants” who were expected to transparently relate their culture to outsiders. To researchers who considered Indigenous storytellers and translators objects of research, the resulting Native stories were cultural artifacts, not dynamic, valid forms of knowledge. Along with other research, these stories were “collected, classified and then represented in various ways back to the West,” where they were decontextualized and used to inform detrimental political and social policies, as well as stereotyped narratives about Natives (1). In the United States, literature canonized these representations of Natives through stories of Native absence and constructions of authenticity, both of which portray Natives as static characters of the past, incapable of change, of survival, or of contributing intellectually to the present. These manifest manners, to use Gerald Vizenor's (White Earth Nation of Minnesota) term for “the racialist notions and misnomers sustained in archives and lexicons as ‘authentic’ representations of Indian cultures,” did not strip Natives of their intellectualism or agency, but they did—and continue to—require Natives to develop creative forms of sur-
vivance, or an “active sense of presence” (Vizenor, Preface vii). Treuer points to this history of theft, appropriation, and manifest manners in several ways, not only by crafting *Translation*’s narrator as a Native translator and focusing the novel on questions of personal and cultural translation, but also by embedding Apelles’s story within a pastoral that capitalizes on stereotyped tropes informed by irresponsible, exploitative ethnographic fieldwork.

The legacy of such history manifests in Apelles’s daily life, where expectations and stereotypes confine his personal relationships. Apelles’s overwhelming anxiety in the novel stems from the demands he faces from other characters to act as a cultural translator, or native informant, for a society in which familiar representations of Natives predetermine his story, regardless of the translation he offers. Inevitably, when people learn he is Native, they ask “What was it like?” and Apelles “felt he was at a disadvantage because he, and all those like him, were measured against the stories that were told about Indians by those who did not know Indians. Not at all like the way men were measured against the stories about men because, for most people, men existed in life not just in stories. And how could he overcome that?” (204, 205). Apelles overcomes this disadvantage by substituting fiction for the story of his life; he maintains control over “that sovereign part of himself” and shifts critical attention from a Native man as an object of study to a Native story as a site of Native intellectual production (204). In refusing to play native informant, Apelles participates in what Audra Simpson (Mohawk) terms “the staking of limits” (70). Apelles offers readers a fictional story rather than personal testimony to delineate the limits of readers’ access to characters’ lives.

Treuer argues for reading Native literature to disrupt historical power relations by understanding Native storytellers as intellectual agents. By explicitly limiting readers’ access to his characters, Treuer contests persistent colonial perceptions of Natives as “natural objects” of study, in what Smith would term a decolonizing methodology (122). The novel’s readers are not privileged recipients of cultural artifacts, but participants in a challenging intellectual and artistic exchange. Reading *Translation* is indeed a challenge; the highly referential, metatextual narratives highlight the novel’s shifting styles, which mimic and adapt the voices of canonical writers. Treuer’s play with literary devices, particularly voice, self-referentiality, and genre, disrupts the narrative to remind readers
the novel is an aesthetic object and work of fiction. This essay argues that unlike Treuer’s critical work on Native literature, *Native American Fiction: A User’s Manual* (2006), which does not engage influential contemporary scholarship in American Indian literary studies, *Translation* participates in contemporary critical discourses about Native literature by carefully employing literary aesthetics to theorize reciprocal, embodied reading practices that recognize Native intellectualism and survival in literature.

THE AESTHETICS OF DISSIMULATION

Treuer establishes vocabulary for thinking about how audiences read early in the novel when Apelles makes two simultaneous discoveries during his biweekly trip to the city archives: a text in a language only he can understand, and the fact that he has never been in love. After packing up for the day, Apelles announces to the reading room librarian, “I am afraid I have made a discovery,” launching into an impromptu theorization of research and reading. The librarian responds, “Discoveries are what bring scholars and translators here. You are here to make them,” but Apelles disagrees (32). Echoing Vine Deloria Jr.’s (Standing Rock Sioux) indictment of the anthropologist, who “already knows what he is going to find” and visits reservations not to learn but “to verify what he has suspected all along,” Apelles explains that he, like other researchers, does not seek discovery but “evidence” to “confirm what [he] already know[s]” (Deloria 80; Treuer, *Translation* 32). In Apelles’s formulation, reading for evidence in fiction involves the unilateral process of searching for narratives made familiar by canonical representations in literature—the same narratives that resign Apelles to a socially isolated lifestyle and that affirm the status quo.

Apelles’s experience of discovery in the archives, in contrast, disrupts familiar narratives and requires him to make sense of what he finds through extensive engagement with and analysis of new ideas. He reflects that the turmoil he feels by having his beliefs disrupted “is the very price we pay for transforming our knowledge into wonder” (30). By naming Apelles’s revelations “discoveries,” Treuer ironically reverses colonial usages of “discovery” that proceed from the assumption of European superiority and inscribe Native peoples into narratives of inferiority, savagery, and Manifest Destiny (Vizenor, Preface
vii). Instead, for Apelles, discovery entails wonder and transformation; he now faces the hard work of interpreting and analyzing knowledge that contests, rather than confirms, what he already knows in a reciprocal process closely related to the mechanics of love and translation. As Apelles explains, “It is one thing to translate a thing, and something else completely to have that thing read. It is one thing to love someone, and something else entirely to be loved in return” (27). If reading to confirm what one already knows involves taking evidence, the engaged analysis Treuer advocates is marked by wonder, transformation, and reciprocity.

Despite Treuer’s efforts to encourage analysis instead of reliance on familiar narratives, critical attention to *Translation* focuses on the relative authenticity of the novel’s two narratives. David Yost offers important correctives to the book’s early reviewers, many of whom read the paired narratives as parallel or miss Treuer’s critique of the essentialist assumptions undergirding the pastoral. He argues, “the story of Bimaddiz and Eta is not, as some reviewers have suggested, a simple parallel to the story of Apelles and Campaspe. . . . Rather, the pastoral romance acts as an *obstacle* to the love of Apelles and Campaspe, its stereotypes threatening Apelles’s ability for self-definition. For all the charms of its story—or perhaps because of them—this fairy-tale simulation of Indian life becomes the true villain of the novel” (69). Yost suggests that the pastoral is a projection of Euro-American fantasies as cultivated and made familiar by canonical American texts. For example, he compares a scene in which a jealous suitor disguises himself as a bear in an attempt to rape Eta—an effort so successful even Eta’s dogs are fooled—to a scene in James Fenimore Cooper’s *The Last of the Mohicans* in which Hawkeye and Uncas, disguised as bears, “walk unrevealed through a hostile band of Hurons” (64). Looking to the familiar tropes the pastoral adopts, Yost concludes, “By putting this Cooper-esque story—and implicitly, the destructive stereotypes authors like Cooper helped to shape—in conversation with the more realistic narrative of Dr. Apelles, the novel again suggests that these stories have nothing to do with the lived experiences of Anishinaabe individuals and everything to do with Euroamerican fantasies of Indians” (64). Like most reviewers, however, Yost reads *Translation* as an ultimately affirming novel that celebrates self-discovery and transcendence.8 He concludes that Apelles works through the confining stories that shape audiences’ understandings of Natives, and by the end of the novel “Apelles has learned to translate
himself and found a ‘much better,’ more genuine love, winning his most important victory” (71–72). Because he has negotiated and transcended the various literary traditions that proscribe how people around him interpret his Nativeness, Yost concludes, Apelles is able to offer a “more realistic,” “more genuine,” “more accurate self-reflection” (64, 71).

The final scenes of the novel, however, displace realism, authenticity, and accuracy as narrative aims by emphatically underscoring the novel’s fictionality. Campaspe confronts Apelles about his omniscience and her own fictionality as a character in his translation:

you didn’t really find anything in the archive, did you?

I found myself, he says with a twinkle in his eye.

but where’s the original, then? what is the original?

you should know that by now.

this all feels make-believe, she says after a while. even my heart—it feels like make-believe. but it isn’t. is it? my heart is filled with something. so there is something to it after all, something you can weigh and measure. it is real. but everyone is going to think you made all this up. I can’t believe it’s actually happening. (312)

Apelles confirms her suspicions: “it is happening, he says, his eyes wild. it is happening and what’s wrong with make-believe? isn’t that how it works: we make belief? besides, happiness is more real than any illusion” (312). Apelles clearly separates his story from conventional understandings of authenticity, which require belief in and fidelity to an essential identity. Rather, as in the Translator’s Note that characterizes the novel as a “gift of beauty,” Apelles underscores his story’s aesthetic nature. He reminds readers that the novel is a fictional creation rather than the exposé of self-discovery it first seems; Apelles is performing, rather than divulging, intimate insights into what it means to be Native. In other words, Apelles refuses to play the role of native informant for his audience. Contrary to critics’ impressions, Apelles shows he is capable of dissimulation and that he is not tied to or responsible for authenticity or realism.

Campaspe’s discovery of Apelles’s—and her own—fictionality directly repudiates her first impressions of her lover: “She had been attracted to him from the start. His silence was beautiful to her because,
although he said little, it was clear that he was not capable of dissimula-
tion—he could not appear as anything other than what he was. He could
not be, or seem to be, anything other than Apelles” (143). Even once
Campaspe becomes intimate with Apelles, she thinks of him “complete
unto himself . . . like some kind of animal—a badger or a woodchuck or
a beaver—who needs nothing else, who need not do anything in par-
ticular at all for us to recognize him, instantly, for what he is” (144). Like
the novel’s readers, Campaspe slowly comes to understand that she is
implicated in Apelles’s story. After stealing his manuscript and bringing
it back to her apartment to read, Campaspe realizes his story is not just
a transparent translation of Apelles’s culture and experiences: “She read
the page again, more confused than at first. Her heart quickened and she
rubbed her fingers together. It wasn’t what she had expected at all. Not
at all. She began reading quickly, with the sickening dread that she was
bound to find herself in the translation, or a version of herself” (249).
Campaspe’s confusion and anticipation of seeing herself in the text are
believable analogs for readers’ reactions to Apelles’s unexpected glance
upward at the end of the novel, particularly if we heed the translator’s
request and turn back to the beginning of the novel to read it again, this
time as a theorization of how and why we read Native literature.

Campaspe, after all, is both lover and reader of Apelles. From his twin
discoveries in the archive early in the novel, Apelles pairs loving and
reading, reflecting, “I should be able to make love. I should be able to
translate it into a language that someone, somewhere, will want to read.
And he knows, surely, that the answer to both the translation and to love
will be the same” (39). He acknowledges, however, that love and transla-
tion are both reciprocal actions, in which both parties—including writ-
ners and readers, as well as lovers—share the labor of translation. Cam-
paspe similarly recognizes the intimacy of reading when Apelles first
piques her interest at work: “Apelles was a pleasant torture because she
longed to lift his cover and read him, to bring him home and read him
immediately and completely, and, ultimately, to shelve him in her most
private and intimate stacks in her warm, cozy, red-hued apartment”
(144). While Campaspe soon has the opportunity to lift Apelles’s cover
as she has imagined, she finds it difficult to read Apelles in ways other
than sex. Apelles frustrates her efforts to understand who he is and
where he comes from; he remains reluctant to share stories of his past
with her even as their relationship grows more intimate.
Apelles’s hesitancy in sharing himself and his past with Campaspe stems from his mistrust of the desires others place on his Nativeness. When Campaspe insists on knowing about his childhood, Apelles compares her demands to those of his first sexual partner in an anecdote he recalls about a summer in his youth, a story Apelles understands as a metaphor for the demands he faces as a Native man. The summer he was twelve years old, Apelles had a troubled relationship with a young white girl who had been sexually abused by her father (214). Frances Warcup—“a white girl, no different from any other, hungry and lonely and orphaned within herself”—taught Apelles about sex and was the first to manually pleasure him, an act they repeated often though it was dissatisfying for both parties: “Dr. Apelles still thought of that girl all those years ago. She had clutched his penis so hard and her arm moved ceaselessly and it must have gotten tired. She must have gotten tired, but she pursed her lips and tilted her head and kept at it, not satisfied until the stain came out and still not satisfied even then” (204, 214). Frances’s relationship with Apelles is a deeply problematic cry for help. Wounded and isolated, she looks to Apelles’s Nativeness as a potential escape from her desperate present.

