

UNSETTLING LAUGHTER:
HUMOR AND RESISTANCE IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY
NATIVE LITERATURE

A Dissertation Presented for the
Doctor of Philosophy
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Henry Yates Kirby
August 2024

Copyright © 2024 by Henry Yates Kirby
All rights reserved.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are many people without whom this project would not have been possible. First, I would like to thank Katy Chiles, my dissertation director. Your kindness, patience, and wisdom have meant so much to me throughout this process. I am honored to have had the opportunity to work with you and learn from you. I would also like to thank my committee members, Dawn Coleman, Bill Hardwig, and Brooke Bauer. Your insight and guidance have helped me craft a much clearer, more articulate, and well-reasoned argument. Thank you also to Anne Langendorfer for your conversation, ideas, and guidance.

I would like to thank the English Department, the University of Tennessee Graduate School, and the Denbo Center for Humanities and the Arts. I have benefitted greatly from the many fellowship opportunities you all have afforded me; I do not think that I would have been able to complete this project in five years without your financial assistance. My experience as a Denbo Center Fellow has particularly aided my progress on the dissertation by providing me a workspace and a community to enrich my writing. I particularly would like to thank Amy Elias, Katie Hodges-Kluck, and my colleagues in the 2023-24 fellowship program for their support and for giving me the opportunity to present my research.

Thank you also to my family and friends for supporting me during this experience. To my moms, Sarah and Dayna, thank you for calling and checking in with me over these last five years. To my dads, Bob and Bill, thank you for your kindness and

always being there for me. To Emma, Hughston, Owen, and Shea, thank you all for believing in me and making me laugh throughout this process. To my grandmother, Peggy Sutton, who passed away during the writing of this project: I know it's not preaching, but it's honest work. I'm sorry you never got to read it. To my best friends, Emily and David, Ben, John and Sidney, Maddie, and the rest of you who are too numerous to name, thank you all for your friendship and for modeling the kind of person I want to be. You mean more to me than I can say.

To Gillie and Mina, thank you for your purrs, biscuits, and cuddles; they always came at exactly the right time.

Finally, and most importantly, I dedicate this dissertation to Chelsea. More than anything or anyone else, YOU are the reason this dissertation is now complete. Your patience, forgiveness, playfulness, and companionship keep me going, especially during the moments when I most doubt myself. Thank you for believing in me, supporting me, loving me, and always being on my team. This is for you. I love you.

P.S. I promise to get all these library books out of the house now!

ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines how nineteenth-century Native authors use humor as a tool of political resistance. In their writings in English, these writers use irony and sarcasm to satirize colonialism and ridicule white society's erroneous misrepresentations of Indigenous character. Additionally, Native writers also use humor to foster solidarity with audiences and to imagine new political possibilities. As these Native authors resisted settler colonialism, contemporary white American writers use humor to enact settler logics and perpetuate ideological violence against Native peoples, sometimes unintentionally. In juxtaposing Native and white humorists in each chapter, this dissertation seeks to decenter whiteness from accounts of nineteenth-century humor and to demonstrate the wide availability of humor as a method of political protest and a language of self- and community-definition for Native peoples historically. Chapter 1 reads Pequot preacher William Apess's *Indian Nullification* alongside Irving's *Tour on the Prairies* to show how Apess and the Osages in Irving's *Tour* use humor to satirize settler hypocrisy and pretension. Chapter 2 explores Cherokee writer John Rollin Ridge's *Life and Adventures of Joaquin Murieta* (1855) with selections of George Washington Harris's Sut Lovingood stories. Scenes of laughter within Ridge's novel critique the violent humor of settler comedy like Harris's that seeks to impose ahistorical narratives of white indigeneity on stolen land. Chapter 3 juxtaposes newspaper reports of Paiute advocate Sarah Winnemucca Hopkins's and Mark Twain's humorous lectures. Hopkins's physical comedy aims to generate new political futures for the Paiutes by building

bridges with white audiences while Twain's humor erases Native presence at home even as it criticizes U.S. imperialism abroad. Chapter 4 compares Muscogee poet Alexander Posey's satirical *Fus Fixico* Letters with selections from Black poet Paul Laurence Dunbar's dialect poetry. For both of these writers, humor critiques the white gaze and also turns inward to privilege and honor domestic joy.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
The Myth of the Humorless Indian	4
The Ends of Native Humor	15
Unsettling American Humor	26
CHAPTER 1 TRAITS OF COLONIZER CHARACTER: WILLIAM APRESS, WASHINGTON IRVING, AND “TALKING STUFF” AS INDIGENOUS RESISTANCE	38
<i>Indian Nullification: Apess’s Fun-House Mirror for the White Man</i>	49
<i>A Tour on the Prairies</i>	66
Talking Stuff	82
CHAPTER 2 VIOLENCE AND LAUGHTER: JOHN ROLLIN RIDGE AND OLD SOUTHWEST HUMOR	87
Satirizing Nation-Building in <i>Joaquin Murieta</i>	93
Reterritorializing Laughter	103
Indigenizing Whiteness in Old Southwestern Humor	116
CHAPTER 3 WINNEMUCCA HOPKINS AND TWAIN ON TOUR: BODIES, COMEDY, AND THE (RE)MAPPING OF NATIVE SPACE	127
Shared Geographies	136
“Mischievous Sarcasms”: Winnemucca Hopkins’s Embodied Humor, 1864-1879... ..	147
Native Erasure and National Renewal in Twain’s Lectures, 1867-1872	177
CHAPTER 4 REFUSAL AND SELF-DEFINITION IN THE DIALECT HUMOR OF ALEXANDER POSEY AND PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR	211
The Sofky Pot: Kinship and Community in the Fus Fixico Letters	219
“one scrumptious time!”: Black Joy in Dunbar’s Dialect Poems	262
Joy in the Language	284
CONCLUSION	288
WORKS CITED	292
VITA	317

LIST OF FIGURES

- Figure 1. Anonymous. "Manner of Instructing the Indians." 1835. *Indian Nullification of the Unconstitutional Laws of Massachusetts, Relative to the Marshpee Tribe: Or, the Pretended Riot Explained*, Jonathan Howe, 1835, frontispiece. 53
- Figure 2. Sarah Winnemucca Hopkins's portrait in Dan De Quille's *The Big Bonanza* (1875). 145
- Figure 3. Scenes of mining life featuring the "honest miner" in De Quille's *The Big Bonanza*. 157
- Figure 4. Posey's application to the Dawes Commission for allotment lands for himself and his two sons, Irving and Kipling Posey, dated April 16, 1902. "Oklahoma, United States records," National Archives and Records Administration. Southwest Region. .. 241
- Figure 5. Fig. 2: A map showing the Posey family's contiguous allotments, circa 1910. Posey's plot occupies Section 17, Town 10, Range 15. E. Hastain. *Hastain's Township Plats of the Creek Nation*. Model Printing Co., 1910, 214. 242

INTRODUCTION

Early Native literature is not often imagined to be funny. For Native peoples, the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries, when Native literature in English first developed, was a time of great loss and tumultuous social upheaval. The exigences that Native writers respond to are often tragic: the decimation of Indigenous populations from disease and the destruction of traditional food sources; the United States's theft of millions of acres of Native lands; the kidnapping of Native children and sexual violence toward Indigenous women; the forced dissolution of tribal governments and suppression of Indigenous cultural and religious practices; and systemic poverty and illness due to lack of access to the basic resources of human survival. Native writers continue to address these same issues today. Early Native writers used a range of rhetorical devices and affective language to write about their experiences under colonialism, from the sentimentality of Sophia Allen Callahan's (Muscogee Creek) early novel *Wynema* (1891) and Charles Eastman's (Santee Dakota) memoirs (1902, 1916), to the righteous anger of Sauk leader Black Hawk's 1833 account of the United States military's genocide of his people. Political writers such as Elias Boudinot (Buck Watie) editor of the *Cherokee Phoenix*, and John Ross, Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation, used logic and the techniques of Western legal argumentation to engage the United States government in debates about Native rights and sovereignty. Humor is rarely understood by literary scholarship as one of the techniques Native writers used. However, many early Native writers such as William Apess (Pequot), John Rollin Ridge (Cherokee), Sarah

Winnemucca Hopkins (Northern Paiute), and Alexander Posey (Muscogee) used humor to accomplish a variety of political and rhetorical ends, including resisting oppression, sustaining Native community under colonialism, and imagining alternative futures for their people.

“Unsettling Laughter” analyzes the political work of Native humor written in English through the nineteenth century. It reconstructs the ways Native writers and performers used humor to negotiate power within the changing dynamics of the U.S. imperium. Organized chronologically, it looks at the following points in time: the 1833-34 Mashpee Wampanoag struggle for civil rights in Mashpee, Massachusetts; the Indian Removal crisis in what is now the southeast U.S.; the U.S.-Mexican War and the territorialization of California in the 1840s and 50s; the American occupation and colonization of Hawai’i in the 1860s; the Bannock War of 1878 in the Great Basin and its catastrophic relocation of the Northern Paiutes; and the enforcement of the Dawes Act of 1887 which precipitated allotment and the dissolution of tribal sovereignty in Indian Territory. In all of these historic moments, Native writers used humor, particularly the techniques of sarcasm, satire, and irony, to protest the United States’s mistreatment of their peoples and to issue calls for justice. They were not alone. Many white writers wrote against the United States’s imperial ambitions as well and several used humor to do so. Washington Irving and Mark Twain, two of America’s best known humor writers, both turned their wit to lampoon and criticize the hypocrisy and cultural chauvinism of the United States’s treatment of Indigenous peoples at home and abroad. However, even

as it protests U.S. imperialism, the humor of these white Americans writers often partakes of popular cultural myths about Indian “savagery” and “inevitable disappearance” that enacts harmful settler colonial logics on a larger scale. Thus humor was both a tool of resistance, a method of negotiating power, and frequently a means of furthering imperial and colonial ends.

By situating Native writers’ humor alongside contemporaneous examples of white humor, “Unsettling Laughter” shows these writers use humor to navigate, resist, refuse, and sometimes enact the forms and discourses of U.S. imperialism. Each chapter centers the pairing of a Native and non-Native writers, linked through their contemporaneity or response to the same historical event, in order to restore to view the textual and discursive conversations among these writers. Thus “Unsettling Laughter” presents a totally new picture of the political work of humor in the nineteenth century. The authors in my study, particularly Native writers, all used humor to respond to the increasingly ambitious expansionist imperial projects of U.S. nationalism, sometimes critiquing the nation-state’s colonialism and sometimes perpetuating settler-colonial logics even as they push back against imperial projects and their attendant territorializing, racializing, and gendered structures of power.

Recognizing humor as a historical language of Native political agency is a crucial step in deconstructing common racist stereotypes that continue to dehumanize Native people. The stock figure of the stoic, unsmiling Indian passing resignedly beyond the horizon has been a staple of American cultural production since at least James Fenimore

Cooper's *Leatherstocking Tales* (1823-41). Part of the complex settler construction of the "noble savage," the "Unsmiling Indian" helped perpetuate the mutually-reinforcing cultural myths that American Indians were savages, below white civilization on progressivist scale of cultural evolution, and that, therefore, their ultimate disappearance, either by assimilation or extermination, before the advancement of American settlement was inevitable. As Marianne Kongerslev observes, "the refusal of settlers to acknowledge or even notice Native forms of humor" is a form of Native erasure, making real Native peoples "unreal and ungrievable as living beings" ("Enduring Laughter," 256). Additionally, this subtler operation of dehumanization through stereotype exists alongside examples of racist white humor that mocks and degrades Native people through caricature, especially the misrepresentation in American Indian English dialect in "Hollywood Injun English" (Meek 93). By restoring to view a sense of Native writers' politically agentic use of humor, rather than focus on their misrepresentation and victimization in humor written by whites, this dissertation participates in efforts by scholars in the fields of Native American and Indigenous Studies, American Literature and American Studies, and Post-Colonial Studies to decolonize our mainstream American collective narratives of Native inhumanity.

The Myth of the Humorless Indian

Humor has always been an important part of Indigenous society and culture. Standing Rock Sioux writer and activist Vine Deloria, Jr. explains that for centuries prior to European arrival Native peoples used teasing and lighthearted ridicule to regulate

acceptable behavior in social groups. “Rather than embarrass members of the tribe publicly,” Deloria writes, “people used to tease individuals they considered out of step with the consensus of tribal opinion” (149). Eventually, Deloria adds, such mockery became integrated into intratribal political discourse as people “began to tease themselves as a means of showing humility and at the same time advocating a course of action they deeply believed in” (149). Long before Native writers adapted it as a means to resist white supremacy, humor thus performed political work for Indigenous people. Additionally, as many non-Native anthropologists demonstrate, humor played a role in Indigenous ceremonial life as well. Julian H. Steward’s 1929 dissertation “The Ceremonial Buffoon of the American Indian” examines the many examples of ritualized clowning exhibited in the religious ceremonies of several Native tribes, such as the Hopi kachina and the heyoka of Lakota and Dakota tradition.¹ Likewise, W. W. Hill’s *Navaho Humour* (1940) attests to the variegated role humor plays in Navajo culture. In these studies, both writers confirm the fictionality of the humorless Indian, or what Deloria calls “the grunting granite-faced redskin...[of] American mythology” (148).

Where does this figure come from? The myth of the humorless Indian can be traced to a theory of sociocultural evolution based on the concept of “progress” from the state of savagery to that of civilization which became popularized in the Age of Enlightenment. As Ter Ellingson summarizes it, this theory posited that human society

¹ Steward’s revised dissertation is reprinted as essay 16 in *Evolution and Ecology: Essays on Social Transformation* by Julian H. Steward, edited by Jane C. Steward and Robert F. Murphy, University of Illinois Press, 1977, pp. 347-65.

developed on a gradual scale from savagery to civilization “with its evolutionary stages grounded in patterns of subsistence: hunting as the basis of ‘savage’ life, progressing upward into ‘barbarism’ with the formation of pastoralist animal-herding societies, and advancing toward civilization with the emergence of societies based on agriculture and ‘commerce’” (159). The four-stage theory was particularly influential to the thinkers of the Scottish Enlightenment, especially Adam Smith, “its most prominent propagator” (Wolloch 253). In his writing, Smith strove to make the generalized theory historically specific in his attention to how different people’s lifeways and the environments in which they lived influenced their different courses of social development. For instance, in his *Lectures on Jurisprudence* (1763), Smith argues that in order for a people to make “improvement in the arts of life...The soil must be improveable, otherwise there can be nothing from whence they might draw that which they should work up and improve. That must be the foundation of their labour and industry” (223). A similar environmental determinism can be seen in other Enlightenment thinkers’ use of the four-stage theory, such as Cornelius de Pauw, Adam Ferguson, William Robertson, the Comte de Buffon, and Thomas Jefferson.²

In the four-stage theory, climate not only determined the development of societies but also the characters of the individuals within them. More accurately, the exigencies of subsistence were thought to shape societies in ways that necessarily encouraged or

² Analyses of the four-stage theory as it appears in each of these writers’ works can be found in Ronald L. Meek, *Social Science and the Ignoble Savage*. Adam Kuper also connects the progressivist theory to the Scottish Enlightenment in Chapter 2 of *The Reinvention of Primitive Society: Transformations of a Myth*, Routledge, 2005.

thwarted certain virtues and vices. For instance, in his enormously popular *History of America* (1777) the Scottish Enlightenment thinker William Robertson uses the four-stage theory to examine the effect of the American climate on what he presents as “the American”—that is, Native—character. Among the characteristics Robertson attributes to Indigenous Americans are a low degree of affection between individuals, hardness of heart, insensibility, and taciturnity (437-8). Robertson argues that what he sees as the lack of sociality among Indigenous peoples comes as a consequence of their environment. As Roy Harvey Pearce explains, Robertson’s portrait of “the Indian as a cold, disaffected individual is, of course, the product of a rude social state necessitated by the exigencies of crude, isolated living. He must live in a small roaming group and survive by hunting; so he has little or no sense of property or wealth, little notion of government and civil organization, but has a ‘high sense of equality and independence’” (Pearce 87). Like so many other non-Native representations of Indigenous peoples, Robertson’s Indians are clearly colonial constructions, designed to enforce a sense of white cultural superiority. Robertson himself never met any Indigenous people and relied on eighteenth-century and earlier travel accounts and their proto-ethnographic renderings of Native life, to furnish his account of Indigenous insensibility. His *History* is full of judgmental comparisons that reflect his ideological commitments: “His [The Native man’s] attention to others is small. The range of his own ideas is narrow. Hence that taciturnity which is so disgusting to men accustomed to the open intercourse of social conversation” (439).

Robertson's Indians are not just pre-social, they are anti-social, and here we have one possible origin for the trope of the humorless Indian; for Robertson's *History* is not only informed by stadial conceptions of history, but also eighteenth-century moral philosophy. In particular, the *History* makes use of Francis Hutcheson's sentimentalist philosophy. Hutcheson proposes that all humans possess a range of innate "internal" senses—far more than the five "external" ones—including senses of Beauty, Harmony, the "Publick Sense," and the "Sense of Honour" (Dorsey). As these senses receive sensations, they generate desires or aversions in the mind in relation to the amount of pleasure or pain caused by the objects or events they perceive. Then, in turn, through the application of Reason and reflection these desires and aversions give rise to "affections" or "passions," excitements to action. Importantly, humans also possess a moral sense, paramount among the internal senses, that enables them to discern different social actors' motivations for actions, whether they seem to be driven by benevolence or self-love. In Hutcheson's philosophy, benevolence is the desire to increase another person's happiness and self-love is the desire to merely increase one's own happiness, perhaps at another's expense. As Hutcheson explains, the "contemplation" of actions motivated by benevolence—that is, calculated to increase the happiness of another—elicits a feeling of approbation in the spectator, what Hutcheon calls "love [for] the Agent": "[S]ome Actions have to Men an immediate Goodness; ...by a superior Sense, which I call a Moral one, we perceive pleasure in the Contemplation of such Actions in others, and are determin'd to love the Agent, (and much more do we perceive Pleasure in

being conscious of having done such Actions our selves) without any View of further natural Advantage from them” (qtd. in Dorsey). Having determined that an action is benevolent, the spectator’s moral sense judges it and the agent to be virtuous. Because Hutcheson held human nature to be essentially benevolent, one’s approbation of another human’s benevolence towards another generates pleasure in the spectator, increasing one’s ultimate happiness.

Importantly for Hutcheson, the pleasure gained from approbation did not only increase one’s individual happiness but tended to raise the happiness of the whole society. His moral philosophy is finally a social theory of how humans work toward the general good of the whole. Though Hutcheson believes with other eighteenth-century natural law philosophers that human beings in a state of nature possess natural freedom and liberty, he argues that humans are nevertheless inherently social beings “fitted by nature for civil polity” (qtd. in Webster 68).³ He describes the “Contagion of *social* affections” in society, the propensity of benevolent feeling to spread naturally between people in social situations such as public worship: “gratitude, love and esteem, are affections which decline concealment when they are lively; . . . our worshipping in society, our recounting thankfully God’s benefits, our explaining his nature and perfections, our expressing our admiration, esteem, gratitude, and love, presents to the minds of others the proper motives of like affections; and by a contagion, observable in all our passions, naturally tends to raise them in others” (qtd. in Grenda 594). Hutcheson explains that the

³ What other natural law writers call “the state of nature,” Hutcheson refers to as “the state of liberty from human government” (“Sociability” 201).

witnessing of virtue actions between people “naturally” inspires like action in the spectator which, in turn, inspires further spectators and so on, spreading virulently through society.⁴

However, in this theory, though all human beings held a moral sense innately according to Hutcheson’s theory, not all human societies were equally optimized to promote the diffusion of benevolence and proper sentiment. The kind of society mattered. Influenced by climate, age, and other factors, different societies offered people opportunities to “cultivate” or “improve” certain moral characteristics resulting, for many Scottish Enlightenment thinkers, in the diversity of manners among the various nations of the world. For instance, in the *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) Adam Smith, Hutcheson’s pupil at the University of Glasgow, explains that:

The general security and happiness which prevail in ages of civility and politeness, afford little exercise to the contempt of danger, to patience in enduring labor, hunger, and pain. Poverty may be easily avoided, and the contempt of it, therefore, almost ceases to be a virtue. The abstinence from pleasure becomes less necessary, and the mind is more at liberty to unbend itself. (297)

That is, because people living within sufficiently sophisticated “civil” societies do not regularly experience danger or find themselves having to toil to provide the daily means of their subsistence, Smith says, they then do not regard those actions, when they

⁴ For a readable introduction to Hutcheson’s moral sense philosophy, see Amy M. Scmitter, “17th and 18th Theories of Emotions,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward N. Zalta, 2016, <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/emotions-17th18th/>>.

perceive them, to be virtuous.⁵ Conversely, Smith writes, people in less-advanced societies—according to the progressivist history to which he subscribed—are “in continual danger...exposed to the greatest extremities of hunger, and frequently [die] of pure want” (297). The moral effect of these privations is a general lack of what Smith calls sympathy, similar to Hutcheson’s generally contagious sociability: “His circumstances not only habituate him to every sort of distress, but teach him to give way to none of the passions which that distress is apt to excite. He can expect from his countrymen no sympathy or indulgence for such weakness” (297).

Turning to the specific example of Indigenous Americans, Smith describes a portrait of emotional torpor in which we can recognize the figure of the humorless Indian. They, Smith claims, never show love or grief, never socialize but “see one another by stealth only,” are insensible to insult and injury, remain stoic and emotionless in the face of torture and even death, they witness the torture of their friends and loved ones with the same stoniness, and “assume upon all occasions the greatest indifference” (298-9). He then draws comparisons between Indigenous peoples and “humane and polished people,” the main difference being that the latter feel “more sensibility to the passions of others” and are more freely able to “converse with the openness of friends,” whereas Indigenous people do so only “with the reserve of strangers” (300). Smith’s account anticipates the

⁵ Hutcheson, Robertson, Smith and all their contemporaries all belonged to the elite class of Scottish and Irish society. They moved within high-ranking religious, social, and intellectual circles and their writings address their colleagues in these circles, which colors their depictions of “proper” sociability and feeling. Of course the lower-class poor in Smith’s Scotland had to endure “labor, hunger, and pain” and could not so “easily” “avoid poverty,” but Smith’s normative human being in society, for the purposes of his moral philosophy, seems to be an elite with great means and ample leisure time.

catalog of vices that Robertson attributes to Indigenous society—hardness of heart, insensibility, etc.—suggesting that eighteenth-century European philosophers founded their cultural superiority over the Native peoples they encountered not only in terms of agriculture and religion, but also in terms of the emotional economy that made up the fabric of society.

Such portrayals circulated widely through the eighteenth-century transatlantic world. As Troy Brickham points out, writers like Hutcheson, Smith, and Robertson wrote for both elite intellectual readers and to a general public whose interest in details about Indigenous peoples a world away was piqued by coverage of the Seven Years War (1756-63) (247). These writers enjoyed enormous popularity on both sides of the Atlantic. In British North America, Hutcheson's theories of moral sense and secular government were taught alongside Locke at the Colleges of New York, Rhode Island, and Philadelphia (Grenda 590-1) and while Robertson's *History* was not printed in the United States until 1812, there is evidence that many writers and historians in the early United States such as Joel Barlow and Washington Irving encountered Robertson through British printings of the *History* (Stimson 39-40). Generations after their publication, the Scottish philosophers' ideas about Indigenous peoples continued to influence public opinion.

The myth of the emotionless, humorless Indian perpetuated in these eighteenth-century texts has had a profound and enduring impact on Native communities. A line can be drawn from Smith's and Robertson's depictions through the stoic and tragic noble savage of the nineteenth-century, to Edward S. Curtis's early twentieth-century

photographic representations of Native peoples as an unsmiling “Vanishing Race” and the grim, doomed warriors of Hollywood Westerns. Each depiction dehumanizes Indigenous peoples, transforming them from flesh and blood into one-dimensional, cardboard cutout reflections of settler ideology. They are what Anishinaabe critic Gerald Vizenor calls “simulations of dominance; the notions and misnomers that are read as the authentic and sustained as representations of Native American Indians” (5-6). Such depictions are “simulations” in the sense that they construct and attest to the absence of Native peoples in the present, erasing the presence of real Native communities, voices, and resistance to colonialism. Unable to laugh, fictional humorless Indians can only react to the forces to colonialism by lamenting what is depicted as already having been lost.

Humor is agency, and the ability to laugh is the ability to create new meanings within imposed narratives. In Vizenor’s work, “postindian warriors of survivance” embody “the Native presence after the simulation who represents both resistance and survival” (152). Postindians exceed and rebuff colonial representations of *indians* through what Vizenor calls “trickster discourse,” which adopts as its methodology “contiguity and infiltration of the dominant symbolic orders and systems” (152). Incongruity, humor, and play are the operative modes of trickster discourse or trickster consciousness. Against Western culture’s “tragic monologue” of Native life, the trickster is “chance and freedom in a comic sign”:

Freedom is a sign, and the trickster is chance and freedom in a comic sign; comic freedom is a “doing,” not an essence, not a museum being, or an aesthetic

presence. The trickster, as semiotic sign, is imagined in narrative voices, a communal rein to the unconscious, which is comic liberation; however, the trickster is outside comic structure, “making it” comic rather than “inside comedy, being it.” The trickster is agonistic imagination and aggressive liberation, a “doing” in narrative points of view, and outside the imposed structures.

(“Trickster Discourse,” 285)

Trickster discourse, then, is the mobilization of the comic view against the settler society’s imposition of confining and definitive narrative simulations, such as those described above. The trickster’s mode of humanistic comic excess reveals the limits of colonial misrepresentations. “Unsettling Laughter” follows Vizenor in restoring to view the comic mode that informs many nineteenth-century Native writers’ resistance to colonialism.⁶ The examples of protest examined in this study are all examples of the active process of “comic freedom.” Living inside of colonial structures that pronounced them all dead and gone, the Native writers examined in this study all use comedy to live in and highlight the incongruities, ironies, inconsistencies, and hypocrisies of colonialism, working within and without its “imposed structures” and narratives to reveal those structures’ limitations.

⁶ I do not mean to suggest that this dissertation is a “trickster study” in the tradition of literary criticism that has “exoticized” the trickster and claimed the figure as emblematic of “postmodern consciousness rather than as part of specific Indigenous cultures, histories, storytelling” (Linda Morra, “A Preface: Ruminations about Troubling Tricksters,” in *Troubling Tricksters: Envisioning Critical Conversations*, edited by Deanna Reder and Linda Morra, Wilfrid Laurier UP, 2010, pp. xi-2). While this study attempts to situate Native humor within specific Indigenous socio-historical contexts, I confine discussions of tricksters to Chapter 1.

The Ends of Native Humor

Nineteenth-century Native writers use humor for a variety of political purposes. Many writers use irony and sarcasm to satirize and critique colonialism or white society's erroneous misrepresentations of Indigenous character. Others turn to humor as a social palliative, using laughter to build bridges and foster solidarity with whites or other Native peoples. Still others find comedy a way to reimagine history, envision new futures, and generate new political possibilities. Finally there are those who use humor simply to entertain and to make themselves and their audiences laugh. All of these purposes motivate nineteenth-century Native humor. The commonality in all these approaches is an enduring Indigenous perspective on humor that understands it primarily in relation to the community, to history, and to Indigenous sovereignty and cultural continuity. This section provides an overview of this perspective as well as the methodologies that frame the readings of Native humorists in this study.

Early Native satire shares many of the broad aims of the British and American tradition. Like white satirists, Native writers use the satirical techniques of irony and sarcasm to mock social pretensions and to critique corrupt or oppressive political institutions. The tone of such satire varies from light irony to bitterness, but always contains the "sense that there is some hope that exposing society's excesses might lead to reform" (Morris 377). For the Native writers examined in this study, reform is often explicitly political and involves correcting dominant misconceptions about Native character and critiquing the United States's historical and ongoing oppression of Native

peoples. As such, this study considers Native-authored satire as a form of political agency aimed at making change in the world by entering into the nineteenth-century American public sphere through the media of print and oral performance.

However, unlike their white contemporaries whose political satires have been influentially analyzed as a form of civic engagement, Native writers entering the public sphere did not seek to participate in perfecting the American polity by creating virtuous citizens or supervising potentially corrupt public officials, though many Native humorists often did both. Instead, Native satirists juxtapose tribalcentric worldviews and perspectives of colonization against dominant white misrepresentations of colonial history and Native personhood with the goal of critiquing the unjust use of power and revealing it to the world. In this vein, Kelly Wisecup argues that Cherokee statesman John Ridge's satirical "Socrates" letters took up the terms of eighteenth-century anonymous participation in the public sphere and "engaged with Western texts in order to relay Cherokee interpretations of treaties, of sovereignty, and of their relation to place" (37). In this, Ridge anticipates Muscogee humorist Alexander Posey's portrayals of Muscogee sovereignty in his satires of Oklahoma politics, examined in Chapter 4 of this study.

The earlier speeches of Haudenosaunee diplomat Sagoyewatha (Red Jacket) demonstrates Native satire's ability to express tribal sovereignty using humor and irony. During his lifetime, Sagoyewatha earned a reputation among Americans as a powerful orator and defender of Native rights and independence. In many of his speeches,

Sagoyewatha used the satirical techniques of irony and sarcasm to point to differences between Native and white societies and to rebuke U.S.-based projects of cultural assimilation. In a speech to Rev. Jacob Cram of the Boston Missionary Society in 1805, Sagoyewatha points out the irony that Christian missionaries among the Haudenosaunee proclaimed Christianity to be the only true religion while, at home, they quarreled endlessly with other Christian sects over Biblical interpretation: “Brother! You say there is but one way to worship and serve the Great Spirit. If there is but one religion, why do you white people differ so much about it? Why do not all agree, as you can all read the book?” (qtd. in Nabokov 70). Sagoyewatha makes similarly ironic observations about Christian hypocrisy in other addresses. In his 1800 reply to Rev. Elkanah Holmes, a missionary who traveled among the Senecas, he says: “Father: We Indians are astonished at you whites, that when Jesus Christ was among you, and went about doing good, speaking the good word, healing the sick, and casting out evil spirits, that you white people did not pay attention to him, and believe him, and that you put him to death when you had the good book in your possession” (qtd. in Granville 186). In these speeches, Sagoyewatha understates his critique of evangelical Christianity by assuming the role of the “forest primitive” (Granville 124) which allows him to engage his white interlocutors in an ironically Socratic manner. Frequently he claims ignorance, as when he says to Rev. Cram that “We do not understand these things,” in order to force his white audiences to reflect upon their arguments. His goal is not only to point out and mock Christian hypocrisy but to inspire reform by drawing equivalents between white and Native

religious traditions.⁷ Sagoyewatha uses irony and satire to protect Haudenosaunee sovereignty by demanding that white people respect cultural differences.

To the extent that Sagoyewatha's, John Ridge's, or Alexander Posey's satires seek to achieve social change in their white audiences, their efforts reflect Indigenous cultures' different outlook on how change should happen in a society. Theories of satire based in the British and American traditions describe its operation as the identification and annihilation of difference. As Frederic Bogel describes the conventional assumptions about satire, "the originating moment of satire is the satirist's perception of an object that exists anterior to the satiric attack" and which the satirist characterizes as "repellant" (2-3). In this view, satire is coercive and conservative, policing difference so as to reinforce the satirist's normative moral view of society. Indeed, in *The Difference that Satire Makes* (2001) Bogel argues that satire does not merely seek to expel preexisting differences in the world, but that it in fact *creates* difference: "to *define* [an object] as different, as other" due to the satirist's "anxiety about proximity or sameness or identification" (42). Bogel's description of the creation of difference and the expulsion of the threatening other as the main mechanism of Augustan satire echoes the way that theorists of race such as David Roediger describe the formation and enforcement of racial

⁷ Ganter Granville provides thorough analyses of Sagoyewatha's techniques of irony in "'You Are a Cunning People Without Sincerity': Sagoyewatha and the Trials of Indian Representation," in *Native American Speakers of the Eastern Woodlands: Selected Speeches and Critical Analyses*, edited by Barbara Mann, Greenwood, 2001, pp. 165–95; and "Red Jacket and the Decolonization of Republican Virtue," *American Indian Quarterly*, Vol. 31, No. 4, 2007, pp. 559–81.

difference in the United States.⁸ The similarity suggests that the West's conception of satire partakes of the same impulses to divide and hierarchize that undergirds the maintenance of constructions like race.

Conversely, messages of social change in Native satire are based in Indigenous values of community preservation, consensus-seeking, and respect for individual autonomy. As Mohawk theorist Taiaiake Alfred advises, Native writers' rhetorical admonitions of white culture, including satire of colonial vices, cannot be effective if they are based in the destructive impulses of colonial society. Instead, "Challenging mainstream society to question its own structure, its acquisitive individualistic value system, and the false premises of colonialism is essential if we [Natives and non-Natives like] are to move beyond the problems plaguing all our societies" (21). The examples of Sagoyewatha's speeches above demonstrates Native satire's strategy of appealing to reason and seeking consensus rather than attacking difference. After he asks Rev. Cram why Christians disagree among themselves so much over the "but one way to worship," he offers a comparative look at Haudenosaunee religious practice. Like Christianity, Haudenosaunee religion "has been handed down to us" through generations; but unlike Christianity, "it teacheth us to us to be thankful for all the favors we receive, to love each other, and to be united. We never quarrel about religion..." (qtd. in Nabokov 70). Here the aim of Sagowayeth's satire is not to *attack* Christianity as a threat to social order, but

⁸ See David Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class*, Verso, 1991.

to direct his white audience's gaze inward at its own structures and assumptions indicated by Sagowayeth's gentle and ironic suggestions. Thus, while some early Natives inflect their humor with outrage and attack and ridicule the outrages of colonialism, and rightly so, others choose to reach across racial lines, to use humor to find commonality and palliate social tension.