Apelles understands the potentially extractive quality of Frances’s desperation as indicative of his future relationships with all white people; they want something from his Nativeness to heal something broken inside of themselves. Their desire for a Native salve, however, relies on the familiar representations of Natives they already know, not engagement with Apelles as an individual. Not only is such an arrangement dissatisfactory—the impressions of indigeneity they seek are the products of colonialist misrepresentations—it continually wounds Apelles, who bears the brunt of such uneven exchanges. Reflecting on his decision to live a lonely life rather than share his story, Apelles names white people’s desires as the imperative for his privacy:

The white people haunted him just as he haunted his own past. They excursed into the sanctity of his own self. It was that way for all Indians. Indians were the past that everyone else visited as a way to check on the development of something deep and long dormant.

That girl [Frances]. She was looking for something after all and tried to call it up, carried on in the wake of his come: some-
thing unique, something different, something from outside herself that she could control in herself. She was looking to interrupt the dreary gray flow of life. She was looking for the one thing. The one thing. The one thing that could tell her she was unique, that her life was unlike any other, that she was more than a ghost, too. It was sad and also very wise.

No wonder he felt the need to protect himself and his own personal treasure. (214–15)

Drawing on his memory of Frances, Apelles reflects: “Campaspe’s curiosity and dissatisfaction with him and his explanations of himself and his translation are just like that. She hopes to get from him something that is unique” (215). He fears that, like Frances and other white people in his life, she is looking for uniqueness in his Nativeness as she understands it through stereotypes of Natives, that she is looking for evidence for what she already knows. In response, Apelles stakes limits around his story.

After months of evasion and Campaspe’s eventual theft of Apelles’s manuscript, the couple’s relationship reaches a happy resolution when Campaspe accepts Apelles’s fictional translation as a way to know him. Unlike Frances, who kept seeking “that one thing” that she needed for herself, Campaspe reads Apelles to learn something about him rather than to confirm what she already believes. Apelles acknowledges, “She needs the story of his life, but as an Indian he is reluctant to give up that sovereign part of himself. So when Campaspe might ask, ‘What was it like?’ because eventually everyone wanted to know, he says, ‘I don’t know’” (204). Instead, Apelles talks about his translation, which “became the story he told her of himself, as a substitute for the story of his life. And he tried not to get anxious if she asked too many questions or probed too deeply” (206). Apelles’s reluctance to share stories about himself, or even his translation, is more complicated than an exclusionary impulse. He admits that “[a]ny story, all stories, suppose a reader. Stories are meant to be heard and are meant to be read. And translations, no matter what the subject, are like stories in that regard, only more so” (24). Apelles wants to be read the same way he wants to be loved, and in both cases he is dissatisfied until the relationship is reciprocal. As Apelles predicted, the answers to love and translation were the same; Campaspe steals Apelles’s translation and reads it with wonder,
rather than reading for a familiar narrative. She explains: “I was so curious . . . I wanted to know what the words meant, she says. once I started reading I couldn't stop, she says. and I was surprised! I had no idea” (309). Their relationship—and the novel—resolves after Campaspe critically reads Apelles's manuscript multiple times and realizes her lover is capable of dissimulation and that she can know him through his dissimulation—his fiction—instead of searching for something “original” he could translate for her.

At the end of the novel, Campaspe understands what Apelles acknowledges: she is a character in a fiction he has created, and their love exists in narrative form. Just as Apelles-the-character's fictional translation became “the story he told her of himself,” so too does Apelles-the-narrator’s fictional Translation become the story he tells his readers of his life. The novel, Treuer emphatically insists, is fiction, a “gift of beauty” to be engaged as an intellectual and aesthetic creation. Understanding the characters and the metafictional gymnastics of the final scenes requires readers to—like Campaspe—engage with the novel's literary style and aesthetics instead of looking to confirm familiar narratives of self-realization, romance, and discovery of Native American worlds.

THE POLITICS OF AESTHETICS

Treuer embeds Apelles's narrative in Bimaadiz and Eta's pastoral romance, a story that locates the political potential of literary dissimulation in a specifically Native historical context. Replete with stereotypes and canonical tropes about Natives, the story illustrates the Euro-American fantasies that threaten to overwrite Apelles's translation. By alternating the two stories for the length of the novel, Treuer links their projects and contextualizes them in a longer history of survivance stories by Native storytellers and translators.

The narrative of Bimaadiz and Eta's love focuses on a year in their adolescence in which they transition from friendly playmates to married lovers. As several of the novel's early reviewers note, the pastoral closely mirrors the Greek story Daphnis and Chloe. Yost tracks the similarities in detail, concluding, “[t]hough he infuses the story with fresh language and detail, Treuer has done little else beyond changing Greek names to Anishinaabemowin ones and adjusting the setting accord-
ingly” (65). Indeed, the plot sequence and even specific scenes can be traced to the Greek myth, from the youths’ early abandonment to their unlikely reunion with their birth parents in the story’s serendipitous conclusion.10 Perhaps most notably, the fantastic innocence Bimaadiz and Eta display is directly linked to the “famous innocence of Daphnis and Chloe—who, despite their careers in animal husbandry, manage to lack the slightest knowledge of sex—[which] also suggests the Rousseauan noble savage, a patronizing stereotype long used to portray the ‘Indian’ as ‘safely dead and historically past’” (Yost 65, quoting Robert Berkhofer). Treuer’s adaptation of Daphnis and Chloe so successfully adopts the tropes about Natives made familiar to US audiences by American literature that many reviewers lauded the pastoral as “lush,” “sensuous,” and “real and affecting,” without noting the parodic quality of the narrative.11 The novel’s reception suggests the degree to which readers read for evidence to affirm social fantasies of Natives as noble innocents and willing cultural translators.

Translation’s conspicuous reliance on a classic European pastoral nods toward a tradition of native informants identifying and capitalizing on the blindness that social fantasies cultivate. Jace Weaver ( Cherokee) offers Herbert Schwarz’s Tales from the Smokehouse (1974) as an example of an informant subverting expectations by explicitly catering to stereotypes. One of the stories in Schwarz’s collection is about a young Native woman naively seduced by a priest who capitalizes on her ignorance and sexual innocence, reportedly related to Schwarz from “the real ‘gentle Indian girl’ involved in the incident” (Weaver, “Splitting” 51). Finding the recent convert lying “naked on the stone floor,” a missionary removes his clothes to lie next to her to share in her suffering (51). Weaver summarizes the story:

Seeing the man’s erection, the young girl inquires, “What is that pointed stick that stands out from your belly?” His Pauline response is: “My child . . . this stick is a thorn in my side, which causes me great pain and misery.” The naïve catechist replies, “It grieves me to see you so. Although I am cold and hungry, my suffering is but small compared to yours. . . . I want you to torture me with that thorn of yours, and put it where it will hurt me most!” The story then progresses to its obvious, gruesome conclusion, made all the more disgusting because it implicitly says that Native women do not know their own bodies. (51)
The story, as Weaver explains, is the “‘put the devil in hell’ tale” from Giovanni Boccaccio’s *The Decameron* (51). He surmises, “I believe that Schwarz’s ‘informant’ was having a bit of fun at the expense of the amateur ethnographer, a not uncommon practice (though Italian Renaissance literature is not normally involved in the jape)” (51). The Native woman clearly recognized the degree to which the ethnographer desired evidence of familiar narratives, so she obliged, at his expense. *Daphnis and Chloe* serves Treuer’s pastoral narrator much as *The Decameron* provided source material for Schwarz’s informant: the narrator thinly veils an old European story as Native by changing the names and setting but keeping intact the stereotypes through which canonical American literature renders Natives legible. In other words, the pastoral offers evidence for what readers already “know” about Natives through legacies of irresponsible scholarship and representation.

In perhaps less obvious ways, Apelles’s narrative can be read in the same tradition of Native dissimulation. Apelles and Campaspe, as critics point out, are historical figures from Alexander the Great’s court, and their love story resonates with the characters’ romance in the novel: an artist, Apelles, paints such a beautiful likeness of Campaspe, one of Alexander’s concubines, that Alexander gifts Campaspe to Apelles in exchange for the portrait.12 More importantly, Treuer’s Apelles—like the Native woman in Weaver’s anecdote—gives his audience the impression that we have access to his life by appearing to transparently translate his memories and intimate experiences for our consumption. Whereas Schwarz’s informant leaves the ironic tension in her story intact, Treuer tips his hand in the final scenes. In both cases, the storyteller maintains control over access and rewrites conventional power relations between native informants and their audiences.

Turning back to the beginning and rereading *Translation* after learning that Apelles fabricated the self he translates for readers involves reading the novel with an awareness of our limited access into the characters’ lives. Like the young Native woman in Weaver’s anecdote, Apelles declines to provide readers with transparent insight into his life; he tells a story that is “meant to be read” but refuses the role of cultural translator historically demanded of Native individuals (24). By insisting on the novel’s fictionality, Treuer shifts focus from cultural artifacts to storytelling, from amateur ethnography to literary study.13 In other words, he
asserts his ability—and prerogative—to dissimulate and to translate on his own terms.

Indeed, in a novel centered on acts of translation Treuer conspicuously declines to translate some Ojibwe dialogue. In an interview Treuer explains his decision to leave some Ojibwe phrases in his novels untranslated:

[W]e novelists have inherited an ethnographic impulse—there’s an equation in ethnography where you have the ethnographer and you have the informant, and novelists have inherited that, so that the world is the ethnographer, we feel compelled to explain ourselves out into the world, and why should we? Why shouldn’t the world reach a little closer and push a little harder, dig a little deeper, towards us? And so that’s why I won’t translate. (Kirwan 86)

Treuer privileges authorial—and in this case, specifically Ojibwe—knowledge by declining to translate private Ojibwe conversations and thoughts for his audience. While Treuer has on occasion translated phrases from his novels for scholars, in an interview about his second novel, *The Hiawatha* (1999), he explains his reluctance to render a character’s thoughts into English as an allegiance he shares with his character: “Betty’s life is terrible, for the most part. And when she remembers her early life with her husband it is the one precious and beautiful and unsullied part of it. So she protects it in her mind from the rest of her life by remembering it in Ojibwe. To translate it in the book would be, in a way, to violate Betty’s memory” (qtd. in Kennedy 53–54). He explains further, “of course, Ojibwe speakers will understand it, but that understanding must be earned by the reader. The chance to look into Betty’s life completely is a chance that is earned” (54). While untranslated Ojibwe is less critical to understanding Apelles’s stories than Betty’s, Translation similarly underscores the limits of readers’ access to the characters. The final scenes of the novel reveal that Apelles has declined to translate and tells a “make-believe” story instead; readers earn the chance to look into characters’ lives by engaging the novel’s aesthetics using, as Daniel Heath Justice (Cherokee) suggests in his review of Treuer’s place in Native literary studies, “our specific skills as literary and textual interpreters, translators, and, even more generally, embodied readers” (345). Treuer, like the characters he crafts, does not exclude
Eils: Dissimulation in *The Translation of Dr. Apelles*

readers but insists on reciprocity, that we “push a little harder, dig a little deeper” toward Native literature.

Treuer’s attention to questions of access and translation resonate with Lisa Brooks’s (Abenaki) frustration with academic expectations of “native informants.” In glossing her understanding of American Indian literary nationalism, Brooks makes a similar call for “the world [to] reach a little closer and push a little harder” toward Native communities and knowledges, rather than continuing to reinscribe the centrality of institutional and canonical authority:

[I]t is Native critics who are so often called on to play the role of translator, who are asked to travel from the village center to the academic council and explain themselves. In writing the books that we have . . . I believe that we are inviting everyone to make their way to the kitchen table, to come to the gathering place. I am not saying that you (or we) will always be welcome there, given the weight of history, or that it will be an easy journey, but I can promise that there will be some food and good conversation waiting for those who come willing to listen, and to reciprocate, in turn. (246)

Brooks does not exclude the “academic council” from discussion but, like Treuer, she refutes the role of “native informant” and insists on intellectual reciprocity. Specifically, Brooks responds to the way in which Native critics who necessarily understand theory and history “in relation to assimilation and its coercive, often violent, history” must defend and explain their positions to their peers who ignore such contexts (245). In short, she challenges the centrality of non-Native knowledge in the academy and proposes a more equal exchange of ideas. The intellectual sovereignty Brooks calls for is not exclusionary, but reciprocal; she insists on recognition and equality, an arrangement in which both Natives and non-Natives share the burden of translation.

**CONCLUSION**

*Translation* has not been read in critical conversation with the work of contemporary Native American literary scholars such as Brooks in part because Treuer published the novel in the fall of 2006, the same season he published *Native American Fiction: A User’s Manual*, a provocative collection of essays on Native literature. Treuer’s thesis in *User’s Manual*
is that “if Native American literature is worth thinking about at all it is worth thinking about as literature” (195). He instructs readers to focus on the form or aesthetics of Native fiction rather than interpreting the content as Native cultural material, and he rejects identity as a category of understanding to the degree that he concludes, rather hyperbolically, “Native American fiction does not exist” (195). Treuer argues that Native literature should be read for its aesthetic style and literary merit, not authors’ identities, a practice he argues diminishes literature to inaccurate cultural artifacts.

Many literary scholars working in the field of Native literature met Treuer’s thesis in *User’s Manual* with resistance. For instance, Vizenor dismisses Treuer’s argument by pointing to *User’s Manual’s* use of Native iconography and Treuer’s identification as “Ojibwe from the Leech Lake Reservation in Northern Minnesota” as evidence that Treuer does not abide by his own argument: “Treuer teases the absence of native survivance in literature, but apparently he is not an active proponent of the death of the author. Surely he would not turn native novelists aside that way, by the ambiguities of cold print, only to declare as a newcomer his own presence as a native author” (“Aesthetics” 17). Most problematic about Treuer’s work in *User’s Manual*, however, is that he does not engage contemporary scholarship on Native American literature in his critical essays and consequently caricatures a sophisticated, dynamic scholarly field. In his collection of essays, Treuer cites only eight works of literary scholarship on Native literature, all of which he uses sparingly; three citations are from 1999–2000, and the remaining five date back to 1989–96. By omitting contemporary scholarship, Treuer never fully contends with at least a decade’s worth of critical conversations on how audiences might de-privilege the issues of authenticity and identity that occupied earlier generations of literary critics. For instance, in *Tribal Secrets* (1995), Robert Warrior (Osage) argues that Native literary studies should move away from “parochial questions of identity and authenticity . . . to keep such questions from obscuring more pressing concerns” (xix). Weaver echoes Warrior’s concern in *That the People Might Live* (1997), naming preoccupation “with questions of identity and authenticity” as impediments to Native literary theory (22). In a critical history of the field, Christopher B. Teuton (Cherokee) cites Weaver and Warrior, along with Vizenor, Greg Sarris, Louis Owens, and Craig Womack, among others, as building on earlier critical modes to
develop new critical inquiries that “began to reshape the field” in the 1990s (204). In _User’s Manual_, Treuer engages reading practices already dramatically reoriented through a decade of robust and sophisticated critical conversations in Native American literary studies.

Where _User’s Manual_ misses the conversation, however, _Translation_ offers a nuanced contribution to contemporary scholarship on Native literature. The novel illustrates how privileging literary aesthetics can take seriously the relationship between literature and Native American communities, an objective of much recent Native literary scholarship. In having Apelles refuse the role of native informant, Treuer contextualizes his critical anxieties about cultural readings of Native literature in a specific political history that makes engagement with contemporary literary scholarship possible and productive. More careful and nuanced than _User’s Manual_, _The Translation of Dr. Apelles_ illustrates the political potential of dissimulation by theorizing reciprocal reading practices that disrupt conventional relationships between readers and texts in the service of Native intellectualism and survivance.

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NOTES


2. The novel provides some textual evidence for this date (76), but as Treuer points out in his interview with Virginia Kennedy, many stereotyped stories about Natives exist outside of time (51). The same might be said of the pastoral.

3. For a more complete consideration of this history, see, for example, Linda Tuhiwai Smith; Thomas King; Vine Deloria Jr.

4. Audra Simpson theorizes an ethnography of refusal that recognizes a dissonance between “the anthropologies of timeless procedural ‘tradition’ that form the bulk of knowledge on the Iroquois” and the articulations of “the living (and their nationhood)” so that she might “take up refusal in generative ways” (71, 78).

5. Warrior’s work on Native intellectualism similarly works against “a very old tradition of racism toward Indians and other colonized people—we are the sort of people who are good with their hands, clever in their crafts, nimble on their feet, and delightful in their imaginations, but not so strong on the heavy lifting of philosophy and other higher order tasks of the mind” (“Native” 196).
6. Various reviewers identify the authorial voices Treuer mimics; see Douglas Robinson; Donna Seaman; and Emily Carter Roiphe, as well as David Yost.

7. Dr. Spencer Cox in Sherman Alexie’s short story “Dear John Wayne” exemplifies the prototypical anthropologist Deloria indicts and Treuer invokes.

8. For example, one review lauds the novel’s “literary satire, metafictional gamesmanship and cultural truth-telling,” while another concludes “Treuer’s edgy romance celebrates our love for each other, love for the earth and love of story” (Roiphe; Seaman).

9. As they discuss the lost manuscript in the penultimate scene of the novel, Campaspe reveals that the story she read is fiction: “I don’t even own a white sweater, she says,” referring to a key part of her wardrobe in the story (311). The couple jokes about Apelles’s narrative power, and Campaspe thanks him for the white sweater and asks, “can I have a red one, too?,” a request Apelles grants (312). Notably, Campaspe does have a white sweater in the story to which readers have access; the same scene that sees the relationship reach a happy resolution, therefore, also shows the romance to be fiction.

10. See William K. Freiert, a classicist who outlines Treuer’s use of Daphnis and Chloe, as well as the story of Apelles, in detail.

11. See, for example, Roiphe; Seaman.

12. John Lyly’s Campaspe (1584) reprises an account of the story first recorded by Pliny. For more complete consideration of Apelles’s and Campaspe’s relationship to the historical figures, see Freiert; Robinson; Yost.

13. Currently on the literature and creative writing faculty at the University of Southern California, Treuer earned his PhD in anthropology.

14. Most Ojibwe phrases in the pastoral can be understood through context. In Apelles’s narrative, however, such is not the case. When a character in the story translates Ojibwe dialogue into English, the meaning changes dramatically (Yost 63).

15. For a more considered contextualization of the reception of User’s Manual, see Daniel Heath Justice; James H. Cox; Karl Kroeber; Arnold Krupat; Lisa Tatonetti; Scott Richard Lyons, “Battle”; Christopher Taylor.

16. Lyons maps the move away from ethnographic, cultural literary criticism over the past several decades (“Actually” 294–95). Christopher B. Teuton similarly tracks modes of critical inquiry in Native literary studies over the past forty years (200–209).

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The Wedding of Pocahontas and John Rolfe
How to Keep the Thrill Alive after Four Hundred Years of Marriage

DREW LOPENZINA

Here you come again, asking. Do you see we have nothing to give, we have given like the ground, our mountains rubbed bare by hybrid black poisons concocted from tobacco.
—Karenne Wood, “Jamestown”

And how many times did I pluck you From certain death in the wilderness—
—Paula Gunn Allen, “Pocahontas to Her English Husband, John Rolfe”

On the 5th of April 2014, on what could only be described as a picture perfect spring day, an eager congregation gathered alongside the banks of the James River outside Williamsburg, Virginia, to witness a reenactment of what is, perhaps, the most storied ceremony of the colonial era in North America—the wedding of Pocahontas and John Rolfe. The event, part of “The World of Pocahontas” forum hosted by Historic Jamestowne, was held outdoors on the site of the former James Fort chapel where Rolfe and Pocahontas may or may not have actually been joined in holy matrimony four hundred years ago in 1614. It was a day resplendent in the anachronistic pairings of costume pantaloons and Disney backpacks, face paint and suntan lotion, period music and iPod earplugs, historians and tourists, and the elements seemed to smile approvingly on it all, with the April sun shining bright and the gentle
lapping of the river upon its banks sounding like a muffled drum beat beneath the general milling of the crowd.

The event was billed as a “commemoration” of the four hundredth anniversary of the wedding and offered, apart from the ceremony itself, a walking tour of Jamestown, opportunities to meet and talk with members of the cast, a “photo opportunity” with the wedding party, and a “World of Pocahontas” activity and coloring book for the young ones. As a professor of early American and Native American literature at a nearby university, I was at once irresistibly drawn to this entertainment and made to feel terribly uneasy by the cultural-historical claims it apparently forwarded—its positioning of Pocahontas within a space and site so circumscribed by colonial power, both past and present. I couldn’t help but wonder whose story was truly being forwarded and to what extent the “world” of Pocahontas and her people could be called forth in such a setting.

It is tempting, of course, when speaking of this event, to say “the wedding of Pocahontas and John Smith” as the two names are so inextricably intertwined in the mytho-historical mire of American memory. In fact, Smith’s statue, erected by the river’s edge but still within the delineated parameters of the old fort, loomed large over the proceedings. Prior to the ceremony couples posed for snapshots at Smith’s bronzed feet and children playfully scrambled around the statue’s base. It was Smith, of course, who catapulted the young daughter of the Powhatan Confederacy into cultural immortality when he forged his romantic tale of rescue at the hands of the beautiful young “Indian princess” in his 1624 *General Historie of Virginia and the Summer Isles*. Smith, the colonial adventurer par excellence, had been unable to attract new investors for a return trip to America and so, in order to rough out a living back in London, had turned to writing thrilling romances of his former adventures instead. In his *General Historie* he elaborated greatly on previous accounts and drew from other popular European writings and folktales to construct a protean narrative of colonial conquest in which he reserved for himself the role of irrepressible hero. In the story, known to most all English-speaking peoples, Smith understood he was being led to his execution before the great Powhatan “emperor.” He was only spared this ignominious fate when the “King’s dearest daughter,” Pocahontas, hopelessly smitten by the figure of Smith, could not bear to see him killed and so
threw herself over him in an impulsive gesture that has come to embody resilient notions of white exceptionalism ever since (Smith 321).

In fact, if we’re being perfectly honest, it is this ceremony, and not the wedding in question, that remains the most storied of America’s colonial past, sprouting countless dramatic and fictional repetitions over the next four hundred years, of which Disney’s version is merely the current favorite. Like the statue of John Smith at Jamestown, Disney has cast its long shadow over the tale, embosoming generations of Americans in its seductive, politically correct, “love conquers all” ending that gently backpedals audiences away from the much more difficult narrative of colonial violence, coercion, and ultimately genocide that radiates yet from its silences.

Contemporary scholars from Karen Ordahl Kupperman to Camilla Townsend to Paula Gunn Allen have offered differing interpretations of what might actually have taken place in Smith’s famous encounter. The most compelling of these interpretations was that Smith was being made a participant in an adoption ceremony of sorts, in which Powhatan (a
traditional title bestowed upon the leader of the Powhatan Confederacy) sought to enlist Smith in a network of kinship diplomacy by which to safeguard and perhaps expand his own influence. In this interpretation, Smith’s life was never actually in danger. Powhatan apparently deemed it wiser to attempt to incorporate the newly arrived settlers than engage in uncertain conflict with them. Smith may have only partially understood the role he was being assigned or the title of Werowance (a kind of regional leader within the larger framework of Powhatan influence) being bestowed upon him. Either way, the English were not inclined to view themselves in a subsidiary relationship to the reigning Indigenous powers. Theirs was a mission of possession and conquest. But Smith’s own account suggests at least some knowledge of Powhatan’s intentions, when he observes in the wake of the ceremony that Powhatan offered him land on what is now Virginia’s eastern shore and from then on vowed to “esteeme him as his son Nantaquoud” (Smith 322).

The idea that Pocahontas would have been present in the famed ceremony Smith narrated is doubted by contemporary Mattaponi and Pamunkey historians who are the keepers of that oral tradition. Their reasonable argument is that Pocahontas, a child of about ten years of age at the time, would not have been involved in such high-level affairs of state and certainly would not have dared to interfere. If she was there, her role would most likely have been an orchestrated complement to the proceedings rather than a deviation from them. But the unlikelihood of her participation is bolstered by the fact that Smith himself makes no mention of such happenings in his earliest 1608 version of his captivity entitled “A True Relation.” Pocahontas only emerges in her quasi-heroic role many years later, after she had traveled to England and become something of a celebrity in the London courts. Smith apparently banked upon Pocahontas’s fame to generate interest in his accounts. In other words, there is the strong possibility that this most generative of American origin stories never took place as related. To embrace such an understanding, however, would detract from the enduring cultural value of the tale in which Pocahontas spontaneously acts out her recognition of Smith’s superior European attributes alongside her devaluation of her own culture. As the good people at Disney put it, Smith is supposed to represent something new, exciting and infinitely more appealing, lurking “just around the river bend.”

If we are all familiar with Smith’s enhanced version of the story, the
knowledge that the promised romance between Smith and Pocahontas was never actually consummated is largely reserved for a few students of history and those of us who have accidentally stumbled upon Disney’s less popular *Pocahontas 2: Journey to a New World*. Smith was injured in 1609 in a mysterious gunpowder accident and was forced to return to England. Pocahontas, in Smith’s absence, apparently found herself attracted to yet another white stranger, the “honest and discreet English Gentlemen, Master Rolfe” (Hamor 1163). If we continue to take the story at face value, as a colonial romance, we are given to understand that Rolfe, secretary to the colony and a loyal vassal to the colonial governor, Sir Thomas Dale, found himself “enthralled” and “intangled” in thoughts of “an unbelieving creature, namely Pokahuntas,” and dutifully sought out the advice and consent of his superiors in this matter (Hamor 1164).