Another common aim of the Native humorists featured in this study is to imagine new future possibilities for Indigenous peoples by turning a humorous eye on the past. Many Native thinkers attest to humor's ability to help Native communities cope with historical and ongoing pain and trauma. Charlie Hill, the famous Oneida stand-up comedian, cites the healing power of humor: "When the situation is the most grim, that's when you see Indian people making jokes about it, just for the survival" (qtd. in Fagan 3). Survival—"the survival of people as physical beings, of languages, of social and spiritual practices, of social relations, and of the arts" as well as the survival of the people through "the recovery of territories, of [I]ndigenous rights, and histories" (Smith, *Decolonizing* 116)—is a political act that resists the genocidal logics of settler colonialism and which entails knowledge of the past and radical being in the present. Survival also imaginatively projects Indigenous peoples into the future. Deloria also points to laughter's capacity to endure hardship, specifically its role in moderating potentially destructive negativity: "When a people can laugh at themselves and laugh at others and hold all aspects of life together without letting anyone drive them to extremes, then it would seem to me that the people can survive" (qtd. in Fagan 3). Following Deloria, Kenneth Lincoln (Lakota)

claims that humor “mediates tragedies with a sense of continuance and survival” and “helps to reverse statistics that bracket Indians as the poorest of the poor, the most invisible of American minorities” (55). More recently, Mohawk actress Devery Jacobs, one of the stars of the acclaimed Native comedy series *Reservation Dogs* (2021-23), attests to the continuing importance of humor in helping Indigenous communities navigate the ongoing COVID-19 crisis: “laughing is how we connect with each other, how we find community, but ultimately it’s how we heal. When there’s nowhere to go, when we’re in our (what feels like thousandth) lockdown and everything feels increasingly heavy, laughing at the situation is our touchstone” (Jacobs). This Indigenous knowledge is backed up by medical literature by both Native and non-Native authors that testifies to the efficacy of humor as a therapeutic method to manage pain, mitigate stress, and cope with physical and psychological trauma.⁹

For early Native writers in the nineteenth century, jokes about history are informed by these same concerns for political sovereignty and cultural and community survival. Maureen Konkle writes that when nineteenth-century Native intellectuals engaged white audiences on the subjects of history and Native political rights, “these writers set out to undo the effects of EuroAmerican knowledge about racial difference by writing history” (6). Moreover, Konkle claims that historiography, the writing of history,

⁹ Such studies include Michael Tlanusta Garrett, et al. “A Laughter Matter: Native American Humour as an Indigenous Healing Tradition and Way of Life,” in *Indigenous Cultures and Mental Health Counseling: Four Directions for Integration with Counseling and Psychology*, edited by Suzanne L. Stewart, Roy Moodley, and Ashley Hyatt, Routledge, 2017, pp. 17-32; and Jacqueline Garrick, “The Humor of Trauma Survivors: Its Application in a Therapeutic Milieu,” in *Trauma Treatment Techniques: New Trends*, edited by Jacqueline Garrick and Mary Beth Williams, Routledge, 2006, pp. 169-82.

is “essential” to early Native writers’ struggle for “the recognition of their political autonomy and their freedom from subordination to EuroAmericans” (36). When Native writers approach historiography humorously they often seek to correct the historical record biased in favor of the colonizers through the use of satire, irony, and sarcasm. For instance, in his 1835 polemical history *Indian Nullification of the Unconstitutional Laws of Massachusetts Relative to the Mashpee Tribe; Or, the Pretended Riot Explained*, Pequot activist and Methodist preacher William Apess seeks to set the record straight about the events of the Mashpee Wampanoag’s struggle for civil rights in 1833-35. The Mashpees protested local whites coming onto Mashpee reservation lands and stealing fish, timber, and other basic resources necessary to their survival. When the Massachusetts government failed to stop the encroachments, local Mashpee leadership framed articles declaring their community’s political autonomy and stating their intention to forcibly resist any further theft of their resources. Massachusetts government officials and the local white press presented the Mashpees’s declaration of independence as an insurrection. *Indian Nullification* presents the real history and causes of the Mashpee protest and defends their right to self-determination by constantly lampooning the white authorities’ hyperbolic misrepresentations of Indian violence self-serving narratives of white innocence. In his concluding remarks, Apess justifies his use of irony and sarcasm, which the white press derided as “harsh” and unfair, and clarifies the connection between his history and the Mashpees’s political future:

If, in the course of this little volume, I have been obliged to use language that seems harsh, I beg my readers to remember that it was in defense of the character of the people under my spiritual charge and of my own. The Marshpees have been reviled and misrepresented in the public prints as much more indolent, ignorant, and degraded than they really are, and it was necessary for their future welfare, as it depends in no small degree upon the good opinion of their white brethren, to state the real truth of the case, which could not be done in gentle terms. (Apess 273)¹⁰

Chapter 1 of this dissertation examines Apess's use of sarcastic humor more fully. However, to some degree, all of the writers in this study use humor to present ironic visions of colonial history. Chapter 2 examines how Cherokee writer John Rollin Ridge's novel *The Life and Adventures of Joaquin Murieta* (1855) parodies the tropes and racist assumptions of colonial adventure genres. Chapter 3 examines Northern Paiute writer and advocate Sarah Winnemucca Hopkins's use of physical humor in her public lectures before white audiences, to reenact corrupt U.S. officials' theft of Paiute land and resources and to amplify her calls for Indian policy reform. Chapter 4 turns to Muscogee poet and journalist Alexander Posey who, in his editorial columns in the *Eufaula Indian*

¹⁰ "Marshpee" was a common alternate spelling for the Mashpee Tribe well into the nineteenth century. According to Wampanoag chairwoman Jessie Little Doe Baird, "Marshpee" is one of the "historic terms applied specifically to the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe by settlers or missionaries" along with "the South Sea Indians, the Mashapoag Indians, the Sandwich Indians, [and] the Praying Indians" (1). It is unclear when Mashpee became the commonly accepted spelling, but probably sometime in the twentieth century. See Jessie Little Doe Baird, "The Mashpee Wampanoag: A Brief Sketch of Our History and Who We Are Today," https://resources.finalsite.net/images/v1623924460/mashpeek12maus/p0dnji6ywdsty2acxn9l/Mashpee_Wampanoag_Sketchdocx.pdf.

Journal (Indian Territory), adopts the guise of “fullblood” traditionalist Fus Fixico to satirize U.S. federal attempts to allot Muscogee lands and dissolve Native governments and to argue for the ongoing importance of traditional methods of Muscogee social and political organization. For each of these writers, humor is a potent tool to produce alternative, tribalcentric histories that compete with official colonial narratives and in turn generate political futures for their peoples.

My readings of these Native writers’ use of humor are mainly framed by methodologies developed by scholars in the interdisciplinary field of Native American and Indigenous Studies (NAIS) that forefront Native people’s own perspectives on their lives and histories and privilege Indigenous epistemologies in framing interpretations of Native cultural productions. In keeping the core tenets of NAIS scholarship “that Native communities and their knowledge bearers, past and present, possess expertise critical to [the] field’s analytic and interpretive work” and “that Native literatures and histories manifest tribally specific genres, languages, chronologies, and geographic boundaries, which often contrast with European phenomena” (Mt. Pleasant, et al. 409) I consciously turn focus from traditional or Eurocentric theories of humor, such as Sigmund Freud’s psychoanalytic theories, to favor Natives’ accounts of the communitistic value of humor. The foregoing quotes from Charlie Hill, Gerald Vizenor, and Vine Deloria, Jr. exemplify this knowledge, and to them could be added further insights from Native writers and scholars Louis Littlecoon Oliver (Muscogee), Robert Warrior (Osage), Paula Gunn Allen (Laguna Pueblo), Craig Womack (Muscogee), Kenneth Lincoln (Lakota); Jace Weaver,

Daniel Heath Justice, Christopher B. Teuton, and Thomas King, all Cherokees; Joy Harjo (Muscogee), Drew Hayden Taylor (Curve Lake First Nations); Sterlin Harjo (Seminole) and Bobby Wilson (Sisseton-Wahpeton Dakota), members of the all-Native comedy troupe the 1491s; and Taika Waititi (Maori) to name only a few of the many Native voices who have something to say on the subject.

All of these writers attest to humor as a method and language of community resistance that is both tribally-specific and common to all Indigenous peoples. Past Americanist literary scholarship has productively applied the methods of what we might call the “Western tradition” of humor studies to Native humor. For example, Kenneth Lincoln brings insights from Freud, Henri Bergson, Max Eastman, and even anthropologist Mary Douglas to bear on the subject.¹¹ I do not claim that this kind of inquiry has exhausted itself or that it “gets it wrong”; doubtless there is more to say with these thinkers. My methodological commitments come from my awareness of my moral obligation, as a settler scholar and reader of Native literature, to privilege Native voices over those from outside Indigenous cultures and ways of knowing. This dissertation thus builds on this body of knowledge and to amplify Native perspective on the ways humor

¹¹ See Kenneth Lincoln, *Indi'n Humor: Bicultural Play in Native America*, Oxford UP, 1993. For the non-Native theories of humor referenced here, see Sigmund Freud, “Humour,” in *Sigmund Freud: Collected Papers*, Vol. 5, edited by James Strachey, Hogarth Press, 1950, pp. 215-21, and *Jokes and Their Relationship to the Unconscious*, 1905, trans. and edited by James Strachey, Norton, 1960; Henri Bergson, “Laughter,” 1899, in *Comedy*, edited by Wylie Sypher, Doubleday, 1956, pp. 61-190; Max Eastman, *The Sense of Humor*, Scribner, 1921; and Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*, Routledge, 1966.

informs their relations to their communities, their pasts and futures, and to their ongoing struggles against settler colonial silences and erasures.¹²

Unsettling American Humor

This study also explores the role of white-authored American literary humor in enacting and perpetuating those erasures. Like Native writers, white writers used humor to critique the United States government, to define their relations to their communities and their histories, and to entertain themselves and their readers. Yet often the terms and modes of these writers' critique of the nation, including the subjects and manner of their humor, reiterates the terms of settler occupancy of Native lands, which are the ongoing dispossession of the land through institutional and legal means and the discursive erasure of Indigenous peoples from narratives of citizenship and national belonging. The comic texts authored by white humorists examined in this study each in their own way normalize the assumptions and operations of settler colonialism, even when their humor seems directed towards critiques of U.S. colonialism in sympathy with the historical or political oppression of Native peoples.

This dissertation builds on Mark Rifkin's argument with respect to the literature of the American Renaissance, that the "everyday phenomenology of settlement...affects forms of textual production in the nineteenth century," (5) and extends his methodology

¹² Alyssa Mt. Silver, Caroline Wigginton, and Kelly Wisecup connect these scholarly commitments back to the efforts of early Native intellectuals like William Apess and Daniel Cusick (Haudenosaunee) to correct hegemonic colonial historical narratives that sideline or erase Native voices (407).

to key works of American humor. In *Settler Common Sense* (2014) Rifkin describes how the process of settlement becomes the omnipresent, “quotidian and commonsensical” basis for everyday settler domestic life (5). He describes how the juridical and administrative policies that structure the ongoing settler state become inhabited by non-Native U.S. citizens as affect, emotional attachments to routines, places, and even the state itself. These affective attachments normalize the multitude of processes that support the political and discursive oppression and suppression of Native sovereignty, making settler colonialism systemic (9). Rifkin turns to literature as both an “an important scholarly site for engaging with the meaning and consequences of the centrality of settlement to the ongoing existence of the U.S. nation-state” and as an archive where scholars might find traces of the “modes of ordinary perception” and “quotidian modes” of settler “sense-making” “from which the texts themselves emerge” (3).

Rifkin chooses *Walden*, *Pierre*, and *The House of the Seven Gables* as the foci for his analysis mainly for methodological reasons.¹³ Their canonicity strengthens his call to “address the presence of indigeneity and ongoing projects of settlement in ways that are not disciplinarily and methodologically territorialized onto the Indian (as represented figure or as author) as the sign of diversity” (33). However, these texts also demonstrate the ways that the diffused and normalized experience of settlement Rifkin describes

¹³ He also chooses them for the representations of alternative domesticities he finds in each text. Rifkin argues that these texts critique the state by cultivating “what might be understood as queer potentials in its development of a democratic ethics [they treat] as antagonistic to the existing regime” (3). Thus, *Settler Common Sense* performs queer readings of “deviations from nuclear domesticity” present in works by Melville, Hawthorne, and Thoreau while also developing a parallel argument that “these writings treat processes of settlement as a given in developing their ethical visions” (3).

abides in and informs texts that seem to neither feature Native representations nor engage with Native politics to a significant degree.¹⁴

Rifkin's analysis suggests how satirical critiques of the state present in non-Native literary humor iterate the basic modes and logics that enable and perpetuate the settler state's existence. Each of the white-authored comic texts in this study mock some contemporary juridical or military process by which the state imposes its power over another polity in ways the authors present as arbitrary, unjust, or simply misguided. Moreover, to the extent that these satires imply a moral norm which the actions of the state violate, their ethical visions all reflect the revolutionary ethos, common in the early republic and throughout the nineteenth century, of Indigenous populations' right to self-determination and in their right to resist political regimes that seek to rule without regard for Native sovereignty. Yet, while they open spaces to imagine alternative anti-colonial political configurations, these writings take for granted the process of settlement and the erasure of Natives from their discursive and literal landscapes. Washington Irving's *Tour on the Prairies* (1835) lampoons Americans' romanticization of frontier adventure without questioning the federal policy of Indian Removal that motivates the

¹⁴ Natives are featured in these texts, in the forms of the Maine "Indian deed" in Gables, Native basket-sellers in Concord in Walden, and the ongoing "significance of Native land claims in upstate New York" in *Pierre*. Rifkin writes, though these texts thus "offer moments where nonnatives come into intimate proximity with Native persons, legacies, and landedness," they nevertheless "swerve away from the implications of this sensuous contact, displacing the possibility of engaging with the ways settler violence animates ordinary life in favor of envisioning forms of nonnative escape from the history of state imposition—Lockean labor in the countryside, sovereign self-elaboration in "Nature," [and] disappearance into the anonymous density of urban space" (32).

writing of the text. Many of George Washington Harris's Sut Lovingood stories, but especially the sketch "Razor-Grinder in a Thunderstorm" published in *Sut Lovingood: Yarns Spun by a "Nat'ral Born Durn'd Fool"* (1867), cultivates a sense of white settler indigeneity in post-Removal Tennessee to make coherent Sut's comic resistance to Northern agents of technological advancement and moral improvement. Mark Twain's lyceum lectures "Our Fellow Savages of the Sandwich Islands" (1866-68) and "Roughing It" (1871-2), which formed the basis for his 1872 book of the same title, mocks white Americans' claims to civility and cultural superiority over Indigenous peoples while discursively emptying his landscapes of actual Native Hawaiians and Great Basin Natives. Examination of how the anti-colonial critique in these works tends to nevertheless reinscribe forms of settler colonialism forms the basis for this study's intervention into the field of American humor.

Each of the following chapters centers on an example of nineteenth-century Native humor paired with one of the white-authored texts above. Chapter 1 reads William Apess's *Indian Nullification* alongside Irving's *Tour on the Prairies*; Chapter 2, John Rollin Ridge's *Life and Adventures of Joaquin Murieta* with selections of Harris's Sut Lovingood stories; and Chapter 3, newspaper reports of Sarah Winnemucca Hopkins's lyceum lectures with similar coverage of Mark Twain's contemporaneous stage performances. Chapter 4 departs from this pattern in ways discussed below. These pairings are not meant to merely broaden the field of "American humor" to include Native humorists alongside white ones. If the goal is only to diversify a canon of writing

identified as “American,” then such an inclusive gesture can actually serve to subordinate non-white voices to the voices in the center and “confirm the whiteness of what is already in place” (Ahmed 33). Furthermore, to thus welcome Native writers into the fold, as it were, of “American” humor, risks assimilating Native writing, categorizing and circumscribing it as an ethnic chapter within a larger academic narrative that has historically understood “American” humor as implicitly white and ineffably tied its development to a familiar, Turnerian account of westward national expansion. In juxtaposing Native and white humorists, this dissertation hopes to decenter whiteness from accounts of nineteenth-century humor and to demonstrate the wide availability of humor as a tool of political protest and language of self- and community-definition for Native peoples historically.

As the title of this dissertation states, one aim of this study is thus to “unsettle” received narratives of the writing of nineteenth-century humor on this continent. Beginning in the early nineteenth century, such narratives have typically represented the changing publication trends of white-authored humor in the early print marketplace as the development of a “national” humor and have therefore relied on, in Rifkin’s words, “the geopolitical self-evidence and security of the [nation-]state” to gain coherence (17). As early as 1838, critics attempted to link changes in humorous literary techniques to the concept of the nation. That year one British observer identified “National American humor” as translating Americans’ “institutions, laws, customs, manners, habits, characters, convictions” as well as the experience of the North American “scenery

whether of the sea, the city, or the hills...in the language of the ludicrous” (qtd. in Blair 3). Nearly a century later, Max Eastman in *The Enjoyment of Laughter* (1936) proposed a “history of American literature...as a rough laughing growth springing up out of the struggles of the pioneers, and having its background in a humorous mythology, in legendary heroes taken as a joke” (168). For both writers, humor becomes American through a Lockean “struggle” whereby land—scenery, the sea, the hills—becomes the “native materials for humorous literature” (Blair 16).¹⁵ The creation of the object of study called American humor, then, not only implies the centrality of the U.S. nation-state as a stable referent, but is also identified historically and metaphorically with the political, material, and discursive processes of state-making, “institutions, laws” and “the struggles of the pioneers,” that depend on the continuous dispossession, displacement, and erasure of Indigenous peoples from U.S. national space.

Moreover, this grand account of American humor is expansionist in character. The typical chronology of its development points west, as the table of contents in Walter Blair’s classic study *Native American Humor* (1960) illustrates. Blair moves from New England and the South in “Beginnings (1775-1830)” to the contemporaneous “Down East Humor (1830-1867)” and “Humor of the Old Southwest (1830-1867)” following the paths of settler expansion into what is now Maine, western Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, and Arkansas. Chapters on “Literary Comedians” and simply “Mark Twain”

¹⁵ I allude here to English philosopher John Locke’s theory in *Of Property* (1690) that the creation and ownership of private property is determined by “the labour that removes it out of that common state nature left it in, made his property, who takes pains about it” (qtd. in Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus* 101).

continue to trace the paths of U.S. expansionism into Texas, the Great Basin, and California. Blair's neat labels obscure the fact that the experience of these places that American humorists would transform into the matter of "national humor" are settler experiences. The example of Mark Twain is paradigmatic in this regard. As I show in Chapter 3, Sam Clemens becomes Mark Twain only after he follows his brother Orion Clemens on the emigrant trail leading west from Missouri to the Nevada Territory where Orion had just been appointed Secretary of the Nevada Territory by President Abraham Lincoln. After an unsuccessful attempt at silver mining, Sam sustained himself in Nevada by working under his brother for the territorial government and freelance writing for small regional newspapers on the side. In this milieu, Sam earned a reputation for his colorful journalistic voice—influenced, many have claimed, by the vernacular humor of the Old Southwestern Humorists whose work he admired—and eventually adopted the nom de plume Mark Twain. Ivan Benson writes that Twain "lived his Western experience to the full, and his response to it in his writings," both humorous and "artistic," "was personal and emotional" (vii).

Sarah Winnemucca Hopkins's contemporary writings and lectures attest to how Twain's "lived...Western experience," which he transformed into materials that would, in time, become metonymic for American humor, is what Rifkin calls "settler sensation" (17). In her lectures and in her only published work *Life Among the Paiutes: Their Wrongs and Claims* (1883) Hopkins tells the history of the United States's colonization of the Paiutes from the Paiutes' perspective. She relates white settlers' encroachments

onto Paiute lands, the destruction of seasonal food sources integral to her peoples' lifeways, white attacks on Paiute villages driven by trumped-up rumors of Native militarism, the routine sexual violence Paiute women experienced from settlers, and the U.S. military's cruel treatment of her people as prisoners of war after the Bannock War, including their forced march over 300 miles from the Malheur Reservation in Nevada to the Yakama Reservation in western Washington in 1879. *Life Among the Paiutes* points to the processes of settler colonialism by which Paiute lands in the Great Basin were territorialized and claimed as U.S. national space: that is, how they became "the West" available for Twain to "experience."

By the late 1860s, Twain had left Nevada though he continued to imaginatively inhabit it through his repeated lectures and texts like *Roughing It* (1872) which cemented his early popularity as a humorist. It is true that throughout his career Twain denounced and frequently satirized the excesses of American imperialism abroad, particularly the United States's suppression of anticolonial forces in the Philippines and annexation of the islands in 1898. However, as Kerry Driscoll points out in her study of Twain's writings about Native peoples, despite the "progress in the writer's opinions regarding many of the key ideological debates of his time," including the civil rights of women and emancipated African Americans and the United States' territorialization of Puerto Rico and the Philippines, "Indians remained an enigma for him—objects of pity, loathing, and confused fascination—until the end" (370). Hopkins's accounts of the colonial processes that ultimately underlie Twain's humor bear out Rikfin's contention that "the juridical

dimensions and dynamics of settlement” are “actualized, stabilized, and extended through modes of settler sensation” and that “such sensation serves as the context from which textual representation emerges” (17). The other humorous Native voices in this study likewise testify to the ways that white humor, even that which aims at critique of the state, enacts the settler colonial processes by which the state is maintained.

While the analyses of Chapters 1-3 are structured by these appositional encounters between Native and white humorists and generally present how Native use humorous techniques like satire and irony to resist political and discursive colonial violence, Chapter 4 deviates from this pattern to examine how humor can also be a tool of political refusal. As explored by Indigenous political scholars like Audra Simpson (Kahnawà:ke Mohawk) and Glen Sean Coulthard (Yellowknives Dene), refusal is an expression of Native political sovereignty that rejects the liberal statist recognition politics. In its legal sense, recognition is “the affirmation of one’s (inherent) rights by the state” (“The Ruse of Consent” 20). According to the website for the United States government’s Bureau of Indian Affairs:

A federally recognized tribe is an American Indian or Alaska Native tribal entity that is recognized as having a government-to-government relationship with the United States, with the responsibilities, powers, limitations, and obligations attached to that designation, and is eligible for funding and services from the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Furthermore, federally recognized tribes are recognized as possessing certain inherent rights of self-government (i.e., tribal sovereignty)

and are entitled to receive certain federal benefits, services, and protections because of their special relationship with the United States. At present, there are 574 federally recognized American Indian and Alaska Native tribes and villages. (“What is a Federally Recognized Tribe?”)

The irony of recognition, as Simpson and Coulthard both indicate, is the notion that Indigenous peoples’ “inherent rights of self-government (i.e., tribal sovereignty)” can be granted, affirmed, and “protected” through the institutions of the settler state, the fact of whose existence is predicated on the elimination of tribal sovereignty and self-determination. Against recognition, Simpson sketches “the political and ethical stance” of refusal, which takes many forms but is, at base, a people’s “willful distancing from state-driven forms of recognition and sociability”—i.e., citizenship—“in favor of others” (*Mohawk Interruptus* 16). The “other” forms of belonging are as varied as the Indigenous polities who seek them out.

Chapter 4 analyzes how Muscogee poet Alexander Posey and late-nineteenth-century Black poet Paul Laurence Dunbar similarly use humor in their writings to imagine alternative forms of domesticity, social organization, and belonging that refuse the assimilative forces of political and cultural recognition that sought to bracket both writers in their lifetime. Unlike the pairings of Chapters 1-3, the pairing of Posey and Dunbar in Chapter 4 is not oppositional, but mutually illuminating. In *The Black Shoals: Offshore Formations for Black and Native Studies* (2019) Tiffany Lethabo King brings together theoretical insights from Black diasporic thought and Native and Indigenous

studies to examine how the enslavement and “fungibility” of Black bodies *as well as* Indigenous genocide *both* make the ongoing project of “White and human world-making possible” (21).¹⁶ Chapter 4 reflects this belief that histories of Black enslavement, the extension and maintenance of settler colonial institutions on dispossessed Native lands, and assimilatory practices of state recognition of both Black and Native people at different points in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries are intimately related historical processes. Posey and Dunbar faced recognition and assimilation in different forms which nevertheless entrapped both writers in essentializing frameworks. The United States government’s dissolution of Native governments and allotment of Native nations’ lands in Indian Territory as private property under the 1887 Dawes Act produced a false binary between “progressive” Natives who supported allotment and assimilation and “traditionalists” who opposed such forces. At the same time, Black intellectuals’ attempts to secure civil rights and economic stability for the first generation of Black American citizens born under the protection of the 14th amendment produced a discourse of Black bourgeois “respectability” within which one either worked to “uplift” the race or genuflected to persistent and harmful white stereotypes of Blackness. For both Posey and Dunbar, humor and the aesthetic of dialect refused these calls to recognition.

“Unsettling Laughter” restores to view nineteenth-century Native writers’ use of humor both as a fact and a political practice. While the settler myth that Natives don’t

¹⁶ King’s use of “human” here reflects her readings of Black theorists such as Frank Wilderson and Franz Fanon who contend that “the Black must be rendered nonhuman for White subjects to know their own humanity” (18).

laugh continues to shape representations of Native people in popular culture today, it is particularly tenacious in limiting the ways mainstream Americanist literary studies and histories continue to imagine historical Native politics. Unlike anger or sentiment, humor has not yet been fully appreciated as a viable political language of Native resistance or refusal prior to the twentieth century.¹⁷ Such silence in regard to the humor within early Native literature not only continues the dehumanization of Native people under settler colonialism, since to laugh is a basic human experience; it also makes it more difficult to see the ways that the humor of white authors reiterates the logics and tropes of colonial domination.

¹⁷ For such an argument regarding Native women's rhetorical use of anger and sentimentality, see Cari M. Carpenter, *Seeing Red: Anger, Sentimentality, and American Indians*, Ohio State UP, 2008.

CHAPTER 1

TRAITS OF COLONIZER CHARACTER: WILLIAM APESS, WASHINGTON IRVING, AND “TALKING STUFF” AS INDIGENOUS RESISTANCE

William Apress’s 1835 *Indian Nullification* begins with a hilarious misidentification. *Nullification* chronicles the Mashpee Wampanoag’s struggle for sovereignty over land rights on their reservation in Mashpee, Massachusetts, from the tribe’s perspective. In the Spring of 1833, Apress arrived on Mashpee Wampanoag lands where the community has invited him to preach in their Meetinghouse. The “Indian Meetinghouse,” as Lisa Brooks reminds us, was one of many buildings scattered throughout the Northeast that formed a web of Native space (166). Mashpee religious leaders and preachers like Popmonit and Solomon Briant had long “traveled between these meetinghouses, strengthening ties between communities and creating a space for regional identity based on ‘shared language and religious rituals’” (166-7). When Apress arrived, services at the meetinghouse were led by the Reverend Phineas Fish, the missionary preacher appointed by Harvard University to oversee the Mashpees’ religious instruction. On the morning of his first ministrations to the Mashpee, Apress stands before the meetinghouse, expecting to see the local Natives arriving to the service. However, Apress writes that he was “greatly disappointed in the appearance of those who advanced. All the Indians I had ever seen were of a reddish color, sometimes approaching a yellow, but now, look to what quarter I would, most of those who were coming were pale faces, and, in my disappointment, it seemed to me that the hue of death sat upon their

countenances” (170). Discomfited by what he perceives to be sickly pale “Indians” unlike any he has ever seen before, Apess nevertheless proceeds to preach. During the delivery of the psalm, Apess “cast my eyes at the gallery, that I might see how the songsters who were tuning their harps appeared; but, with one exception, paleness was upon all their faces. I must do these *Indians* the justice to say that they performed their parts very well” (171). Apess winkingly stresses “*Indians*,” nudging the reader in the ribs before turning finally to the punchline of the scene: the unnaturally pale worshippers were not Mashpees at all, but white residents of the surrounding towns, “pale men [who] were certainly stealing from the Indians their portion in the Gospel, by leaving their own houses of worship and crowding them out of theirs” (171). As the scene resolves, we realize that what Apess has played off so far as his own misperception is actually the sarcastic unfolding of his acute recognition of the injustice going on at Mashpee. Indeed, the initial scene at the Indian Meetinghouse holds within it the whole crisis at Mashpee in microcosm, where, besides the Gospel, the “pale men” of Massachusetts had for centuries “[stolen] from the Indians their portion” of the land and the resources and sovereignty it offers. Apess adds scathingly: “The law, perhaps, allowed them to do so” (171).

The meetinghouse scene does more than introduce in broad terms the political conflicts of the 1833-5 Mashpee push for civil rights in which Apess played an integral part. It also showcases Apess’s signature wit and sarcasm he employs throughout *Indian Nullification*.¹⁸ Because sarcasm criticized one’s personality or character rather than

¹⁸ Further references to this text will be cited as *Nullification*.

neutral facts or institutions, nineteenth century Anglo-American rhetoricians scorned it as indicating bad character or “ill humor.” Still today, sarcasm is seen by some as a passive aggressive if not downright sinister form of communication, “turned around and not forthright” (Bendik-Keymer). If white audiences then and now frown upon a white speaker’s use of sarcasm, how much worse did it sound coming from a Native speaker, especially when he leveled it at white community leaders and government officials as Apess did? Apess’s sarcasm does not at all resemble the kind of romanticized oratory colonial minds imagined and expected from Native speakers. What then did Apess gain from his sarcastic style? This chapter explores Apess’s use of sarcasm and other forms of humor in *Nullification* and its relation to Apess’s goal of forwarding Indigenous rights in the Northeast. Apess used sarcasm and its “not forthright” approach to disrupt, confuse, and expose ready-made colonial ideas about Indigenous people as foolish and wrong. Above and beyond deriding the local officials directly involved in the civil rights crisis at Mashpee, Apess’s sarcastic style ranges more widely to show, in philosopher Jeremy Bendik-Keymer’s words, his “cognitive contempt” for the systemic settler-colonial logics undergirding ongoing oppression of Indigenous peoples across the continent.

Apess’s feigned misperceptions throughout *Nullification* mount a critique of colonial misapprehensions of what Washington Irving calls “the traits of Indian character.” In 1814, as editor of *Analectics Magazine*, a young Irving published an essay by that title that circulated widely through antebellum print culture, including republication in 1828 in *The Cherokee Phoenix*, the official newspaper of the Cherokee

Nation.¹⁹ In the essay, Irving responds to racist misrepresentations of Native “savagery” sparked by the violence of the 1813-14 Red Stick War in which a coalition of U.S. and Cherokee military forces invaded Creek lands in what is now Tennessee and Alabama. Irving sympathizes with the Creeks and condemns the racist, hawkish rhetoric about Indigenous peoples that sought to justify U.S. atrocities against Natives in and beyond the immediate context of the war. Newspaper coverage of the war displaced white depredations onto the Creeks, depicting them as inhuman monsters and blaming them for the brutality of the fighting. Describing the Battle of Horseshoe Bend, in which 800 Red Stick Creek warriors were killed defending their position in a narrow bend in the Tallapoosa River, General Thomas Pickney assured readers of the *Washington Inquirer* that “while the sign of humanity will escape for this profuse effusion of human blood, which results from the savage principle of the enemy, neither to give nor accept quarter...we have ample cause of gratitude to the Giver of all victory for thus continuing his protection of our women and children, who would otherwise be exposed to the indiscriminate havoc of the tomahawk and all the horrors of savage warfare” (“Great Victory Over the Creek Indians”).

¹⁹ Irving would later revise “Traits of Indian Character” for inclusion as one of the two so-called “Indian sketches” (alongside “Philip of Pokanoket”) in his famous *Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon* (1820). Prior to Irving’s representation of the revised essay in *The Sketch Book*, however, missionary Elias Boudinot of the American Bible Commission quoted portions of the 1814 “Traits” in *Star in the West* (1816), in which he forwarded the hypothesis that Indigenous peoples of North America were descendants of the lost tribes of Israel in the Old Testament. The Cherokee intellectual Elias Boudinot (Buck Watie), who adopted his name in honor of the missionary Boudinot and who served as the first editor of *The Cherokee Phoenix* newspaper, probably reprinted “Traits” from *Star in the West* rather than directly from *Analectic* or the more recent version in *The Sketch Book*, but it is impossible to know for sure.

Irving defends the Creeks against this kind of misrepresentation, but in doing so he falls back on romanticized portraits of the noble savage common to the period that lamented Indigenous nations' ostensible inevitable disappearance before the march of civilization: "Let the fate of war go as it may," Irving writes, 'the fate of those ignorant tribes that have been inveigled from their forests to mingle in the strife of white men, will inevitably be the same... They will vanish like a vapor from the face of that earth—their history will be lost in forgetfulness—and "the places that know them, will know them no more forever"' ("Traits" 145). Irving depicts the progress of civilization as an onslaught on Indigenous nations, completely debasing their cultures and characters: "The independence of thought and action, that formed the main pillar of their character, has been completely prostrated, and the whole moral fabric lies in ruins. Their spirits are debased by conscious inferiority, and their native courage completely daunted by the superior knowledge and power of their enlightened neighbors" (145).

When Native intellectuals such as Elias Boudinot (Cherokee) reprinted Irving's essay, they recontextualized its romantic editorializations of "Indian character," ironically framing its "observations" with evidence of contemporaneous Indigenous ingenuity and capability in order to forward Indigenous political ends. Apess himself quoted extensively from Irving's essay in the Appendix of his autobiography *A Son of the Forest* (1829) as part of what Katy Chiles describes as Apess's strategy of quoting "non-Native writers to dispute other non-Native writers who had given inaccurate accounts of Indigenous history, practices, and lifeways" (22). Apess's sarcastic framing of

Massachusetts' ludicrous response to the Mashpees' push for civil rights continues his ironic treatment and criticism of non-Native hypocrisy and hyperbole toward Natives that he began in *Son of the Forest*. Taken as a whole, Apess's humor constitutes an ongoing analysis and satirical takedown of the colonizer character: a humorous and cuttingly sarcastic reversal of imperial, proto-ethnographic tropes about Natives and their "moral fabric" about which non-Natives endlessly opined. The portrait of non-Native ignorance, arrogance, and hypocrisy that emerges across his work, but particularly in *Nullification*, shows the ways that Apess turned humor into a looking glass for his audience,²⁰ as part of what Drew Lopenzina calls Apess's "negative work." For Lopenzina, negative work denotes the "tiresome and perpetual undoing of...an intricate web of cultural and historical assumptions" about presumed Native primitivity and inferiority "before [Native writers] can clear a space in which their own narratives might emerge" (6). As Lopenzina suggests, such "undoing" is taxing and frequently insulting to the Native people who undertake it. As valuable as this attention to the exhaustive nature of such "negative work" is, I am interested here in the instances when Apess finds irony in the undoing and when he uses humor and sarcasm to perform his negative work. Apess's humor resists settler colonial ideology by reflecting it back and defamiliarizing it for his non-Native readers. Encountering this strange, sarcastic presentation of their own unconscious

²⁰ I intentionally reference here Apess's 1833 essay "An Indian's Looking Glass for the White Man," which Apess published as an addendum to *The Experiences of Five Christian Indians of the Pequot Tribe* (1833). In it, Apess tells his white readers: "By what you read you may learn how deep your principles are" (160). William Apess, "An Indian's Looking Glass for the White Man," *On Our Own Ground: The Complete Writings of William Apess, a Pequot*, edited by Barry O'Connell, University of Massachusetts Press, 1992, 155-61.

assumptions disrupts the smooth workings of settler-colonial logics, forwarding the rhetorical and political ends of the Mashpee civil rights protestors in 1833-5 by engendering in his readers sympathy for the Mashpee and other Indigenous targets of colonial encroachment.

Apess presents his non-Native audiences across various media with what we might call the “Traits of Colonizer Character” in which they perceive themselves distorted through satire, but all the more truthfully for that. In his use of satire, wit, and wordplay to accomplish his goals, Apess, a Pequot adopted into the Wampanoag Mashpee tribe, resembles the Wampanoag *Ahanaeenun* or “medicine clown.” Black-Wampanoag artist and literary critic Mwalim Peters writes of the *Ahanaeenun* that they are a “branch of the culture’s medicine community, using humor and satire as a means of bring[ing] social and spiritual healing to people” (“Laughter Keepers”). Similar to *heyoka* among the Lakota and Dakota or the *koshares* of the Hopi, the Wampanoag *Ahanaeenun* performs a religious ceremonial (“medicine”) function of disrupting the more “serious” ceremonies with antics meant to induce laughter and thereby “bring emotional relief from intense events, issues and conflicts [which] is viewed as a sacred activity” (“Laughter Keepers”). Because of the Wampanoags’ long history of encounter and conflict with Europeans and American invaders who condemned Wampanoag medicine as devil-worship, little documentary evidence of the *Ahanaeenun* or their social or religious functions exist outside of the Wampanoag language and oral tradition.