Rolfe was acutely aware of the then unwritten prohibitions against marrying outside one’s racial caste in seventeenth-century England. In his appeal to Governor Dale, he openly wrestled with his conflicting emotions, making “a mightie warre in my meditations,” and wondered what strange forces had provoked him to be “in love with one whose education hath bin rude, her manners barbarous, her generation accursed, and so discrepant from all nurtiture from my selfe” (Hamor 1165). If this is hardly the kind of language that typically knocks a girl off her feet, it resonated strongly with colonial auditors who would have been concerned not only with the interracial aspects of the proposed marriage but also the fact that Pocahontas was not a Christian. Rolfe studiously made his case, however, noting that his motives were not founded in base emotions as many might suspect but, in fact, were driven by his sense of duty to God and his superiors, in addition to “our Countrey’s good, the benefit of the plantation, and for the converting of one unregenerate, to regeneration; which I beseech God to graunt, for his deere Sonne Christ Jesus his sake” (Hamor 1167). Rolfe was pulling out all the stops and, in essence, promised to make Pocahontas the first true Christian convert of the English colonies.

Disney, perhaps wisely, leaves out the part about Christian conversion in their retelling of the narrative. In our current cultural environment, such an element feels too openly coercive and gets in the way of an otherwise good love story. Lest we doubt the central importance of Christian conversion to the overall narrative, however, it is helpful to
remember that John Gadsby Chapman’s lavish 1840 portrait of Pocahontas’s baptism still hangs in the rotunda of the Capitol building in Washington DC, thus making it a vital component in the panorama of American power there on display. Early theatrical reproductions of Smith’s story, too, placed Pocahontas’s conversion at the center of the tale.

Of course, there are other things that Disney left out. For instance, familiar as the story is, most of us are surprised to discover that Pocahontas, far from freely offering herself up in matrimony to Rolfe, was a prisoner of the English when she “consented” to the union. Ralph Hamor describes in a 1614 letter to his colonial supervisors how that “everworthy gentleman,” Captain Argall, in what amounts to an undisguised act of treachery and deceit, lured Pocahontas aboard his ship, “that in ransome of hir, he might redeeme some of our English men and armes, now in the possession of her Father.” Captain Argall, who would eventually become governor of the colony himself, is depicted as one who had earned the respect and trust of the local Natives. These simple savages, to use the parlance of the times, apparently loved Argall so dearly they would trip over themselves in trying to find new ways to “doe him some acceptable good turne, which might not only plea-
sure him, but even be profitable to our whole Colonie” (Hamor 1120–1121). Apparently such “good turnes” included helping Argall kidnap the daughter of their principal chief.

The attempt to justify Argall’s actions and redirect fault back to the Natives is unpersuasive, even if scholars have traditionally failed to interrogate it too deeply. One thing Hamor leaves out in his explication of these transactions is that the English men in Powhatan’s custody had not, in fact, been captured by the local Natives, as readers might presume, but had actually fled to them, seeking to escape what they saw as cruel bondage to their colonial overlords. In which case Argall’s forceful abduction of Pocahontas, a seventeen-year-old girl at this time, cannot even be properly understood as “payback” or “tit for tat.” Nor are his actions in anyway consistent with the carefully cultivated relationship of “love and peace” he is said to have nurtured with the Natives. Adding insult to injury, even though the ransom was promptly paid by Powhatan, the English determined that they were better off keeping both the ransom and the “Emperor’s” daughter, and so they declined to release her. She remained in colonial custody for a full year, which only ended in her marriage to Rolfe.

These are the uncomfortable facts surrounding the “romance” of Pocahontas and John Rolfe, and they form the materials from which Historic Jamestowne crafted its theatrical reenactment. Historic Jamestowne is jointly operated by the National Park Service and the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities. According to their own promotional literature, their mission is “to preserve, protect and promote the original site of the first permanent English settlement in North America and to tell the story of the role of the three cultures, European, North American and African, that came together to lay the foundation for a uniquely American form of democratic government, language, free enterprise and society” (“Historic Jamestowne”). As with Disney’s Pocahontas, this narrative is at once culturally inclusive and yet not so subtly oriented toward a perspective still deeply rooted in the privileging of colonial institutions and practices. The mission statement posits the formation of a participatory process in which three cultures seamlessly unite to form one government, one language, one society, the overall benign value of which none should question. Repressed in Historic Jamestowne’s innocuous language of inclusion are vital questions
of tribal sovereignty, termination, language loss, removal, and other acts of colonial violence too great to enumerate.

Gerald Vizenor has described this type of narrative as a “literature of dominance” that “maintains the scientific models and tragic simulations of a consumer culture” (67). Although a performance such as the wedding of Pocahontas and John Rolfe may be propped up with all the technical apparatus of modern history making, bestowing upon it a sheen of accuracy and integrity, it takes for granted that history itself, the colonial writings by which such events are passed down to us over time, is somehow an impartial process or renders for us the only world we are capable of knowing. Vizenor questions the authenticity of such archival accounts, probing the colonial agendas that reside within inscribed narratives of exploration and discovery, finding instead simulations and shadows that have successfully distracted us from the lives and learnings of the Indigenous communities they seek to neutralize and contain.
Pocahontas does not appear before us here as a figure cut whole from the cloth of history, but rather as a “bankable simulation” constructed to appease dueling forces of academic and consumer culture (11).

As Linda Tuhiwai Smith reminds us, it is dangerous to simply accept that history as a discipline is innocent, that facts merely “speak for themselves and that the historian simply researches the facts and puts them together . . . to tell their own story, without any need of theoretical explanation or interpretation” (32). The English settlers who colonized Jamestown at the start of the seventeenth century took a decidedly dim view of Native culture. Their accounts not only project their misrepresentations and prejudices into the future, but they willfully rationalize the aims and practices of colonization, predictably placing the blame for eruptions of violence and aggression at the feet of the “savages” who, if the colonial record is to be believed, knew nothing of civility, piety, culture or law. In the estimation of many Indigenous scholars, what these historical accounts offer, the simulations they disseminate, do not represent Native lives and cultures so much as produce their absence.

One might argue in response that Historic Jamestowne’s mission statement deliberately attempts to accentuate the positive by locating a narrative of mutual cross-cultural value. The event was subtitled “The Promise of Peace,” and as the promotional literature states, the 1614 wedding brought about “a new period of optimism and cooperation . . . between two peoples caught within the emerging 17th-century Atlantic world” (Historic Jamestown). By soliciting the participation of local Native communities in its activities, the curators worked to bring Native lives and histories to the center of the story. The Pamunkey Indian Museum and Cultural Center was consulted in staging the event, as was the Patawomeck Heritage Foundation. There can be little doubt that, in restaging the four-hundred-year-old wedding, Pocahontas is not only the central figure, but she is what draws the crowds. It is her image and not one of Rolfe that adorns the promotional brochures. She, and not Smith or Rolfe, is the eponymous heroine of the beloved Disney movie and countless earlier productions. And, what’s more, the role of Pocahontas on this important four-hundredth-year anniversary was played by Wendy Taylor, a young Pamunkey woman, meaning that the role had been restored to some extent to its tribal origins rather than being doled out to an actress from another Indigenous community or, worse yet, to a white actress dressed up to look the part of Indian. These efforts might
be seen as genuine attempts to restore balance to the presentation of this story, and it appeared as though the crowd of tourists and much of the press was pleased to take it that way. Still, I am reminded of Tuhiwai Smith’s acknowledgment that “under colonialism indigenous peoples have struggled against a western view of history and yet been complicit with that view” (34).

All of these factors contributed to the complex nature of this production—a dizzying mix of history, myth, and consumer culture. A large portion of the crowd consisted of parents who had brought their young children to see the “real” Disney princess get married. The fact that maybe some of these children were being presented something of a “correction” to Disney’s current hegemonic control over the tale had to be considered a kind of positive, did it not? And who wants to play the role of Professor Buzzkill by informing young children that what they were witnessing was still very much wrapped up in a cultural labyrinth of dominant discursive norms? One young girl in my presence removed a slip of rolled parchment paper from her Pocahontas backpack and demonstrated how she was able to trace in crayon her family’s roots going all the way back to Pocahontas and Rolfe, both of whom could be found pictured like smiling colonial wedding cake figurines at the base of this genealogical tree. What little girl wouldn’t want to be able to think of herself as a Disney princess, and how few opportunities there are given that not many Disney princesses have an actual historical pedigree? Whether this was all innocent childhood fantasy or represented something more dark and disturbing—the perpetuation, perhaps, of a deeply rooted colonial violence—was in many ways severely complicated by the very visual participation of tribal communities in the production. In fact, it must be noted, a handful of Native people were in the audience, mingling with the day-trippers bussed in from nearby Colonial Williamsburg, tv camera crews, and members of the press, alongside the smattering of historians, anthropologists, and other academics. We had all been drawn to the spectacle, wondering what to make of it and caught up, consciously or not, in its dazzling contradictions.

Right on schedule, the actors entered in groups of two or three, gliding through the crowd by way of a roped off passageway over the lawn and into the site of the chapel. Each group had a speaking role to perform as they made their way through the makeshift aisle and onto the stage, wearing head microphones so they might be heard over the
crowd. The actors playing Captain Brewster and Sergeant DeRose were made to sound out some real-politic concerns about the marriage and its diplomatic potential, with Brewster cheerfully acknowledging that he never dreamed Pocahontas would agree to linger with the English, no less marry one of them. Captain Argall’s character freely admits to having taken Pocahontas captive, but intimates her kind treatment at the hands of the English. When asked if the wedding might be considered a “forced union,” he laughs, insisting that Pocahontas simply chose to stay with “the Englishman who loved her.” Martha Sizemore, one of the few women settlers at Jamestown who, in the play at least, was cast as Pocahontas’s attendant during captivity, served the role of “gossip” and could claim that Pocahontas had “the heart of an English woman.” When asked if she believed it a good thing to have the heathen and English brought together in holy matrimony, she tells how Pocahontas, herself, desired the union once she learned that her father preferred a copper kettle and a few old swords to his “beloved daughter.” In fact, it is repeated throughout the ceremony that Pocahontas freely chose to remain with the English “who loved her” rather than return to her own people. But if there were further doubts, Martha Sizemore bids us to just look at the young couple, as though the story of their love were fully inscribed there upon their countenances. In each case one could appreciate, perhaps, the historical accuracy of the portrayals, as well as the occasional nods to tribal sensitivity. Opahisco, who history tells us was sent by Powhatan to “give Pocahontas away,” entered along with two young men as escorts, all of them dressed in traditional regalia and face paint. Opahisco was an uncle of Pocahontas’s, and the two young men were thought to be brothers. Opahisco spoke toward the obligations of the Powhatan Nation and the hope of renewed diplomatic relations to be brought about by the union. He concludes that the marriage is “the proper course for our family.”

Last to enter, of course, was Pocahontas herself. Unlike the other members of the cast, Wendy Taylor, who played Pocahontas, had no formal acting experience and seems to have been chosen not only for her tribal affiliation but also for the extent to which she approximated the impossible physical requirements of the role as defined by the Disney movie. But as she followed the theatrical procession to the stage, she held herself with poise, perhaps feeling as out of place and strangely the object of attention as the real Pocahontas had four hundred years earlier. Taylor’s presence as
she mounted the stage was at once captivating and elusive, as though, like
the chimerical nature of Pocahontas herself, she was both present and not
present, the stuff of literature or a bit of colonial theater, staring down at
the crowd from the height of the stage, unsmiling, the embodiment of an
unresolved tension that the play’s ameliorative gestures, its promises of
peace, could not possibly reconcile. Unlike her fellow countrymen on the
stage, she was clothed in English attire, Pocahontas having already at this
time been converted, baptized, and christened as Rebecca, a name with
biblical implications suggesting the coming together of two nations. Also,
unlike the other major players in the production, Taylor had no speak-
ing part to perform, which, perhaps, contributed to the uneasy silence
that collected around her. Or, rather, she had no speaking part until the
conclusion of the ceremony when she voiced the indispensable nuptial
refrain of “I will.”

It is hard to explain away Pocahontas’s silence in the production. As
with the dominant historical record from which we compile the materi-
als of the tale, she becomes an object of fascination and colonial agency,
but she is not offered the opportunity to speak herself. Her thoughts
and feelings can only be intimated through the impressions of the other
cast members whose perspectives are roughhewn from the deep quarry
of biased colonial reporting. Buck Woodard, who was involved in the
creation and organization of this year’s performance and who served as
liaison between Historic Jamestowne and its tribal affiliates, suggested
to me the important thing to remember was that Taylor was the first
Pamunkey tribal member to perform the role at a Jamestown commem-
oration since 1907. If she was not given a speaking part, it was because
her acting experience was minimal, and the historical record does not,
in fact, allow us to place words in Pocahontas’s mouth.

Never mind that it, history, did allow the producers to put forward a
Martha Sizemore who, despite the historical silences surrounding her,
was enabled to voice important judgments as to the “true romance”
between Rolfe and Pocahontas. But apparently we can turn a blind eye
to that. And perhaps we should also turn a blind eye to the history that
does not make it into the script or get voiced on stage: how Smith and
the Jamestown settlers, unable to feed or supply themselves, took entire
villages hostage, threatening to kill indiscriminately unless their barges
were loaded with corn; how John Rolfe’s professed love for Pocahon-
tas seems to spring not from a spontaneous outpouring of the heart,
but from a calculated design of colonial power meant to keep the Powhatan empire in check and for which the loyal vassal, Rolfe, beforehand admits he had “received no small encouragement” (Hamor 1166); or how Pocahontas, while in captivity, was carried inland and made to witness the English soldiers as they “burned in that verie place some forty houses . . . and made free boote and pillage,” killing five or six Powhatan men in the process (1124). This was done, Pocahontas understood,
because her father could not afford to continuously offer up ransoms that the English would in turn refuse to honor. If she was being used as the trump card by which her peoples' lives and belongings could be destroyed, she had recourse to one solution and that solution is echoed in the lone moment of agency she is allowed to voice on stage. Pocahontas says, “I will.”

It might be useful here to think of Scott Richard Lyons's definition of an “X-mark.” If an X-mark is typically understood as a treaty signature made by one who has not mastered the tool of European literacy, Lyons would also like us to imagine it in a broader sense as “a sign of consent in a context of coercion; it is the agreement one makes when there seems to be little choice in the matter. To the extent that little choice isn’t quite the same thing as no choice, it signifies Indian agency” (1). Lyons goes on to explain that, given the conditions of colonial containment under which Native literature continues to be produced, all Native writing might be considered an X-mark. One thing, however, seems certain. Pocahontas’s “I will” is an X-mark. It is the language placed in her mouth by colonial domination, and yet it remains her own significant act of exercised agency, placed in an impossible situation, but still consciously offering consent in the hope of restoring order to a world terribly out of balance.

Whatever the coercive circumstances that allowed for that consent to be offered, dominant history still reads and performs it as “I will.” The main problem with the Jamestown wedding anniversary commemoration is that it cannot be expected to reconcile the violent tensions that reside behind Pocahontas’s offered consent. Anyone who viewed the proceedings on April 5, 2014, would have walked away satisfied, perhaps, in their reaffirmation, rooted in the play’s explicit assertions, that Pocahontas and John Rolfe married for love. Truly, to stage it any other way would likely alienate or even outrage audiences. The setting of Historic Jamestowne itself, with its mandate “to preserve, protect and promote the original site of the first permanent English settlement in North America,” suggests that it is already hopelessly wedded to one version of history, one set of outcomes, one single American origin story. The play must present itself as a romance and a love story, just as it always has. Although it cloaks itself in the mantle of archeological and historical sciences, it inevitably bends toward the highly manufactured simulations of dominance that replaces violence and coercion with more marketable wares.

If this assessment seems too harsh, one might consider for just a
moment, how the story would look were you to flip the terms. When white women were captured by Indians in the colonial period (either in real life or in literary productions), there was little question about a positive romantic outcome. The capture of white women by dark-skinned peoples was, and still is, often characterized as the “fate worse than death.” As Increase Mather asserted in the case of one Mary Rowlandson, a colonial goodwife captured by the Narragansett during King Phillip’s War in the 1670s, none, save those who have experienced it, “can imagine what it is to be captivated, and enslaved to such atheistical, proud, wild, cruel, barbarous, brutish (in one word) diabolical creatures as these, the worst of the heathen; nor what difficulties, hardships, hazards, sorrows, anxieties and perplexities do unavoidably await such a condition” (321). All this despite the fact that Rowlandson spent only eleven weeks in captivity and, by her own admission, was not physically molested or forced into any conjugal relations. Although nineteenth-century literature remained fascinated with interracial flirtations and offered multiple texts that labored to produce circumstances placing white women and Native men in close proximity to one another, as Carolyn L. Karcher points out, such plots ultimately functioned to “exclude interracial marriage as a mode of reconciling the races” (xxiv). For a white woman to maintain sexual relations with an Indian was the equivalent of a renunciation of whiteness, an unspeakable loss of status that placed strict prohibitions against anyone in such circumstances from ever returning to the fold. By the same token, the literary conventions of the day suggest that an Indian woman brought among white men will immediately recognize the superior nature of her captors and become hopelessly smitten with little chance of emotional reciprocity. Like Magawisca, who fulfills the Pocahontas role in the 1827 novel Hope Leslie, this woman is fated to be the Tragic Mulatto who sacrifices and then pines in the shadows for the white man whose heart she cannot master. In other words, literary and historical tradition properly recognizes such circumstances as incidences of violence and coercion should they happen to white people, but when Indigenous women are treated to such violence, it is seen as an opportunity to highlight notions of racial superiority under the guise of unrequited love. Perhaps this is why Rolfe, whatever his contributions to the colony and his later successes with supplying a marketable strain of tobacco that proved the salvation of the settlement, has remained history’s cuckold. It is Smith we remem-
ber, the intrepid explorer who, despite being the object of attraction, retains his racial orientation at all costs.

Worth noting is that when Mattaponi people tell this story, their tradition views it within its proper context of colonial violence. Pocahontas, having learned that Argall was seeking her capture, went into hiding. She was already married to one Kocoum, a warrior within the Powhatan Confederacy, and is believed to have had a child by him. When Argall finally managed to find and capture Pocahontas, the Mattaponi claim he raided Kocoum’s village, killing Pocahontas’s husband and her infant son. Mattaponi tradition further claims that Pocahontas was raped, perhaps repeatedly, while in captivity and that she was already pregnant when Rolfe agreed to marry her for “the good of the colony” (Custalow and Daniel “Silver Star” 47–67). Some of this can be corroborated through colonial records, and some of it has been carefully preserved and passed along from one generation to the next by Mattaponi priests or quiakros (xxiii). Whether or not we choose to accept this version of the story, it would be disingenuous to simply ignore it. When Historic Jamestowne offered to commemorate the wedding anniversary, it agreed, wittingly or not, to remember together. The term co-memoration implies that different parties will draw from their collective memory banks, working toward an inclusive expression of historical recovery. By ignoring the narrative elements by which the Native groups involved preserve this story, and by privileging aspects of the story that are ameliorative to a puerile version of history keeping that erases the blatant exertion of colonial power and coercion, the people at Jamestown remain complicit in a long narrative of settler colonialist violence.

The Pocahontas and John Rolfe wedding ceremony serves as a reminder that, even with the supposition of good intentions all around, history is still about power. As Tuhiiwai Smith writes, “history is mostly about power. It is the story of the powerful and how they became powerful, and then how they use their power to keep them in positions in which they can continue to dominate others” (35). Sometimes that use of power involves murder, treachery, and placing innocent young women in bondage so that they have no choice but to consent to a forced union. Sometimes it involves a young girl who becomes so implicated in a lie that she latches onto its fabrication on the most intimate level of genealogy, drawn up in blood and crayon. We will never know for sure what passed between Pocahontas and John Rolfe. There is always the possi-
Fig. 5. 1922 statue of Pocahontas in Plains Indian attire at Historic Jamestowne. Photo by author.
bility that they overcame the violence surrounding them and forged true emotional bonds. Such things can be said to have happened, even within the complex and destructive forces of colonization and war. To allow for that possibility is, in a sense, to grant another kind of agency. But to insist upon that narrative, to weave it into the mytho-historical fabric of one’s culture at the most fundamental level, to use it to spin cultural fantasies and prop up the apparatus of continued colonial subjugation, is a moral lapse that needs to be called out, revisited, and resisted until the time comes when maybe we can truly co-memorate these events and thereby restore some semblance of the balance that Pocahontas hoped for in her “I will.” Therein lies the “promise of peace.”

NOTES

1. A good source for a compilation of texts centering on the Pocahontas narrative over the last four hundred years is Tilton.

2. Kupperman suggests that the ceremony produced John Smith’s “symbolic death” and rebirth as an adopted member of the Powhatan Confederacy. Kupperman doesn’t parse Pocahontas’s intervention but, nevertheless, assumes it to be a designed component of the ceremony. Paula Gunn Allen understands Pocahontas’s intervention to be more complex, viewing Pocahontas as one who was groomed by her nation as a Medicine Woman who is asked to infiltrate English culture and serve as an informant or spy.


WORKS CITED


This is a big book about a big topic. Counting the prefatory pages, the book is just twenty pages shy of five hundred small-print pages. The topic is how Native authors rewrite major misconceptions of Americans and American history. David L. Moore places special emphasis on concepts that erase tribal sovereignty (frontier theories) and render Indigenous peoples marginal (Manifest Destiny), invisible (Vanishing Americans), or trapped in rigid binary oppositions (civilization versus savagery). Moore claims that Native authors counter, undermine, and ridicule these powerful historical and cultural constructs with provocative articulations of five concepts, themes, or strategies: sovereignty, community, identity, authority, and ironic humor. To demonstrate how the Native authors express these counternarratives, he discusses a wide range of authors from the eighteenth to the twenty-first centuries, but he focuses primarily on analyses of the works of five authors that exemplify the counternarratives he admires: William Apess, Sarah Winnemucca, D'Arcy McNickle, Leslie Marmon Silko, and Sherman Alexie.

Moore employs a highly structured and complex organization to make his case. His introductory chapter opens with a narrative analogy for the “rewriting of America.” Martin Charger, or Wanatan, was “a mixed-blood, yet traditional, Lakota” who, with his followers, had been inspired by the vision of another Lakota to “Do good for people” (1), which translated into helping their people as well as some white hostages
in the 1860s. Their reward for their efforts: they were jailed by white settlers and ridiculed by their people. Moore doesn’t stress their failures; instead he sees their attitudes and efforts as analogous to the functions of Native writing: “Charger and his friends were willing to risk their lives for peaceful dialogue, reconciliation, and mutual accountability, to affirm the commonality of their Indian bodies and the white hostages’ bodies” (90). Similarly the five writers Moore emphasizes were willing to risk their reputations and hostile criticism by opening dialogues that would undermine the powerful misconceptions enumerated above. The rest of the introduction defines and analyzes in substantial detail those dehumanizing colonization concepts by surveying both secondary and primary sources.

Each of the five chapters that follow the introduction focuses on one of the five concepts, themes, or strategies, beginning with sovereignty, which Moore perceives as the foundation for the other four. Each chapter begins with a substantial overview of relevant scholarship that typically features relevant influential critics, for example, sovereignty (Womack, Warrior, Cook-Lynn), community (Weaver), identity (Owens, Clifford), authenticity (Ortiz), humor (Vizenor). Each overview also offers Moore’s particular slant on each theme: sovereignty (sacrifice), community (animism), identity (change), authenticity (translation), humor (irony and pluralism). Moore follows each overview analysis with discussions of all five authors’ works in a rotating order that follows a chronological progression, with the first author as the featured writer for that theme: sustainability (Apess), community (Winnemucca), identity (McNickle), authenticity (Silko), humor (Alexie). A brief concluding chapter expands upon Moore’s discussions of authenticity and sovereignty, drawing in particular on Philip Deloria’s work and on what is probably the most quoted article in the book, Simon Ortiz’s “Towards a National Indian Literature.”

The advantages to the structure of the book are obvious. The emphasis on the five authors enhances the unity of a wide-ranging book, and the focus on the five concepts, themes, or strategies offers readers a substantial review of many of the most important academic and political issues in Native American studies during the past forty years. The five authors featured represent diversities of tribal affiliation, genre, gender, and historical perspective. The latter is especially important to Moore: “Each [of the authors] is deeply conversant with the experiences of
Indians across America in their own and previous periods, sometimes addressing the future as well” (16). The focus on these authors in their historical and cultural contexts in combination with brief references to authors as early as Samson Occom and as twenty-first-century as LeAnne Howe helps to give Moore’s arguments depth and breadth.