I do not propose that Apess, after his adoption into the Mashpee Wampanoag, actually fulfilled this venerated medicine role. However, viewing Apess's use of satire through the lens of the *Ahanaeenun* contextualizes his unusual rhetorical mode in a continuing history of Wampanoag religious practice that honored trickster resistance. In his essay on the Wampanoag *Ahanaeenun* tradition entitled "Laughter Keepers," Mwalim records a story from the Mashpee Wampanoag Chief Sly Fox about the "Weasel Man," an *Ahanaeenun* figure.²¹

So the tale goes, many Mashpees had gathered in the meetinghouse one Sunday to hear the gospel of a white pastor. As the pastor preached, a weasel ran into the meetinghouse, looking at the people and running all about the meeting. It was not unusual for animals to wander into the meeting, so nobody saw it as unusual, until the weasel ran up to the pulpit and stood next to the pastor. The weasel then transformed into a man. The man was somebody that was known to the Mashpees as a medicine man who lived off by himself in the woods. He asked the assembly if their preacher could do that too, then changed back into a weasel and scurried

²¹ The website for the Mashpee Wampanoag tribal government contains brief character sketches of their past leaders. According to them, Chief Sly Fox (Vernon Pocknett) was "Always at the center of the storm, Vernon Pocknett partnered with Tribal Chairman to keep the pressure on for the fledgling Mashpee Wampanoag. Whether the land suit, fishing rights, or the quest for recognition, "Sly Fox" was in the mix. Outspoken and unabashed, Vernon was a sharp contrast to many Mashpee leaders who would sooner ignore you than confront you. He would set you straight in a hurry. A master fisherman and hunter in the Pocknett tradition, the Chief would take tribal children on camping trips and excursions to remind each generation of their unique heritage and valued place in the world." See "Past Leaders," <https://mashpeewampanoagtribe-nsn.gov/past-leaders#:~:text=Vernon%20%27Sly%20Fox%27%20Pocknett%2C%20Chief&text=Whether%20the%20land%20suit%2C%20fishing,you%20straight%20in%20a%20hurry.>

out of the meetinghouse. It was said that the pastor quickly changed his sermon to a discussion about the demons that exist among us. (“Laughter Keepers”)

Sly Fox’s story uncannily echoes Apess’s experiences at Mashpee. In fact, the story may collapse and encode Apess’s arrival among the people and his first experience in the Meetinghouse with Wampanoag oral traditions surrounding the trickster weasel and the history of Mashpee resistance centered on the Meetinghouse before and after Apess’s time. The shapeshifting medicine man employs clownish, trickster antics to show up and make fun of the non-Native preacher, whose only defense is to fall back to his old Puritanical redoubt of diabolism.²² Such lampooning of presumptive, colonial authority is a hallmark of Apess’s style in *Nullification* and is central to this portrayal of the “Traits of Colonizer Character.”

In this chapter, I use the Ahanaeenun tradition to frame my examination of Apess’s use of humor and satire, particularly sarcasm, in *Indian Nullification* to communicate his contempt for non-Natives’ hypocrisy in their ongoing oppression of the Mashpee. Like the Mashpee Ahanaeenun Weasel Man’s sudden transformation, Apess’s sarcasm interrupts non-Native authoritative narratives to voice a critique of settler-colonial scripts via his expose of the “colonizer character.” I position Washington Irving as an interlocutor for Apess in this chapter because, as his quotation of Irving in *A Son of*

²² By this, I do not mean to suggest that Fish was a Puritan in the sectarian sense. I mean that narratives of Natives’ devil-worship originating in the Puritan era continued to shape ideas about Native character in the colonial imagination well past the seventeenth century. According to the Native Northeast Portal, Fish was a “liberal Congregationalist with heavily rationalist, anti-Calvinist with Unitarian tendencies.” See “Fish, Phineas, 1785-1854,” Native Northeast Portal, <https://nativeneastportal.com/bio/bibliography/fish-phineas>.

the Forest suggests, Apess saw the writer of “Traits of Indian Character” as the exception that proves the rule among non-Native disclaimers of “Indian character.”²³ That is, Apess saw in Irving’s work proof of many white historians’ general “great misrepresentation” of Indigenous peoples (Apess, *Son* 139).

In this chapter, I then move to focus on Irving’s 1835 travelogue *A Tour of the Prairies* in order to examine the subtle operation of Native humor in the text. Published in the same year as *Nullification*, *Tour* presents a romanticized version of Irving’s trip in 1834 through Pawnee and Osage homelands with Indian Commissioner Henry L. Ellsworth, who had been dispatched by the U.S. government to survey lands in the so-called “Indian Territory” for the resettlement of forcibly deported Indigenous communities from the Southeast. Historically, literary critics have overlooked *A Tour on the Prairies* (1832) and the other “western” books Irving published upon his homecoming to the U.S. in favor of his more celebrated Sketch Book. Recent scholarship has re-examined these later works for what they can tell us about Irving’s relationship to imperialism and capitalism. For instance, rather than sectioning Irving’s work off into discrete periods, J. Woodrow McCree argues that the Irving of *A Tour on the Prairies* is “essentially the same person who wrote *A History of New-York*” and traces the author’s

²³ It is unclear whether Apess was aware that Irving was the author of “Traits of Indian Character.” In both the 1829 and 1831 editions of *A Son of the Forest*, Apess presents the essay as coming from *Analectic Magazine*, in which “Traits” was published as an editorial to which Irving found it unnecessary to sign his name. Likely Apess quoted Irving’s work from Boudinot’s *Star in the West* (where Boudinot also introduces “Traits” anonymously) rather than quoting it from the Cherokee Elias Boudinot’s reprinting of “Traits” in the *Cherokee Phoenix* in 1828, where Boudinot does attribute the essay to Irving (though he quotes the 1814 version from *Analectic*, rather than the revised 1820 version from *The Sketch Book*.)

consistent critique of settler colonialism (though Irving never used that term) across Irving's lifetime (xii).

Here I focus less on Irving's settler colonialism than on the Indigenous humor that creeps, seemingly unknowingly and unsurveilled, into *A Tour on the Prairies*. Irving seems to record these moments unwittingly, and their humor often undermines Irving's affable, worldly persona, making him and his non-Native traveling companions the butt of the joke. For instance, in one scene that I discuss below, Ellsworth is carrying out the diplomatic aspect of his mission by speechifying to an assembled group of Osages about the importance of keeping peace with their neighbors the Pawnees and renouncing the temptations of wasteful revenge. The rich historical ironies of Ellsworth's message are there on the surface for any twenty-first century reader to readily appreciate; however, it all becomes hilarious when we appreciate that the hunting party has departed the village for a season and so Ellsworth's Osage audience are mainly old men, women, and children. Their response deepens the irony of the situation. In Irving's words: "This speech...seemed to have a most pacifying effect upon the multitude who promised faithfully that as far as in them lay, the peace should not be disturbed; and indeed their age and sex gave some reason to hope that they would keep their word" (Irving, *Tour*, 25-6, emphasis added). The drift of the humor here changes whether one adopts Irving's perspective or the Osages'. For Irving, the irony is that the old men, children, and women in the village were unlikely to go to war anyway and had limited power to decide such questions for their people. However, when one understands the complexity of Osage

government and the instrumental role of the Ne ke a Shin ka, the “Council of Little Old Men,” in deciding questions of peace and war, then the punchline reflects back on Ellsworth. We see his canny audience now ironically eyeing commissioner Ellsworth and his troop of U.S. rangers: “We won’t disturb the peace. Will you?”

The Osages and Pawnees whose humor sneaks through in between the lines of Irving’s work join Apess and other Mashpee leaders in turning the romantic, proto-anthropological gaze back on men like Irving and Ellsworth, mimicking their authoritative scripts and sarcastically presenting them with their own estimation of colonizer character. Apess saw writing as a mirror that reflected the reader’s character. In 1833, he advised his non-Native readers that “[b]y what you read, you may learn how deep your principles are” (Apess 160). Through his use of humor, *Nullification* becomes something like a carnival fun-house mirror, revealing the warped morality of settler colonialism.

Indian Nullification: Apess’s Fun-House Mirror for the White Man

As Drew Lopenzina has written, Apess’s rhetorical strategy for addressing white audiences bent on misrecognizing him through the lens of settler-state myths was not outrage or sentiment, but “to reflect back” the “pale inconsistencies” of their racist mischaracterization of him and the other Mashpee leaders, “formed of the logics of oppression, back at his audience in the hope that, somehow, they might give pause” (214). His efforts “may have strained at the polite boundaries” of the Christian “discourse” he adapted to the ends of pressing for Native agency, but Apess also strained

the boundaries of expected Native discourse in the nineteenth century (4). In this section I will examine how Apess strategically strained those boundaries with humor. “Apess’s wit,” Lopenzina writes, “his political consciousness, his provocative engagement with history, and even his bifurcated brand of Christianity all work to powerfully subvert passive notions of Native identity” (3) and “kept him at a rhetorical remove from other nineteenth-century Native figures, such as Tecumseh, Black Hawk, Geronimo, or Sitting Bull, who were involved in what might seem like more tangible struggles for land and cultural identity” (4). Unlike these figures who rightly protested broken treaties and stolen land, Apess worked within the center of the settler-state in the Northeast to expose the illogicality of settler-colonial thought undergirding such atrocities. His tools were a sarcastic disregard for the tropes of authority and the satirist’s desire to bring balance: in other words, the tools of the Ahanaeenun.

The sarcasm of the Ahanaeenun is obvious from the very beginning of *Indian Nullification*, where the book’s title page declares its full title: *Indian Nullification of the Unconstitutional Laws of Massachusetts Relative to the Mashpee Tribe: or, The Pretended Riot Explained, by William Apes (sic), an Indian and Preacher of the Gospel*. In the period between 1833 and 1835, the white press in the area around Mashpee referred to the Mashpees’ peaceful assertion of sovereignty as a “riot,” “revolt,” “open rebellion,” or “insurrection.” Such language derives from prevalent historical and literary conventions that depicted Indigenous peoples as particularly and “savagely” violent. To the colonial mind, any Native resistance to white encroachment must necessarily be

armed and bloody. Apess's chosen title addresses both sides: by naming the Mashpee political movement "Indian Nullification," he references the contemporary nullification crisis with South Carolina. In doing so, Apess "unyoke[s] nullification as a political practice from the arguments of southern US states" and invests the Mashpees protest with a contemporary language of political resistance intelligible to white Americans (Zuck 397).²⁴ However, by naming the Mashpees' movement the "Pretended Riot," Apess also points out the fictionality of the white press's prophecies of Native violence. Moreover, the "Pretended Riot" also points ironically to the Massachusetts state officials who react to the Mashpees' declaration of autonomy by threatening to send armed troops to the town. Thus, the title holds out a hand to Apess's white readers, offering to put recent events in a context and language they can understand, but only if they leave their biases and preconceived notions of "Indian character" at the door of the Meetinghouse.

Even before the title page, though, Apess announces his satirical perspective through the inclusion of a woodcut frontispiece illustration entitled "Manner of Instructing the Indians."²⁵ The engraving shows a Northeast woodland Indigenous figure

²⁴ On Apess's work in the context of the nullification crisis and other U.S. national conversations, see Neil Meyer, "'To Preserve This Remnant': William Apess, the Mashpee Indians, and the Politics of Nullification," *European Journal of American Studies*, vol. 13, no. 2, Summer 2018, pp. 1-16.

²⁵ The engraving is unattributed, though its style bears some resemblance to the work of contemporary historian and engraver John Warner Barber (1798-1885) who produced hundreds of drawings and engravings of colonial encounters for his illustrated books of New England history. Barber even produced a woodcut of the Mashpee Meetinghouse for *Historical Collections* (1839). Besides the interesting woodcuts, Barber's entry on "Marshpee" is notable for its recognition of Mashpee Wampanoag continuance and sovereignty. He describes the area as "ancient Indian territory" (46) and writes that "[p]revious to 1834, the government of the Indians consisted of a band of white overseers...The Indians getting dissatisfied, the government was changed, and now consists of three selectmen, a clerk of their own number and choice, and a white commissioner appointed by the governor and council" (47). It is difficult to positively attribute the engraving to any artist, though its visual reference to the cart full of wood suggests local knowledge of the events of 1833-35. See Barber, *Historical Collections, being a general collection of interesting facts,*

reaching out to grasp the arm of a white man in apparent greeting. The white man seems to reciprocate the gesture while holding a bottle of liquor aloft in the other hand. In the background, an Indigenous couple can be seen beside what appears to be a Plains-style tipi while a second figure dressed in European clothes watches the transaction over his shoulder as he drives a wagonful of timber away from the village, his horse's legs raised at full gallop. The engraving addresses Native and white audiences at the same time with different messages. To white audiences, it condemns the underhanded ways in which colonial forces have tricked and coerced Native people into "selling" their land. The simultaneous gesture of friendship and offer of the liquor bottle capture this double-dealing and the man escaping with what is obviously Native-owned timber connects the apparent gift to the ongoing history of colonial theft. Apess preached frequently on the dangers of intemperance and condemned in print the colonial practice of cultivating drunkenness among Native communities. In *A Son of the Forest*, he blames the sufferings of his youth "in a great measure to the whites, inasmuch as they introduced among my countrymen that bane of comfort and happiness, ardent spirits—seduced them into a love of it and, when under its unhappy influence, wronged them out of their lawful possessions—that land, where reposed the ashes of their sires" (7). Apess connects alcohol to a whole series of settler depredations, including land theft, sexual violence toward Indigenous women, and the "scattering abroad" of whole villages (7).

traditions, biographical sketches, anecdotes, &c., relating to the history and antiquities of every town in Massachusetts, Dorr, Howland & Co., 1839, 46-8.



Figure 1. Anonymous. "Manner of Instructing the Indians." 1835. *Indian Nullification of the Unconstitutional Laws of Massachusetts, Relative to the Marshpee Tribe: Or, the Pretended Riot Explained*, Jonathan Howe, 1835, frontispiece.

However, for Native audiences, the engraving connects to other moments in *Nullification* to move past mere condemnation and focus on community-building and spiritual health. For instance, in his first exhortation to the Mashpees, Apess “told them what I had heard from their missionary, viz., that it was their general disposition to be idle, not to hoe the cornfields they had planted, to take no care of their hay after mowing it, and to lie drunken under their fences. I admonished them of the evil of these, their ways and advised them to consider any white man who sold them rum their enemy and to place no confidence in him. I told them that such a person deserved to have his own rum thrown into his face” (171). Apess is being sly here. As he later mentions in *Nullification*, temperance efforts led by Mashpee religious leaders had been frustrated by unlicensed white men from the surrounding areas who continued to sell illicit rum to the Mashpees. Apess incorporates two excerpts from the *Boston Daily Advocate* denouncing the legislature for failing to punish or even investigate these “white harpies” (201). The writers for the *Advocate* connect the ongoing illegal sale of rum to the Mashpee to a whole network of oppressions:

The Indians have no adviser near them in whom they can confide; those who hold the power, appear regardless of their wishes or their welfare; no pains is taken by the authorities to punish the wretches who continue to sell rum to those who will buy it; and though the Indians are still struggling to advance in improvement, every obstacle is thrown in their way that men can devise, whose intent it is to get them back to a state of vassalage, that they may get hold of their property. All

this, we are satisfied, from personal inspection, is owing to the injudicious appointment made by Gov. Davis, of a commissioner, and yet the Governor unfortunately seems indisposed to listen to any application for a remedy to the existing evils. (241)

With Rev. Fish watching over his shoulder, “caution[ing]” him “not to say anything about oppression” (172) to the congregated Mashpees, Apess appears to countenance the reverend’s ungenerous portrait of the Mashpees’ character while deftly weaving in acknowledgement of the systemic nature of the Mashpees’ oppressions. Apess advises his audience to shun alcohol and pursue education so as to be “useful to themselves and...the world” (171). Concluding his sermon, Apess “addressing the throne of grace,...besought the Lord to have mercy on them and relieve them from the oppressions under which they labored” (171-2). The engraving’s sarcastic message echoes loudly here and points to the Ahanaeenun dimensions of Apess’s rhetoric. He moves from Rev. Fish’s conventional accusations of Indigenous moral failure to reveal a wider panorama of settler-state abuse and neglect. Finally, Apess stresses the importance of civic engagement when he writes of re-establishing community bonds through being educated and “useful.”

Alongside the ongoing duplicitousness of whites in their dealings with Indigenous communities, Apess lampoons the colonial mind’s hysterical fear of Native violence as another “Trait of Colonizer Character.” Stories of the Natives’ insatiable bloodlust recur

throughout colonial chronicles.²⁶ Puritan writers conjured horrific visions of Indigenous brutality against settlers, vilifying the “savages” for their fabled propensity to attack innocent and soldier alike. For instance, Mary Rowlandson begins her famous captivity narrative with a gruesome retelling of a Nipmuc raid on her village. Rowlandson lingers on visceral images of Native warriors shooting English women full of arrows and knocking wounded children over the head. Rowlandson pictures herself at the scene of slaughter: “Thus were we butchered by those merciless heathen, standing amazed, with the blood running down to our heels” (4).

Apess makes fun of this trope many times throughout his work. In a famous passage from *A Son of the Forest*, Apess remembers how as a child he was terrified by the “mere threat of being sent away” from his white foster family to live “among the Indians into the dreary woods” (10). To illustrate his “dread” at the idea of “seeing any of my brethren of the forest,” Apess relates an early encounter with “Indians”: “One day several of the family went into the woods to gather berries, taking me with them. We had not been out long before we fell in with a company of white females, on the same errand—their complexion was, to say the least, as dark as that of the natives” (10). The writer Apess makes clear that these were white girls and not Natives, but his young self did not realize this. “This circumstance filled my mind with terror, and I broke from the party with my utmost speed, and I could not muster courage enough to look behind me

²⁶ For an overview of this bias in Puritan literature, see Richard Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600-1860*, University of Oklahoma Press, 2000, especially chapter 5, pp. 116-145.

until I had reached home” (10-11). Influenced by colonial discourses of Indigenous barbarity and cannibalism, Apess’s “imagination had pictured out a tale of blood, and as soon as I regained my breath...I informed [Mr. Furman] that we had met a body of the natives in the woods, but what had become of the party I could not tell” (11). Apess plays his juvenile hysteria for laughs, reminiscent of Benjamin Franklin’s similarly self-deprecating humor in *The Autobiography*. Apess wraps up the passage by directing the humor of the anecdote toward a political point about white hysteria and the rhetorical abuse of Native people in colonial history-writing: “the great fear I entertained of my brethren was occasioned by the many stories I had heard of their cruelty toward the whites—how they were in the habit of killing and scalping men, women, and children” (11). Again, adult Apess knows what his younger self did not and underlines the irony of this colonial rhetoric. “But the whites did not tell me that they were in a great majority of instances the aggressors—that they had imbrued their hands in the lifeblood of my brethren, driven them from their once peaceful and happy homes—that they introduced among them the fatal and exterminating diseases of civilized life. If the whites had told me how cruel they had been to the ‘poor Indian,’ I should have apprehended as much harm from them” (11).

Apess plays on this trope again in *Nullification* when he describes how local and state officials in Massachusetts reacted to the Mashpee Tribe’s 1833 proclamation of legal autonomy. The notice, written collectively by Mashpee leaders assembled in council and signed by newly-elected President Daniel Amos and Secretary Israel Amos,

declared that “[h]aving heretofore been distressed, and degraded, and robbed daily, we have taken measures to put a stop to these things” by establishing a new form of government for the community and electing tribal leaders to represent them (179). The new Mashpee government also issued a clear and straightforward resolution nullifying the existing state laws pertaining to them, which Apess quotes in full: “Resolved, That we will no longer accede to your terms after the first day of July next, 1833. Done by the authority of the Mashpee Tribe” (180). Apess depicts with great irony the immediate reaction this produced in the overseers: “Those who had, as we think unlawfully, ruled us hitherto now awoke in astonishment and bestirred themselves in defense of their temporal interests (180). He goes on to detail the way overseer Gideon Hawley represented the Mashpees’ peaceful resolutions to the governor: “He stated that the Indians were in open rebellion and that blood was likely to be shed,” that “we had armed ourselves and were prepared to carry all before us with tomahawk and scalping knife; the death and destruction, and all the horrors of savage war, were impending; that of the white inhabitants some were already dead and the rest dreadfully alarmed!” (180-1). He finishes, wryly: “An awful picture indeed” (181).

The sarcasm with which Apess infuses this scene, dwelling on Hawley’s pop-eyed, gibbering fear, does more than make the overseer look ridiculous. Sarcasm here enables Apess to more or less faithfully relate the circumstances following from the Mashpees’ declaration of sovereignty for the edification of his readers, but to do so in a way that makes it clear that the whole “pretended riot” was a figment of the diseased

colonial imagination. Furthermore, Apess's rhetorical choices here emphasize the rhetorical sovereignty of the Mashpee Tribe's collective voice. Sarcasm, as I have mentioned, is a form of indirect, oblique communication, requiring a complex negotiation of what is stated versus what is implied.²⁷ Here and elsewhere, Apess's critique of the settler state and its discontents is kept at this lower level of implication so that he less frequently explicitly states the Mashpees' specific grievances. His indirect rhetoric thus both registers his contempt for colonizers' myths and steps aside to allow the Mashpees to speak for themselves. Doing so clarifies Apess's mediatory—rather than representative—role in *Nullification*. He does not speak for the Mashpee but uses his knowledge of non-Native print networks to facilitate the Mashpee version of events. In this way, Apess's humor amplifies Indigenous voices by ridiculing the colonizers'.

Sometimes these Indigenous voices come through in *Nullification* in such a way as to show that Apess is not the only writer at Mashpee with a penchant for snark, as a letter from Mashpee President Daniel Amos makes clear. Following Hawley's report to the governor, Apess writes that the Mashpee “soon learned that the governor had sent an envoy,” Josiah Fiske, “to deal with them” (182). The news of the envoy enables Apess to relate an exchange between the Mashpee and Massachusetts governments. He writes: “A verbal message was brought, desiring us to meet him. We replied by asking why the agent did not come to us, if the governor had sent him for that purpose, instead of going to a tavern and calling on us to come to him there” (182). One can almost hear Apess

²⁷ I use the term “passive-aggressive” advisedly. I do not mean to imply here that Apess's sarcasm was annoying or immature, but that it is literally a form of oblique, indirect aggression.

rolling his eyes. He continues: “we sent the agent an answer in writing, to the following effect” and quotes the entire message, dated July 4th, 1833:

Dear Sir, We are much gratified to see that the governor has noticed us so much as to inquire into our affairs. Your request could not be attended to yesterday; our people being very busy in the affairs of the day; but we will meet you with pleasure this morning at nine o’clock, at our meetinghouse, there being no other place where we should like to see you for an interview. (182)

Here Amos mocks the government’s presumptuous attitude towards the Mashpee by adopting his own lofty tone. His vague allusions to Mashpee “affairs” not only deflate Fiske’s self-importance by relegating him to a rather low-priority item on the tribe’s very full agenda, but also enact Mashpee tribal sovereignty in a serious way. President Amos’s refusal to meet with Fiske on the state’s terms enacts “refusal” in Audra Simpson’s sense of the term in *Mohawk Interruptus* (2014). For Simpson, refusal is “a political and ethical stance” that rejects the settler state’s authority to “recognize” Indigenous nations’ sovereignty (11). Distinct from acts of resistance, acts of refusal decenter whiteness as the standard reference point for issues of Indigenous politics.²⁸ More than a sardonic rebuke, Amos’s refusal reifies the resolutions of the Mashpee government by centering the Mashpees’ right to set the terms for their negotiations with a fellow sovereign government.

²⁸ I describe Audra Simpson’s concept of refusal in more detail in Chapter 4, below.

Furthermore, the narration of Apess's and Amos's reactions to Fiske's summons in *Nullification* represents Mashpee sovereignty by recalling formal Indigenous treaty protocols that had been observed by colonial governments under British administration prior to the Revolution. Protocol for eighteenth-century treaty councils developed syncretically from the British Crown's recognition of the Six Nations and other tribes as "Indian nations" as well as Haudenosaunee diplomatic traditions such as the Condolence Ceremony (Wallace and Powell 252-3, 255). Unlike Fiske's brusque summons of the Mashpee leaders to a "tavern," treaty councils had been held at sites of administrative and cultural importance, such as an Haudenosaunee council fire or Lancaster court house, and the invited party, whether Native or non-Native, were considered guests and treated hospitably by the council hosts. Apess's reaction to Fiske's brusque summons is framed by something like resentment for this forgotten protocol of mutual diplomatic respect and good-faith negotiation.²⁹ Meanwhile, President Amos's written reply to Fiske ironically reverses that history. His authoritative written reply to Fiske's oral dispatch reverses the trope of Native orality/English textuality and his insistence on the Mashpee meetinghouse as the venue for the meeting reverses the familiar narrative of the treaties held and printed in the centers of colonial power and forces the envoy of the American government to enter Mashpee space by showing respect. Amos's letter is one example of how Mashpee leaders beyond Apess used humor to negotiate power in their interactions with non-Native governments.

²⁹ For Apess's experiences and possible impressions of Haudenosaunee diplomacy and ceremony, see Lopenzina, 119-131.

Indeed, it is possible to see *Indian Nullification* as a book as interrupting colonial narratives of domination represented in the body of treaties between the New England colonies (later, the U.S.) and the various Indigenous nations.³⁰ Following victory in the Revolutionary War, the tone and format of U.S. “treaties” with Indigenous nations changed as “American commissioners replaced elaborate speeches and wampum rituals with blunt talk and forceful demands. Treaties, they said, consisted of the United States granting peace to Indians and giving back to the tribes those lands it did not immediately require” (Calloway 100). Before independence, colonial governments had been obliged to view Indigenous nations as foreign sovereignties; now, the predominant view of the U.S. was that Indigenous peoples had no rights to their lands. Colin Calloway quotes New York legislator James Duane, who in 1784 urged his state to dispense with wampum and abandon “the disgraceful system of pensioning, courting and flattering them as great and mighty nations...They are used to be[ing] called Brethren, Sachems and Warriors of the Six Nations. I hope it will never be repeated. It is sufficient to make them sensible that they are spoken to” (99). This imperious tone is very much on display in the Massachusetts government’s response to the Mashpees’ 1833 declaration of sovereignty,

³⁰ Between 1736-1762, Benjamin Franklin printed the minutes of 13 treaties between the Haudenosaunee nations and the governments of different New England states. Every treaty was advertised as having been “printed and sold by B. Franklin at the New-Printing-Office, near the Market” in Philadelphia (Kalter). For more about treaty protocols and Franklin’s role in their development, see Wallace and Powell. For the full text of the “Franklin treaties” and commentary on them, see Susan Kalter, *Benjamin Franklin, Pennsylvania, and the First Nations: The Treaties of 1736-62*, University of Illinois Press, 2006. For more about the history of treaty-making between Indigenous nations and the European colonies as well as the United States, see Colin Calloway, *Pen and Ink Witchcraft* and *The Chiefs Now in This City: Indians and the Urban Frontier in Early America*, Oxford UP, 2021. In *Chiefs*, Calloway gives particular emphasis to the experiences of Native treaty delegates to councils in U.S. cities.

as evidenced by “a letter from the governor” to Fiske quoted by Apess in *Nullification*, which instructed the American emissaries to “let [the Mashpees] be confined in their adoption to an application of civil power” and warned Fiske that “[i]f there is resistance, the Sheriff will...call out the posse comitatus, and should there be reason to fear the inefficiency of this resort, I will be present personally, to direct any military requisitions” (Apess 183).

The jeering Ahanaeenun spirit dances through Apess’s response to the governor, mocking the solemn rituals of American “diplomacy.” “This letter,” Apess writes in *Nullification*, “was read to the people” who “thought it grievous that the governor should think they had put him in mind of his oath of office, to secure the Commonwealth from danger, and given him cause to call out perhaps fifty or sixty thousand militia” when the Mashpee “might, possibly, have opposed a hundred fighting men and fifteen or twenty rusty guns” (183). Apess’s self-denigrating humor makes the Massachusetts government look ridiculous by emphasizing the huge imbalance of military power, which also has the effect of reasserting the Mashpees’ arguments for civil rights with greater force. Apess writes that John Reed, a Massachusetts Congressman from Yarmouth who was present at the meetinghouse, “told us that merely declaring a law to be oppressive could not abrogate it; and that it would become us [the Mashpees], as good citizens...to wait for the session of the Legislature and then apply for relief” (183). Apess arranges his narrative so that Reed’s “advice” comes after the revelation of the governor’s letter threatening to levy the strength of the militia against the tribe. The order of these documents renders

absurd the idea that the Mashpee are “citizens whom the government was disposed to treat well” (not to mention that among the first of the grievances Apess learns about at the beginning of *Nullification* is the long history of tribal petitions and memorials to the legislature and other local governing bodies to which “they had never been able to obtain a hearing” [173]). Meanwhile, Apess also brings to the forefront the irony of their oppressors’ revolutionary history. By fully quoting President Amos’s letter (dated, as we will recall, July 4, 1833) and juxtaposing it with the governor’s eagerness to resort to military power, his neglect of the wellbeing of his “good citizens,” and the deafness of the legislature to Mashpee petitions for redress, Apess coordinates the events leading up to the Mashpees’ “pretended revolt” with the American colonies’ grievances on the eve of Revolution.³¹ To hammer this point home, Apess refers several times ironically to Massachusetts as “the birthplace of American freedom” (183).

The second half of *Nullification*, in which Apess editorializes on the documentary history of the Mashpee’s resistance to colonial oppression, is full of similarly sardonic takes on non-Native hypocrisy. At a time when other figures of Native resistance such as the Sac chief Black Hawk, the Cherokee editor Elias Boudinot, the Senecan orator Red Jacket, or the Shawnee brothers Tecumseh and Tenskwatawa used the discourses of sentiment, outrage, Christian and Indigenous religious imagery, the language of

³¹ Including of course the infamous passage charging that the Crown “excited domestic insurrections amongst us, and has endeavoured to bring on the inhabitants of our frontiers, the merciless Indian Savages, whose known rule of warfare, is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes and conditions.” The irony of the Mashpees’ rhetorical positionality with the Declaration, especially this particular clause, reverberates throughout *Indian Nullification*.

prophecy, knowledge of European and Indigenous history, non-Native law and custom, ethics, philosophy, and literature to remonstrate and reason with non-Native audiences on behalf of Indigenous nations, Apess added to all of these his wit and sarcasm, through which he held up to his readers a fun-house mirror in which they saw themselves rendered ridiculously real.

The contemporary reaction of the *Barnstable Patriot* tells us just how effective Apess's strategy was. Editorializing on a speech he delivered at Boston's Representative Hall in 1834 on the subject of the Mashpees' oppression, the newspaper accused Apess of "vilifying and abusing the irreproachable Pastor...Mr. Fish," "stigmatizing and calumniating the Court and Jury who tried and convicted him, and flinging his sarcasms and sneers upon the Attorney and Jury who indicted him" (*Patriot* Feb. 5, 1834). The *Patriot* writer is far more concerned with Rev. Fish's reputation than he is with Apess's claims about the Reverend's role in the oppression of the Mashpee. Their retort reflects a moral indignation similar to that described by Joseph Addison in *The Spectator*, where he decries underhanded and ill-natured "Lampoon[s]" and "Satyr[s]" that "produce...a secret Shame or Sorrow in the mind of a suffering Person" by "set[ting them] up as a Mark of Infamy and Derision" (*Spectator* March 27, 1711). The *Spectator* envisioned satire offensively, as a weapon, and employed the tropes of "savage Indian warfare" to describe attacks on public reputations as "Arrows that fly in the dark" (March 27, 1711). However, Apess turns on this trope, too, turning sarcasm to the defense of his adoptive tribe. In his "concluding observations" to *Nullification*, Apess writes, "If, in the course of

this little volume, I have been obliged to use language that seems harsh, I beg my readers to remember that it was in defense of the character of the people under my spiritual charge and of my own” (273). What their non-Native audiences considered a mark of ill-nature or bad breeding, Apess and other Mashpee leaders turned to the ends of rhetorical and political sovereignty.

A Tour on the Prairies

Washington Irving’s career as one of the early fathers of American humor hit its early zenith in 1809 with the publication of *A History of New York*. Once he retired the satirical Diedrich Knickerbocker for the more genial Geoffrey Crayon, his humor mellowed significantly, only rising to its former heights again briefly in “Rip Van Winkle” and “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow,” the most famous sketches in Crayon’s Sketch Book, both attributed to Knickerbocker. Where Knickerbocker had lampooned colonial enterprise and provincial braggadocio in a way that shed a harsh light on contemporary Jeffersonian democracy, Crayon channeled the “artless benevolence” and gentle wit of Irving’s favorite literary role model, Oliver Goldsmith (Leary 199). This trend continued, defining the humor of Irving’s writings from the publication of The Sketch Book in 1819 to his return to the United States in 1832. A gentler, more amiable humor is one facet of Irving’s Anglified voice, which American critics lamented, after 1819, “had lost...many of her home qualities” (Leary 199). *A Tour on the Prairie* is Irving’s attempt to address those critics who accused him of a lack of patriotism. He

returns in that work to American themes and environments and engages with American types that he had delineated at the height of his career, admittedly with greater effect.

As Guy Reynolds has pointed out, literary historians have disagreed on what to make of Irving's impression of his western tour of American expansionism generally. Reynolds echoes Dana Hagensick's contention that, though his party allegiances wavered throughout his life, in his writing Irving consistently demonstrated the "simple biases" of "nationalism-patriotism and conservatism" (Reynolds 89). From this point of view, *Tour* participates in the project of westward expansion by performing what Andrew Hebard calls "styling territory," the national appropriation of land as territory via the process of literary "enunciation" (Hebard 51). Irving's *Tour* presents the west as already cultivated and civilized, its Indigenous inhabitants continually retreating and disappearing from the "action" of the text (Reynolds 95-7).³² Reynolds calls the *Tour* an "extended, Jacksonian act of wish-fulfillment" (96). But Irving, as usual, is slippery, and other critics have sensed in *Tour*'s layers of irony concealed skepticism of his contemporaries' nationalism. Most recently, J. Woodrow McCree has argued that Irving's professional imaginative writing consistently advocated a genial doctrine of "world citizenship," criticizing cultural chauvinism wherever he sensed it (149). Where McCree portrays Irving's criticism as gentle rebuke, William Bedford Clark sees it as more confrontational. Clark calls *Tour* "a mock-heroic quest that quietly subverts the perennial American myth of westering, a myth that presupposes that civilization must inevitably conquer the

³² Reynolds also remarks on Irving's "terrible habit" of "setting up moments with the potential for confrontation and melodrama, only to [comically] deflate the crisis" (97).

wilderness,” and asserts “in *A Tour on the Prairies* it is the West itself that wins in the end and sends the would-be torchbearers of law and order—peace, progress, and prosperity—scurrying back to Fort Gibson” (336).

The social criticism that marked the younger Irving’s humor is not absent from *A Tour on the Prairies*, though it is muted by more amiable sensibilities. Removal provides both the method and target of his subtle critique, allowing his humorous scenes and characters to comment on the injustices of colonization, insofar as Irving assessed them. His admiration for Ellsworth aside, the humor of Irving’s *Tour* often makes the white rangers and traders of the frontier the butt of the joke, inexperienced strangers in the land of the Osages and Pawnees. While the result is certainly not a scathing critique of Removal, the humor of *Tour* suggests Irving’s skepticism of nationalistic and expansionist rhetorics. Reading *Tour* with an attention to the way Irving’s humor pushes back against these frames allows us to see the ways that white authors such as Irving with investments in the nation-state project both contributed to and undermined the rhetorical basis for settler-colonialism in the 1830s.

More importantly, insofar as the humor of the *Tour* also records Indigenous perspectives on these issues through the characters of Beatte and Tonish as well as the numerous unnamed Osages encountered by the “Irving Party,” *Tour* can contribute to our understanding of humor as an important dimension of Indigenous culture and mode of resistance. Beatte’s sarcastic contempt for the white rangers’ inexperience and inexpertise in hunting and survival, which Irving endorses ironically, is a quiet condemnation of the

entire notion of Manifest Destiny. Likewise, the humor of the Osages, which Irving records but perhaps does not fully understand, marks critical lacunae not only in the narrative of *Tour* but also in the national narrative Ellsworth and the “Irving Party” embody. The Osages’ reactions and responses to the Irving Party, often in the form of jokes at their expense, escape translation, stymying Irving’s authorial control over his own text. Given that *A Tour on the Prairies* is partly a tacit, if uneven, endorsement of Removal, the Indigenous humor that interrupts Irving’s text voices a critique of Removal and of settler-colonialism.

Tour’s competing themes—its simultaneously pro- and anti-nationalistic tones; its admiration for and ironic deflation of the American rangers, the agents of national expansion; and its ambivalently sympathetic portrayal of Indigenous peoples—can be partly understood as an effect of Irving’s choice to return to the mediatory lens of his Geoffrey Crayon persona.³³ *A Tour on the Prairies* was issued as the first of a series Irving called *The Crayon Miscellany*, which allowed Irving to publish content from his Crayon notebooks that could not, by themselves, exist as standalone volumes (Irving, *Tour* xvii-xviii). Crayon’s persona, advertised in the title of the work, not only capitalized on the critical success of *The Sketch Book* and the other foregoing Crayon volumes but also signaled to readers that *Tour* would continue Crayon’s recognizable tone and style. From the perspective of an “alienated observer” of a foreign culture, Crayon furnished his

³³ Crayon was the persona that Irving employed most often as the governing voice of his literary sketches, as opposed to his narrative-driven tales, which he assigned to Deidrich Knickerbocker. The three main tales of *The Sketch Book*, “Rip Van Winkle,” “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow,” and “The Spectre Bridegroom,” are all Knickerbocker entries.

readers with picturesque scenic descriptions and character sketches that achieved a balance of journalistic description and amiable, ironic detachment (Killick 46). Just as it had successfully crossed the barrier of postcolonial cultural tension between Britain and the U.S., Crayon's style was well-suited to make the relatively raw "frontier" scenes and characters palatable for Eastern readers.³⁴ Through Crayon, Irving is able to hold his criticism of westward expansion in ironic suspension, granting him the plausible deniability of the flaneur.

Like *The Sketch Book*, *Bracebridge Hall*, and *Tales of a Traveler*, *A Tour of the Prairies* is told as a quasi-travelogue consisting of a series of literary sketches. When they are funny, the sketches' humor comes from the ironic deflation of Irving's romanticized ideal of adventure on the frontier. For example, Irving romanticizes Tonish as a "Gil Blas on the frontier," and invests him with many of the qualities that would come to be associated with the likes of Sut Lovingood and the other "ring-tailed roarers" who populate the stories of the Old Southwestern humorists.³⁵ Throughout the text,

³⁴ Here and elsewhere, I use the term "frontier" either as Irving or another writer used it (in quotes) or to allude to the literary and political construction of "the frontier" and not to its existence in actual fact. Then and now, the language of the "frontier" sought to write geopolitically contested land into a providential history of U.S. Manifest Destiny as land that had not yet been settled, but would undoubtedly be. In reality, these lands are the homelands of many different Indigenous nations, including the Pawnees and Osages, whose lifeways continue a meaningful connection to these lands.

³⁵ Old Southwest humor, sometimes called the "Big Bear School" of American humor, was just coming into literary vogue at the time of Irving's tour, though it had roots in Southern and Appalachian folklore, including Indigenous oral tradition, as well as more immediate influences in regional newspaper humor. Old Southwest humor was not one thing, but grew in time to be associated with the rawboned rooster frontier-type who pits natural wit against outsider (frequently Yankee) pedantry and witlessness. Irving's own Brom Bones, the local hero of *Sleepy Hollow*, provides one prototype for this character, as does the figure of Nimrod Wildfire, the celebrated Kentucky hunter, who features in the play *The Lion of the West* (1831) by Irving's lifelong friend James Kirke Paulding. *Tour's* contemporaneity with the burgeoning popularity of Southwestern humor as well as his pioneering character work in *Tour* and elsewhere suggest that Irving's humor and style was not as staid, genteel, and "Europeanized" as his reputation suggests. We

Tonish rants and raves, frequently leaving his place of watch over the party's train of pack horses to join the rangers' mad dash after game.³⁶ Even when he comes back empty handed, he careens forth into a big-fish story of the time he single-handedly brought down the largest buck or fought the meanest Pawnee. In one instance, Irving relates an anecdote in which, while hunting, their group hears what they believe to be one of their hunters taking down a bear. When Irving and the men investigate, "to my infinite, though whimsical chagrin, I found it to be our two worthies Beatte and Tonish, perpetrating a foul murder on a pole cat, or skunk!" (*Tour* 39) Irving's humor here cuts both ways as he stacks incongruities. Firstly, he deflates the great bear hunt, an ur-myth in many cultures and a stock subject in American tall tales, by reducing the mighty bear to an ignominious skunk. Hunting becomes "murder" here and Tonish and Beatte, Irving's guide and hunter, appear ridiculous next to the cadre of rangers who represent, at least in this instance, the nobility of the hunt as a test of one's strength and masculinity. Their ridiculousness reflects upon Irving himself, who, with self-deprecating humor, grimacingly admonishes his two valets. Undeterred and "with his usual buoyancy," Tonish "consoled himself by vociferous eulogies on the richness and delicacy of a

might say that Tonish, for 1835, was au courant. I discuss the Old Southwest humorists in more detail in the next chapter.

³⁶ The man whom Irving called "Tonish" was named Antoine de Hatre, of Florissant, Missouri, which was settled by French settlers in the late eighteenth century. According to Thomas James, de Hatre's granddaughter claimed that Irving greatly misrepresented Antoine in his writing. See Thomas James, *Three Years Among the Indians and Mexicans*, edited by Walter B. Douglas, Missouri Historical Society, 1916, 176n11.

roasted pole cat, which he swore was considered the daintiest of dishes by all experienced Indian gourmands” (*Tour* 39).

Irving’s representation of Tonish resembles his sketches of the Bracebridges and other English “humorists,” who are remarkable for their “bigoted devotion to old English manners and customs” (8). In *Bracebridge Hall*, Irving writes that Squire Bracebridge’s humour “jumps a little with my own...having as yet a lively and unsated curiosity about the ancient and genuine characteristics of my ‘fatherland’” (8). *Tour* is motivated by a similar curiosity for “genuine characteristics” and Tonish becomes something like a case study of the characteristics of the true denizen of the prairie settlements. In anecdotes like the one above, Irving seems to align himself with the rangers’ more “civilized” values against Tonish’s rougher sensibilities.³⁷

However, in other instances, the rangers come in for their share of mockery. In one chapter, “The Alarm Camp,” Irving demonstrates what Angela Calcaterra calls *A Tour on the Prairies*’s “disorientation.” Reorienting her reading of Irving to the Osage and Pawnee storytelling aesthetic of the trail, *Tour*, Calcaterra writes, “fails to go anywhere...for Irving can only go so far along the trails that are occluded by his lack of knowledge and his willingness only to go so far” (129). “Occlusion and disorientation characterize almost all of Irving’s party’s attempts to read and comprehend—to follow the trail of, so to speak— Indigenous practice” (130). The chapter begins with Tonish’s arrival to camp “all glorious from his hunting match, his white horse hung all round with

³⁷ For more on Irving’s ambivalent representation of hybridity in *Tour*, see Reynolds.

buffalo meat” and “boasting” how he had single handedly “laid low two mighty bulls” (*Tour* 73). Irving reports that he and the other men automatically “deducted one half from his boastings,” but nevertheless grow uneasy when Tonish also reports signs of a “roving band of Pawnees” in the area. As anxiety spreads, the rangers also grow worried about the extended absence of Old Ryan, a “veteran hunter” in the mold of Cooper’s Leatherstocking, whom Irving romanticizes throughout. Amidst these fearful rumors, Irving reports Beatte as saying: “Dat old man [Ryan] will have his brains knocked out by de Pawnees yet...He tink he know every ting, but he don’t know Pawnees—any how” (73). Tonish’s braggadocio and Beatte’s contempt of Old Ryan’s purported expertise set the stage for the rest of the chapter, framing the chaos of “the alarm camp” as the result of American hubris. The remainder of the chapter is divided into a series of crescendoing crises. The first is a fire, caused by an errant flame from an unattended campfire. Irving shows the rangers racing around to protect their horses and powder stores, wryly noting that “mean time no one thought of quelling the fire, nor indeed know how to quell it,” except Beatte “and his comrades” who “attacked it in Indian mode, beating down the edges of the fire, with blankets and horse cloths” quickly putting out the fire (73-4).

More calamities follow closely on the heels of the fire. After Beatte smothers the fire with blankets, someone begins to shout to gather in the horses. Immediately a cacophony arises; no one can tell whether “the Captain has started buffaloes” and is calling a sudden hunt; or whether “the prairie is on fire beyond the hill,” requiring that

they should take the horses to safety behind water; or, indeed, if the rumored Pawnees are ambushing the camp. Irving paints a scene of total chaos:

During the late alarm of fire, the saddles, bridles, rifles, powder horns and other equipments had been snatched out of their places and thrown helter skelter among the trees.

“Where is my saddle?” cried one. “Has any one seen my rifle?” cried another.

“Who will lend me a ball?” cried a third who was loading his piece. “I have lost my bullet pouch.”

“For God’s sake help me to girth this horse!” cried another, “he’s so restive I can do nothing with him!”—In his hurry and worry he had put on the saddle the hind part before! (74-5)³⁸

Irving grants himself the role of strangely disembodied observer, removed from the chaos. For Calcaterra, this is another instance of Irving’s disoriented aesthetic as “[h]is body becomes a site to express his inability to find familiarity in the scene” (133). That it is Irving’s aesthetic choice is further suggested by Ellsworth’s version of this event, where he remembers Irving “calling through the camp loud, and louder still, for his odd leggin, of mighty little consequence in a battle—He was as pale as could be, and much terrified” (Williams 2: 42). As the men struggle to fortify themselves against the enemy they have convinced themselves will descend upon them at any moment, the Captain

³⁸ Details from Ellsworth’s narrative suggests it may have been Pourteless, a European traveling with the Irving Party, who girthed his saddle backwards. See Williams, 2: 42.

returns, unable to establish whether or not the Pawnee threat exists. Eventually, it is all discovered to have been miscommunication, when a small band of rangers who had gone out hunting buffalo alone returns to camp and are immediately interrogated by the camp:

“Well, but the Pawnees—the Pawnees—where are the Pawnees?”

“What Pawnees—?”

“The Pawnees that attacked you—?”

“No one attacked us.”

“But have you seen no Indians on your way?”

“Oh yes, two of us got to the top of a hill to look out for the camp, and saw a fellow on an opposite hill cutting queer antics, who seemed to be an Indian.”

“Pshaw! That was I!” cried the captain. (*Tour 77*)

This comic dialogue forms the punchline to the whole farce. Irving, who is clearly not above editing the truth to save face, chose to present his fellow travelers in such a ridiculous light. After all, he could have framed the events in such a way as to illustrate the heightened tension and perilousness of the white man on the Great Plains, constantly beset by forces of nature and fearsome Pawnees. Instead, he worries “that, in case of being attacked by such a number of these well mounted and warlike savages as were said to be at hand, we should be exposed to considerable risk from the inexperience and want of discipline of our newly raised rangers, and from the very courage of many of the younger ones, who seemed bent on adventure and exploit” (75).

In this episode, the drift of Irving's humor is to scrutinize the inadequacy of the military arm of the state and to implicitly question the fitness of the United States for expansion into the west. Irving, whose writing after *A History of New York* mostly avoided political criticism, never bluntly denounced colonialism or imperialism, at home or abroad. He shared with the transatlantic literati, especially those in the urban Northeast, an armchair radical's sympathy for the plight for America's Indigenous peoples but, like them, was prepared to consign Natives to history, as he did in the final lines of "Traits of Indian Character": "They will vanish like a vapour from the face of the earth—their very history will be lost in forgetfulness—and 'the places that now know them will know them no more forever.'" His caricature of the rangers in *Tour* thus does not necessarily recognize contemporary Native agency, but attempts to reduce Native peoples to an ahistorical, static foil against which the ineptitude of the Americans can be seen more clearly.

Despite these attempts at reduction, certain moments of Osage humor survive in the text of *Tour* that make Irving and the Americans the butt of the Natives' jokes. Many times throughout his text, Irving records Indigenous individuals' humorous responses to the party's endeavors, each time with the apparent aim of highlighting again the absurdity and ignorance of the whites' cultural chauvinism and their "inability to familiarize" in Native space (Calcaterra 131). As we have seen, Irving often positioned the half-Osage Beatte as a foil to the rangers, playing up Beatte's "sovereign contempt for the inexperience of the young rangers in all that he considered true knowledge" (*Tour* 54).

As the party's interpreter, Beatte also occasionally provided Irving access to nuggets of "real" Indigenous humor that the writer included in *Tour* for their realism and anthropological flavor, as well as for their wittiness. In one instance, Irving encounters an Osage "war party" on their way home from hunting who had broken from the main group "to waylay and hover about some Pawnee camp, in hopes of carrying off scalps or horses" (87). Through Beatte, Ellsworth—whom Irving ironically here styles as "Pacificator"—"made a speech exhorting [the Osage] to abstain from all offensive acts against the Pawnee; informing them of the plan of their Father at Washington to put an end to all war among his Red children" (88). In reporting this exchange, Ellsworth asserts the Osages readily acceded to his message (Ellsworth 114). However, Irving writes that, according to Beatte, "the [Osage] leader...had observed to his companions, that, as their great Father intended so soon to put an end to all warfare, it behooved them to make the most of the little time that was left them. So they had departed with redoubled zeal to pursue their project of horse stealing!" (*Tour* 88) Whether the Osages actually said this or not (Ellsworth claims that "Mr. Irving has added a little here to make a good story" [114]) the effect of this joke is to cast doubt on the efficacy of Ellsworth's mediatory role and, by extension, the policy of Removal in general. In *History of the Osage People* (2004), Louis F. Burns explains that Osage warring against invasive settlers from other Indigenous nations was one reason that Indigenous tribes east of the Mississippi were unwilling to resettle in the west under the Jeffersonian policy of voluntary removal (134-5). Hence the efforts, beginning under Jefferson, to mediate intertribal hostility and

promote peace between western Indigenous nations, particularly among the Osage and the Lakota (whom Burns calls “the Sioux”), whom Jefferson considered the most powerful western nations (140-46). If the success of Removal depended on the establishment of firm borders and harmonious cohabitation between the various Indigenous nations of the west and within what the U.S. government now designated “Indian Territory,” then the Osage’s sarcastic response to Ellsworth’s entreaty suggests the ineptitude of that mission. Irving may have included the joke in his *Tour* simply for the sake of a good story. Indeed, he may have made it up entirely. Either way, the anecdote casts a wry eye on Ellsworth and the settler-colonial interests he represents.

A similar, more involved episode occurs when Ellsworth appeals to the residents of an Osage town to cease their warring against the Pawnees. Irving notes that the young men of the village having recently left to hunt and that Ellsworth’s audience consisted of “a number of old men...while the women and children huddled together in groups, staring at us wildly, chattering and laughing among themselves” (*Tour* 25). The passage reveals the limits of Irving’s romantic sympathies. Even his view, so attentive to humanity and the particularities of character, was blinkered by animalizing stereotypes about Indigenous people. His misconceptions about the Osages provide the punchline of the joke in this scene:

Here the Commissioner made a speech from horseback; informing his hearers of the purport of his mission to promote a general peace among the tribes of the West, and urging them to lay aside all warlike and bloodthirsty notions and not to

make any wanton attacks upon the Pawnees. This speech being interpreted by Beatte, seemed to have a most pacifying effect upon the multitude who promised faithfully that *as far as in them lay*, the peace should not be disturbed; and indeed their age and sex gave some reason to hope that they would keep their word. (25-6, emphasis mine)

For Irving, the joke is that Ellsworth has mistaken his audience by exhorting the old men, women, and children to keep the peace when that is obviously the purview of the young, male warriors of the village. Read this way, this scene further participates in *Tour's* agenda of ridiculing the Indian Commission's misguided mission to pacify the Osages. However, in setting up this joke, Irving misconstrues the complex organization of Osage gender and ritualistic roles, interpreting them through the Euro-American lens of patriarchal gender binary and hierarchy.

Read through the lens of Osage culture, the scene takes on different valences and, the joke is on the members of the Irving Party. Firstly, the place that Irving characterized as a "straggling Osage village" is a hunting camp. Ellsworth's mission into Osage territory happened to coincide with the fall buffalo hunt. Like many other Indigenous nations, the Osage observed alternating hunting and planting seasons. Crops were planted in the late spring and harvested in late summer. Between these planting cycles, the Osages organized large-scale excursions into the plains to hunt buffalo in the summer and fall.³⁹ The entirety of Osage society was involved in these hunts. Women, children, and

³⁹ My use of the past tense here is not meant to indicate that neither the Osage nor their traditional agricultural practices have disappeared. Indeed, the recent establishment of the Osage Nation Harvest Land

the elderly not only accompanied younger, male hunters on the hunt, they also played integral roles in the hunting process. The elderly plotted the course of the expedition and performed necessary rituals and ceremonies while the women worked back at the hunting villages to process the game the men brought back with them (Edwards 70-1).

Meanwhile, children were learning from their adult counterparts the particulars of these community responsibilities. What the Irving Party encountered, then, was not a “straggling Osage village,” which conjures up colonial images of Indigenous remnants clinging to the edges of white villages or outposts, but a fully functioning, temporary hunting village.

This context is important for the scene’s humor because it reveals that the women, the young, and the old that, Irving suggests, have nothing to do with war (thus mocking Ellsworth’s peace talk) actually play an integral role in those community functions. Organizationally and ceremonially, the Osage approached hunting and war similarly, since both were related to the typically masculine realm of taking life. An Osage war party’s social and ritual roles, similar to those of a hunting party, contributed not only to the material success of a hunting or war party, but also to its cosmological or religious correctness. Thus, when Ellsworth’s audience of Osage women, children, and elders assured him that “as far as in them lay, the peace should not be disturbed,” they spoke

communal farm in 2021 is an act of sovereignty and evidence that sustainable agricultural practices remain of central importance to the Osage people. However, it is nevertheless true that settler-colonialism greatly disrupted the land and game base upon which the traditional subsistence patterns of the Osage nation depended. Today, for instance, the grazing range of the American bison, which once stretched from Alaska to Mexico and served as a consistent food and material basis for several different Indigenous cultures, is a mere fraction of what it once was and is consigned mainly to National Parks.

from the perspective of those who, though they seldom physically rode with the men to carry out raids on Pawnee, Cherokee, Delaware, or white invaders, nevertheless wielded immense cultural authority. From this point of view, the joke is on Irving rather than Ellsworth, revealing his ignorance. As Burns attests, “Osages find pompous characters like Ellsworth” and here, Irving, “a good target for their humor. Such characters never grasp the fact that they are the butt of the joke and this pleases the Osage funny bone” (213).

Irving’s ethnocentrism contributes to the irony of the United States preaching peace to an Indigenous nation. No doubt the Osages chuckled wryly amongst themselves at Ellsworth’s pleas for peace with the Pawnees and the Cherokees. Although the Osages had warred against the Pawnees, the Cherokees, and other Indigenous nations for centuries, oppressive treaties and extortionate land cessions to the United States were by 1830 the main threat to the Osage way of life. Indeed, the United States’ invasion of traditional Osage homelands exacerbated intertribal conflicts among the Osage neighboring Indigenous groups. Ellsworth’s tour occurred in the midst of a thirty year period of intense change for the Osage nation. Between 1804 and 1839, the Osage were forced to cede over 98 million acres of land to the United States, diminishing Osage territory by over 75%.⁴⁰ Not even a decade before Irving’s journey, the Osage Treaty of

⁴⁰ Part of this land was used to settle refugee Cherokees, exacerbating intertribal pressure in Osage territory. Burns, 168-70; See also, Kansas Historical Society, “Osage - Treaties with the United States,” *Kansapedia*, khsh.org.

1825 represented the largest cession of Osage land during that period. Indeed, the entire route taken by the Irving Party in 1833 lies in territory taken from the Osage in 1825.

These facts inflect the response from Ellsworth's audience of Osage women and elders with a sarcastic rebuke that transcends Irving's joke. Moreover, all the situational factors that build towards his punchline eclipse the ironies of the passage, pointing in fact to the persistence of Osage culture in the face of settler colonial invasion. The significance of this moment, then, lies not in Irving's comedy but in the Osages' ability to mix laughter and defiance and reflect upon a dire situation with irony and humor. For them, the real joke is the United States' posturing as peacemaker while constructing calamities for Indigenous nations wherever their settlers go. The Osage women and elders speak back to Americans through Irving's writing, reminding us of the irony of preaching coexistence out of one side of one's mouths while endorsing genocide out of the other.

Talking Stuff

In his stories "Turtle & The Oak Tree" and "A Lizard Appeared," contemporary Mashpee Wampanoag storyteller Mwalim Peters exemplifies the Mashpee tradition of using humor as resistance. These stories allegorize the Mashpees' 1833-35 struggle for civil rights using the animal story genre common to both Wampanoag *Ahanaeenun* and West African griot traditions (Peters 5). The stories' characters map onto real, historical individuals central to the events at Mashpee: Blind Turtle is "Blind Joe" Amos, the Mashpee spiritual leader; Phineas the snake is Phineas Fish; the Snake Circle represents

the settler governments and representatives such as Fiske, the Simpsons, and Governor Levi Lincoln who seek to surround and destroy the Mashpee; and Fire Lizard is, of course, Apess. In Peters' allegories, as in *Nullification* and *Tour*, Native humor undermines and mocks non-Natives' pretentious declarations of authority.

In Peters's "Turtle & The Oak Tree," Blind Turtle has a spiritual practice of sitting under a great old oak tree in the swamp. Although "Blind Turtle couldn't see the physical world, he was a turtle of great vision and insight" (37). He sits under his tree for hours listening to "the voices...on the wind" (40). Meanwhile, "a slimy, little water moccasin named Phineas," is assigned to the meetinghouse by the Snake Circle ("which was really more of a coil") to teach the turtles and other animals "the proper and civilized ways of snakes" (38). Phineas is jealous of Blind Turtle because, while his congregation grows thin, yet animals collect around Blind Turtle's tree every day, waiting on him to deliver one of his visions. Phineas slithers down to the oak tree to spy on the gathering and learn Blind Turtle's secrets. However, the voices on the wind have forewarned Blind Turtle about Phineas and he invites the snake to join them. "All the animals turned and saw Phineas laying flat along the creek, trying to look like a branch...until he sneezed" (39). This causes all of the animals to laugh uproariously at the spectacle of "Phineas eavesdropping on Blind Turtle" and "the snake slithered away in humiliation" (39). A little while later, Phineas returns to Blind Turtle's oak tree to try to hear the voices as he does. At first he hears nothing, but after a while he began to hear the voices, though he "was too excited to really pay attention" (40). Phineas writes a report to the Snake Circle

who conclude that “the turtle’s ability to hear voices” was not his but “was in the tree itself” and henceforth all meetinghouses would be torn down and rebuilt with supposedly powerful oak wood (41). Following the Snake Circle’s proclamation, “the snakes and congregation would gather in the oak meetinghouses and sit silently waiting for the voices to manifest” (41). Meanwhile, “Blind Turtle and the other animals continued to gather under the oak tree” where Blind Turtle gave “thanks to the trees, bushes, and grass...and thanks to the crickets and small birds who sat in the tree and conversed on the days that Phineas...visited [the] oak tree” (42).

“A Lizard Appeared” tells the story of the troublemaker Fire Lizard, who is guided by a vision from his home in the cedar forest to the swamp where Blind Turtle continues to sit under his oak tree and the snakes sit quietly in their meetinghouse. Since the snakes had “learned” about the powers of the oak tree, they had started cutting down more and more trees in the swamp. The snakes “had come up with a rule that made the territory common property that snakes could take from whenever they pleased” and Blind Turtle worried “that his oak tree would soon be up for grabs unless the animals were able to do something” (57). Fire Lizard hatches a plan and when the snakes show up to cut down the oak tree, Stuff-Talking Chipmunk (an over-enthusiastic and irrepressible creature) confronts them and tells the snakes that the swamp animals don’t have to leave:

“What?!?” hissed the fore-snake.

“Yeah! That’s right! That’s what I said! You heard me!” continued Stuff-Talking Chipmunk.

“How dare you! Do you know who you’re talking to?”

“Some snake as far as I can see. What’s that supposed to mean to me?”

(59)

Stuff-Talking Chipmunk’s militant resistance catches the snakes off guard and they can only watch in stunned anger as the other animals “unpacked the snakes’ wagon full of lumber, took away their weapons, and sent them back to the snake community empty-handed and humiliated” (60).

Humiliation recurs as a motif in both “Turtle & the Oak Tree” and “A Lizard Appeared” as political praxis and expression of Mashpee sovereignty. Stuff-Talking Chipmunk’s brazen announcement to the snakes that they “have three minutes to clear out of here yourselves” enacts the same boundary-setting as the official pronouncements documented in *Indian Nullification*. Indeed, if Stuff-Talking Chipmunk lacks a 1:1 historical referent, he stands in for the collective Mashpee spirit of resistance. Like Apess’s sarcasm, Chipmunk’s “stuff-talking” is theorized in these stories as a method of resistance.

Moreover, these stories’ “harsh” sense of humor (to use Apess’s description of his own sarcastic perspective) help us see more clearly the political and cultural work of Apess’s anatomy of colonizer character. At his nadir in “Turtle & the Oak Tree,” Phineas is humiliated, “a laughing stock to all of the Snake Circle” and he is ridiculed by the swamp community and the Snake Circle alike for “sneaking to a turtle’s meeting!” (39-40). Phineas’s humiliation remixes the encounter between Fish, Apess, and the Mashpee

community as presented in *Nullification*. Apess ironically writes that in their staunch refusal to recognize the spiritual leadership of either Blind Joe or Apess, Fish and Harvard College fear that “William Apess wants to get what Mr. Fish has” (254). “Turtle & the Oak Tree” allegorizes this pretended desire and transfers it to the snake Phineas, where it presents as his envy of Blind Turtle’s privileged sight. Phineas’s desire to hear the voices on the wind allegorizes Apess’s insight in *Nullification* and that of the Osages and Pawnees in Irving’s *Tour*, that though non-Natives claim to know much and proclaim mastery over all, their perception of the Indigenous world is tragically limited. Once this central irony is realized, humiliation of Eurocentric objective “knowledge” through jokes, pranks, and sarcasm becomes a fearsome tool of Indigenous resistance.

CHAPTER 2

VIOLENCE AND LAUGHTER:

JOHN ROLLIN RIDGE AND OLD SOUTHWEST HUMOR

The fact has hardly been recognized, but Cherokee writer John Rollin Ridge's 1854 novel *The Life and Adventures of Joaquin Murieta, The Celebrated California Bandit* is often very funny. The novel is a fictionalized account of the life of Joaquin Murieta, a quasi-legendary figure in California history, and follows Murieta's journey from a peaceful miner to a notorious bandit who seeks revenge for the injustices inflicted upon him and his fellow Mexican immigrants by American settlers. Though *Joaquin Murieta* is known for its sensationalized depictions of violence, several moments of laughter interrupt the novel's "parade of scenes of dismemberings, shootings, and throat-slittings" (Rifkin 29-30). Sometimes these moments add levity to the drama. In one such instance Murieta, having escaped Captain Harry Love's California Rangers only to fall into the trap set by the Indigenous Tejons, "burst out in a loud laugh at his ridiculous position" (Ridge 38). In other moments, Murieta's laughter celebrates his superior cunning, as when he successfully disguises himself to falsely testify on behalf of his comrade in court (94-6).

Humorous moments in *Joaquin Murieta* reveal the ways that the novel's politics are informed by Cherokee values of cooperation, mutual obligation, justice, and community well-being. That is, Ridge's novel is centered by an Indigenous ethical and political philosophy that the literary theorist Jace Weaver (Cherokee) calls communitism.

Communitism, Weaver writes, is “the valorization of Native community and values and a commitment to them” (45). It describes a communal approach to life and society found with many Native cultures in which the community is viewed as a holistic entity where individuals are deeply interconnected with each other and with the land. Throughout the novel, members of Murieta’s gang demonstrate their commitment to their “outlaw” community as a whole, prioritizing the well-being of the group over individual interests. Furthermore, a communistic reading shows how the novel aligns individualism with a Western worldview that valorizes individual rights, private property, and economic growth over the maintenance of relationships within the community. My argument in this chapter thus offers a different perspective on the novel from those which emphasize its apparent celebration of Ridge’s supposed American boosterism and Murieta’s romantic individualism.⁴¹

While the humor of *Joaquin Murieta* indicates that novel’s proactive commitment to Native community and sovereignty, the humor of the Old Southwest signifies the opposite: the erasure of Native peoples and the naturalization of white land claims to stolen Native lands. “Old Southwest Humor” names a U.S. Southern literary movement that emerged in the 1830s and continued into the late 1860s, characterized by its satirical, often exaggerated, portrayal of rural Southern life, culture, and characters. Initially published in Southern regional newspapers, the sketches and tall tales of Southern humorists like Augustus Baldwin Longstreet, Johnson Jones Hooper, and George

⁴¹ See, for instance, Rowe, “Highway Robbery,” 98.

Washington Harris circulated nationally through sporting journals like William T. Porter's *Spirit of the Times*. Though Porter and the humorists he published touted their writing as quasi-anthropological social documents that sought to "record a way of life before it disappeared" (3) James H. Justus argues that Southern humor "is as artful a distortion of the way things were as plantation romance" (16). Like that mode, which used racial tropes to broadcast a cultural fantasy of racial harmony under white supremacy, the Southern humorists' "distortions" of the region ignored Native nations' enduring claims to the lands now claimed as Southern states' territory by erasing Indigenous presence from their Southern landscapes and naturalizing white settlers' presence in the land. Justus links Southern humor's presentation of ahistorical whiteness explicitly to the recent history of Removal. This literature, he writes, "depicts the people and places of the newly resettled Indian lands of the Mississippi Valley with scarcely a hint of historical development," "the humor unfolds as a kind of *found condition*" (7). In this light, the Southern humorists' erasure of Native presence from the South mirrors in literature what the settler state sought to accomplish in reality: "the dissolution of native societies" and the simultaneous "erect[ion of] a new colonial society on the expropriated land base" (Wolfe 388). It is, perhaps, no coincidence that the beginnings of Old Southwestern Humor coincide with the United States's formal adoption of Removal policy in the 1830s.

In this chapter, I compare the communitism of *Joaquin Murieta*, visible in the novel's bitterly comic vision of individuality and heroism, against the ideological

establishment of the white settler-state in Old Southwest Humor, represented by George Washington Harris's *Sut Lovingood: Yarns Spun by a "Nat'ral Born Durn'd Fool"* (1867). Though contemporaries, Ridge (1827-1867) and Harris (1814-1869) are separated by academic distinctions of regionalization and periodization, the former associated with California literature, the dime novel tradition, and the development of the Western genre and the latter with Southern literature. However, grounds for comparison are suggested by Justus, who explains that some literary conventions that "became familiar moments in the later 'western' ...have their prequels in the humorous writing of the Old Southwest" (7). More importantly, Ridge's novel and Harris's *Sut* stories are connected by the historical and continuing presence of Cherokees in Harris's home state of Tennessee and its contested status as unlawfully occupied Cherokee homelands.

Gina Caison's conceptualization of Southern ideological "red states" in *Red States: Indigeneity, Settler Colonialism, and Southern Studies* (2018) provides a lens through which to understand both the ideological work of Old Southwest Humor and *Joaquin Murieta*'s resistance to it. In *Red States*, Caison argues that U.S. Southern regional and political identity has, since colonial times, been fundamentally shaped by narratives that naturalize white settlers' affective attachment to and historical belonging in the land. "The U.S. South," she writes, can be understood "as a set of narrative orders constructed to maintain land claims under more romantic notions of race, place, and economy" (4). Moreover, Caison demonstrates how long before nineteenth-century articulations of the Lost Cause myth, settler colonial narratives of white belonging in the

South centered on concepts of loss and absence, beginning with colonial writers' strategic "absenting" of Native and English presence in the archive (34-7).⁴² For instance, Caison argues that as debates about Removal circulated in U.S. Southern print networks in the late 1820s and 1830s, white southerners came to identify with the discursive figure of the "tragically defeated Native" as potential victims of the northern states and the federal government (124). Such a "conflation of [actual] Native and [presumptive] southern loss" ignored the continued presence of real Native agents who fiercely resisted Removal, including Cherokee Nation statesmen John Ridge and Elias Boudinot, and appropriate their resistance to frame their own sense of beleaguered regional exceptionalism (124). As I will show, the sketches and tall tales of Old Southwest Humorists like Augustus Baldwin Longstreet, Johnson Jones Hooper, and George Washington Harris likewise use narratives of loss and recovery in order to naturalize white Southern land claim and perpetuate paradigms of regional exceptionalism and white supremacy.

Like the Indigenous-authored counter-narratives of the Native South Caison examines in the second half of *Red States*, *Joaquin Murieta* voices an anti-colonial critique of the largely ahistorical, romantic, and mythic narratives of U.S. identity. It does so through its subtle satire of the conventions of historical romances and regional history, genres that naturalize white land claim and the settler-state's continued occupation of

⁴² Caison builds her argument on Gerald Vizenor's influential theorization of the *indian* (always lowercase and italicized) as a fictional construct within colonial literature that works to obscure historical Native presence in the land by simulating Native absence from the scene. Native absence, Vizenor explains, "is an event created in [colonial] discourse" (*Fugitive Poses* 25). As the signifier of that discursive creation, "the *indian* is a simulation, not a trace; the *indian* has no referent" (26). Gerald Vizenor, *Fugitive Poses: Native American Indian Scenes of Absence and Presence*, University of Nebraska Press, 1998.

stolen Indigenous lands; genres, in other words, that undergird the conceptual red state. My reading of *Murieta*'s satire builds on Lori Merish's reading of the novel, in which she claims that "By textualizing an oral legend...Ridge intervenes in the process of history writing" as part of what Anishinaabe literary critic Gerald Vizenor's terms the "literature of dominance (35). Vizenor's term describes the archive of settler colonial culture productions in which actual, historical, agentive Indigenous people are rendered absent via the figure of the *indian*.⁴³ The process of history writing is central to the operation of the red state, which seeks to inscribe land within a new, settler colonial order of time. As Vizenor, Caison, and Maureen Konkle all indicate, Indigenous people have always known this, and some choose to resist this specific form of domination and erasure by "[writing] historical accounts of their traditions and experiences of European colonization and settlement in order to write themselves into a political future" (Kongle 6). John Rollin Ridge is no exception. In an 1855 letter to his mother, Sarah Bird Northup Ridge, Ridge stresses the personal importance of representing the history from an Indigenous perspective: "What prouder object could a man propose to himself than...handing down to posterity the great names of Indian history and doing justice to a deeply wronged and injured people by impressing upon the records of the country a true and impartial account of the treatment which they have received at the hands of a civilized and Christian race!"