The inclusion of discussions of all five authors in each chapter reveals aspects of each author that would have been overlooked had Moore decided to concentrate on just one author in each chapter. Apess is the prime beneficiary of this recursiveness. His texts are the featured writings for the sovereignty chapter; that is certainly no surprise. His *Indian Nullification of the Unconstitutional Laws of Massachusetts, Relative to the Marshpee Tribe* (1835) is a well-known advocacy treatise on self-determination and land rights for an “Indian village” and a criticism of white rule over the Mashpee, a misrule that Apess associates with disempowerment as well as the violation of Native women. Moore argues, moreover, that Apess’s *Eulogy of King Philip* (1836) decentralizes the “history of heroes” by including a Native leader, an “archenemy of the Puritans,” among the pantheon of American heroes (62). In the community chapter, Moore makes insightful analyses of Apess’s combinations of nationalistic sovereignty rhetoric and a Christian rhetoric similar to John Winthrop’s *Model of Christian Charity* (1630) “knit community” language. Moore’s chapter on identity stresses the adaptability of Indian identities depending on historical circumstances and a writer’s audience. For Moore, Apess’s writings represent “a full spectrum of agency and identity, from the pitiable sinner of *Son of the Forest* to the polemical prophet in *Eulogy of King Philip*, from hagiographic historian of *The Experiences of Five Christian Indians* to the legal historian of *Nullification*” (189–90). In the authenticity chapter, Moore concentrates on Simon Ortiz’s concept of translation—the use of the dominant language for Native purposes. In the Apess section, he reminds us of Apess’s use of the Lost Tribes–Indian connection and the obvious fact that Jesus was “white,” as well as Apess’s call for non-Natives to “convert” to an Indian “looking-glass.” I was especially delighted to be introduced to Apess the ironic humorist in chapter 5. My favorite example was Apess’s ironic and hyperbolic rendition of the Massachusetts governor’s response to the Mashpees’ “nonviolent actions to reclaim their woodlot” (351). Apess imagines the governor calling out “fifty or sixty thousand militia” to protect the Commonwealth from “a hundred fighting men and fifteen
or twenty rusty guns. But it is written, ‘One shall chase a thousand, and two shall put ten thousand to flight.’ So there might have been some reason for persons who believe the Bible to fear us” (qtd. 351–52).

There are nevertheless some disadvantages to maintaining the chronological rotation of the first author discussed and using the same five authors throughout. For example, in the second chapter, “Community as Animism,” Moore does indicate that whereas the animistic qualities expressed by the other authors are often subtle, “Silko . . . openly proclaims an animistic view” (151). But since Winnemucca is the second chronologically after Apess in this second chapter, her Life among the Piutes (1883) is featured first, and Silko, again in chronological order, is second to last. But Moore does compensate for this problem: when an author is not featured first but obviously excels in using the strategy under discussion, he or she gets extended space, as in the case of Moore’s excellent discussion of Silko’s animistic communities. Moore’s decision to focus primarily on the same five authors—despite the unity it provides—does limit his ability to give extended discussions to relevant authors, for example, possibly, Mathews’s Talking to the Moon (1945) and Erdrich’s Blue Jays Dance (1995), for human-animal-plant communities and the works of Thomas King, Alexander Posey, and Will Rogers for humor (Moore does briefly mention the first two). If he allowed himself some flexibility, especially in the humor chapter, he wouldn’t have had to strain to find substantial use of humor in Winnemucca, McNickle, and Silko.

Who should read That Dream Shall Have a Name? Everyone in Native American literature studies, and especially graduate students, in particular those studying for comps. They will find substantive discussions of five of the most important nexus of interpretive discussions during the past forty years (the one obvious omission being transnational discussions); provocative analyses of five important authors whose publication dates cover almost two hundred years; an appendix with concise biographies of the five authors; and an extensive works cited list. I especially appreciated the thoroughness of Moore’s discussion of scholarship, which includes comments on work done decades ago as well as recent studies; the insights offered about specific authors (for instance, the concise identity interpretations of Silko’s Almanac, Ceremony, and “Storytellers Escape” were excellent), and the invitations to perceive familiar texts in new ways. Now when I think of Apess, I will always imagine
his delight as he imagined a hyperventilating governor calling out thousands of militiamen to protect the citizenry of Massachusetts from those fifteen or twenty rusty guns that defended the sovereignty of a woodlot.


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Theresa S. Smith’s *The Island of the Anishnaabeg: Thunderers and Water Monsters in the Traditional Ojibwe Life-World* provides an in-depth analysis of how the Ojibwe (specifically those living on Manitoulin Island, Ontario) experience and interpret what non-Natives would deem as simply natural phenomena (thunder, storms, raging lakes, etc.). Early on, Smith points out that this text “acts . . . not as a static set of rules or systematizing dictator within the Ojibwe life-world, but as a servant to understanding, a guide for strangers on Anishnaabe island” (12). *The Island of the Anishnaabeg* is rooted in a phenomenological approach that focuses on how traditional and contemporary Ojibwe experience the world rather than what Smith (or other non-Native scholars) thinks about that experience. This foundation is essential to presenting a study that avoids rewriting religious mythology as fiction or relegating it to a base, primitive perspective. In moving beyond Eurocentric sources and focusing closely on the experiences of Ojibwe informants, traditional and contemporary stories, Ojibwe language, and even traditional and contemporary art, Smith’s text gracefully avoids both pitfalls and offers a thorough and engaging examination of the relationship between the spiritual and physical worlds of the Ojibwe.

At the core of Smith’s study is her desire to let the Ojibwe speak for themselves, a goal that is clearly represented in her reliance upon multiple consultants (twenty-one total). Her consultants figure prominently throughout the text as she incorporates their versions of historical as well as contemporary stories about the Thunderers and Water Monsters (both are manitouk, powerful supernatural entities, who regularly do battle over large bodies of water). The Thunderers are in constant combat with the Water Monsters (more specifically Mishebeshu), and these battles are typically experienced as torrential thunderstorms. Several of
her informants explain how their lives have been shaped by traditional stories; likewise, many also recount how their personal experiences with the manitouk have been formative as well. For example, one informant shares a story about a time when he witnessed Mishebeshu swimming in Wikwemikong Bay and was told by a friend that such an encounter was a “gift,” as it could assist him not only in fishing but also in traveling safely across dangerous water (96–97).

Throughout *The Island of the Anishnaabeg*, the reader is consistently presented with such examples of how traditional perspectives, stories, and spirituality have evolved and continue to be relevant in the modern world. Another example is her discussion of Dreamer’s Rock, a place where, in the past, Ojibwe youth would “[fast] and [pray] for a dream to learn their spirit guides” (31). Dreamer’s Rock continues to play a significant role in Ojibwe life and culture as it is still regularly visited as a sacred place. What is significant for Smith is that the Ojibwe, who are still connected to traditional beliefs and story, are also modern people. They don’t eschew science in favor of a religious or spiritual explanation of natural events; however, their way of interacting with the world is predicated on a different understanding of it.

Smith’s linguistic training is vital to understanding the spiritual and cultural perspective provided by her informants. While one may easily translate a single word or two via a dictionary or even an informant, true understanding of language comes from the conjunction of a word’s meaning, its cultural use, its traditional significance, and its context within a given story. For example, in discussing the Thunderers themselves, she explains the eight different terms that identify them; they range from “ninamidabines . . . The chief or boss of the Thunderers” (74) to “beskinekkwam . . . Thunder that’s going to hit” (75). The range of words and phrases used to explain a concept that most non-Natives see as simply thunder represents, as Smith writes, “the precision with which they recorded their experiences with language” (75). This precision, which Smith applies throughout *The Island of the Anishnaabeg*, underscores the status of Ojibwe spirituality as a complex system of belief that avoids dogmatic ideology and continues to play a role in today’s world.

The role of the Thunderers and Water Monsters in the Ojibwe life-world is evident in the pieces of art Smith uses to advance her analysis. Art illuminates the depth and intricacy of what would otherwise be seen as basic binary relationships. For example, she points out that for many
non-Native people, the relationship between the Thunderers and the
Water Monsters can simply be seen as one of good versus evil. However,
in analyzing Carl Ray’s painting *Conflict between Good and Evil* (a title
that plays off of the expectation of a simplified binary), Smith points
out that such a binary is insufficient to understand the image as well
as the larger, cultural perception of the manitouk. The painting, which
presents the Thunderers and Water Monsters in bold, swirling lines that
draw the viewer’s eye in an unending cycle between both images, shows
“how the text of the mythic relationship is read first in the artist’s image
and at another level in the natural phenomena which the image recalls
[a thunderstorm over the water]. The manitouk not only speak to each
other but mirror one another in their conflict” (131). Indeed, as Smith
earlier writes: “Standards of good and evil are better understood here
as standards of balance and imbalance, control and chaos” (106). It is
through such balance, she implies, that the Ojibwe can maintain *bimaa-
diziwin*, or a life lived well (24).

The primacy of Ojibwe interpretations of natural events is fur-
ther reinforced in Smith’s treatment of non-Ojibwe sources. This well-
researched text draws upon a wide variety of sources including his-
torical accounts of interactions between Ojibwe and early traders and
missionaries as well as academic scholarship written about the Ojibwe
over the past century. The historical resources Smith includes provide a
vital sense of how non-Ojibwe interpreted Ojibwe spirituality and reli-
gion, and in some cases the academic sources she includes provide use-
ful commentaries on Ojibwe life and belief over time. More specifically,
the text as a whole is shaped around a phenomenological framework.
However, this theoretical approach is not directed by Western ideology.
Rather, phenomenology enables her to focus her analysis on an Ojibwe
understanding of the world rather than an external, academic one.

Yet Smith deftly avoids presenting academic sources as academic
truth. In many cases, she draws out their flaws, highlighting what pre-
vious scholars have missed, misinterpreted, or simply misrepresented.
For example, Smith argues against a recent scholar, Christopher Vecsey,
who defines Ojibwe religious experiences as “analogous, if not identi-
cal, to pre-contact religious patterns” (27); this position, Smith writes,
presents “religion as a static entity” rather than as a constantly evolving,
modern way of interacting with the world (27). Likewise, she identifies
flaws within historical documents and points out that early academics,
who lacked sufficient linguistic and cultural knowledge to understand traditional stories, often ascribed complex figures (such as Mishebeshu, who is repeatedly represented as a great underwater cat) as being foreign in origin (99).

*The Island of the Anishnaabeg* smoothly navigates the intricate relationship between the Ojibwe and the spiritual world. Smith deconstructs the larger belief system into their discrete, lucid components and then reassembles them to demonstrate how they interrelate and, ultimately, work in perfect balance with each other. Exceptionally well written and researched, *The Island of the Anishnaabeg* has clear interdisciplinary value as it not only speaks to religious studies scholars but also to those within the fields of Native American literatures, Native American language studies, and Native American art.


Jenna Hunnef, *University of Toronto*

Emerging from the conversation begun during a round table session organized for the 2007 meeting of the Canadian Historical Association to commemorate Sylvia Van Kirk’s scholarship, *Finding a Way to the Heart: Feminist Writings on Aboriginal and Women’s History in Canada* exceeds the expectations of a traditional festschrift. Designed as a means of showcasing the influence of Van Kirk and her generation of feminist scholars on the last three decades of feminist historical writing in Canada, the collection avoids becoming an unbridled celebration of hers and others’ work. Adele Perry’s thought-provoking contribution to the collection comments upon the simultaneously ambivalent and inspiring interventions that Van Kirk’s enormously influential *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur-Trade Society, 1670–1870* (1980) made into women’s, Aboriginal, and fur trade history in Canada. Emerging from “the possibilities as well as the risks” inherent in this kind of historiography, Perry suggests, is “the power of new analytics to reframe old questions” (83, 84). These “new analytics” are present in every essay in this collection, which suggests that this approach is perhaps Van Kirk’s single most influential contribution to the development of the fields of
women’s and Aboriginal peoples’ history in Canada in the decades since the publication of her first book.

This collection yields the strongest appeal for historians and anthropologists—especially those engaged in delineating the historical and cultural intersections of race, gender, and labor—but its disciplinary breadth is astonishing. History professor Robin Jarvis Brownlie’s comparative analysis of settler news media in Upper Canada between the 1820s and 1850s and the writings of two Anishinabe preachers, Peter Jones and George Copway, draws upon elements of historical and literary analysis to produce a nuanced and interdisciplinary elaboration of racial discourses on Indianness and whiteness in Upper Canada. Brownlie’s contribution represents just one of the collection’s many essays that illustrate the importance of interdisciplinarity, scholarly cooperation, and intellectual curiosity in a manner that this reviewer has rarely seen spelled out in clearer terms.