⁴³ In Vizenorian theory, *indian* (printed in all lower-case and in italics) denotes the settler colonial construction of the Native as it appears in European and American literature and which Indigenous writers resist via "postindian narratives of survivance." *indian* should not be confused with the problematic term "Indian," which is of settler colonial derivation and signifies nothing real. While I intentionally limit my usage of the term in any sense, my use of *indian* here and elsewhere follows Vizenor.

(qtd. in Dale and Litton 86-7). Ridge's intervention into settler colonial regional history can therefore be understood as part of a larger history of the Indigenous expression of rhetorical, intellectual, and political sovereignty via the writing of history. The act of (re)writing history in *Joaquin Murieta* is a self-consciously metatextual exercise that parodies the genres of settler literatures of domination that appropriate and erase Indigenous history to "clear the way" for fantasies of white settler indigeneity and land claim.

Satirizing Nation-Building in *Joaquin Murieta*

In "Jim Smiley and His Jumping Frog," Mark Twain's unnamed narrator comments on Simon Wheeler's straight-faced delivery of the outrageous tale of Jim Smiley: "He never smiled, he never frowned, he never changed his voice from the gentle-flowing key to which he tuned the initial sentence, he never betrayed the slightest suspicion of enthusiasm; but all through the interminable narrative there ran a vein of impressive earnestness and sincerity, which showed me plainly that, so far from his imagining that there was any thing ridiculous or funny about his story, he regarded it as a really important matter, and admired its two heroes as men of transcendent genius in *finesse*. To me, the spectacle of a man drifting serenely along through such a queer yarn without ever smiling, was exquisitely absurd" (9). Like Simon Wheeler, the narratorial voice of John Rollin Ridge's *Life and Adventures of Joaquin Murieta* maintains a staid and sober demeanor throughout its relation of some of the most gruesome and grisly scenes in all of nineteenth century American literature. Hardly a scene goes by without

some description of a murder, maiming, or some form of sexual assault. One can imagine *Joaquin Murieta* as Zorro by way of Quentin Tarantino.⁴⁴ Just as Simon Wheeler's deadpan delivery is integral to the comedy of Twain's story, the detachment with which Ridge's narrator renders the fantastic gore of *Joaquin Murieta* indicates a deep irony in the novel and is central to its bitter comic vision.

The main literary form *Joaquin Murieta* parodies is what Peter Antelyes calls the "Western adventure tale." Less one coherent genre than a formula of stock characters and plots, the adventure tale embodied the national expansionist impulse in the figure of an American hero crossing the boundary from civilization into a West coded as "savage" through Indigenous signifiers. The hero faces many dangers in the wilderness, risking life and limb, and in the end their victory represents also the victory of American society over

⁴⁴ I have found the comparison to be analytically useful as well. Stylistically, Ridge and Tarantino have much in common. Like Tarantino's films *Pulp Fiction* (1994), *From Dusk Til Dawn* (1996), and *Kill Bill: Vols. 1-2* (2003-4), and *Django Unchained* (2012) *Joaquin Murieta* mixes a diverse array of genres and narrative elements from across the culture of its time, combining history, poetry, and journalism as well as sentimentalism, romanticism, folk tales, and western adventure stories. Furthermore, Ridge and Tarantino's styles both feature an extreme aestheticization of violence remarkable for their respective times. However, most importantly for my argument here, both artists temper their ultraviolent aesthetic with a cutting irony that can be difficult to pin down. The question of the nature and purpose of irony in Tarantino's oeuvre remains open, but to my knowledge no critic has raised the question of parody or satire in *Joaquin Murieta*.

For an exploration of irony in Tarantino, see film critic Kenji Fujishima's essay "The Philosopher and the Fan: Jean Luc Godard and Quentin Tarantino—3rd Installment," *Slate*, 11 October 2007. Fujishima compares the two filmmakers, usefully distinguishing between parody and pastiche. Academic analyses of Tarantino's more recent filmography acknowledge his more purposeful use of satire in films like *Inglorious Basterds* and *Once Upon a Time in Hollywood*, see Nadine Hussein, "Inglorious Basterds: A Satirical Criticism of WWII Cinema and the Myth of the American War Hero," *Inquiries Journal*, vol. 13, no. 2, 2021. There is no end of articles and essays on Tarantino's use of violence. To list only a few: Esther Zuckerman, "Everything Quentin Tarantino Really Thinks About Violence and the Movies," *Atlantic*, 11 January 2013, <https://www.theatlantic.com/culture/archive/2013/01/quentin-tarantino-violence-quotes/319586/>; Joshua Gooch, "Violent Feelings: Quentin Tarantino's Cruel Optimisms," *Lit: Literature Interpretation and Theory*, vol. 30, no. 1, 2019, pp. 5-24; Edward Gallafent, *Quentin Tarantino*, Routledge, 2014, especially chapter 3; and Moon Charania, "Django Unchained, Voyeurism Unleashed," *Contexts*, vol. 12, no. 3, August 2013, pp. 58-60.

nature. Antelyes describes the basic form of the adventure tale: “Central to the form is the narrative of the hero’s journey through alien or hostile territory to accomplish some goal” (2). The hero’s conquest over the dangers in their path represent the form’s “commitment to expansionism as a model of human conduct” (3) so that the tale itself becomes the “narrative form of the ideology of expansion” (14). By the end of the adventure, the antagonistic forces arrayed against the hero’s striving are vanquished and with them all the forces antagonistic to the expansionary energies undergirding the tale. Western adventure tales thus encode the logics of settler colonialism, the ideologies of Manifest Destiny, and the expansion of the marketplace in a series of motifs that circulated not only in romances such as Owen Wister’s *The Virginian* (1901) but also in nineteenth-century travel writing and settler histories like James Hall’s *Letters from the West* (1828) and Francis Parkman’s *The Oregon Trail* (1849).

As Indigenous nations resisted the expansion of the United States, the pressure of their resistance transformed the American adventure tale and a new form, what Antelyes calls the “Indian adventure tale,” became the “tale of [the American] mission” (99). Across an array of genres, American writers constructed the “Indian” to simultaneously embody the dangers and obstacles of the natural world and to, by the end, give way to the inexorable expansion of the settler-state: “Within such forms as captivity narratives, guidebooks, almanacs, fur trapper narratives, and travel journals, the Indians were cast in two related roles: as impediments to and as martyrs of expansion. In both cases they were the characters conquered in the march of civilization” (100). This is the class of writing

Vizenor calls “literature of domination.” Like its European predecessor, the American “Indian adventure tale” buttressed Americans’ sense of racial superiority, cultural chauvinism, and providential right, and they justified genocidal policies at every level of government to expedite the “disappearance” of the Indigenous owners of the land.

Elements of the Indian adventure tale can be found across many nineteenth-century genres. Romances and romanticized biographies of backwoodsmen like Daniel Boone, Davy Crockett, and Kit Carson set these paragon Americans against caricature Native warriors to emphasize the puissance of American settlement and enterprise. Novels such as Cooper’s *Leatherstocking Tales* (1823-41) and Robert Montgomery Bird’s novels, especially *Calavar; or the Knight of the Conquest* (1834) and *Nick of the Woods* (1837), use the motifs of “Indian fighting” to affirm American readers’ sense that all the lands of North America were theirs by right. “Frontier” romances valorized the expulsion of Indigenous peoples (often via the image of the tragic defeat of great Indigenous leaders of the past, like Montezuma or Metacom) and sanctified their passing as the fulfillment of Manifest Destiny. Travel writing and history mirrored this form as well. William H. Prescott’s *The History of the Conquest of Mexico* (1843) draped his narrative of Cortez’s genocidal war on the Aztecs in the trappings of chivalrous adventure: “civilization pitted against what seemed at best only semi-civilization, and Christianity against paganism; two towering figures, Cortez and Montezuma, locked in mortal combat, the one representing the future, the other symbolizing the past” (Johannsen 180). Likewise, Francis Parkman’s *The Oregon Trail* (1849) is constructed as

a dangerous crossing of “the Anglo-American ego” into “an environment that threatens to break it apart” (Meola 5). Large game animals and conventionalized images of Indigenous warriors serve as the obstacles that must be conquered in the name of “masculine national renewal” (5). To be clear, the American authors of these narratives often claimed sympathy for the “poor” Native figures they depicted as falling away before the relentless march of civilization. For these writers, the trope of the Noble Savage was a useful shorthand for piously lamenting the violence of American expansion without conceding their belief in Manifest Destiny. Moreover, as in Charles Wilkins Webber’s sketches of society on the Texas-Mexico borderlands, the Americans came in for their fair share of criticism as well. Webber decried the Texans’ “cutthroat ferocity” and “domineering brutality” (Johannsen 186). Nevertheless, critiques such as Webber’s always served to admonish settlers for their failure to live up to “civilized” standards and never truly questioned the moral virtue of expansion itself. Thus, the adventure tale could register anxieties about the effects of violent expansion on the national character but ultimately serve to control those anxieties through the sublimating metaphor of the heroes’ victory and a concomitant, overarching narrative of progress from moral or social savagery to civilization.

Though scholars such as John Carlos Rowe have understood *Joaquin Murieta* as one of “the countless popular adventure stories of frontier life” (103) I argue that Ridge’s novel can be better understood as a parody of the typological narrativization of westward

expansion present in the Indian adventure tale.⁴⁵ It is true that *Joaquin Murieta* follows the basic narrative form of the adventure tale. Ridge presents Murieta as a romantic, individualistic hero capable of almost supernatural feats whose quest for justice brings him to face down many obstacles in a hostile and alien territory, including an antagonist who darkly reflects Murieta's virtues. The most obvious difference is that Ridge flips the types of hero and villain. Murieta, the novel's hero, is an outlaw who declares his murderous vendetta against all Americans in the first four pages of the novel, whereas Ridge's Americans are the antagonists of the novel. Captain Harry Love, the captain of the California Rangers whom Ridge presents as something of a foil to Murieta, embodies law and order but is outwitted by the romantic bandit for most of the novel. Despite these changes, Rowe contends that *Joaquin Murieta* nevertheless remains ideologically committed to American progressivism, "propos[ing]" to "analyze and solve" the "social problem" of the "failure of democratic idealism in postwar California" "by demonstrating the anarchic consequences of this failure" and "appeal[ing] repeatedly to the sort of sublime and absolute 'law' that would adjudicate the social, political, and psychological contradictions" of his society (107-8).

It is true enough that the novel points out the flaws in Californian society, but my reading counters the claim that *Joaquin Murieta* is a book about law and order. Rowe

⁴⁵ Despite the novel's title, surprisingly few scholars position *Joaquin Murieta* within the tradition of the adventure tale. My analysis thus builds on the work of Mark Rifkin and John Havard, who both identify the novel as at least partially conforming to the conventions of the mid-nineteenth-century sensation novel. See Rifkin, "For the Wrongs of My Poor Bleeding Country," and John C. Havard, "John Rollin Ridge's *Joaquin Murieta*: Sensation, Hispanicism, Cosmopolitanism," *Western American Literature: A Journal of Literary, Cultural, and Place Studies*, vol. 49, no. 4, Winter 2015, pp. 321-49.

argues that “Joaquín’s tragedy is that his talents for civic virtue can swerve so easily into criminality” and that the novel condemns Joaquín’s tyrannical control over his criminal gang (109). Such a claim troublingly recirculates settler colonial myths about Mexicans’ criminality and the “uncivilizability” of Indigenous people and obfuscates the originary violence of the American settlers against the Murietas, the true tragedy of the novel. In 1850, at the age of 18, Muritea immigrates from Sonora, Mexico, to California with his wife to make his living as a miner in the Gold Rush. There he enjoyed community and wealth among the prosperous miners until a group of “lawless and desperate men, who bore the name of Americans but failed to support the honor and dignity of that title” driven by “the prejudice of color, the antipathy of races” forced him from his land by beating him and raping his wife (Ridge 9). The Murieta family relocates to another mining claim, where he suffers the same brutal treatment from another group of Americans. Kicked off their land a second time, the Murietas move to Calaveras County where Joaquín gets a job dealing monte. As they begin to recover from their trauma—Ridge reports here that Murieta’s “sky seemed clear and his prospects bright”—he visits his half-brother the next town over when a group of white Americans accuse him of having stolen the horse he is riding. They gather a mob, tie Joaquín to a tree and whip him and lynch his brother. Ridge describes Murieta’s radical change after this third brutal beating and his brother’s murder: “It was then that the character of Joaquín changed, suddenly and irrevocably. Wanton cruelty and the tyranny of prejudice had reached their climax. His soul swelled beyond its former boundaries, and the barriers of honor, rocked

into atoms by the strong passion which shook his heart like an earthquake, crumbled around him. Then it was that he declared to a friend that he would live henceforth for revenge and that his path should be marked with blood” (12-13). Thus, Murieta’s criminality does not come from some innate talent or perverted civic but is a direct result of the Americans’ terrorizing of his family. The novel does not, then, level any kind of moral judgment against Murieta or his character; indeed, the first page of the novel proclaims that the character of Murieta, “a man as remarkable in the annals of crime as any of the renowned robbers of the Old or New World,” “was nothing more than a natural production of the social and moral condition of the country in which he lived...and, consequently, his individual history is a part of the most valuable history of the State” (7). Ridge ultimately refers all of Murieta’s crimes to the influence of the “social and moral condition” of the settler-state and, indeed, makes Murieta a synecdoche for California itself. Put differently, Murieta’s cruelty reflects and is the result of American cruelty.

Though the novel ends with Murieta’s death at the hands of the California Rangers, the final vision of American success is one predicated on extraordinary violence, casting doubt on the nation’s claims to “civilization.” The grisly spectacle of Murieta’s head blurs the line between civilization and savagery, pointing out the hypocrisy at the very heart of that division. In order to prove to the legislature that Murieta is dead, Captain Love decapitates the bandit leader, an action that Ridge notes is taken mainly due to the extreme exigence of the situation and something that “he would

not otherwise have done” (155). Murieta’s head is delivered to the California legislature where it is identified and then “carried for exhibition over a large portion of the State,” along with the hand of Murieta’s lieutenant, Three-Fingered Jack (156). The motive for this grisly tour is ultimately unclear. Ridge writes that the head was “thoroughly identified in every quarter,” suggesting a desire for positive knowledge of Murieta’s death as one reason (156). However, Three-Fingered Jack’s hand “was also exhibited...not to prove its identity...but to give the public the actual sight of an object which had flung a strange, haunting dread over the mind, as if it had been a conscious, voluntary agent of evil” (156). As Timothy Donahue notes, the severed head and hand represent the government’s biopower over its citizens, “dramatiz[ing] the triumph of the US state over those who would contest its sovereignty by presenting a spectacle of bodily punishment and subjugation” (391). However, contemporary broadsheet advertisements touting the tour of Murieta’s and Jack’s bodies as once-in-a-lifetime attractions (“The Head of the Renowned Bandit! Joaquin! and the Hand of Three Fingered Jack! The Notorious Robber and Murderer” were to be “Exhibited for One Day Only! At the Stockton House!” [Donahue 39]) causes the exhibition to take on the flavor of a traveling freak show of the sort popularized by P.T. Barnum. As Linda Frost explains, the freak show “aided in the construction of the nation by creating hierarchically superior, white, middle-class identity that could claim national membership” via the exhibition of racialized Others whose savagery, indicated by the showmen’s insistence on their primitiveness or quasi-bestiality, marked them as lower on the evolutionary scale of

civilization and outside the bounds of citizenship (3). Frost's perspective suggests other readings of the tour of Murieta's head and Jack's "ruthless *talons*" (156). The grotesque display of these body parts asserts a notion of American citizenship based in whiteness, but it dissolves the notion of the whites' superior moral character. The whites have become the ethnic Other they despise.

The Americans' racist violence against Murieta's family and the Legislature's absurd and sensationalized exhibition of the gang's dismembered bodies bookend the novel's satirical narrative of the nation. Where other adventure tales symbolize the forgone conclusion of the march of American civilization over savagery and the victory of American democracy over foreign tyranny in the forms of the individualistic adventurer, *Murieta* points out the violence of this process and the un-democratic racial othering that becomes the *modus operandi* of American identity formation. It does so by linking Murieta's criminality with the "social and moral condition of the country" (6) and identifying his tragedy with the "early history of this State" (158), troubling easy definitions of national belonging and settler histories that elide the violence of colonization. The aim of *Murieta*'s satire is to criticize settler colonial violence, especially racial violence, and its erasure in the archive of colonial, regional histories. In short, it critiques the formation of the red state. In the next section, I will examine how moments of humor in the novel carry through its satire of American identity formation and its critique of the red state in Ridge's depiction of Murieta's encounters with Indigenous peoples.

Reterritorializing Laughter

Since at least the seventeenth century theories of humor have attempted to explain the phenomenon of laughter. In 1651, Thomas Hobbes linked laughter to the “sudden glory” of one’s perception of oneself as superior to another. “Sudden glory, is the passion which makes those grimaces called laughter; and is caused either by some sudden act of their own, that pleases them; or by the apprehension of some deformed thing in another, by comparison whereof they suddenly applaud themselves” (qtd. in Morreal). Students of humor have referred to Hobbes’s thinking and its successors as the Superiority Theory of Laughter. Another explanation may be found in Freud’s Relief Theory. In *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious* (1905), Freud describes how laughter vents emotional energy summoned up for a psychological task that one suddenly finds irrelevant or unnecessary. For Freud, jokes conjure up scenarios that would normally require a healthy response of sexual desire, hostility, pity, or any other emotion. However, the punchline of the joke undercuts the reality of the situation, rendering the legitimate expression of the emotion unnecessary. The now-useless emotional energy is vented as laughter, which contains the trace of the original energy. Henri Bergson’s (1900) idea of laughter as social is related to both the Superiority and Relief theories. For Bergson, we laugh at anti-social “inelastic” behavior in order to correct it, to police the human community.

These theories hold some explanatory power for the moments of laughter in *Joaquín Murieta*. For example, when Murieta, late in the novel, watches from afar and laughs as a posse of Americans burns a camp where they think he is, his laugh could be

said to express a Hobbesian superiority to his pursuers (Ridge 122). Murieta's side-splitting laughter at the image of his main enforcer, Three-Fingered Jack, chasing down and threatening the life of a Chinese man named Woh Le could be understood as either a Freudian venting of pity or a Bergsonian response to the of Woh Le's stereotyped bulging eyes and clattering wooden footwear (64). Both these interpretations are valid, but they imagine Murieta's laughter as *belonging to him*, an extension of his body, personality, or mind. Thus imagined, laughter becomes another sign of Murieta's romantic individuality and Ridge's apparent "endorsement...of ideologies of individualism" (Rifkin 44). There is surely ample evidence that Ridge *did* endorse "the prevailing individualism of mid-century U.S. culture" (Rowe 117), however, as Mark Rifkin reminds us, such endorsement does not necessarily foreclose the possibility of anti-imperialist or even anti-American critique (43-44, 50n23).⁴⁶

Rather than retreading theories of laughter that privilege readings of Murieta's romantic individualism by emphasizing Murieta "as an *individual* subject or object, in relation to laughter" (Emmerson 2084), I want to explore geographer Phil Emmerson's ideas about "transpersonal laughter" and its capacity to "enact re/deterritorializations" (2095). Emmerson's work investigates what laughter does when we divorce it from the causality of humor. Humor and laughter, he argues, too regularly elide each other and are

⁴⁶ Rifkin maintains that Ridge's investment is in capitalist ideology and not "Americanism" specifically. His reading of Joaquin Murieta is persuasive but taken alongside the rest of Ridge's oeuvre—especially his letters and Poems—the novel seems to honestly endorse specifically American ideology. However, that does not foreclose the possibility that Ridge might critique America: indeed, that is the whole point of his novel.

studied as two sides of the same phenomenon, reducing laughter to the mere “representation” of humor. Turning this around, Emmerson claims that “laughter itself is not reducible [to] the intentionality of a pre-existing (humorous) subject, but rather *produces the subject through its occurrence*” (2085, emphasis mine). This insight leads Emmerson to name laughter as “transpersonal,” meaning that laughter, instead of being conceptualized as the individual body’s response to funny stimuli, is in excess of the body, “overflowing the bounds of the body as [it] projects sound outwards, but also exceeding representation through generating affective intra/inter-actions within and between different bodies” (2085). Unlike other theories of humor that claim to chart the effects of laughter on the self, Emmerson shows us how laughter reconstitutes space and recharts social relations by actually generating new social subjectivities (2085). Mobilizing the Deleuzian concept of the “refrain” (a nonrepresentational “anything that adds structure to an otherwise chaotic world”) Emmerson further posits that laughter has the capacity to “deterritorialize” and “reterritorialize” existing regimes of space time (2086). In other words, laughter is “capable of drawing bodies together and pushing them apart...in ways that interrupt the actual and assumed/imagined power geometries generated by humor” (2095).

There are some issues with applying Emmerson’s thought to a work like *Joaquin Murieta*. The main issue, as mentioned above, is that one of Emmerson’s main concerns is to study “nonrepresentational” laughter as an analytical category separated from humor. In a novel, all laughter is representational insofar as it is always an aesthetic

choice. The kind of spontaneous, contagious laughter Emmerson charts in certain social situations cannot exist on the page. It may not always have to be a response to humor, but when a character laughs, it is always representational. However, this does not discount the possibilities Emmerson opens for us. Indeed, Emmerson opens up moments of laughter in any text and demonstrates that, beyond an obligatory gesture to mark humor, laughter can mean and do multiple things at once. Nevertheless, Emmerson's ideas allow us to consider instances of textual/representational laughter anew and to imagine new possibilities for the social and political assemblages such laughter creates.

Though Emmerson does not develop his thought in this direction, I build upon his ideas by claiming that transpersonal laughter may be imagined as interrupting the "power geometries" imposed upon space by imperial agents and policies. If, as Andrew Hebard argues in *The Poetics of Sovereignty in American Literature, 1885-1910* (2013), the nation-state's control over space must be imagined, enunciated, and represented both physically and textually, often through the erasure and appropriation of Indigenous history and land claim, then Emmerson allows us to see how laughter can disrupt and reconfigure both kinds of representations of sovereignty to imagine alternative geographies and resist settler colonial erasures. For instance, in her essay about Algonquian laughter in Mary Rowlandson's captivity narrative, Laura Arnold notes that "Algonquian muffled laughter" opens up dialogic space in the text, "unsettl[ing] and contradict[ing] Rowlandson's" rigidly monologic "Puritan-centered vision of events" (3). The laughter of Rowlandson's captors refutes Puritan land claims, "For if Rowlandson

were to acknowledge Algonquian social conventions surrounding status, reciprocity, and adoption,” cultural differences traced in the laughter recorded in Rowlandson’s text, “she would as good as admit the land she travels on is Algonquian, not British” (22). Thus, as I would argue, while Algonquian laughter “deterritorializes” the power geometries between Algonquian and British presumed by the settler colonial logics of Rowlandson’s Puritan worldview, it reterritorializes in a literal sense the land across which the text travels, reaffirming Algonquian land tenure through its recognition of Algonquian cultural practices derived from the land itself.

Likewise, the laughter in *Joaquin Murieta* disrupt the racial hierarchies imposed in the land by the novel’s Americans. The resultant, decentered power relations embodied by Murieta’s gang and other Indigenous figures in the novel, such as the fictional Tejons, indicate *Joaquin Murieta*’s communitism. The “Tejon Nation,” whom Mark Rifkin identifies as a fictionalized version of the Miwoks, a nation Indigenous to California, are contracted by a group of Americans to track down Murieta and reclaim some horses that Murieta and his band have stolen from a nearby rancho. Though they outsmarted and outran the Americans, the Tejons successfully capture the outlaws and strip them of their clothes, jewelry, horses, and weapons. “Never were men so completely humiliated,” Ridge writes of Murieta’s capture. “The poor, miserable, cowardly Tejons had achieved a greater triumph over them than all the Americans put together! Joaquin looked grim for a while, but finally burst out into a loud laugh at his ridiculous position, and ever afterwards endured his captivity with a quiet smile” (38). A Freudian reading would

perhaps interpret Murieta's laughter as giving vent to an impotent rage, but more interesting is the way that his laughter reconfigures the racial dynamics of his encounter with the Tejons.

Murieta's laughter deterritorializes the relationship between the Tejons, Americans, and Murieta's gang. At the beginning of this scene, as Americans approach Sepatarra in the Tejon town, the novel's language reflects their perspective, describing the Tejons through racist references to their "swarthy" skin, unappetizing forage, and cowardliness. "They soon reached the capital, which consisted of twenty or thirty very picture-esque looking bark huts scattered along the side of a hill, in front of the largest of which they found old Sepatarra, seated upon his haunches in all the grandeur of 'naked majesty,' enjoying a very luxurious repast of roasted acorns and dried angle-worms" (36). Ridge's ironic rendering of the Tejons is dominated by references to visuality. Ridge's choice of the word "picture-esque" to describe the Tejon domiciles signals that we are seeing things from the American's visual perspective and thus receiving information that has been filtered through a racializing American lens. Their gaze lingers on Sepatarra's posture and note his nudity before noticing the food he is eating, all of which is processed through the nineteenth-century American savagist dichotomy. Rendering the Americans' savagism ironically is a double-edged technique for Ridge. On the one hand, it strengthens our sense of taking the Americans' perspective by implicitly glorifying Euro-American civilization. Sepatarra's nudity, for instance, rather than being processed as an anthropological detail becomes ironized as "naked majesty," which emphasizes the

Americans' sense of cultural and political supremacy over Indigenous traditions of governance on display in the town. On the other hand, however, Ridge's irony perpetuates the ignorant chauvinism it satirizes, obscuring what his true feelings on the subject might be. This switching between perspectives—already difficult to track because of Ridge's irony—is made even more difficult because of his frequent use of free-indirect discourse in the first half of the novel. It is also, therefore, problematic to try to distinguish between views that Ridge may have felt himself and those that he intends us to see as belonging to a certain character.

Ridge's irony establishes one kind of "refrain" over the scene, which is to say that it arranges the power dynamics between the actors of the scene in a certain way, made intelligible to a reading audience by virtue of his appropriation of the language of savagism. When the scene shifts from the Americans' encounter with the Tejons to focus on the Tejons' encounter with Murieta resulting in Murieta's capture, Murieta's laughter marks a moment in the text akin to when a film camera breaks the cinematic "180-degree rule," crossing an invisible axis between two subjects and disorienting the viewer by disrupting the positions of a scene's visual reference points. His laughter disrupts the power dynamics of the previous scene and rearranges them in a new configuration whereby the Tejons are now on equal ground with, if not superior to, Murieta. Ridge's announcement (we sense from Murieta's perspective now) that "The poor, miserable, cowardly Tejons had achieved a greater triumph over them than all the Americans put together!" is structured as a punch line to the foregoing scenes. The rehearsal of all of the

Americans' savagist assumptions about the Tejons piles irony on irony, until the significance of that perspective collapses under the circumstances of their repetition: the display of the Tejon's strategy, military ability, diplomacy, and newly-acquired material wealth. Murieta's "loud laugh" deterritorializes the relationship between the Tejons, Americans, and Mexicans, temporarily disrupting the hierarchical worldview of white supremacy to chart a new geography of relations that recognizes the strategic superiority of the Tejons' "cowardly cunning," even over the master strategist himself.

This encounter with the Tejons illustrates a moment of *Joaquin Murieta's* communitism in its prioritization of justice as a restoration of balance rather than as a punitive act of state violence. The humor of Sepatarra's captivity of Murieta balances out the idea of Murieta as a romantic, infallible, criminal genius, a vision of Murieta that originates in American newspapers but that Murieta plays into for the survival of his community. As Murieta's grimness gives way to amusement, his "loud laugh" reveals another facet of his leadership skills and respect for Indigenous traditions. For instance, his response to being beaten by the Americans is to wage war, but his response to the ceremonial beatings Sepatarra orders for him is to "laugh prodigiously—declaring upon his honor as a man that not a hair of old Sepatarra's head should be harmed" (40). The difference is that the Americans' behavior is a violation of his rights while Sepatarra's "decent and thorough flogging" is an act meant to restore balance by seeing "the ends of justice satisfied" (39).

Justice is one form of balance; humor is another. Joaquin's laughing acceptance of the Tejon law while he is in their captivity contrasts sharply with the Americans' disdain for Tejon culture. The Americans who turn their nose up at Sepatarra's hospitality cannot imagine crossing the cultural divide that they imagine separates them from the Tejons. Conversely, Murieta accepts the terms of his captivity, including his ceremonial flogging, as in total accordance with the values the novel constantly identifies with the ideal American civilization: courage, honor, justice, and fairness. Murieta's good humor in this scene exemplifies the virtues that *should* govern all scenes of encounter across the multiple theaters of U.S. expansion. The distance between Murieta's laughter and the Americans' scorn precisely indexes the novel's critique of U.S. colonialism and, more specifically, the ideology of xenophobic white supremacy that undergirds it.

Such "de/re-territorialization" via laughter is almost literally thematized a few paragraphs later when, after having been beaten and then freed by Sepatarra, Murieta and his band of followers wind their way back to their isolated mountain camp. Naked, unarmed, and bedraggled, they present quite the spectacle to Mountain Jim, one of Murieta's lieutenants:

After a day or two's travel, Joaquin and party arrived, nearly worn out, in the vicinity of San Francisco Rancho at the head of the Tejon Pass where they met with Mountain Jim, one of their confederates, who had been out upon his "own hook" robbing and stealing for a few weeks then passed. He was astounded at the spectacle which they presented, and begged Joaquin to allow him the privilege of

laughing one hearty laugh before he listened to any explanation of the mystery. The privilege was readily granted, and the jolly bandit went through the performance with great zest and unction, making the woods echo and re-echo with his most refreshing peals of merriment. The women hid themselves in the brush, and were like mother Eve when she sinned—conscious of their nakedness without being told of it. (41)

John Carlos Rowe contends that Ridge's novel "condemn[s] cooperative labor," that, "frustrated in his efforts to realize his identity as an individual...Joaquin becomes a tyrant" (109). It is possible to read this scene as evidence in support of Rowe, that Murieta's reappearance in camp and the brief series of events it initiates on Murieta's behalf point to the power of Murieta's personality over his men. After all, Jim's laughter is heavily mediated; his "peals of merriment" are described as a "performance" which may only begin with Murieta's "permission." From this perspective, Jim's laughter re-territorializes the hierarchical power relations between Murieta and his men that had been disrupted by his captivity among the Tejons. But this is not the whole picture. To reiterate Emerson's key insight about laughter: it is transpersonal, meaning that instead of apprehending it as the ego's response to conditions outside the body, laughter exceeds the body and, in fact, finds its primary significance beyond the individual in the ways that it configures the space and relations *between* bodies. When Jim's laughter "echoes and re-echoes" through the surrounding area, suffusing the landscape with "peals of merriment,"

it temporarily reconfigures the space and the relations between him, Murieta, and the other bodies in the scene.

Although Murieta “allows” Jim’s laughter to happen, thus seeming to grant him some level of control over it, laughter itself seems to spread far beyond Murieta’s immediate encounter with Jim, exceeding the power relation between two bodies it supposedly marks.⁴⁷ Murieta’s return to camp, a refrain in the novel that typically reinscribes Murieta’s central authority over the criminal organization he is said to control, instead here becomes a demonstration of the true *decentralized* power of the organization. Immediately, the scene de-emphasizes Murieta’s tyrannical authority. Mountain Jim is designated “one of their confederates, who had been out upon his ‘own hook’ robbing and stealing.” This is one of two places in the novel Ridge uses the word “confederate” (both instances in reference to Jim) which designates Jim as an ally on equal grounds with, rather than a pledged subordinate to, Murieta. Moreover, through the second-person plural pronoun *their*, this equality of stature is extended to the entire band, not just to Jim himself. Next, it matters that Jim was “out on his ‘own hook.’” Murieta may be the presiding genius over the enterprise, but its success (and Joaquin’s terrific reputation) depends largely on his independent allies’ coordinated efforts. Indeed, it is suggested in the opening pages of the book that part of Murieta’s fearsomeness comes from the fact that he seems to be able to travel vast distances nearly instantaneously, a

⁴⁷ One could see this moment as carnivalesque. Jim’s laughter is a moment of carnivalesque freedom that, despite being sanctioned by authority, nevertheless represents a brief respite from rule in which traditional authority and hierarchies are temporarily suspended and opened to ridicule and, perhaps, to reform.

feat which Ridge puts down to there being in fact more than one “Joaquin” in the gang. These efforts go on in Murieta’s absence—and, the novel’s ending suggests, for some time after his death—and contribute to the welfare of the whole.

Moreover, Murieta’s reappearance on the scene does not refocus the episode of Jim’s laughter on its presumptive hero but sets off a series of events that further demonstrates a decentralized, communal ethos. After his raid, Mountain Jim provides the “naked and defenceless” group with clothing, horses, and weapons and “in an instant,” Ridge writes, Murieta is “transformed into a powerful and dreaded outlaw; and this by the efficiency of that combination which his own daring genius had set on foot and successfully maintained” (41-42). This picture of Murieta’s operations indicates an important foundational ethos of communal care and mutual aid: an ethos, I will argue below, is grounded in Cherokee ethics. Having seemingly recovered from his humiliation and dispatched some men to organize further “outfits” in the surrounding area, Murieta and Mountain Jim go out to recover what they assume is the body of their partner (and Murieta’s brother-in-law), Reyes, whom they had previously left for dead. However, they discover Reyes “not only alive, but able to sit up. His faithful mistress had supplied him with the only food she could obtain...a sweet-smelling root which grows in great abundance all over that region...and also some red berries which grew on the bushes around her” (42). The roots that Carmelita used to sustain Reyes recall the foraging practices of the so-called “digger” Indians and the acorns and angle worms eaten by the Tejons. According to the discourse of civilization and savagery in the period (some of

which is detectable in Ridge's language) such traditional practices were derided as "savage" compared to the "civilized" cultivation of livestock and European style of farming. However, here such sustenance practices are part of an array of signs that indicate the communal ethos undergirding Murieta's confederation.

While these moments of laughter indicate the resilience of communal Cherokee values in *Joaquin Murieta*, particularly the core values of kinship, reciprocity, justice, and balance, they also point to the most important and enduring value that the Cherokees share with all Indigenous peoples: their continuous and persevering connection to their lands. Just as the "muffled Algonquin laughter" that Laura Arnold traces unsettles the Puritan land claims that undergird Mary Rowlandson's captivity narrative, so the laughter of Murieta's clan sounds again and again their resistance to the articulation of American land claim over California. After all, the originary violence that motivates the entire plot of the novel is about land, and Murieta's subsequent reign of terror is a total refusal to acculturate to American values of capital and private property.⁴⁸ Laughter's reterritorialization of Murieta's clan from a hierarchy of bandits to a confederacy of equals sharing food and spoils simultaneously deterritorializes California as an American

⁴⁸ In this context, it is interesting to note that at several points in the novel, Murieta and his confederates hide out on land belonging to the ranchos, old Californian families whose land claims predated American rule in the state. Around the time of the novel, the ranchos were embroiled in legal disputes with the U.S. government over the legitimacy of their land claims. American settlers, clamoring for land in California, often sought to settle on land belonging to the ranchos, disrupting the grazing grounds of the ranchos' horses and herds of cattle. In his newspaper editorials for the *Sacramento Bee*, Ridge sided with the Americans in the "settlerism" question,

“conquest,” imagining a more egalitarian, perhaps more totally and radically free, land in its stead.

Indigenizing Whiteness in Old Southwestern Humor

Through the example of George Washington Harris’s *Sut Lovingood* story “Razor-Grinder in a Thunderstorm,” we can see how the nostalgic and violent Southern identity envisioned in this instance of Old Southwestern Humor engages narratives of Removal and appropriates Cherokee signifiers of resistance. As pointed out in this chapter’s introduction, Gina Caison describes how, historically, narratives of Southern regional identity have been bound up with foundational myths of loss as well as structures of feeling that naturalize white settlers’ belonging to the land. As the stories white Southerners told each other justified a collective sense of attachment to the land that became “the South,” they erased the Native history in the region and ignored contemporary Indigenous resistance to the settlers’ ongoing land theft. As part of this erasure, settler narratives of Southern belonging appropriate the signifiers of historical Native resistance in order to strengthen white Americans’ sense of their own romantic indigeneity in the land. “Razor-Grinder in a Thunderstorm” demonstrates this complex process and shows the role that the violent humor played in Old Southwest Humor’s formulation of Southern identity.

Considered by many critics to be exemplary of Old Southwest Humor, the *Sut Lovingood* tales present conventionalized versions of the customs and dialect of rural, lower-class, white East Tennessee society through the eyes of the irascible trickster-

narrator Sut Lovingood. Sut is a Tennessee “native,” born and raised in the landscape where his stories take place. As with many stories from the body of Old Southwest Humor, Sut’s tales are recorded and presented by George, the genteel representative of the cosmopolitan reader, who may be based on Harris himself.⁴⁹ The first Sut story, “The Snake-Bit Irishman,” was printed in the *Spirit of the Times* in 1846. Most of Harris’s other Sut stories were printed between 1854-1869 in local papers like the Nashville *Union and American*, though a few appeared in the *New York Atlas* and other papers outside of the South.⁵⁰ “Razor-Grinder in a Thunderstorm” appears to have been first published in Harris’s 1867 book-length collection of original and reprinted Sut stories, *Sut Lovingood: Yarns Spun by a “Nat’ral Born Durn’d Fool,”* hereafter called *Yarns*.

Like most of Harris’s yarns, “Razor-Grinder” is short and its plot is easily summarized. Sut encounters George, the narrator, shaving in “a scrap ove lookin-glass” and, noticing the razor’s dullness, suggests to George that “Bake Boyd’s man” would’ve been able to sharpen it for him (59). Boyd’s man was a “mighty mean Yankee rayshure [razor] grinder” who, years before, had turned up in Knoxville and set up shop with his

⁴⁹ There is a tension in George’s framing of Sut’s storytelling. Influentially, in *Mark Twain and Southwestern Humor* (1959) Kenneth Lynn called the tales’ conventional narrative frame the “*cordon sanitaire*,” pointing to the distancing in the narrative structure in which the narrator served to hold the lower-class subject at arm’s length thereby protecting the polite reader from contamination and offense. More recent critics of Old Southwest Humor, such as Ed Piaciento and James Justus discredit Lynn’s reading of the genre’s genteel conservatism. See, for instance, *Southern Frontier Humor: New Approaches*, edited by Ed Piaciento, University Press of Mississippi, 2013.

⁵⁰ For a comprehensive bibliography of Harris’s story’s first appearances as well as some subsequent reprintings, see M. Thomas Inge, “A Bibliography of George Washington Harris,” in *Sut Lovingood’s Nat’ral Born Yarnspinner: Essays on George Washington Harris*, University of Alabama Press, 1996, pp. 315-22.

grinding “mersheen” (59).⁵¹ Sut disdainfully recalls that the unpalatable Yankee “thort that hissef an’ [his] mercheen cummanded the respeck an’ submishun ove the poperlashun, whatever he went” (59). Boyd, who “wer pow’fully pursessed wif the devil,” decides to humiliate the pompous razor-grinder and comes up with a plan. He convinces the Yankee that there is a profit to be made “lecturin ontu the skyance [science] ove raysure-sharpenin” (60). Driven by his stereotypical love of profits, the Yankee is convinced and Boyd advertises the lecture around Knoxville. As a local crowd gathers to witness what Boyd has planned, the Yankee employs Boyd to sit behind him, hidden from the audience, to feed him lines from his prepared lecture notes in case the “lecterin-mersheen” forgets his material (61). Sure enough, halfway through the lecture, the razor-grinder does forget his lines. He appeals to Boyd, who begins to recite the next lines in a whisper. The lecturer urges him to speak “louder and plainer,” at which point Boyd, “instid ove duin better, got wus—sot intu readin in sum furrin tung, sorter like Cherokee, wif a sprinkle ove Irish” (61). Stymied, the razor-grinder stalls in his lecture until, at a signal from Boyd, accomplices placed outside the church set off a large brass cannon “full tu the muzzle wif powder an’ red clay” (61). At the same time, Joe Jackson, who is hidden in the ceiling over the Yankee’s head, drenches the stunned lecturer with “a half barril full ove wartur” polluted from the carcass of “a misfortinant dead sow”

⁵¹ Razor-grinding was one of the services offered by itinerant Yankee peddlers throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. As Harris’s story suggests, these peddlers carried with them machines designed to sharpen razor blades. See J. R. Dolan, *The Yankee Peddlers of Early America*, Clarkson N. Potter, Inc., 1964, especially p. 102, where Dolan quotes a notice posted on a tavern in New York: “No Razor grinders or Tinkers taken in.”

(61). Startled by the sudden cacophony and doused in foul muck, the Yankee stoically suspends his lecture “owin tu the inclumency ove the nite” and, Sut relates, is never seen in town again (62). Once Sut finishes his yarn, “a fat-headed young man” asks whether “anybody laughed at the unfortunate man that night Mr. Lovingood?” (62). As he stalks off, Sut mutters with “supreme contempt,” “Yu mus’ be a dam fool” (62).

Boyd’s humiliation and violent expulsion of the Yankee peddler from his East Tennessee community structures “Razor-Grinder in a Thunderstorm’s” sense of exclusive Southern identity. The story’s stock confrontation between the “native” Southerner and the opportunistic Northern outsider rehearses common cultural scripts that, after 1865, assisted in the solidification of a resistant Southern regional identity. Harris’s razor-grinder collapses the antebellum figure of the Yankee peddler and the Reconstruction-era carpetbagger. The carpetbagger emerged in the postwar Southern press as a symbol of “white southerners’ outrage at radical government” and came to represent the former Confederacy’s resistance to what they perceived to be illegitimate Reconstruction state governments (Tunnell 791). Like the carpetbaggers vilified throughout the postwar South, Harris’s razor-grinder is seen by Boyd and Sut as an unwelcome and exploitative force of change infiltrating the South from without. Sut justifies the razor-grinder’s expulsion from the region specifically on account of the Yankee’s sense of superiority, that he “thort that hisself an’ mercheen commanded the respeck an’ submishun ove the popularshun” (Harris 59). The image of the South’s “submission” to the North in the Civil War was a powerful negative image in postwar Southern memory and discrediting

it became a central element of the Lost Cause myth. Expelling the razor-grinder, then, stands a radical act of Southern self-definition, a rejection of the notion that the region had ever or *would* ever bow to Yankee culture.

Boyd's and Sut's violent humor can thus also be understood as part of the story's anti-Reconstruction politics. "Razor-Grinder" fits into the pattern of exclusionary and defensive violence that Andrew Silver claims separates Harris's postwar Sut stories from his antebellum sketches. According to Silver, many of the Sut Lovingood stories written after 1865 "begin with a threat to Sut's community and end with Sut and other accomplices humiliating and exiling that threat and preserving a newly purified community in the process" (53). Sut's retelling of Boyd's practical joke transforms the Yankee razor-grinder's humiliation into comedy, bolstering his Southern audience's sense of superiority at the expense of the expelled Northerner. Thus, humor becomes the means of regional purification in the story.

Furthermore, allusions in the story to Cherokee culture link the Southerners' resistance to Yankee exploitation to a history of Native resistance to U.S. colonialism in the South that the story uses to legitimize the Southerners' cause. The most obvious instance of this is when Boyd speaks a language "sorter like Cherokee" to interrupt the Yankee's lecture. The story uses the Cherokee language as a metaphor for abstruse gibberish that derails the Yankee's metaphysical discourse. However, in order for Boyd's tactic to remain intelligible to the reader, the Cherokee language cannot be emptied of meaning but must remain legible as a sign of resistance. In the debates surrounding

Removal, advocates for the Cherokee Nation pointed to the Cherokees' widespread adoption of the syllabary, the written form of the Cherokee language developed by Sequoyah in the 1820s, as evidence of the Nation's sovereignty. Somewhat problematically, such arguments usually used the Cherokees' literacy as evidence of the people's ability to "improve" themselves according to Western standards. As Elias Boudinot argues in the *Cherokee Phoenix*, the syllabary is a sign of "progress" among the Cherokee and also a sign of the Nation's social and cultural equality with the U.S.: when Thomas Jefferson "advised us to make laws and government—we made them, on the model of the American republic. He advised us to have school-houses and churches—we have them all: we have an alphabet of our own invented within a few years past by an ingenious native (George Guess)—we have learned to read and write... You gave us good advice—we followed it" ("Cherokee Meeting in New Haven," *Cherokee Phoenix*, March 24, 1832). While he appears to comply with the American civilization scheme, Boudinot subtly makes the Cherokees' achievements in literacy support an argument for Cherokee land claims. "Mr. Jefferson," he writes, "told [the Cherokees] how much their condition would be improved by agriculture and the arts of civilization—how much more happily they would be—how much more attached to the soil of their fathers—how much more unwilling they would be to leave it—how much more they would rejoice to repose their bones in its bosom, and transmit it to their children" ("Cherokee Meeting"). Thus did Cherokee statesmen like Boudinot and John Ridge point to Cherokee cultural elements like the syllabary to resist the oppression of foreign powers like the state of Georgia,

whose justifications for the expulsion of the Cherokee from their homelands rested partly on the assertion of Indigenous cultural inferiority. Boyd's weaponization of "the infunel Cherokee" language reveals how the story draws a genealogy back from the Tennessee "natives" to the Native nations (Harris 61). "Razor-Grinder" thus invests Sut's and Boyd's defensive Southern identity with a stolen sense of sovereignty located in its use of the Cherokee language.

While Boyd's use of the Cherokee language as a method of resistance proclaims a sense of regional exceptionalism, the nostalgia of this and other Sut stories further implies a sense of white indigeneity in the land that strengthens the story's vision of Southern sovereignty. In another Sut story, "Eaves-Dropping a Lodge of Free-Masons," included after "Razor-Grinder" in *Yarns*, the narrator George begins to wax nostalgic about the "Knoxville [of] thirty-five years ago" (101). George conjures up picturesque descriptions of local sites, landmarks, and persons, only to then banish them to the past. In one such telling instance, the narrator describes a phantasmal procession of figures attached to the settlement of East Tennessee and his sense of them is limned with retrospective awe:

But even now, and here in the thickening twilight, I see gliding past in misty ranks, the forms of [Andrew] Jackson, Hu Lawson White, the Williamses, the Dunlaps, Haywood, Peck, Powell, McKinny, Pleasant Miller, the Andersons, Carrick White and Mynott Scott. In my boyish eyes they seemed giants, and manhood's more discriminating gaze sees them undiminished. The quiet grave has

long ago claimed the last of the band, but memory preserves their fame, and deeds of well-doing. (101)

Here, George constructs a genealogy that naturalizes white, American land claim in the South through the associations of kinship. Through the nostalgic lens of his “boyish eyes,” Southern history becomes atemporal, a mythic time of “giants” that seems to begin with Andrew Jackson. Importantly, the patriarchs of this lineage: Jackson, Hugh Lawson White, John Williams, Pleasant Miller, are all figures who played active roles in the dispossession of Native nations in the South. Hugh Lawson White served as a U.S. Senator from Tennessee (1825-1840) and was chairman of the Committee on Indian Affairs during the passage of the Indian Removal Act of 1830.⁵² John W. Williams and Pleasant Miller, both of whom represented Tennessee in the federal legislature, participated in the United States’s military activities against the Seminoles and Muscogees in 1812-14.⁵³ In its simultaneous evocation and erasure of the history of Removal, George’s nostalgic vision dissociates the historical settlement of East Tennessee from the violent dispossession of its Native inhabitants and naturalizes white land claim in the South.

⁵² White’s father, James White, was an important figure in territorial politics in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In 1786, he founded White’s Fort, the settlement which became the City of Knoxville. A number of buildings in modern-day Knoxville, including buildings owned by the University of Tennessee, are named in honor of White or his relatives, such as the McClungs.

⁵³ John W. Williams served in the U.S. Senate from 1815 to 1823. Pleasant Miller served in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1809-1811 and in Tennessee’s state House of Representatives from 1811-12 and 1817-1823.

As the passage continues, a narrative of Southern loss coalesces with narratives of Removal, solidifying the defiant white Southern identity in *Yarns*. George concludes his reminiscences: “The march of improvement first, then the march and crash of armies, have nearly swept away those, to me, almost sacred places. But they and those who ‘were boys then,’ still have a place in memory that time nor distance can take, nor the pressing, crowding, bleeding events of now dim...” (102). Here Sut interrupts him, taking over the rest of “Eaves-Dropping.” It is significant that the historical ruptures that threaten to separate George and those of his generation from the ahistorical South of their boyhood, “The march of improvement first, then the march and crash of armies,” echo protests from John Ross and other representatives of the Cherokee Nation about the process of Removal. In “The Memorial and Protest of the Cherokee Nation,” delivered to Congress in 1836 to protest of the signing of the Treaty of New Echota, Principle Chief of the Cherokee Nation John Ross recounts a similar history:

The Cherokees were happy and prosperous under a scrupulous observance of treaty stipulations by the government of the United States, and ...made rapid advances in civilization, morals, and in the arts and sciences. Little did they anticipate...they were to be despoiled by their guardian, to become strangers and wanderers in the land of their fathers, forced to return to the savage life, and to seek a new home in the wilds of the far west, and that without their consent...

(Ross 17)

George's nostalgia maps the history of Removal onto his sense of Southern identity. He appropriates the Cherokees' defiance to amplify the sense of Knoxville's local resistance to extraregional influences and the continuity of a unique local culture. Ironically, in appropriating these Native signifiers, George assumes the total success of Removal and does not mention Native peoples' ongoing resistance to colonialism in the South far beyond the Removal "period."

Likewise, Boyd's Cherokee speech can be understood as part of "Razor-Grinder's" desire to recover an idealized Southern past, then we can see how that story erases the Native agent from the history of the region in order to "indigenize" Sut and his fellow white Southerners as the true "natives" of the land. "Razor-Grinder" is a story of removal. However, Boyd's expulsion of the Yankee from the land is a defensive purging, presented very differently here than the greed that motivated the whites' theft of the southeast nations' lands. In their defensive posture and sense of loss, Harris's Southerners imagine themselves as a people whose homelands and way of life are threatened by encroaching outsiders who seek to remake the South in their image. In effect, they cast themselves as Cherokees in a restaging of the drama of Removal. In so doing, they transform the Cherokees into symbols of romantic pathos and righteousness, symbols which the Southerners can affiliate with their own fight without having to confront the actual trauma of dispossession and removal in the South.

As Gina Caison reminds us, we "should remain attuned to the significant differences between the use of the past to commit colonial violence and the retelling of

stories to survive” (159). Comparing *Joaquin Murieta* to Sut Lovingood not only highlights the stakes of Caison’s distinction, it also helps us to focus on the ideological ends of humor in Ridge’s and Harris’s work. “Razor-Grinder in a Thunderstorm” engages with histories of Native resistance to colonialism, embedded in Boyd’s appropriation of the Cherokee language, in order to give shape and coherence to a sense of defiant, postwar Southern identity. *Joaquin Murieta* upsets this settler colonial temporality by weaving Cherokee values into his resistance narrative, insisting on the failure of Removal to destroy Cherokee culture and inscribe American ownership on the land.

Attention to humor in both texts points to how Ridge encodes within *Joaquin Murieta* Cherokee resistance to colonialism that speaks back to and against the efforts of the Old Southwest Humorists to use laughter to impose a structure of settler colonial domination and a sense of white indigeneity on stolen Native land. *Joaquin Murieta* collapses the geographic and temporal distance between the Old Southwest and the new southwest of California, restaging Cherokee resistance to land theft and Removal and speaking directly against regionalist writers in and beyond the U.S. South whose red state fantasies sought to erase Indigenous history or laugh it away. *Joaquin Murieta* laughs back.

CHAPTER 3

WINNEMUCCA HOPKINS AND TWAIN ON TOUR:

BODIES, COMEDY, AND THE (RE)MAPPING OF NATIVE SPACE

In late-nineteenth-century lecture tours, Sarah Winnemucca Hopkins (Northern Paiute) and Mark Twain both demonstrated the rhetorical power of humor. As a young, single woman, Sarah Winnemucca performed on the stages of American mining settlements with her father, staging tableaux vivants and translating her father's speeches for white audiences. In 1879 and then again in 1883 as a married woman, Winnemucca Hopkins took to lecturing as a way to raise awareness about the Northern Paiutes' suffering under the oppression of corrupt agents of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and the injustice with which her people were treated following the 1878 Bannock War. Winnemucca Hopkins lectured in San Francisco and Carson City before making her way east and touring the major cities of the east coast, where she spoke to crowds associated with various reform movements. Even as she addressed these somber subjects, Hopkins understood the power of humor to break through whites' expectations of Native speechmaking and to amplify her message.

Contemporary with Winnemucca Hopkins, Mark Twain used lecturing to make a living and promote himself as America's preeminent humorist. Primarily known today for his novels such as *Huckleberry Finn* (1884), *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* (1889), and *Pudd'nhead Wilson* (1893) lecturing was Twain's "alternative career" (Lorch, *Trouble* ix). He delivered hundreds of lectures across the United States and

England between 1866 and 1891. While Winnemucca Hopkins's style hewed closer to the majority of nineteenth-century orators who sought to morally instruct their audiences, Twain delivered "humorous lectures" in the style of fellow western stage humorists Josh Billings, Petroleum V. Nasby, Dan De Quille, and Artemus Ward. There was seldom a moral lesson to his lectures. Rather, he sought to entertain his audiences, to make money, and to boost sales of his forthcoming books. Quoting a review of a Twain lecture printed in a Buffalo, New York, newspaper, scholar Fred Lorch writes that Twain's lectures were "deliberately designed, cold-blooded nonsense...If it made you laugh it was a success. And if some, as they expressed it, were 'mad at themselves for laughing at such nonsense,' the lecture was all the greater success" ("Sandwich Islands" 319).

Despite the differences in the aims of their humor, Winnemucca Hopkins's and Twain's methods for provoking their audiences' laughter were remarkably similar. Both practiced an embodied form of physical comedy that elevated and, reportedly, outshone their more verbally-focused sarcastic or witty jokes. Twain called this dimension of his humor his "manner" and deemed it all-important. According to contemporary newspaper reports, on stage he spoke slowly with an affected drawl that emphasized his Missouri upbringing and training among the "sagebrush humorists" of the American West. He also made great use of the pause, "that impressive, eloquent, and geometrically progressive silence which often accomplished far more than the most felicitous combination of words" (Lorch, *Trouble* 156). Winnemucca Hopkins likewise used her body and voice to enhance her lectures. For instance, she embellished her account of Malheur Reservation

Agent William Rinehart's perfidy with a pantomime of Rinehart kneeling down with one hand lifted in prayer and the other groping around to pick up loose change. Since detailing Rinehart's corruption was a hallmark of her act whenever she spoke, it is likely that Winnemucca Hopkins performed this "bit of mischievous sarcasm" before many audiences (qtd. in Carpenter and Sorisio 97). Reporting on one of her lectures in 1879, the *San Francisco Chronicle* highlighted the joke and noted that it "brought the house down" (97). Further, Winnemucca Hopkins used her body as an expressive tool for more than humor. Many newspaper reporters noted her "gracefulness and [the] dramatic effect of her gestures," suggesting that she used her body to add pathos to her lectures' sentimental moments (108).

This chapter examines humorous moments from Winnemucca Hopkins's lectures that serve to critique and resist containment in its various guises. The humor I examine spans the breadth of her brief lecturing career, 1879-1884, and while not exhaustive, provide examples of how she analyzed her own and others' bodies as sites of critical humorous intervention. What, we might ask, was at stake for both of these people in staging their bodies in this way? Specifically, Winnemucca Hopkins joked about bodies in order to untangle the morass of colonial systems of containment and to engage her non-Native audiences in imagining new futures for Northern Paiutes. Cari M. Carpenter describes the double-edged nature of Winnemucca Hopkins's physical comedy, explaining that it "surprised Winnemucca's audience,"⁵⁴ allowing her to mount a forceful

⁵⁴ Most scholars and biographers of Winnemucca Hopkins refer to her by the last name "Winnemucca." However, I have chosen to refer to her by the last name "Winnemucca Hopkins" because that is the name

critique. Yet this also highlighted the Native woman's body, the very site that was the target of racialized and sexualized violence in the nineteenth century" (Carpenter, "Choking" 20). Carpenter's point is well taken. As Stephanie Nohelani Teves points out, in settler colonial ideology, "violence against the land is figured as normative and it is conjoined with images of violence against women's bodies," especially the bodies of Indigenous women (59).

Winnemucca Hopkins was acutely aware of her body's importance as a site of colonial domination. She came of age in a time when her people's homelands were being reinscribed as territories by U.S. officials. The laws of the newly established "Nevada Territory" that encompassed Kooyooee Panunadu (Pyramid Lake) directly legislated the reproduction of Native women by distinguishing whites from "Indians" based on blood quantum.⁵⁵ Such definitions, though arbitrary, had drastic consequences for all those

that she identified with during the period 1879-1884 that I am discussing. "Sarah Winnemucca" was born Thocmetony (or "Shell Flower") around 1844. It is unclear where the name "Winnemucca" came from, but it is likely an Anglicization of a Northern Paiute name or word and attributed to Thocmetony's father and grandfather by non-Native settlers. Similarly, Thocmetony likely became "Sarah" when she began to work for and live with non-Native families in settlements like Carson City. When she later worked as an interpreter for various non-Native officials, they all called her Sarah. After she married Army officer Lewis H. Winnemucca Hopkins in 1881, Sarah adopted his last name. In 1833 she published her only book, *Life Among the Piutes, Their Wrongs and Claims* under the name Sarah Winnemucca Hopkins. Similarly, Honorée Fanonne Jeffers in her biography of the poet Phillis Wheatley Peters, *The Age of Phillis* (2020) retains the name the poet adopted after her marriage to John Peters, in order to emphasize Wheatley Peters's agency rather than acknowledging only the name given to her by her enslavers. Likewise, my choice to refer to Sarah Winnemucca Hopkins by the name she chose and identified with as an adult points to her lived experiences and agency, and should not be understood to define her as an "assimilated" or "inauthentic" Native woman.

⁵⁵ Kooyooee Panunadu means "Cui-ui Standing Water" and refers to the lake in what is now western Nevada that was the main lands of the Kuyuidika band of the Northern Paiutes. Paiute bands were loose, independently-governed groups that were identified by important food staples in their seasonal subsistence practices. The Kuyuidika were so named for their reliance on the Cui-ui, a kind of sucker fish endemic to Kooyooee Panunadu. The Kuyuidika were adept fishermen and constructed sophisticated weirs to catch the Cui-ui during their summer mating seasons. Non-Natives called Kooyooee Panunadu "Pyramid Lake" after

racialized under the law. Furthermore, Winnemucca Hopkins witnessed firsthand settlers' sexual violence against Native women. In her lectures and her book *Life Among the Piutes* that grew out of them, Winnemucca Hopkins retells the origins of the so-called "Paiute War" or Pyramid Lake War of 1860,⁵⁶ which she locates in the abduction and captivity of two young Paiute girls by a group of white settlers at Williams Station. The men kept the girls bound and gagged on mattresses in a hidden cellar underneath the barn on their property. According to Winnemucca Hopkins, the "war" began after a group of Paiute men murdered the men at Williams Station and rescued the girls. White citizens of the surrounding settlements were alarmed at the seemingly unprovoked outbreak of Native violence and quickly organized volunteer militias to retaliate. While western newspapers avidly followed the violence and reported the death toll, no American outlet mentioned the sexual violence that precipitated everything until Winnemucca Hopkins began telling her version of events onstage in 1879. Such rewriting of local settler histories is one way in which her lectures and writing resisted colonial domination.

Using her body as an instrument to correct the historical record was a potent form of protest, especially when her protest took the form of critical humor. Humor theorist Nicholas Holm defines critical humor as "humour as a form of critique"; it is supposed to wield some political power or perform some political work (31-2). As Carpenter and

the lake's iconic rock formations. Today it is the home of the Kooyooee Tukadu, the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe.

⁵⁶ There does not seem to be a consensus as to the name of this conflict. From what I can tell, more recent (though not tribal) materials tend to refer to it as the Pyramid Lake War and older books and articles call it the Paiute War. However, this is not universal. I have yet to find how the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe names this period of history. Throughout this chapter I will refer to it as the Pyramid Lake War.

Carolyn Sorisio point out in their introduction to *The Newspaper Warrior: Sarah Winnemucca Hopkins's Campaign for American Indian Rights, 1864-1891* (2015), William Rinehart, the appointed agent for the Malheur Reservation, was the most frequent target of Winnemucca Hopkins's critical humor. More precisely, however, Winnemucca Hopkins's humor transcends the individual example of Rinehart to aim at what Mishuana Goeman (Tonawanda Band of Seneca) calls "logics of containment" ("Land as Life" 72). Goeman quotes Kanaka Maoli scholar Noelani Goodyear-Ka'ōpua who explains that "containment can manifest in geographic forms as reservations or small school spaces, in political forms as legal recognition frameworks that seek to subsume sovereignty within the settler state's domestic laws, and in ideological forms . . . that [allow] a sprinkling of indigenous history and culture only to maintain its marginality" (qtd. in Goeman, "Land as Life" 72). Beyond referring only to the literal confinement of Indigenous peoples upon reservations (often without regard for bands' seasonal subsistence patterns, which required them to access different areas at different times of the year) the logics of containment permeate and inform all efforts of settler society to define, control, assimilate, and exterminate Indigenous populations.

Winnemucca Hopkins's stated political goals for her lectures were to secure the Northern Paiutes' right to leave the Yakama Reservation on which they were confined in 1879 and to restore the Malheur Reservation, which had been discontinued and opened to settlement by executive order in 1882, for the Northern Paiutes. These goals were controversial in her time and remain so today. Winnemucca Hopkins repeatedly

contended that the Northern Paiutes “should be allowed to go on a good Reservation, they should be taught to build and farm, and educated without the interference of an agent, they could make their own living, and would be glad to do so” (qtd. in Carpenter and Sorisio 93-4). Her language invokes the tropes of the BIA’s and federal government’s program of acculturation and imagines the Northern Paiutes as happy and productive proto-citizens. However, her claims were not evidence of her endorsement of colonial goals but should rather be viewed as part of a strategy that Goeman calls “(re)mapping” Native spaces (*Mark My Words* 3).

In Goeman’s definition, (re)mapping is a form of “spatial intervention” through “metaphoric and material capacities of map making” that seeks to unsettle “imperial and colonial geographies” (3). (Re)mapping is a disruptive and critical practice of “spatial decolonization” in which Native women writers use Native epistemologies to supplant imposed colonial geographies and imagine alternative futures for their communities (4). Goeman does not include Winnemucca Hopkins among the Native women writers she studies, but I argue that her concept of (re)mapping allows us to see how Winnemucca Hopkins’s call for “a good Reservation...without the interference of an agent” attempts to reimagine the colonial vision of the reservation as an abject space of policing, management, and containment as a space for her people to begin to build back community amid the ravages of settler colonialism.

Thus focused on imagining alternative futures, I see Winnemucca Hopkins’s critical humor as an example of what Nicholas Holm calls “constructive resistance” (42).

In his analysis of the political potential of critical humor, Holm calls on students of humor to reevaluate common assumptions about the critical power of humor through “an orientation” in our study of humor “from critique to constructive resistance” (42). Citing sociologists and political theorists, Holm defines critique as a destructive, revelatory act, that “pokes holes” in official dogma with the goal of deconstructing oppressive systems. But while critique has relevance in totalitarian regimes, Holm argues that neoliberal systems of government encourage and thrive on critique, absorbing critique’s shock to its systems. If our notions of humor’s critical power are to retain any relevance, Holm says, we must attend to critique’s capacity to inspire new alternatives and not simply dismantle present hegemonies. “Conceived in this manner,” he concludes, “we would not be looking to humour to unsettle, rattle and problematise the existing arrangements of the world, but as one affective and accessible way by which alternatives might be raised in resistance” (42). I see Holm’s constructive resistance as resonant with Goeman’s concept of (re)mapping; both are radical imaginative practices that transcend and transform colonial constructs to collaboratively imagine liberatory scenarios.

When reporters recorded Winnemucca Hopkins’s bodily communication in more detail, as they tended to do with her physical comedy, they point to a dimension of her critique of spatial colonization that recognized Native women’s bodies as a common site of colonial control. Colonial geographic regimes establish reservations in order to police Native populations’ movement and transform space into property based on concepts intimately tied to possessive individuality and the ability of the body to perform labor.

Colonial law exercises particular control over Native women's bodies, since movement in and through these spaces, as well as access to food, water, and material goods within and without them, are further governed by laws that attempted to define Indigeneity by policing Native reproduction. As we shall see, Hopkins's physical comedy constructively resists colonial biopower by mocking white, imperial bodies. The terms of her mockery are highly contextual, changing as Winnemucca Hopkins moves through regions and addresses different audiences at different times. However, I understand Winnemucca Hopkins's physical comedy in all its expressive modes as (re)mapping various colonial spatial regimes as reclaimed Native space, the base of Paiute community, culture, and futurity.

As in previous chapters, I set my reading of Native humor against the example of a contemporary non-Native humorist: here, Sarah Winnemucca Hopkins and Mark Twain, intimately linked by shared geographies. The professional personas for which they gained public recognition were shaped by their experiences of the colonial spatial regimes in the West. In what follows, I contemplate their paired trajectories as they cross and re-cross the United States, lecturing in the same cities—sometimes only miles apart—to vastly different ends. While Winnemucca Hopkins used physical comedy to (re)map colonial spaces such as the reservation as Native space, Twain's humorous lectures erase Native presence from the landscapes he depicts, making Native space ideologically available for the imaginative reconstruction of postbellum American national identity. I begin below with a brief section outlining their shared geographies,

beginning with Twain's arrival in Northern Paiute homelands in 1864 to their lecture tours in the 1870's. Next, I analyze the role of physical comedy in Winnemucca Hopkins's stage performances between 1864 and 1879. Here I argue that Winnemucca Hopkins frequently used her body as an eloquent tool of both critique and creative resistance, imagining alternative futures for her people through physical comedy. Finally, I analyze Mark Twain's own habitual focus on bodies as a source of humor as well as national identity. I examine two of Twain's major lectures, his "Sandwich Islands" lecture (1866-68) and "Roughing It" lecture (1871-72), to argue that Twain erases Native Hawaiian and Indigenous North American bodies from the landscapes he presents so that the white bodies of his imperial, predominantly male audiences might gain coherence and meaning within ideologically "free" space. Thus, as Twain's humor maps colonial geographies of dominance onto Native lands of the West and the Pacific, Winnemucca Hopkins's humor (re)maps colonized space, creatively redefining Native space to imagine new futures for her people.

Shared Geographies

Winnemucca Hopkins was born Thocmetony ("Shell Flower") to her mother Tuboitony and her father, whose name may have been Wobitsawahkah or Mubetawaka, (Ontko 399) but whom non-Natives called "Chief Winnemucca," the headman of the Kuyuidika, a band of the Northern Paiutes whose homelands are based around Kooyooee

Panunadu (Pyramid Lake).⁵⁷ As mentioned above, Thocmetony's formative childhood years were marked by violent Native-white encounters. In the first chapter of *Life Among the Piutes*, she recalls "fearful news coming from the different tribes, that the people whom they called their white brothers were killing everybody that came in their way, and all the Indian tribes had gone into the mountains to save their lives" (Winnemucca Hopkins 11). One of the emigrants infiltrating Northern Paiute lands was Samuel L. Clemens, a riverboat pilot from Missouri, who traveled west in 1861 with his brother, Orion, the newly-appointed Secretary of the Nevada Territory. As his brother's confidante, the younger Clemens was intimately situated amid the federal government's efforts to reshape Native space into public domain land open to settlement. Two years later, in 1863, the personality Mark Twain was born in the pages of the *Territorial Enterprise*, a small newspaper published in the mining settlement of Virginia City, just over sixty miles south of Kooyooee Panunadu. This dissertation is the first project to draw attention to these shared geographies.

Chief Winnemucca and his daughter were local celebrities in Mark Twain's Nevada. Although Twain never mentioned them in his published writing or correspondence, his contemporaries did. The *Territorial Enterprise's* editor Rollin

⁵⁷ Andrew Gale Ontko relates that the name Winnemucca, which is not a Numic word (Numic being the language group inclusive of the Paiutes, Shoshones, Snakes, and other tribes) derives from the meeting between Winnemucca Hopkins's paternal grandfather and European traders in Canada in 1807. According to Ontko, Winnemucca Hopkins's grandfather met the traders wearing only one moccasin and the traders jokingly dubbed him "Wuna Mucca," meaning "One Moccasin." The young man apparently adopted the name. By the 1860's he was known among the white settlers of the Great Basin as "Old Winnemucca" and his son, Winnemucca Hopkins's father, as Chief Winnemucca. It was evidently the white media who mistakenly identified the name as a surname and thus young Sarah's last name (Ontko 72 n62).

Daggett was of white and Haudenosaunee heritage and, perhaps because of this connection to Native communities, his paper frequently published news and accounts of the Paiutes (Driscoll 60). In 1876, Twain's friend and fellow *Territorial Enterprise* contributor Dan de Quille remembered the early social scene on "the Comstock" where the dearth of white women in the mining communities made it "necessary, in order to 'make up the set,' to take in Miss Sarah Winnemucca, the 'Paiute Princess' (daughter of Winnemucca, chief of all the Piutes)" (11). De Quille's book, *The Big Bonanza: An Authentic Account of the Discovery, History, and Working of the World-Renowned Comstock Lode of Nevada* (1876), was published by Twain's publisher Charles Warner in Hartford, Connecticut, when the Clemenses lived there in the neighborhood of Nook Farm. Moreover, Twain himself was well aware of the Native presence in the Nevada Territory. In 1861, he and Orion stayed in the home of the widow Margaret Ormsby, whose husband Major Ormsby was killed in the Pyramid Lake War the year before (Driscoll 61). Thocmetony had lived and worked in the same house almost a decade earlier. It was there she learned the English language and perhaps where she was given the name Sarah (Canfield 11). Besides hearing stories of conflicts with the Paiutes from Mrs. Ormsby, maybe Mark also heard of the young Native girl whom she had once taught to read.