Although some pieces are stronger than others, each of the dozen essays in Finding a Way to the Heart is nonetheless valuable. The excellent triumvirate of inaugural essays by Jennifer S. H. Brown, Franca Iacovetta, and Valerie J. Korinek multitask as both personal reminiscences of Van Kirk’s collegiality and scholarly spirit, and as historical surveys of the changing landscape of feminist scholarship and its academic reception in Canada since the 1970s. These essays are invaluable memoranda to later generations of feminist scholars of the work that has been accomplished thus far, and what remains unfinished. Robert Alexander Innes’s contribution challenges the scholarly focus on tribal affiliations as the primary means of consolidating group identity on the northern plains. This focus, he argues, ignores the importance of kinship ties in the formation of group identity. Questioning the notion advocated by some scholars that tribal boundaries are “concrete,” Innes suggests that group formation on the northern plains took place instead at the band level. Innes’s essay provides a comprehensive historical review of the problematic politics of the term tribe since the 1960s and is critical of the scholarly tendency to distinguish Métis from First Nations groups, which obfuscates the close relationships that existed between them despite apparent cultural differences. Innes’s essay is perhaps most valuable for the way it enlarges the scholarly network of Van Kirk et al.’s influence, forging implicit connections with the rising focus on kinship criticism in contemporary Indigenous studies.
The structure and organization of the collection reflect the field’s increasing complexity over the decades. Although the contributors share a common pool of resources, the organization and variety of their essays nonetheless gesture toward an ever-widening field of inquiry and influence, evident in Katrina Srigley’s suggestion that scholars “need to think differently about source material” in order to continue to develop “an Indigenous-centred historiography” (243), and in Brownlie’s advocacy of a historical approach that analyzes the interactions between settlers and First Nations people, rather than considering their histories in isolation from each other (171).

Readers of this collection should be prepared to look past some copy-editing problems. Although most of these issues are mercifully minor, they are nevertheless particularly pronounced in contexts that might hinder scholars seeking to follow up on sources or to do further reading because many of these errors appear in the essays’ endnotes, and some individuals’ names are spelled inconsistently.

As its title suggests, the collection engages critically with both Aboriginal and women’s history in Canada. Some readers may find this dual purpose simultaneously discomfiting and provocative, which may have been the goal of the book after all. However, this book occasionally risks perpetuating the elision of the uneasy tensions that exist between Aboriginal peoples and the more generalized category of “women” in Canada. This threat is uncomfortably close to the surface of some of the collection’s essays, particularly Kathryn McPherson’s analysis of “domestic intrusion narratives” written by Euro-Canadian women in the late-nineteenth-century prairie west and their articulation of a different colonial encounter for settler women than settler men. The first part of the title of Patricia A. McCormack’s contribution, “‘A World We Have Lost’: The Plural Society of Fort Chipewyan,” explicitly invokes the title of the final chapter of Van Kirk’s famous first book. However, like Van Kirk’s text, the source material that would necessitate the use of quotation marks around this phrase is never mentioned in McCormack’s essay. The double erasure of the phrase’s origins and the rhetoric of vanishing that it perpetuates undermine McCormack’s otherwise revisionist study of pluralist fur trade societies in northern Alberta, which she establishes in direct contradistinction to a persistent tendency in historical scholarship to reduce the fur trade world to binary oppositions. Although the content of McCormack’s article does not reproduce the
rhetoric of vanishing, it is nonetheless bookended by it: the implications of the title become manifest in her concluding observation that the plural society that persisted in Fort Chipewyan well into the twentieth century is now lost (163). These threats are largely mitigated, however, in those essays where they loom most ominously by an emphasis on the fact that prevailing attitudes toward women or Aboriginal peoples were neither monolithic nor oriented exclusively around victimization. Rather, these essays suggest that local attitudes were oriented around agency and activism, both of which are most pointedly demonstrated in the collection’s final essay that rounds out and punctuates its finer points, Srigley’s astute analysis of the lasting and varied impact that Indian Status and Bill C-31 had on families.

Notwithstanding these concerns, *Finding a Way to the Heart* is nonetheless an extremely valuable resource for teachers of Aboriginal and women’s history in Canada and abroad. This breadth of scholarship is most evident in the contributions by Elizabeth Jameson, Angela Wanhall, and Victoria Freeman. Jameson discusses Van Kirk’s influence on international feminist scholarship, and her particular resonance south of the border with historians of American Indians, western women, and, broadly speaking, the American West. Although the essays that precede it touch upon Van Kirk’s later work, Wanhall’s discussion of interracial marriage in Aotearoa/New Zealand’s whaling and trading era in the early nineteenth century and its long-term influence on the identity of Ngāi Tahu is the first in the collection to draw extensively upon Van Kirk’s later historical studies of mixed-raced families in the Pacific Northwest. Freeman’s analysis of attitudes toward miscegenation between 1860 and 1914 covers a broad geographical range, including Canada, the United States, Australia, and Aotearoa/New Zealand, making it an excellent complement to the discussions begun by Jameson and Wanhall. Although Freeman’s analysis was inspired by Van Kirk’s foundational work, her main point of reference is a provocative 2001 *American Historical Review* article by Patrick Wolfe in which he proposed that the timbre of colonial discourses of miscegenation was contingent upon whether the colonizer’s power over the colonized had its source in land or labor. Freeman’s essay represents an important intervention into both monolithic notions of attitudes toward miscegenation and Wolfe’s dichotomous construction, which, she suggests, “considers only the colonizers’ discourses and deals only with those that were dominant,” argu-
ing instead that such attitudes were always calibrated at the local level by “alternate and minority viewpoints . . . with which the ruling elites had to contend” (196–97).

This collection of essays will also be an excellent resource for undergraduate and graduate students seeking an enlarged understanding of the field, from its development to an overview of its major thinkers and texts to its current state of affairs and possible future directions.


Susan Gardner, *University of North Carolina, Charlotte*

Readers of this journal will not be surprised that Trickster Lives! In his many guises! And most will be aware that American Indians not only excoriate Columbus; they also joke about him: Vine Deloria Jr., in *Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto*. Sherman Alexie chided Stephen Colbert for housing him in a hotel room with a view of a statue of Columbus. Carter Revard, in *Family Matters, Tribal Affairs* (1998), wrote a hilarious satire, “Report to the Nation: Repossessing Europe.” Special Agent Wazhazhe, #2,230, concludes: “It may be impossible to civilize the Europeans. . . . Europe in any event won’t be worth things of serious value. So don’t let any of us offer language, traditions, bead work, religion, or even half of the Cowboy and Indian myth, let alone ourselves, this time” (76, 89). But few readers may know that Adam Fortunate Eagle, in 1973, discovered Italy, claiming it in protest of Columbus Day. He kindly offered a brief audience to Pope Paul VI, during which Fortunate Eagle blessed him.

As befits stories told by Trickster, the text is (seemingly) chaotic and disordered. Addressed to various audiences, it is a whirligig of short stories (comic and tragic), anecdotes, reminiscences, critiques of federal Indian policies, paragraph-long jokes, stinging letters to the Indian Health Service (to which President Obama sympathetically replies, though I wonder . . .), letters to editors, all of which his grandchildren call “damn Indian stories.” Fortunate Eagle is a trickster of many facets: social activist, serious joke medicine person, national treasure, enemy of the state (thanks to the federal government), living history, to which I
would add straight talker, loose cannon, humorist (at times, mildly scatological; no trickster could be anything less). Sitting Bull has graciously provided a foreword recommending him as “a Contrary Warrior, in that he joins the ranks of shamans, skinwalkers, shape shifters, sacred clowns, heyokas, republicans, and evangelists” (iii). He also warns us that “[Fortunate Eagle] is a badass Indian who sees another reality, who dances to the beat of a different drum, who uses satire and humor to call attention to the inequalities of our society. Or, he can be a bumbling coyote, who can screw up the best of intentions, crap on it, kick some dirt over it, and then walk away with his tail held high. He has the guts to write a book this bad and thinks he can get away with it, and if he hasn’t offended someone with his stories, he is not doing his job” (xiii).

On first reading and rereads, I kept on asking myself, “Did this really happen? Does it matter if it didn’t?” But Fortunate Eagle anticipates such dizzying responses: “Some of my stories are total fabrications disguised as the truth. . . . Personally, I find it impossible to distinguish the difference between outright fabrications and bullshit. You, gentle reader, must decide. But don’t you agree that bullshit is the fertilizer of the mind?” (xv).

So how is the hapless reader ever to decipher his stories? Fortunately for us (I only discovered this on the fourth reading), our author has included an “Appendix: Percentage of Bullshit per Story.” So I’m pleased to announce that, according to his own estimations, this narrative is 2066% bullshit and 4009% true.

Fortunate Eagle was born Adam Nordwall in 1929: his mother was Red Lake Ojibwa and his father Swedish. After the father’s untimely death, his mother had no recourse but to send her five sons and their older sister to an Indian Training Boarding School, about which Fortunate Eagle published a memoir, Pipestone: My Life in an Indian Boarding School (2010). They lived there for the next ten years. Later, he met his Shoshone wife Bobbie at the then Haskell Institute in Kansas, and they have been married for sixty-five years. “That’s a record of survival few people can ever achieve. Ho Wah!” (196). He became a community activist in 1962 and helped to organize the takeovers of Alcatraz in 1964 and 1969. One of the most moving stories, “Alcatraz Is Not an Island” (95% bs, 5% true) is a haunting tribute to the huge captive turtle Iktomi, who lives in the sea depths and is perfectly capable of shaking up the island. “Evil Spirits of Alcatraz” (98% bs, 2% true) spans centuries of imprisonment and despair, leavened by a comic ending. “The Saga of the Lahontan Valley
Long-Legged Turtles” (98% bs, 2% true), is an endearing, compassionate allegory of the slaughter of the Great Plains bison.

Fortunate Eagle became a published writer in his eighties, although he had been scribbling throughout his storied career. It took him fifteen years to complete Scalping Columbus. His English teacher at Haskell, Mae Maeness (is this name real?), “encouraged my writing by having me read my goofy essays to the delight of the other students. That literary time bomb waited over fifty years before exploding into reality” (“Interview with Adam Fortunate Eagle,” publisher’s press release).

Our good fortune is that he became a writer (he is also a sculptor and has many other tricks of trades). His life has been a perilous journey, tinged by sadness (a sister’s suicide), serious illnesses, and danger, as well as full with triumphs and honors. At one stage, he and his wife bravely went into self-imposed exile on her Shoshone-Paiute reservation; he was considered dangerous by the federal government. There is so much more to say, but I conclude by stating (0% bs, 100% true) that Fortunate Eagle is indeed a “national treasure.” Read his book!


Denise Low, University of California, San Diego

Women and Ledger Art: Four Contemporary Native American Artists, by Richard Pearce, is an in-depth analysis of four Native women artists who extend the Plains ledger art tradition into contemporary times. This is reason enough to make the book an important addition to any library collection. The artists are Shannon Ahtone Harjo, Kiowa; Linda Haukaas, Sicangu Lakota; Dolores Purdy Corcoran, Caddo; and Colleen Cutschall, Oglala Lakota. Richard Pearce, the non-Native author, uses extensive interviews with the artists for biographies as well as discussion of their aesthetics. Forty-six full-color plates represent the richness of the women’s visions. In a few instances, photographs of cultural referents extend background context. An example is a 2006 photograph, Contemporary Turkey Dancers by Dayna Bowker Lee, which features the hair ornaments, dush-tos, prominent in Purdy Corcoran’s pen-and-ink ledger drawing Turkey Dance. The vast majority of the book’s images are
the women’s artwork. The large dimensions of the book, 8.5 x 10.5 in.,
add to the illustrations’ impact.

Pearce describes his book’s goals as “three-fold”: to celebrate the art-
ists; to place the narrative aspects of the art into “geo-historical con-
texts”; and to document the art and the artists’ intentions through in-
depth interviews. Each chapter presents brief biographies, lengthy
artists’ quotations, detailed description of selected artworks, and discus-
sion of gender issues.

Pearce discusses the roles of women in relationship to the ledger art
tradition, including discussion of women warriors. He quotes Bea Med-
icine’s essay “Warrior Women—Sex Role Alternatives for Plains Indian
Women” on the flexibility of Plains Indian gender roles, especially for
the “Ninawaki,” or “manly woman,” who engages in a warrior’s activities
as a “life occupation” or for particular occasions. Such women, accord-
ing to Medicine, “counted coup, received honors, gained wealth, and
were members of female soldier societies with specific police duties.”