By the time young Sarah accompanied her father on her earliest stage appearances in Virginia City in 1864, Twain had already moved to San Francisco where he took up a staff position on a local paper called the *Morning Call* (Benson 114). However, even here

he revolved in Sarah's orbit; the *Call*'s offices were located in San Francisco's "Newspaper Row," only a few blocks away from the Metropolitan Theater where the "Winnemucca troupe" performed in the fall of 1864. There is no extant mention of the performance in the *Call*, but its rival newspaper, the *Daily Alta California* published detailed accounts of it in which they paid special attention to the Native girl they called "Shell Flower," daughter of the chief (qtd. in Carpenter and Sorisio 35). In 1866, Twain left San Francisco for a five-month sojourn in Hawaii on behalf of another California newspaper, the *Sacramento Union*. His letters to the *Union* about people and island scenes inspired his lauded "Sandwich Islands lecture" upon his return to the United States in 1866. In October and November of 1866, Twain delivered his lecture a little more than a dozen times in the music halls and theatres of San Francisco, Virginia City, and Carson City on stages that had four years before hosted lectures and performances by young Sarah and her family. In the spring of 1867, Twain took his show on the road to perform in Midwestern and Eastern cities. He continued to deliver the "Sandwich Islands lecture" sporadically for the rest of his life, sometimes under the provocative and offensive title "Our Fellow Savages of the Sandwich Islands."⁵⁸

Twain organized many more tours and delivered many other lectures after 1867, but his experiences in the west continued to inform whatever subjects he pursued. In the

⁵⁸ Stephen Railton's website *Mark Twain and His Times*, hosted by the University of Virginia, provides detailed information about all of Twain's lecture tours, including interactive maps, tour schedules, and composite texts of Twain's spoken performances. For more, see "The Trouble Begins at 8:00," the section of Railton's website devoted to Twain's lecturing career: <https://twain.lib.virginia.edu/onstage/lectures.html>. [[What an amazing resource; I didn't know about this!]]

fall of 1871, he toured a new lecture based on readings of his forthcoming book *Roughing It* (1872) which humorously recounted Twain's adventures among the Comstock miners. Between the spring of 1872 and the fall of 1884, Twain did not tour but was engaged for numerous dinner speeches and occasional lectures. He performed the "Sandwich Islands" and "Roughing It" lectures at least 7 and 4 more times, respectively, during this time (Fatout, *Speaking* 649-55).

Meanwhile, the 1870s was a tumultuous decade for the Northern Paiutes. In 1875, Winnemucca Hopkins (who was Sarah Winnemucca Bartlett at the time) worked as an interpreter for Samuel Parrish, the newly appointed BIA agent at the Malheur Reservation in eastern Oregon, which President Ulysses S. Grant had established by executive order in 1872.⁵⁹ In 1876, Parrish and his family were replaced as agents by William Rinehart and within three years most, if not all, of the Paiutes who had come to live on the Malheur had left again. In 1878, members of the Bannock (Snake) tribe broke out of the Fort Hall Reservation in Idaho. The U.S. Army was ordered to quell what the government saw as Native rebellion, sparking the conflict known as the Bannock War. Controversially, Winnemucca Hopkins worked for the U.S. in the Bannock War, providing her services as interpreter and scout for General O. O. Howard. After the war, Winnemucca Hopkins aided Howard in tracking down "small parties of hostiles"—

⁵⁹ Sarah married three times, all to white military men: first to Edward Bartlett, 1872-1876; Joseph Satewaller, whom Sarah apparently married in 1876 according to Oregon marriage records; and Lewis Winnemucca Hopkins, in 1881. Winnemucca Hopkins's biographer Sally Zanjani suggests that Winnemucca Hopkins may have had as many three other marriages (and at least one of these to a Native man) but Winnemucca Hopkins does not mention these in *Life Among the Piutes* (Zanjani 143-45).

Native warriors still at large—and inducing them to come back to Camp Harney in eastern Oregon (Winnemucca Hopkins, *Life* 185). Unbeknownst to Winnemucca Hopkins, the Army forcibly deported the Native groups concentrated at Camp Harney, including Northern Paiute bands who had not joined in the fighting against the U.S., moving them over 300 miles, to the Yakama Reservation in Washington Territory. Many Paiutes died on the forced march and those that survived arrived at Yakama starving and suffering from exposure. In the following months, many more died from the after-effects of the grueling journey (McKenzie 15).

The tragic and unjust treatment of the Northern Paiutes inspired Winnemucca Hopkins to take to the lecture circuit in an effort to bring public awareness to what was happening to her people. Perhaps she also felt remorse. In *Life Among the Piutes* she disavowed any foreknowledge of removal, but many contemporary Northern Paiutes remember Winnemucca Hopkins as a traitor for her role in the march to Yakama (Albanis 30-1). In the fall of 1879, Winnemucca Hopkins began to lecture in San Francisco. She presented new versions of recent history, retelling events such as the Pyramid Lake War of 1860 from a Paiute woman's perspective, and she advocated the re-establishment of the Malheur Reservation as a permanent home for the Northern Paiutes. As a result of her 1879 lecturing, Secretary of the Interior Carl Schurz invited Winnemucca Hopkins as part of a delegation of Northern Paiutes to meet with him at Washington, D.C. to discuss the Paiutes' situation. As related in *Life*, the meeting appeared to be successful. Winnemucca Hopkins acquired a document from Schurz that formally "freed" the Paiutes then

confined to Yakama to leave the reservation. However, corruption and bureaucratic confusion between the BIA, its agents, the Office of the Interior, and the Army meant that Winnemucca Hopkins's letter was disregarded for years. In 1882, under pressure from white settlers greedy for still more land, President Chester A. Arthur issued an executive order declaring the Malheur Reservation discontinued and its lands to be "restored to the public domain" (*Executive Orders* 95). Reporting on the order a few days later, Oregon newspaper *The Morning Astorian* declared the former Malheur lands "open for settlement" (30 Sept. 1882, 3).

In 1883, Winnemucca Hopkins embarked on another lecturing tour, this time in the east. As in 1879, her goals were to free the Northern Paiutes from Yakama and to secure the Malheur Reservation as their permanent, legally-protected home. In the east, Winnemucca Hopkins was aided by Elizabeth Palmer Peabody and Mary Peabody Mann, sister activists and education reformers, who helped Winnemucca Hopkins access some of the most prestigious reformist circles in New England. Between March 1883 and April 1884, Winnemucca Hopkins spoke before audiences in churches, athenaeums, public halls, and private residences from Boston to Baltimore. Her lecture then was much the same as it had been in 1879. She shared Paiute oral history in order to rewrite skewed, popular narratives of the western "Indian Wars" that emphasized Paiute savageness and brutality. She detailed the rampant corruption within the BIA, which she called "the Indian Ring," and provided firsthand accounts of Rinehart's abuses of his power over her people. Again she expressed her desire for a "good reservation" for her people and

emphasized the Paiutes' capacity for education. Northeastern newspapers reported that audiences' reactions to Winnemucca Hopkins's lectures were generally enthusiastic and emotional. In 1884, Winnemucca Hopkins concluded her tour of the east by presenting a petition to Congress which she had circulated among the crowds at her lectures, laying out her terms. Her petition was not successful in reestablishing the Malheur Reservation.

In the fall of 1883, Winnemucca Hopkins delivered three lectures in Hartford, Connecticut: one on October 4 at the home of educational reformer Dr. Henry Barnard at the invitation of the Connecticut Indian Association, and two more, on October 31 and November 1, at Pearl Street Church in the middle of downtown Hartford.⁶⁰ On these occasions, Winnemucca Hopkins and Twain were once again mere blocks away from each other. The Clemens family moved from Buffalo, New York, to Hartford in 1874, and their Nook Farm home is only two miles away from the Henry Barnard House as the two buildings stand today. It was in his Hartford house that Twain hosted his former *Territorial Enterprise* confederate Dan De Quille as Twain helped De Quille craft his history of Virginia City and the Comstock Lode, *The Big Bonanza*. The two spent several hours "grind[ing] literature all day long," Twain guiding the composition and publication all along the way (Lewis xix). In this atmosphere Twain would have encountered Sarah Winnemucca again while listening or reading through his friend's page proofs. Because he was a stickler about the illustrations in his own books, it is likely that Twain also

⁶⁰ The dates and locations for Winnemucca Hopkins's performances here and throughout this chapter come from newspaper reportage of Winnemucca Hopkins's public appearances, collected in Carpenter and Sorisio, *Newspaper Warrior*. Similarly, dates and locations for Twain's tours comes from Stephen Railton's website *Mark Twain and His Times*.

approved the interior art for *Bonanza*, including the small, pen and ink sketch of “The Princess Sarah Winnemucca” (Fig. 1). Though Twain disdained the woman-fronted reformist atmosphere of the northeast (in *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, which Twain was working on around the time he was working with De Quille on *Bonanza*, he called them “committee[s] of sappy women” [255]) and was therefore not likely to ever attend a meeting of the Connecticut Indian Association or any other charitable organization, it is nevertheless surprising that Twain makes no mention of Winnemucca Hopkins’s activities so close to his home. Like De Quille, Winnemucca Hopkins was a figure out of Twain’s personal history. His silence on her efforts, especially in light of De Quille’s remembrances, speaks volumes.

As Winnemucca Hopkins returned west after the conclusion of her eastern tour, Twain was preparing for a return to the lecture circuit. In October 1884, Twain embarked on another tour and this time he shared the stage with Louisiana novelist George Washington Cable. In 103 engagements, primarily in eastern cities, and stretching as far west as St. Paul, Minnesota. Twain and Cable read selections from their published and forthcoming works. In many of the same cities that had hosted Winnemucca Hopkins the year before, Twain performed a diverse range of readings, including his famous “Jumping Frog,” anecdotes from the “Roughing It” lecture, as well as dramatized selections from drafts of what would become *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. Cable read excerpts from his new novel *Dr. Sevier*, which was stoking fresh sectional controversy for its message that “the northern cause in the Civil War was just and that



THE PRINCESS SARAH WINNEMUCCA.

Figure 2. Sarah Winnemucca Hopkins's portrait in Dan De Quille's *The Big Bonanza* (1875).

“we of the South”—Cable was from New Orleans—“could now admit it” (Lorch, *Trouble* 171). He also presented, and possibly sang, passages from his essays in progress, “Dance in Place Congo” and “Creole Slave Songs,” both of which were published in the *Century* magazine after the tour in 1886.⁶¹ Twain’s and Cable paired their readings to engage closely with race and social justice in the 1880s, reaching across time and space, resurrecting geographies that Northern audiences thought put to rest with the close of Reconstruction. Though Twain’s readings in 1884-5 focus on Black-white race relations in the United States and not Native peoples, his earlier experiences among Indigenous peoples in the West and the Pacific continue to inform his perspectives. As Amy Kaplan has argued, “When Twain turned to write fiction about race relations and the legacy of slavery in America” in novels like *Huckleberry Finn* and *Puddin’head Wilson*, “he had for many years been engaged in a global imperial conversation...about the incapacity of nonwhite people to govern themselves” (90). These conversations crossed from the Nevada Territory to Hawai’i, and across the world again to Palestine before returning to the antebellum U.S. South. Winnemucca Hopkins’s unacknowledged proximity to Twain in 1883 embodies these “imperial routes” that underlay his national identity and “haunt the corpus of his writing about America” (91). Thus, in 1885, Winnemucca Hopkins and

⁶¹ On 1884 tour programs provided by Stephen Railton, one of Cable’s performances is advertised as “The Songs of Place Congo,” indicating that Cable may have split his lecture across two later essays or, conversely, combined his notes for the two essays into one performance for the time’s sake. See Stephen Railton, “A Night at the Opera House,” *Mark Twain and His Times*, <https://twain.lib.virginia.edu/huckfinn/hfprogrm.html>.

Twain remained in each other's orbits like binary stars, bound together yet kept utterly separate by the gravitational forces of American colonialism.

“Mischievous Sarcasms”: Winnemucca Hopkins’s Embodied Humor, 1864-1879

The earliest documentation of Winnemucca Hopkins’s performances took place in October 1864, shortly after the Pyramid Lake War. She and her kin, including her father, Chief Winnemucca, and her sister, Elma, traveled from Pyramid Lake to the mining settlement of Virginia City where they appeared onstage at Sutliff’s Music Hall. According to historian Margaret G. Watson, the revue was the idea of the Sutliff’s manager, Max Walter, who “persuaded the Chief and some members of his tribe to become actors” (323). No doubt Walter hoped to capitalize on the spectacle of presenting Natives on the stage; Chief Winnemucca’s object, though, was to raise funds for his people. They took the stage that night following a minstrel show (323). Details of the performance reprinted from the *Virginia Daily Union* describe the Paiutes’ appearance “on stage dressed in full Indian costumes, with tomahawks, scalping knives, and all the other requisites” (323). The program for the night, advertised as “romantic entertainment” (Canfield 39) in later billings, included “a series of tableaux representing a camp scene, a council of war, a war dance, a scalping dance, and other phases incident to Indian life on the deserts, in the mountains, or along the rivers and lakes of Washoe” (Watson 323-4).⁶² For the climax of their show, Watson relates, “the chief and other loyal

⁶² The journalist covering this first show for the *Virginia Daily Union* may have been Alfred Doten, the “prolific Virginia City diarist” (Bergen 12). Doten wrote many articles for the *Union* and became in 1864

native-born citizens captured a Copperhead just arriving over the Sierras and pulled off his scalp in a ‘highly scientific manner’” (324).

Through these shows, Chief Winnemucca took advantage of Walter’s greed and non-Natives’ curiosity about “exotic” Native lifeways to raise money for his people, who were suffering from the settlers’ disruption of their subsistence bases.⁶³ However, Winnemucca also used his platform to court non-Natives and sway public opinion in favor of the Paiutes. In the wake of the Pyramid Lake War, the “Winnemucca show,” as one commentator called it, promoted the idea of the Paiutes as the peaceful friends of white settlers (Zanjani 75). The tableaux vivants and other physical performances retold histories of Paiute-white encounter, emphasizing the Paiutes’ role in helping early white emigrants across the Great Basin. However, they also disrupted colonial narratives of domination by depicting recent history, such as the Pyramid Lake War, from the Paiutes’ perspective. In this complex rhetorical context, young Winnemucca Hopkins’s physical comedy helped to support her father’s diplomatic message by reaching out to make connections with non-Native audiences and inviting them to imagine alternatives to

“Local Editor” of the paper. He also frequented Sutliff’s and always noted the entertainment he saw there. His diary entry for 5 October 1864 reads: “...Entered in full upon my duties today as Local Editor of the Virginia Daily Union...Evening I attended Sutliff’s – Winnemucca, his 2 daughters & 7 braves went through war scenes, dances, scalping scene &c – very interesting – reported it...” Alfred Doten, *The Journals of Alfred Doten, 1849-1903*, Ed. Walter Van Tilburg Clark, University of Nevada Press, 1973, 807.

⁶³ Though money was Winnemucca’s motivation, unfortunately these shows, though popular, were not lucrative for the Paiutes. As Gae Whitney Canfield writes, “The cost of theater rental, traveling expenses, hotel rooms and meals, promoter’s cuts, and some minimal payment to the performers had to be deducted from the receipts” (42).

colonial history. Thus, rather than just critiquing colonialism, the “Winnemucca show” and Winnemucca Hopkins’s physical comedy engaged in constructive resistance.

The Winnemucca show’s tableaux participated in the nineteenth-century practice of Native performers exhibiting Indigenous “scenes” for non-Native audiences. Tableaux vivants, also called living portraits, living statues, or *poses plastiques*, were popular entertainment in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, eventually waning with the advent of photography and later cinema. In touring stage shows and in private parlors, tableaux involved live performers dressed in costume and arranged with set pieces to recreate classical paintings or statuary, dramatize historical moments, or depict allegorical motifs.⁶⁴ Settler versions of Native culture and history were popular subjects for tableaux. During the 1839-1845 European tour of his “Indian Gallery,” American painter, ethnographer, and showman George Catlin hired Ojibwe and Iowa men and boys to “illustrate his lectures on Indian life through a series of...eleven war scenes and eight domestic scenes” (129). Jessica L. Horton writes that Catlin’s living recreations of his own paintings of Mandan life strived for an ethnographic parity between the tableaux, the paintings, and the original Mandan referents (130).⁶⁵ As with the Winnemucca troupe, the

⁶⁴ For more on the transatlantic tradition of the tableaux vivants see, for instance, Mary Chapman, “‘Living Pictures’: Women and Tableaux Vivants in Nineteenth-Century American Fiction and Culture,” *Wide Angle*, vol. 18, no. 3, 1996, pp. 22-52; David Glassberg, *American Historical Pageantry: The Uses of Tradition in the Early Twentieth Century*, UNC Press, 1990, pp. 18-22; Brenda Assael, “Art or Indecency? Tableaux Vivants on the London Stage and the Failure of Late Victorian Moral Reform,” *Journal of British Studies*, vol. 45, October 2006, 744-758; and Robert M. Lewis, “Tableaux Vivants: Parlor Theatricals in Victorian America,” *Revue française d’études américaines*, vol. 36, April 1988, pp. 280-291.

⁶⁵ For more on Catlin’s “Indian Gallery,” see Mary Sayre Haverstock, *Indian Gallery; the Story of George Catlin*, Four Winds Press, 1973; George Gurney and Therese Thau Heyman, eds. *George Catlin and His Indian Gallery*, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Norton, 2002; Robert M. Lewis, “Wild American

Ojibwe and Iowa performers in Catlin's show countered the tour's "economy of ethnographic depiction" in their own impressions of European life (130). In 1848, the Ojibwe chief Maungwudaus published his *Account of the Chippewa Indians, Who Have Been Travelling Among the Whites in the United States, England, Ireland, Scotland, France and Belgium*, in which Maungwudaus records his impressions of European culture and society. His account wryly reverses the ethnographic gaze of Catlin's Gallery and the tableaux in which he participated. For instance, writing about meeting and performing for the French King Louis Phillipe in 1846, Maungwudaus trivializes the ethnographic display of "Indian scenes," the central draw of Catlin's shows, and instead emphasizes the Ojibwes' socializing at the French court:

We went to France; stayed five months in Paris with Catlin's Indian Curiosities. Shook hands with Louis Phillippe and all his family in the Park, called St. Cloud; gave them little war dance, shooting with bows and arrows at a target, ball play; also rowed our birch bark canoe in the artificial lake, amongst swans and geese. There were about four thousand French ladies and gentlemen with them. We dined with him in the afternoon in his Palace. He said many things concerning his having been in America when he was a young man. He gave us twelve gold and silver medals; he showed us all the rooms in his house. (6)

Maungwudaus pinned some of these medals to an ornate beaded bag with a snakeskin strap when he sat for a portrait by Canadian portraitist Paul Kane in 1851 (Silverstein-

Savages and the Civilized English: Catlin's Indian Gallery and the Shows of London," *European Journal of American Studies* 3.1, Spring 2008, <https://doi.org/10.4000/ejas.2263>.

Wilmott 78). For Maungwudaus, Catlin's show may have misrepresented some important aspects of Ojibwe life (not the least of which being Catlin's passing them off as Mandan), but it furthered important international relationships between the Ojibwe and the English and French empires which had long benefitted all peoples. Maungwudaus's meetings with Louis Phillippe and Queen Victoria allowed him to represent the Ojibwe as sovereign nations and international allies, not as colonized wards. Maungwudaus's visit was reciprocated when Albert Edward, the Prince of Wales, visited the Caradoc Reserve in Ontario in 1860. Maungwudau's son, now Chief John Tecumseh Henry, hosted the Prince on that occasion, wearing the bag his father had worn in Europe ten years earlier (74-5).⁶⁶

The Winnemucca troupe's 1864 stage performances embody a similarly complex hybrid of Paiute diplomacy and canny manipulation of non-Native fascination with Native peoples. These complexities prefigure Sarah's later mixture of performativity and political advocacy in her lectures and writing. The journalist covering the 23 October 1864 show in San Francisco's Metropolitan Theater for the *Daily Alta California* noted the specific order in which the Paiutes revealed their tableaux: "the *tableaux vivants*, with the accompaniments of forest scenery and Greek fire, were introduced, in the following

⁶⁶ See also Christopher Mulvey, "Among the Sag-A-Noshes: Ojibwe and Iowa Indians with George Catlin in Europe, 1843-1848" in *Indians and Europe: An Interdisciplinary Collection of Essays*, edited by Christian F. Feest, University of Nebraska Press, 1989, 253-275, and Donald B. Smith, "International Entrepreneur: Maungwudaus, or George Henry (ca. 1805-after 1877)" in *Mississauga Portraits: Ojibwe Voices from Nineteenth-Century Canada*, University of Toronto Press, 2013, 126-163. Catlin gives his own account of the Ojibwes' and Iowas' experiences in *Catlin's Notes of Eight Years' Travels and Residence in Europe, with his North American Indian Collection*, vol. 2, George Catlin, 1848.

order: “The Indian Camp,” “The Message of War,” “The War Council,” “The War Dance,” “The Capture of a Bannock Spy,” “Scalping a Prisoner,” “Grand Scalp Dance,” “Scalping of an Emigrant Girl by a Bannock Scout,” “The Wounded Warrior,” and “The Coyote Dance” (qtd. in Carpenter and Sorisio 37). More than merely showcasing “phases incident to Indian life,” this series of tableaux represent the advent and causes of the 1860 Pyramid Lake War from Winnemucca’s perspective. In September 1864, the *Gold Hill Daily News* reported a speech Winnemucca delivered to whites that had been translated by “one of his daughters, who...could talk very plain English, and was quite intelligent”—probably Sarah (85). The journalist recorded Winnemucca as saying “The Indian east upon the Plains fight white man; they will not mind me; I try to stop them. Young Winnemucca is not my son; he says he is, but he is an impostor. I have got but one son; he is here with me. White man commenced the war at Ragtown. I did not want to fight, but I could not keep my people back; they would not obey me” (34). “Young Winnemucca” was the non-Natives’ name for Numaga, the war chief of the Paiutes at Pyramid Lake. Historian Ferol Egan describes Numaga as the lone voice for peace among the Bannocks, Shoshones, and other Great Basin peoples prior to the Pyramid Lake War (102). According to nineteenth-century historian Myron Angel, while the representatives for the other bands indicated in war councils that they were for making war, Winnemucca himself “held his own council, and declared neither for peace or war; but was known to be in favor of the latter” (151). From this perspective, Winnemucca’s speech at Gold Hill and his performances in Virginia City and San Francisco indicate that he depicted the

Pyramid Lake Paiutes as only passive participants in the violence of 1860, emphasizing other tribes, particularly the Bannocks, as the main actors against the settlers.

Downplaying any role he may have had in Native war councils previous to the onset of the Pyramid Lake War rhetorically amplifies Winnemucca's calls for peaceful relationships between the Paiutes and whites in 1864.

In addition to the Pyramid Lake scenes listed above, in some shows Winnemucca included five additional scenes "representing Pocahontas saving the life of Captain John Smith" (qtd. in Carpenter and Sorisio 37). Here, "One of the 'Flowers'"—probably Winnemucca Hopkins, whose name meant "Shell Flower"—"enacted the part of the famous Indian Maiden, and Old Winnemucca the hard-hearted old parent, Powhatan" (37). Alongside them, "a white man in the costume of an 'honest miner' did the John Smith" (37). The "honest miner" (which the *Alta California* placed in quotation marks) was a humorous literary type popularized in Comstock newspapers like the *Territorial Enterprise* and mocked in the writings of both Dan de Quille and Mark Twain.⁶⁷ The

⁶⁷ Like the New England Yankee or the "ring-tailed roarers" of the Old Southwest in Chapter 2, the honest miner was a regionalist caricature mocking the hundreds of rough-mannered miners who flooded to the Great Basin in the 1850's hoping to make it rich mining silver but who blew their meager earnings on gambling and alcohol in places like Virginia City. In his 1913 memoirs, C. C. Goodwin, the former editor of the *Territorial Enterprise*, described the type: "When, after a little, the men from the diggings came with their dust and from the proceeds began the fashion of painting the town red, then the 'honest miner' acquired a name. He was of a new species never seen before, and, praise God, he has kept the species distinct and pure ever since" (76). Dan De Quille included in *The Big Bonanza* a paean to the honest miner, a parody of George Sand's "Goddess of Poverty," in which he sarcastically praises the character of "the bully Honest Miner": "He it is that makes it hot for the free-lunch table; it is he that bucks at *monte*; plays draw-poker; fights the tiger; patronizes the Hurdies; sings like a 'Washoe canary;' it is he who sees the first peep of dawn—through the bottom of a tumbler—through the same cocks his eye on the last smile of evening...It is he who carries the pick, pan, and shovel; who digs about croppings; who picks up 'indications,' pounds them into a mortar, and 'salts' the 'prospect'" (339). De Quille's song is illustrated with a sketch depicting the comic figure of the honest miner fighting and passing out drunk (fig. 3). Later, in *Roughing It*, Mark Twain fondly recalled the "wild, free, disorderly, grotesque society" where "[t]he

Pocahontas story was a popular subject for American tableaux in the nineteenth century. In his 1868 “how-to” manual for putting on domestic tableaux, popular pantomimist and clown Tony Denier provides instructions for staging a series of three scenes in which Pocahontas intervenes in John Smith’s execution and pleads with her father, Smith takes Pocahontas’s hand as Powhatan blesses them, and ending with the Natives and presumably Pocahontas and Smith all smoking together (24). Denier’s description of the common Pocahontas tableaux reflects settler myth rather than actual history and romanticizes the violent relationship between the Virginia colonists and Pocahontas’s people, the Mattaponi. It is impossible to know what exactly the Winnemucca troupe’s version of this story looked like, but many productions probably resembled Denier’s example to a greater or lesser extent.

To this day, United States history contains Pocahontas’s body as a site of colonial domination and identity-making. Myths about Pocahontas’s innate goodness and mercy towards the Virginia colonists reify ideological scripts of white racial superiority, patriarchal authority, and the inevitable disappearance of Natives from the land. For instance, popular settler versions of history claim that, as a young girl, Pocahontas defied the wishes of her warlike father, Chief Powhatan (Wahunsenaca), to bring food to the starving Jamestown colonists. According to Dr. Linwood “Little Bear” Custalow, a Mattaponi historian, and Angela L. Daniel “Silver Star,” Pocahontas (Matoaka) did not

honest miner raked from a hundred to a thousand dollars out of his claim a day, and what with the gambling dens and the other entertainments, he hadn’t a cent the next morning, if he had any sort of luck” and fought any man who dared to go out spruced up in a “biled shirt” (415-6).

defy her father, but was allowed to go to the English as part of a larger Mattaponi peacekeeping retinue: “As Wahunsenaca’s favorite child, Pocahontas being allowed to go with the delegations to Jamestown demonstrated his sincerity to befriend the English colonists” (28). As a child within Mattaponi culture, Pocahontas would not have been accorded the freedom to act what white myth attributes to her. Furthermore, by the same logic, Custalow and Daniel assert that Pocahontas’s sacrifice for John Smith is probably wholly fictional. Not only is it improbable that Wahunsenaca would execute John Smith after according him the title of werowance, or “chief” of the English, Pocahontas’s status as a child would have precluded her from being able to warn him or stop an execution even if it had happened (30-31). The mythical version of history retold in scenes like this and in Pocahontas’s symbolic sacrifice for John Smith understands Pocahontas as precociously and preternaturally giving of herself to the English, a view which simultaneously makes the 10-year-old Pocahontas sexually available to Englishmen and metaphorically aligns her sexuality with the availability of the land (Kolodny 5).

Recognizing the symbolic weight of the Pocahontas myth to their white audience, the Paiutes’ staging of her story sought to further Chief Winnemucca’s diplomatic aims and mediate between the Northern Paiutes and Virginia City residents. While staging the Pocahontas story at all risked recirculating some of the colonial meanings assigned to Pocahontas’s body, the version of history depicted in the Paiutes’ tableau reclaims a sense of Native agency that settler mythology strips away. For instance, substituting the local figure of the “honest miner” for the great John Smith was surely hysterical to

Winnemucca Hopkins's audience of Comstock miners, but it also perceptively translates the Pocahontas myth to a Great Basin setting (from Virginia to Virginia City), reflecting Chief Winnemucca's vision for a cooperative political future between the Paiutes and Nevadans. Furthermore, by replacing the mythical figure of John Smith with the comic figure of the honest miner, the Paiutes' tableau presents a tribal version of recent history wherein the Paiutes are the saviors of the white men in the Great Basin, rather than obstacles to Manifest Destiny. Winnemucca Hopkins never commented on her brief experience representing this iconic Native woman, but it is possible that embodying Pocahontas, another chief's daughter from another time, instilled in her a sense of how history and ideology worked to contain her Native body just as effectively as warfare and reservations. Perhaps it also awakened in her an awareness of how staging her own body could raise ironic critiques of those forces of containment.

In addition to tableaux vivants and lectures, the Winnemucca troupe exhibited traditional ceremonies, including Paiute songs and dances. Winnemucca seems to have meant at least some of these dances, such as the Coyote Dance, as further peaceful overtures. However, they gave Winnemucca Hopkins further opportunities to exercise her physical comedy. Reporting on the Winnemucca troupe's display of the Coyote Dance in San Francisco, the *Alta California* lauds it as "the best" dance of the night "and...decidedly the favorite with the youngsters" (qtd. in Carpenter and Sorisio 37). They note a particularly funny moment when Winnemucca Hopkins, or "Flower"...got a back fall by pulling too hard on the tail of the Coyote" (37). Beyond the visceral comedy



Figure 3. Scenes of mining life featuring the “honest miner” in De Quille’s *The Big Bonanza*.

of Winnemucca Hopkins's pratfall, her physical comedy serves to enhance the dance's cultural meanings in the context of recent Paiute politics.

Various Native accounts describe the Coyote Dance differently. Southern Paiute elders Charley Greyman, Edrick Bushhead, Wendell John, and Bessie Tillahash describe a dance in which "women... bent forward a little and let their arms hang down limp, full length, swaying them back and forth to the left and right in rhythm to the music" as a "prayer for an abundance of food" (Songs, Dances, & Ceremonies). James Marble, a Mojave man, claims that this dance originated with the Mojaves who performed it at funerals: "The Paiutes turned this dance into a social dance when they got it. Their song for it is one of our songs telling of 'Looking for water on the other side of a mountain'" (Songs, Dances, & Ceremonies). Archie Rogers, another Paiute elder, explains another version of a dance that tells the story of how coyote came to be: "One man used to go around pawing at the ground and acting like a Coyote now acts. As a result of this he turned into a Coyote. The Coyote dance is put on to tell how this happened" (Songs, Dances, & Ceremonies).⁶⁸ In *Boundaries Between: The Southern Paiutes, 1775-1995*, Martha C. Knack describes the Coyote Dance as a funereal ceremony that invokes the coyote in order to exile him and keep him away from the graves of the dead:

⁶⁸ These quotes from Shivwit Paiute elders and other southwestern Indigenous individuals come from the Indigenous-operated website nuwupaiute.com, which is devoted to keeping available important cultural information about the Southern Paiutes by digitally curating material originally collected by enrolled Paiute tribal member and scholar LaVan Martineau. See "Materials on this Website," nuwupaiute.com/about-nuwu, Martineau Visual Media, 2023.

Kin and well-wishers from miles around came to [Paiute] funerals. By the turn of the century if not earlier, Paiutes at Moapa and Kaibab had adopted and modified the native southern California ceremony anthropologists call the Memorial Cry. Held a year or more after a death to give relatives a chance to collect food for visitors, who in turn brought gifts, the dead were honored and remembered, as a somewhat garbled newspaper account described, “with a mournful chant pouring from 300 aboriginal throats for two nights and one day, and the shuffling coyote dance in which that nocturnal prowler is banished to the barren lands.” (185).

The Winnemucca troupe’s performance of this dance probably resembled some composite of the above descriptions: a round dance in which the dancers swung their hanging arms, “pawing” at the ground like a coyote with another Coyote figure disrupting the dance for the sake of comedy. It is tantalizing to speculate what Winnemucca may have had in mind by including this dance. In the context of the martial and historical matter of the other tableaux, the Coyote Dance could be intended in its funeral function, commemorating the Paiute warriors lost in the Pyramid Lake Massacre (perhaps embodied as “The Wounded Warrior”) and denouncing further bloodshed by banishing the scavenging Coyote, a figure of hunger and opportunistic violence. Winnemucca Hopkins’s physical comedy would add levity as well as cultural clarity to the dance’s message. Pulling on the Coyote’s tail and exaggerating her strength so as to topple over comically turns the trickster’s antics back on him, provokes laughter from the audience

and also clearly signals that the scavenger figure of hunger and deprivation has no place in the Paiutes' and Nevadans' joint future.

Fifteen years later, Winnemucca Hopkins returned to San Francisco. She traveled by steamer from Washington Territory to San Francisco in November 1879 to deliver a series of lectures. Her goal, as she told a reporter for the *Daily Alta California* in interview, was to reveal to “white people...what the Indians have got to stand” (qtd. in Carpenter and Sorisio 85). As a young woman, she had helped translate her father's lectures, but now for the first time she lectured by herself, telling the Paiutes' history in her own words. Winnemucca Hopkins injected a characteristic humor into her 1879 lectures. Incorporating lessons she had learned in 1864, Winnemucca Hopkins used physical comedy in her lectures but she also included jokes *about* bodies. These jokes operate similarly to her physical comedy to engage non-Native audiences in the imaginative deconstruction of colonial maps—both maps of actual land and temporal maps of history—and in the constructive work of envisioning alternative narratives of space and people in their place.

One such joke I call Winnemucca Hopkins's “Clayton's Body” anecdote. Winnemucca Hopkins delivers the joke as a punchline of sorts to her narrative about the origins of the Pyramid Lake War. Narrating the beginning of hostilities, Winnemucca Hopkins is reported to say:

Soldiers came, and the Indians had to fight the white men. I have come here to lay down the facts, good or bad, in behalf of my people. But people say of the

Indians, 'Exterminate them! exterminate them!' My friends, they would not say this of the Chinamen or the negro. When the soldiers came, all was trouble. There was one good man named Clayton, who came among us, and brought goods and beads and handkerchiefs. We learned to love that man. When the fighting commenced he said to my brother, Natchez, 'Be merciful unto me, Natchez; save my life.' My brother said: 'It is almost too late. But I will fire over your head and you can roll down the hill, and the Indians will think you are dead.' But he was too late, and the Indians killed Clayton. He taught us English. He did roll down the hill, and his bones lie there rotting. (92)

The bitterly humorous spectacle of Clayton's lifeless body rolling down the hill anyway is one of the darkest examples of Winnemucca Hopkins's humor available in the archive and also one of the most interesting because of its ambivalence. Typically, Winnemucca Hopkins's humor takes aim at the reservation system, its agents, or at her audience. However, in this anecdote, the joke seems to be on Clayton, an individual unknown to the audience and peripheral to the greater story Winnemucca Hopkins tells of Paiute-white encounter.

Functionally, the joke seems to align with dark humor's faculty as a "coping" mechanism. As Uğur Ümit Üngör and Valerie Amandine Verkerke explain in their essay on "genocide humor," dark humor offers groups targeted with genocide "a reduction of, or escape from pain" via a redirection of emotional or psychic energy away from "negative feelings of pain and sorrow" and toward sarcasm, irony, and laughter (83). This

helps explain the oddly eulogistic tone of Winnemucca Hopkins's joke. Perhaps Clayton condenses all the senselessness and loss of life the Northern Paiutes experienced during the Pyramid Lake War, the Bannock War, and the tragic march to Yakama, despite not being a Paiute himself. Winnemucca Hopkins's dark joke "dispels" her grief (83).

However, I argue that Winnemucca Hopkins uses the Clayton's Body anecdote in order to amplify the tragedy and senselessness of violence not in the service of eulogy or grieving but to hopefully imagine otherwise. Clayton is both a cautionary tale and an aspirational figure. In her 1879 lectures, Winnemucca Hopkins continues to talk about her efforts to temper other Paiute bands' desire for vengeance against white settlers. She warns them they "must not condemn the whole white race because they do wrong to a few [Paiute] women. Sometimes you kill innocent people" (qtd. in Carpenter and Sorisio 92). Clayton is one such innocent person, a non-Native non-combatant whom the Paiutes "learned to love" and whose behavior signaled his respect for the Paiutes. His death is darkly ironic but nonsensical, an accident rather than a tactical victory, and thus symbolic of war's ultimate wastefulness. Clayton also represents Winnemucca Hopkins's feeling, expressed in her lecture, that "If only [whites] could only know our feelings...they would call us their neighbors" and therefore abide by the biblical dictum to love your neighbor as yourself (92). Though couched as a message of regret, the call to neighborliness and community in Winnemucca Hopkins's use of the optative is clear.