Pearce notes the nineteenth-century and earlier practices of women’s
roles in battle as “helpers, vocal supporters, and warriors.” The author
fully summarizes available sources about women’s historic connections
to ledger art, because in several instances this book’s contemporary
women artists face ostracism for war-related artworks. Pearce empha-
sizes the dynamic and hybrid nature of ledger art. It is not a frozen arti-
fact, but rather, as Pearce notes, an evolving form.

Any discussion of ledger art begins with its definition, as the genre
and its nuances are unfamiliar to most people. Pearce opens with an
effective explanation of the pictographic warrior subject matter, drawn
on paper ledger books beginning in the 1850s. This hybrid art form con-
tinues a precontact hide painting tradition. The stylized glyphs, with
abstract semi-circles to represent horse hooves, for example, are part
of a codified system for preserving war accounts and winter count cal-
endars. Notable nineteenth-century ledgers are mostly from Lakota,
Northern Cheyenne, Southern Cheyenne, Arapaho, and Kiowa nations.
From 1875 to 1878, some Southern Plains prisoners of war at Fort
Marion created ledger art, and these included one Caddo. The artists
in Women and Ledger Art are members of Caddo, Kiowa, and Lakota
nations. Pearce asserts convincingly that these artworks continue spe-
cific and detailed tribal traditions.

Details of ledger art from four different traditions (Caddo, Kiowa,
and two bands of Lakota) are difficult to interpret precisely, and the author makes some missteps. In the drawing Return from War Dance Haukaas depicts women wearing first-phase Navajo chief’s blankets. In his interpretation, Pearce assumes “[t]hey would have belonged to a husband, father, or other male relative who was a chief.” These were not men relatives’ possessions, but rather prized trade goods obtained from Diné (Navajo) sources. The term chief’s blanket refers to the Diné pattern. Four Northern Cheyenne ledgers created by Wild Hog, Porcupine, and other Fort Robinson breakout survivors depict women wearing such blankets (Plains Indian). The earliest surviving photograph of a Cheyenne woman, taken in 1867 by Charles William Carter, shows her wearing a first-phase Navajo chief’s blanket (Carter). These were the women’s prized accoutrements. In another instance, the author attributes the term snagging to Lakota people specifically when he discusses a drawing by Haukaas with that title. Indian Country Today lists snagging as one of the top five terms in intertribal, not specifically Lakota, powwow slang (“Top”). When Pearce uses the artists’ information and direct description, he creates effective explanations of the pieces. He continuously refers back to women’s perspectives in each explication.

Discussion of the artists begins with a brief description of the 1920s career of Lois Smoky, one of the original members of the Kiowa Five art movement. In previously unpublished material, Pearce describes the discrimination she faced, including mutilation of her artworks, according to Oscar Jacobson. This establishes a baseline for Pearce’s discussion of women’s relationship to ledger art. This early twentieth-century woman artist’s history segues into Kiowa artist Shannon Ahtone Harjo’s chapter. She studied with Southern Cheyenne artist Dick West at Bacone, and under his tutelage she chose to focus on her nation’s history. Kiowa Sun Dance required much research with elders and written sources, she tells Pearce, as the last Kiowa Sun Dance was 1887. Ahtone Harjo’s piece Last Will and Testament depicts a Kiowa man on a horse, painted on Confederate ten dollar bills, not ledger paper. This repurposing of a defeated nation’s currency adds elements of irony. Many army personnel, including George Armstrong Custer, were veterans of the Civil War. The superimposed Kiowa fighter carries an army bugle, perhaps a captured trophy according to Pearce, and wears army pants. The artist adds the time and place, “Young County, Texas, October 1864.” This references the Elm Creek Raid, where Kiowas captured a child,
Millie Durgan, who became Ahtone Harjo’s great-grandmother. Pearce explains the historic context with thoroughly researched facts and the artist’s comments.

Both the works of Linda Huakaas and Delores Purdy Corcoran use historic ledger paper. Nineteenth-century ledger books are still available for purchase at estate sales and antique stores. These original documents create a palimpsest, where multiple time frames exist at once. Huakaas’s *At the Museum* shows men and women war society leaders viewing a historic Lakota pictographic muslin hung at the top of the drawing, as though in a museum. The artist explains this drawing to Pearce as a repatriation of a historic object as well as reclaiming the narratives of museum displays. Dolores Purdy Corcoran selects particularly appropriate historic documents in addition to ledgers, including an 1890 Department of the Interior pension certificate. Her work and Pearce’s presentation of her comments is one of the most effective.

The book concludes with the acrylic paintings and bronze sculptures of Colleen Cutschall. Her work is not on ledger paper or other historic documents, but rather it uses images derived from the ledger art tradition. Her large, thirty-five feet long sculpture “Spirit Warriors” (2002) is at the Little Big Horn / Greasy Grass Aboriginal Memorial. The outlines of three warriors on horses—Lakota, Cheyenne, and Arapaho—ride toward the horizon, similar in form to ledger pictographs. The fourth figure, a woman, hands a Medicine Wheel shield to one of the men. In her comments, Cutschall tells Pearce that women, like this figure, supported men in their war expeditions: “Black Shawl, the wife of Crazy Horse, stood ready with hot meals, fresh horses, and replenished weaponry.” The artist’s participation in this project helped change the focus of the memorial to commemoration of Indigenous inhabitants rather than Custer. Pearce celebrates this subversion of the settler narrative.

Pearce spent six years interviewing, photographing, and studying ledger art. This innovative project is an important resource for study of narrative Indigenous forms. It also points out the dearth of art historians writing about contemporary Native artists, especially Native respondents. Those few Native people with PhD degrees in art history who write about Native artists include Jolene Rickard (Tuscarora), Heather Igloliorte (Inuit), Lara Evans (Cherokee), Jennifer Vigil (Diné), and perhaps a few more. Another handful of Native people writing about Native artists who have advanced degrees or community experi-
ence include Arthur Amiotte, Gail Tremblay, Joseph Horse Capture Jr., Mique’l Askren, Emil Her Many Horses, Heid Erdrich, Becca Gerken, and Dylan A. T. Miner. Indigenous American art includes many kinds of historic artifacts with explicit and implicit narratives, as well as the works of numerous practicing Indigenous artists. Plains ledger art falls into the English language category of “visual art.” This does not diminish its importance as a literary text produced by Indigenous peoples of the Americas. *Women and Ledger Art* expands the boundaries of contemporary “literature” in important ways.

**WORKS CITED**


Alicia Robinet, *Western University*

Timothy C. Winegard’s careful attention to the neglected history of Canadian Aboriginals during the First World War makes *For King and Kanata: Canadian Indians and the First World War* a significant contribution to First World War, Aboriginal, and Canadian studies. Despite the incompleteness of records on Aboriginal participation in the war, Winegard draws upon an abundance of primary documents—from both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal sources—to provide a clear history of Aboriginal activity in the book’s introduction, nine chapters, and short conclusion. The brief epilogue glosses Aboriginal participation in the Second World War, as well as some commemorative efforts to recognize Aboriginal involvement in both world wars, and the current figures of Indigenous participation in the American and Canadian military. Winegard’s nuanced balance between individual anecdotes, secondary sources, and archival records also offers readers insight into the untold stories of individual Aboriginal soldiers whose sacrifices are largely unknown.
Winegard’s historiography privileges accuracy over political correctness, which entails that his language often evokes the context of the time period, a decision that some readers may find controversial. Winegard avoids charging the Canadian government with racism, whereas scholars like James Dempsey have argued that some recruitment efforts in the later years of the war represented racial prejudice. Winegard suggests, instead, that these efforts stemmed from the exigencies of the Canadian militia at the time. Some reviewers have challenged this book’s early chapters for their plodding backstory of Aboriginals in Canada or Winegard’s efforts to justify his terminology. However, he skillfully summarizes a vast amount of history, including early contact, the Indian Act, the residential school system, and the Red River Rebellion to provide the necessary contexts for both new and seasoned scholars of not only the First World War, but also Aboriginal or Canadian studies in general.

Winegard clarifies that there was not in fact an official policy of exclusion during the war, in contrast to what some scholars have suggested. He acknowledges the influence of policies on Aboriginal participation in previous wars—such as the Boer War—in shaping the unofficial policy of exclusion from 1914 and into 1915, but also the increased efforts of some Canadians to initiate all-Aboriginal units (all of which were rejected). By illuminating statistical indexes, he highlights, for example, that there were approximately equal numbers of Aboriginal soldiers from Canada as Euro-Canadian soldiers. Further, Winegard attends to the differences between tribes in Canada that may have affected recruitment patterns, which reminds us that we should not consider Aboriginal groups as homogeneous during the war.

Winegard explores Aboriginal participation in the context of contemporaneous race theories that perceived Aboriginals as possessing innate military prowess. Citing evidence for the prevalent “noble savage” construct and the assimilatory practices of Canada’s Department of Indian Affairs (DIA), this book highlights additional ways of understanding the varying perceptions of Aboriginal participation. Moving beyond the “noble savage” stereotype and instead surveying records of Aboriginal service, Winegard concludes that Aboriginal soldiers “were exceptional marksmen” (114) in the First World War because of their hunting and trapping abilities. Whereas previous scholars have ignored the imperial documents of October 1915 that led to official inclusion of Aboriginals in the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF), Winegard engages with
these imperial archives to highlight their importance in the policy shift to military inclusion of Aboriginal men. Although Aboriginals were officially allowed into the CEF in December 1915, other minorities in Canada, such as blacks and Asians, were still unofficially restricted from joining the CEF, a distinction that Winegard argues exemplifies the continued belief in the enhanced martial prowess of Aboriginals. Engaging with early war policy also enables him to demonstrate the shift in policy toward other minority soldiers and to show how the recruitment of black Canadian soldiers was connected to the acceptance of Aboriginals into the CEF. He points to the unfortunately scarce availability of documentation when attempting to consider the full extent of Aboriginal participation in the war. He highlights that an unknown number of American Indigenous soldiers also fought in Canadian regiments prior to the declaration of war by the United States in 1917.

Importantly, this book prompts readers to consider the military structure of the imperial government when considering Canada’s wartime decisions and Aboriginal participation in the First World War. In addition to treaty agreements with the Crown, as Winegard reminds us, Aboriginals did not possess Canadian citizenship rights during the war, and thus many Aboriginals felt more allegiance to the Crown than to Canada. Winegard’s attention to the complex triangulations of Empire nuances the colonial relations within Canada; he reasons that Aboriginals fought in the First World War partly because they sought autonomy from Canada just as Canada looked for the same from Britain. Moreover, he points out that Aboriginals did not own their reserves or their band funds, which affected their ability, rather than their desire, to contribute to the war effort. He also highlights that this ownership vested in the Crown meant that the government continued to appropriate Aboriginal lands even into the postwar years.

Winegard cites some instances of Aboriginal resistance to recruitment as “evidence of the strategies initiated by Indians to promote their agendas and to confront the paternalistic edicts of the Indian Act and the control of the dia” (66). Some Aboriginals, and even entire reserves, resisted compliance with conscription efforts; For King and Kanata reveals that it was not only French-Canadians who actively resisted government attempts to conscript them leading up to the Military Service Act of 1917. Winegard provides evidence of one soldier at the front who sought clarification about his rights to return home based on laws
passed during the war. Winegard does well to point to Aboriginal sovereignty efforts during the War, for Aboriginals conceived of their support of the imperial government as means by which to lobby the Crown to encourage Canada to revise unjust laws. Whereas much Canadian historiography of the First World War highlights the increased autonomy of the Canadian nation as a result of the war, this book provides ample evidence to suggest that Aboriginal groups were politically active and lobbied their own interests both during and after the war.

Toward the book’s conclusion in the chapter “On the Home Front,” Winegard moves beyond the traditional masculinist perspective and explores the ways in which Aboriginal women participated in the war effort. Here he could have pushed his analysis to investigate further the gender dynamics between male and female Aboriginals and other Canadians during the war. However, in expanding our knowledge on Aboriginal participation in the war, Winegard does not ignore details of white Canada’s war service, which makes his monograph a highly informative introduction to those studying Canada’s role in the First World War more generally. In this vein, this book treats Aboriginal participation as a fundamental aspect of the historical narrative of Canada’s participation in the war, rather than as a supplement to white Canada’s involvement. Winegard’s book is a well-researched and ultimately engaging survey of Aboriginal participation in the First World War that will interest scholars, students, and the general reader of Canadian history, Aboriginal studies, or histories of the First World War.
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