Unlike many of the other instances of humor from her lectures, the Clayton's Body anecdote does not make it into *Life Among the Piutes*. However, Winnemucca

Hopkins does include a version of the story in her book to tell the death of Major Ormsby, a local non-Native politician and militia leader. In *Life*, she writes:

And so the war began. It lasted about three months, and after a few precious ones of my people, and at least a hundred white men had been killed (amongst them our dear friend, Major Ormsbey [sic], who had been so hasty), a peace was made. My brother had tried to save Major Ormsbey's life. He met him in the fight, and as he was ahead of the other Indians, Major Ormsbey threw down his arms, and implored him not to kill him. There was not a moment to be lost. My brother said, – "Drop down as if dead when I shoot, and I will fire over you;" but in the hurry and agitation he still stood pleading, and was killed by another man's shot. (72)

It is likely that this is actually how Major Ormsby died; Winnemucca Hopkins's story is corroborated by Nevada historian Myron Angel in his 1881 *History of Nevada*, where he includes the testimony of other Native and non-Native witnesses to the event (157). It is unclear why Winnemucca Hopkins initially attributed Ormsby's death to the man Clayton, who does not appear in *Life* in any capacity. Interestingly, Winnemucca Hopkins attests in *Life* that she and her sister learned English while living with "our friend" Major Ormsby and his family, which in her lecture she attributes to Clayton (59; Zanjani 46). Winnemucca Hopkins presents Ormsby as a beneficent figure similar to Clayton, except that her reminiscences of her time with the Ormsby family in *Life* have an assimilative flavor absent from the version of the story featuring Clayton. Clayton enters Paiute space as a cultural emissary, offers goods and knowledge, and earns the

people's respect. Conversely, Winnemucca Hopkins's family sent her and one of her sisters to live with the Ormsbys as children in order to work as servants in exchange for English language lessons (Canfield 11, Zanjani 46). Whatever the motivation for altering Ormsby's identity for her lecture, Clayton's death strikes a much more sympathetic chord than Ormsby's and better serves to support her call to neighborliness and mutual understanding.

In another lecture at San Francisco's Platt's Hall two nights later, a correspondent for the *San Francisco Chronicle* noted that Winnemucca Hopkins "wound up her summary of [Indian Agent] Mr. Rinehart's character with a bit of mischievous sarcasm that brought down the house" (qtd. in Carpenter and Sorisio 97). William Rinehart, agent of the Malheur Indian Reservation from 1876-1882, was the frequent butt of Winnemucca Hopkins's humor in her lectures. Her jokes against Rinehart took many forms, including sarcastic, intellectual humor as well as physical comedy. As discussed in Chapter 1, sarcasm is an unreliable rhetorical tool, liable to outrage as easily as entertain. Moreover, it cut against non-Native notions of natural Native eloquence and was therefore equally capable of lowering white audiences' guard by taking them by surprise or simply going over their heads entirely. However, Winnemucca Hopkins's sarcasm was more recognizable and more palatable than William Apess's for two reasons. Firstly, comedically, it was far broader. Winnemucca Hopkins's audience had the benefit of her tone, body language, facial expressions, and often, bits of physical comedy to accentuate her sarcasms more effectively than Apess could do in print. Secondly, Winnemucca

Hopkins's sarcasm was seldom aimed at the audience themselves. One function of her humorous portrayals of Rinehart is to build solidarity between herself, the other people on stage (in the west, her brother Natchez and other Paiutes; in the east, Peabody and other reformers) and the audience against the institutions she ridicules. Bringing her audience in on her jokes against Rinehart is one way in which Winnemucca Hopkins's sarcasm aimed at building community.

One such moment occurs just after the Clayton's Body anecdote and was recorded by the *Daily Alta California's* coverage of her lecture in their November 26 edition. The anecdote, a humorous retelling of a Methodist sermon delivered at the Malheur Reservation, is quoted in its entirety below:

In 1878 Mr. Grannis [the preacher] came to preach a sermon, and I interpreted it. He said, "If you are not good you will go to a place called Hell. If you are good, and do not lie and steal and commit adultery, you will go to heaven." And one of our men interrupted him and turned to Rinehart, the agent, and said, "You say to be good and we will go to heaven. Mr. Rinehart, where will you go? You claim to be a Christian man. You kneel and uplift your hands and the tears roll down your face. Who do you pray to? We are Indians and do not understand. We have eyes but you think us blind. You hold out your left hand and pray for us, and your right hand is grabbing something else." Mr. Rinehart is a good man, probably. I think he is a good man. The biggest thief, whether a man or a woman, is good if

wealthy. With the jingle in his pocket and plenty in his hand, he lives away up, socially. (qtd. in Carpenter and Sorisio 92-3)

When she told this joke on stage, Winnemucca Hopkins would on some occasions amplify her delivery by physically mimicking Rinehart kneeling in prayer with “one hand lifted up to Heaven and the other...rummaging in a money sack.” During one telling of the joke in 1884, Winnemucca Hopkins “knelt by the table on the stage and went through the motions of a man filling his pockets with money and when she had finished the prayer she arose, held an imaginary sack by the corners, shook it and then [sic] scrambled about on the floor as if hunting for money,” which “caused considerable merriment in the audience” (215).

As critique of Rinehart’s perfidy, which she offered as a metonymy of the corruption going on at every level of what she called “the Indian Ring,” Winnemucca Hopkins’s humor found its mark. The audiences’ laughter in 1879 and 1884 flowed out of the lecture hall and into the press, where it eventually reached Rinehart. He was none too happy. In January 1880 he sent a series of affidavits to the Bureau of Indian Affairs in Washington, signed by acquaintances who defended his character against Winnemucca Hopkins’s claims and in turn called her character into question. These letters express surprise that “an intelligent public and high officials should give any credence to the statements of such a person” as Winnemucca Hopkins, who, “in addition to her character of Harlot and drunkard,...merits and possesses that of a notorious liar and malicious schemer” (Canfield 172-3).

Winnemucca Hopkins's lecturing, including her humorous impressions mocking Rinehart, mounted a potent critique that the U.S. government was eager to silence. The "high officials" alluded to are Secretary of the Interior Carl Schurz and President Hayes himself, whom Winnemucca Hopkins met as part of a Paiute delegation that same month. In *Life*, Winnemucca Hopkins implies that media coverage of her lecturing is the main reason that she is invited to Washington (217). Furthermore, Winnemucca Hopkins writes that she was warned not to lecture in Washington (221). She records a conversation between herself and Schurz, who says, "I don't think it will be right for you to lecture here after the government has sent for you, and your father and brother, and paid your way here" (221). Though Winnemucca Hopkins's depiction of Schurz suggests that the powers in Washington fear the effect of her words on the eastern public. Perhaps more accurately, Schurz fears the incongruity of Winnemucca Hopkins's competing roles as official envoy sponsored by the government and social critic on behalf of a people targeted by that government's genocidal policies. Schurz assures her that "The government is going to do right by your people now" and directs her: "Don't lecture now; go home and get your people on the reservation – get them located properly; and then, if you want to come back, write to us, and tell us you want to come back and lecture, and we will pay your way here and back again" (221).

In Winnemucca Hopkins's depiction of her interaction with Schurz, the Secretary cares primarily about the public's perception that the Bureau of Indian Affairs is "doing right by your people," a fragile perception that the government can only control through

their manipulation of public information. Citing French sociologist Luc Boltanski, Nicholas Holm explains how “critique can serve a powerful political function” under “simple models of domination [that] are predicated on control of how the world is understood” through “the revelation of the inaccuracies, inconsistencies, and contradictions of the official, sanctioned world view” (38).⁶⁹ Winnemucca Hopkins’s lecturing threatened official (mis)representations of Native humanity such as Winnemucca Hopkins records in the mouth of the man she encounters in Schurz’s office, who cynically mocks Winnemucca Hopkins’s lecture as merely a money-making scheme and who claims that the Paiutes she represents are “are bad people; they have killed and scalped many innocent people” (218). The federal government tacitly endorsed these broad mischaracterizations in order to prop up systems of colonial domination like the reservation system, boarding schools, and genocidal military campaigns like the U.S.-Dakota War (1862) and the Snake War (1864-68).

⁶⁹ Readers may debate whether or not the system of oppression represented by the reservation system and other institutions listed above designed by the Bureau of Indian Affairs and other departments of the federal government to discipline, contain, and eliminate Natives may be analyzed as “simple models of domination” as Luc Boltanski defines them. In Boltanski’s essay *On Critique*, which Holm quotes, “simple models of domination” are marked by a separation of an “official” truth and reality via physical violence (including police violence) and the maintenance of deep social asymmetries based on race, gender, or other traits (123-4). Boltanski differentiates “simple systems” from “complex systems,” in which domination is achieved by “continually altering the contours of reality as if to inscribe the world in it, as a site of constant change” (123). Holm provides Nazi Germany and other despotic regimes as examples of the former type of domination, while the latter type is more evident in modern neoliberal governments. To test the applicability of either model to the nineteenth-century United States is far beyond the parameters of my project, but I think that even if one argues that as a whole the United States practiced (and continues to practice) mainly complex systems of domination to maintain its hegemonic power, the microcosmic governmental system that was the nineteenth-century reservation system seems marked by simple models of domination. As Martha C. Knack writes about reservation life generally in the nineteenth century, “Agents had nearly total dictatorial authority within their reservation domains, and Indians dared resist only under extreme duress” (97). While Knack’s definition of “resistance” is far too narrow, her point regarding the arbitrary biopower practiced by many agents upon reservations nevertheless stands.

Many scholars have pointed out the critical power of Winnemucca Hopkins's humor, particularly her send-ups of Rinehart, but I argue that the point of what the *San Francisco Chronicle* calls Winnemucca Hopkins's "mischievous sarcasm" is not mainly to tear down Rinehart down or speak truth to power, but to create connections with her non-Native audiences and to create community solidarity between Natives and non-Natives against the targets of her humor. In Chapter 2, I discussed laughter's transpersonal qualities, its capacity to "[re]organise already 'existing' subjects, whilst simultaneously generating new ones" (Emmerson 2086). The audience's "considerable merriment" temporarily linked them with Winnemucca Hopkins and the other Paiutes with whom she shared the stage, disrupting demarcating lines of race, gender, nationality, and difference on the fictitious scale of civilization, to form new subjectivities according to the ethics of neighborliness and mutual respect for each others' humanity. Winnemucca Hopkins mobilizes these new subjectivities as spaces of creative collaboration, where she and non-Native audiences imagine "a better state of the world" (Holm 42).

The "better world" Winnemucca Hopkins invites her audience to imagine emerges from her descriptions in her lectures of the treatment the Paiutes deserve versus what they have experienced at the hands of whites. For instance, in her lecture of November 25, 1879, Winnemucca Hopkins flows from her ridiculous portrayal of Rinehart, above, into an appeal for the Paiutes then officially confined to the Yakama Reservation. She distinguished between the Bannock leaders who "should be punished—

hanged or imprisoned for life” and the innocent Paiutes who, she claims, were duped into open hostilities with the whites and who should not be punished to the same extent. She included this argument in expanded form in *Life*, explaining that “only a few [Paiutes]...went with the Bannocks who did wrong. I have given up those who were bad; the soldiers have them prisoners at Vancouver Barracks, Washington Territory. I have not come to plead for the bad ones. I have done my work faithfully. I told the officers if they would surrender I would give up all the bad ones, which I did, and I ask you only to return to their home all that have helped the white people. Yes, sir; the very man who killed Buffalo Horn was sent to the Yakima Reservation [sic]” (218). Winnemucca Hopkins’s characterization of Paiutes as implicitly “the good ones” who “helped the white people” is another way she draws her audience into a community, albeit a problematic one that is willing to submit other forces of Native resistance to the punishment of the colonial regime. Indeed, she aligns the Paiutes with whites, identifying Paiute interests with white interests. Her strategy amplifies the injustice of the Paiutes’ postwar treatment where even those whom the whites should have recognized as war heroes, such as “the very man who killed [Bannock chief and rebel leader] Buffalo Horn was sent to the Yakima Reservation” (218).

Winnemucca Hopkins’s distinction between the “good” Paiutes and the “bad” Bannocks leads into a more specific appeal for justice for the Northern Paiutes. She declares that while “the leaders” of the Bannock rebellion “should be punished—hanged, or imprisoned for life...the people [the Paiutes] should be allowed to go on a good

Reservation, they should be taught to build and farm, and educated without the interference of an agent, they could make their own living, and would be glad to do so” (qtd. in Carpenter and Sorisio 93-4). She repeated these arguments often in lectures and other venues. For instance, in a letter she wrote to Major Henry Douglas that was eventually published in *Harper’s Weekly* in 1870, Winnemucca Hopkins assured Douglas:

If the Indians have any guarantee that they can secure a permanent home on their own native soil, and that our white neighbors can be kept from encroaching on our rights, after having a reasonable share of ground allotted to us as our own, and giving us the required advantages of learning, I warrant that the savage (as he is called today) will be a thrifty and law-abiding member of the community. (qtd. in Wilson 84)

On the surface these arguments seem like Winnemucca Hopkins espousing assimilationism for the Paiutes, something the federal government aimed for under President Grant’s Peace Policy. But her statement bears more scrutiny, for here we see Winnemucca Hopkins engaging in “constructive resistance.”

To understand her constructive resistance, one must first recognize the importance of the Malheur Reservation to the Northern Paiutes in the 1870’s and 80’s. In 1868, in the direct aftermath of General George Crook’s genocidal assault on the Northern Paiutes, Bannocks, and other Great Basin peoples that is often misleadingly called the Snake War, the chiefs of seven Northern Paiute bands signed an unratified treaty drawn up by Indian

Agent John Webster Perit Huntington. The treaty required the Paiutes to move to and reside on a reservation “in their own country” (Wilson 75). The cosigners of Huntington’s treaty interpreted this language to refer to their traditional homelands in the areas surrounding what are now called Lake Hearn and Lake Malheur in southeastern Oregon (*The Snake or Piute Indians v. United States*). In 1872, plans were drawn up for a reservation for the seven bands of Northern Paiutes who had signed Huntington’s treaty upon these lands. President Grant approved the Malheur Reservation by Executive Order on September 12, 1872. Though reservation life was far from perfect and represented a form of colonial oppression, the importance of the establishment of the Malheur Reservation on traditional Northern Paiutes lands cannot be overstated. It meant that, rather than being forcibly moved from the lands where their ancestors lived and were buried, as had been federal policy in the era of removal, those bands of Northern Paiutes could remain in their home. From 1872 to 1876, the Malheur Reservation was overseen by agent Samuel Parrish, whom Winnemucca Hopkins presented glowingly. In a lecture she delivered in Platt Hall’s in December 1879, Winnemucca Hopkins “dwelt at length upon [Parrish’s] kindness to ‘my people’” and jokingly said that with Mrs. Parrish as their teacher and Winnemucca Hopkins herself as her assistant, “in five months...some of our children—Indian children—could spell words of two syllables. Think of that!” (qtd. in Carpenter and Sorisio 98). Winnemucca Hopkins’s sarcasm, less mischievous here, is nonetheless constructive. Simultaneously proud of her people and disparaging of Rinehart, whose failure to educate the Paiutes is brought out in sharp relief against the

Parrishes' example, Winnemucca Hopkins literally invites her audience to "think of" what might have been and what still could be.

But the Parrishes did not stay; they were replaced in 1876 by Rinehart, whose mistreatment of the Piutes of Malheur Winnemucca Hopkins documents thoroughly. Rinehart's tenure was so oppressive to the Northern Paiutes that they all willingly vacated Malheur, despite its location on their homelands. In November 1879 the *Daily Alta California* published a report from eye witnesses in Washington corroborating Winnemucca Hopkins's claim that the Paiutes had all abandoned Malheur (94). After the Bannocks' and Northern Paiutes' forced deportation to Yakama in 1878, and under pressure from white settlers greedy for still more land, the Malheur Reservation was discontinued. In September 1882, President Arthur issued an executive order declaring the lands be "restored to the public domain" (*Executive Orders* 95). Reporting on the order a few days later, Oregon newspaper *The Morning Astorian* declared the former Malheur lands "build for settlement" (30 Sept. 1882, 3). This was the historical context in which, between 1879 and 1884, Winnemucca Hopkins appealed to non-Native audiences across the United States. In her lectures, she reiterated this narrative of her people's early cooperation with whites, the rise and fall of the Malheur under Parrish and Rinehart, the Paiutes' innocence in the Bannock War, and their unjust confinement to the Yakama Reservation.

Thus, we can see how Winnemucca Hopkins's physical humor in her 1879 lectures helps establish a shared space of constructive resistance. Physical comedy like

her pantomime of Rinehart not only ridicules the agent's corruption in order to critique the BIA and call for reform but also opens up a dialogic space where she and her audience can imagine alternative future possibilities for the reservation system. Rather than an abject space of containment or oppression ruled by figures like Rinehart, Winnemucca Hopkins calls her audience to imagine the reservation (re)mapped as Native space. Similarly to how, according to Noreen Groover Lape, Winnemucca Hopkins employs "parody and hidden polemic" to "redefine assimilation" in *Life Among the Piutes* (263), in her lectures Winnemucca Hopkins used humor to (re)map the colonial space of the reservation system into a space defined by Paiute sovereignty and futurity. Note her crucial qualification in 1879 that Paiutes "should be taught to build and farm, and educated *without the interference of an agent*, they could make their own living, and would be glad to do so" (qtd. in Carpenter and Sorisio 93-4, emphasis mine).

Winnemucca Hopkins here defines the reservation as a space of self-determination free from the arbitrary power wielded by despots like Rinehart and even the well-meaning paternalism of a Samuel Parrish. Moreover, Northern Paiutes had already proved themselves adept at weaving traditional knowledge and values into western practices. Northern Paiutes thus transformed building, farming, and education, hallowed tenets of the Bureau of Indian Affairs' plan to enculturate Native peoples, into tools for community-building, mutual support, and grassroot political organizing (Knack 109). Winnemucca Hopkins's body on stage offers further proof for her assertions of Paiute capability. Nearly every newspaper article about her lectures lauds her communicative

and rhetorical abilities. To her non-Native audience, Winnemucca Hopkins's attainments indicate the future possibilities for the Paiutes if men such as Rinehart did not continue to oppress them for personal gain.

While Hopkins's 1879 lectures did not result in a lasting change in the Northern Paiutes' official status, in the establishment of a permanent home on the Malheur Reservation, or the sacking of Rinehart, she succeeded in connecting with her non-Native audience and engaging them in imagining alternative futures for the Paiutes outside colonial narratives. Her success is evident in the press of the time. For instance, an 1880 column in the *Daily Alta California* reporting on Winnemucca Hopkins's meeting with Secretary Schurz in Washington proclaimed:

The agreement appears to be that they [the Paiutes] and their tribe, or such of them as choose, may go [to] the Malheur Reservation, and there take up lands in severalty, thus conforming to the habits of white people, and so doing away with the Reservation curse, starvation and oppression from the Indian Agency, which, according to Sarah, were the causes of dissatisfaction on their part, resulting in every Piute leaving the Reservation and obtaining an uncertain and scanty subsistence elsewhere... Thus, after so many years and centuries, some of the descendants of the natives of this continent are to be treated as if they were rational, human like ourselves, and entitled to living and a home on the land of their ancestors. We believe that a similar policy toward the Indians would have

saved the country from most of the Indian wars of two hundred and fifty years.

(qtd. in Carpenter and Sorisio 116)

The writer then turns from reportage to editorialization and critique. They continue:

We like our country, its institutions, its laws, its people generally, and, as a good American, are proud of them and ready on all proper occasions to defend them.

But, like that railroad bridge over the Tay, some of its political spans are defective, unworthy of the country, and liable at some day or night, when the winds howl and clouds float athwart our sky, to plunge the passing train into the depths of the seething waters disaster and destruction. Had our Government and people dealt with the Indians on the principle that they had rights which we were bound to respect, most of our bloody and cruel Indian wars might have been avoided. At last we have, to some extent, adopted this idea, by allowing the Indian to choose and own his particular home. After more than 250 years of false policy and an unworthy humanity, we have come to this view of the question at last.

(116-7)

Much like Winnemucca Hopkins, the *Alta*'s critique of the government's inhumanity does not merely tear down the country's venerated institutions but focuses on imagining an alternative history of neighborly respect between Natives and non-Natives. The future they imagine is based in honoring Native nations' connections to their lands by acknowledging those lands as sovereign Native space. Of course, the *Alta*'s vision still assumes the federal government's right to remove and contain Native populations,

however liberally. It is not an unproblematic vision, but it nevertheless indicates that Winnemucca Hopkins's humor found some purchase with non-Native audiences.

Native Erasure and National Renewal in Twain's Lectures, 1867-1872

While Winnemucca Hopkins used her embodied humor to (re)map colonial spatial paradigms and to promote neighborliness and cooperation between Northern Paiutes and non-Native whites, Mark Twain's lecturing style, which mixed irreverent humor with sublime natural description, worked to erase Native presence from traditional lands in the U.S. West and Hawai'i and to territorialize those places as property of the American republic. Twain's politics with regards to American imperialism and Native rights shifted across his lifetime; nevertheless, his travel writings and lectures continued use racializing and exoticizing humor to present Native people as others against whom his white, East Coast American audiences defined themselves racially and nationalistically. For instance, in his earliest and most popular lecture, which he sometimes called "Our Fellow Savages of the Sandwich Islands," much of Twain's humor arises out of the incongruity between the ostensibly ridiculous customs of the Native Hawaiians and the supremely practical American expatriates and visitors (including Twain himself) who represented the colonizing forces of American commerce and culture in the islands. In one example, Twain jokes that it is a "peculiarity of these Kanakas...that nearly every one of them has a dozen mothers" (Fatout 8). He presents a funny dialogue between a Native Hawaiian laborer and a sugar grower from California

who grows increasingly more exasperated as the worker asks off work again and again, each time burying another mother. The premise of Twain's anecdote points to American colonizers' theft of Native Hawaiian lands and the extraction of Native labor and natural resources, which continues to this day. Eventually, the exasperated plantation owner explodes: "I don't want to be hard on you in your affliction, but it appears to me that your stock of mothers holds out pretty well. It interferes with business, so clear out, and never come back until you have buried every mother you have in the world" (9).

This joke illustrates the kind of exoticizing humor that made Twain's travel writing and lectures about other places so popular with white audiences in the nineteenth century and today. However, Twain's jokes should not be separated from the historical specificity of mid- to late-nineteenth century America. In 1868, when Twain first performed his "Sandwich Islands" lecture, the United States was still riven by divisions over the Civil War and Radical Reconstruction. Mark Twain entered into a postwar United States permeated with racial tensions and a fractured sense of national identity. Much Twain scholarship attests to the role of Twain's writings and lectures in the emergence of a new sense of the nation. For instance, Marlene Boyd Vallin argues that Twain's irreverent humor holds up the experience of the "American Everyman" against the "Establishment's hypocrisy" (4), "consistently and doggedly" promoting "virtues of authenticity and autonomy," which cultural commentators like Twain claimed, "derived naturally from the uniquely American frontier experience" (8). Thus, for many Twain scholars, Twain occupies a complex position as simultaneously a populist standard bearer

for authenticity and autonomy in the face of civilizing institutions and also what Vallin calls a “Representative American” who contributed mightily to the emergence of a coherent American national identity in the post-Civil War period (12). As I show below, decolonizing such perspectives is necessary if we are to get a good sense of how Twain’s writings and critical legacy perpetuate settler colonialist ideology.

Viewing Twain’s writing through an Indigenous Studies lens reveals how some strains of Twain scholarship have naturalized virtues like “authenticity,” obscuring the way that these constructed categories contribute to the erasure of Native peoples in his work. I argue that viewing Twain’s lectures as expressions of a cultural settler colonialist ideology helps bridge these apparent contradictions. As described in Chapter 2, claims to autochthonic “virtues” such as autonomy, authenticity, and “real living” are common discursive ways of articulating a sense of place and indigenizing whiteness in dispossessed Native lands. Like other contemporary cultural figureheads of his day, Twain built his identity as “Representative American” against exoticized, racialized, and erased Native bodies. I begin with a discussion of the humor of Twain’s “Sandwich Islands” lecture and the ways that his comedy renders Native bodies and cultures ridiculous in order to enhance and promote a sense of superiority and even paternal responsibility over the Kanaka Maoli (Native Hawaiians). That Twain’s humor, like Washington Irving’s as seen in Chapter 1, also casts a wry eye on the ironies of colonialism, it is not to weaken his audiences’ faith in their national institutions, but to amplify his moral criticism of hypocrisy. Therefore, as well shall see, the erasure and

elimination of Native bodies in Twain's lectures does not criticize the American nation-state but rather reinforces it by shoring up a sense of the mentally, physically, and morally superior white, masculine individual at the center of the republic. In this way, Twain's lectures provided "America...[an imaginary] site where it could explore and act out its nationhood away from recurring squabbles" (McBride 51).

My analysis of Twain's investments in settler colonial projects in Hawai'i considers that Twain has long been understood as an anti-imperialist. According to an older scholarly consensus, the Spanish-American War, the Philippines-American War, and the Second Boer War instantiated a turning point in Twain's supposedly stalwart nationalism and patriotism throughout the 1860s, 1870s, and 1880s. While Twain saw the Spanish-American War as an emancipatory war and thus demonstrative of the United States's continued commitment to spreading global democracy (Gibson 437), he strongly denounced the annexation of Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines after the war. Many scholars define Twain's anti-imperialist period as dating from around 1898, in response to these world events. However, John Carlos Rowe argues that this tradition of periodizing Twain's anti-imperialist sympathies obscures how "anticolonial and anti-imperialist attitudes inflect virtually all of Twain's writings" ("How the Boss Played" 176). Rowe backdates Twain's "ambivalence regarding Euroamerican imperialism" at least a decade to the publication of *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* (1889).

More recent critics have problematized this narrative by examining Twain's lifelong imbrication with American imperialism. Amy Kaplan, in *The Anarchy of Empire*,

focuses on Twain's encounters with American colonialism in Hawai'i in 1866 and draws provocative connections between his earliest journalistic reports from the islands and his later fictionalized treatments of American slavery. Kaplan "proposes that the nationality identity of Mark Twain" and his iconographic status as the Representative American writer, "was forged in an international context of imperial expansion" (52). Separating the persona Mark Twain from the man Samuel Clemens, Christopher McBride argues that Clemens self-consciously "refashion[ed] himself as a figure of national consolidation." "With...entertaining travel descriptions, [Clemens] created a comic persona [Twain] that sided with American imperial and capitalist interests, while simultaneously uniting a divided America around economic gain and subjugation of "'lesser' island natives" (67). McBride concludes that Clemens "could not maintain this humorous imperial stance indefinitely;" as evidenced in his later anti-imperialist writings (67). In her study of Mark Twain's relationship to the Indigenous peoples of North America, Kerry Driscoll locates a tension in Twain's newfound anti-imperialism. Holding up Twain's evidently changing attitudes about the domination of Indigenous peoples abroad alongside his ostensibly progressive view of Black-white race relations in the U.S., Driscoll points out that Twain does not seem to have demonstrated the same epiphanic "imperial conscience" (McBride 67) regarding the attempted structural elimination of the Native populations at home. While his experiences abroad, particularly among the Māori in Aotearoa (New Zealand), "caused the writer to question both the notion of progress and long-held assumptions concerning the binaries of savagery and

civilization,” Twain nevertheless “continued to avoid the uncomfortable topic of American Indians during his last decade” despite his seeming awareness of the clear parallels between European and American settler colonialism (11-2).

I aim to clear some ground in this debate by calling attention to Twain’s actions as signaling his investments in American settler colonial projects. I follow Patrick Wolfe in distinguishing between settler colonialism as a “structure, not an event” predicated upon the “logic of elimination” of the Native, and franchise colonialism, in which the geographically distinct (and perhaps distant) metropole imposes an oppressive economic and political regime upon a Native population in order to extract its resources (388). The important difference between the two systems is that under settler colonialism, settlers come to stay and seek to transform dispossessed Native lands into the metropole. In settler states, structural techniques of containment, erasure, and elimination serve to remove and vanish Indigenous owners of the land and naturalize (or indigenize) settler epistemologies, histories, and land claims, as we saw in Chapter 2. These systemic processes (which many scholars aptly term “logics”) inhere at the level of ideology and become rote and normative for settler subjects. Mark Rifkin terms this permeated worldview “settler common sense,” which he writes “suggest the ways the legal and political structures that enable non-Native access to Indigenous territories come to be lived as given, as simply the unmarked, generic conditions of possibility for occupancy, association, history, and personhood” (xvi). Mark Twain is writing and speaking about the space he thought of as “the frontier” but he is no less entrenched in the normative

psychic (and literal) landscapes of settler colonialism for that. Indeed, Rifkin's framework helps us see how the "democratic values" that, above, Marlene Boyd Vallin attributes to Twain (autonomy, authenticity, common sense) did not simply come from his experiences on the "frontier" but are themselves discursive manifestations of settler colonial logics that structure and territorialize the "frontier" as a non-Native space of subject formation, rather than contested Native space.

It is important to distinguish between settler colonialism and franchise colonialism in Mark Twain's case, because it helps explain his seemingly incommensurate attitudes towards America's treatment of Puerto Ricans, Filipinos, and other native populations abroad on the one hand and the plight of Indigenous peoples, such as the Northern Paiutes of the Great Basin, in the U.S. on the other. The United States' annexation of former Spanish colonies in 1898 and its treatment of the Filipino resistance in the Philippines-American War seemed to Twain to resemble tyrannical European-style colonialism antithetical to democratic American principles. In his satirical "A Defense of General Funston" (1902) Twain draws ironic contrasts between Eduardo Aguinaldo, the leader of the Filipino revolutionary forces who resisted U.S. occupation, and George Washington, calling attention to the United States' hypocritical abandonment of its core republican principles.⁷⁰ "I thought it would be a great thing to give a whole lot of freedom to the Filipinos," Twain unironically told the *Chicago Tribune* in 1900, "but I guess now that it's better to let them give it to themselves" (qtd. in Rowe 177-78).

⁷⁰ See Jim Zwick, ed. *Mark Twain's Weapons of Satire: Anti-Imperialist Writings on the Philippine-American War*, Syracuse UP, 1992, 119-132.

Whereas the colonization of foreign lands seemed to Twain a betrayal of America's basic values, the United States' dispossession of Native lands in North America and Hawai'i are invisible in his work. His corpus is full of momentary recognition of Native humanity and political sympathy for Indigenous resistance to U.S. oppression, but such moments almost always give way to Twain's acknowledgment of the inevitability of U.S.

hegemony and Native disappearance. Speaking about Native Hawaiians, he says, "It isn't the education or civilization that has settled them; it is the imported diseases, and they have all got the consumption and other reliable distempers, and to speak figuratively, they are retiring from business pretty fast. When they pick up and leave we will take possession as lawful heirs" (Fatout 6). Here the Kanaka Maoli are already "settled" and though Twain casts sarcastic doubt over the "lawfulness" of the Americans' possession of Hawaiian lands, it does not blunt his assurance of the Hawaiians' ultimate disappearance from the landscape.

Twain's belief in American settlers' impending "possession" of Hawai'i reflects the logic of elimination that is central to settler colonialism. Haole scholar Judy Rohrer summarizes key "strategies of elimination" as theorized by Patrick Wolfe and Lorenzo Veracini, including "large-scale genocide" but also "'narrative transfers,' including the [I]ndigenous as hopelessly backwards, 'inevitably vanishing,' and collapsed into the category of 'exogenous alterity'" (60).⁷¹ Twain's half-joking allusion to the Kanaka

⁷¹ Rohrer self-identifies as haole, a racial term originating in the Hawaiian language that has come to designate non-Native white Hawaiians. As Rohrer explains it, "'Haole' is originally a Hawaiian word meaning foreign or introduced. It has come to mean white people but also, more broadly, settler colonial whiteness in Hawai'i and its manifestations in culture, ideology, and performance. From Cook's arrival to

Maoli's speedy "retirement" exemplifies such a "narrative transfer" that overwrites the realities of the Kanaka Maoli's resistance to elimination, which continues to this day. Moreover, Twain's joke conflates the dispossession and disappearance of Native Hawaiians with the success of American capitalism on the islands, in effect naturalizing the domination of the Kanaka Maoli as the inevitable result of competition and market forces. American settlement of Hawai'i is depicted as a hostile takeover, which both acknowledges and erases the crimes of the settler state.

Twain's erasure of Native presence is more obvious in his later "Roughing It" lecture. The humor of that lecture, as we shall see, comes from Twain's performance of a western identity for his Eastern audiences. He exoticizes the U.S. West, depicting the Great Basin and Nevada Territory as a barren, inhospitable place peopled with irascible "frontier" types, reminiscent of the Old Southwestern humorists' representation of rural Southern whites as regional Others. Twain positions himself variously as a green fish-out-of-water, the butt of the miners' hilarious pranks, and an expert in the region's local history and topography. Notably, few if any examples of the "Roughing It" lecture make any significant mention of the Indigenous Great Basin peoples who continue to live in the region today. Twain's omission of Native presence from his reminiscences of the Nevada Territory exemplifies the settler state's structural drive to indigenize non-Natives in dispossessed Native space, naturalizing settler land claims while historicizing (or

the present day, haole and haole desires have driven the dispossession of Kanaka Maoli and the colonization of Hawai'i through the imposition of Western institutions of science, religion, law and politics, capitalism, language, and communication" (10).

completely silencing) ongoing Indigenous resistance to these narratives. Sarah Winnemucca Hopkins is just one contemporaneous voice demonstrating the eloquent absence of Native presence in Twain's performed history of the West.

The settler colonial logics of Twain's lectures operate in his frequently humorous treatment of both Native and non-Native bodies within occupied and/or territorialized Native space. The effect (not to say the goal) of his depictions of both Native and non-Native physicality is to imaginatively dispossess Natives of their Indigeneity and land claims through satire and ridicule and to, in turn, indigenize white non-Native settlers in Native space via the same techniques. The very first joke in his "Sandwich Islands" speech begins with the image of "a repulsive...case of Oriental leprosy, of so dreadful a nature that I have never been able to get it out of my mind since" (Fatout 4).⁷² By the late 1860's, leprosy or Hansen's Disease had become, like many other diseases in the nineteenth century, a metaphor for racial purity. Today, we know that Hansen's Disease is caused by the bacteria *Mycobacterium leprae* and that it is not easily transmissible between humans (CDC). However, in the nineteenth century, the origin and transmission of the disease was still a highly debated topic. The prominent physician Dr. Joseph Jones, who studied the history of Hansen's Disease in Louisiana, claimed in 1887 that it had been brought to the United States by early European settlers in the Gulf of Mexico,

⁷² There is no single, authoritative text of any Twain lecture. According to Stephen Railton, Twain continuously reworked lecture materials while on tour, meaning that each individual lecture was singularly unique. Twain scholars such as Paul Fatout, Fred Lorch, and Walter Frear have reconstructed critical texts of Twain's lectures based on extant manuscripts and contemporary newspaper summaries that recorded Twain's material, sometimes in great detail. I base my discussion of Twain's Hawaiian lectures, below, on Paul Fatout's reconstruction provided in *Mark Twain Speaking* (1976), pp. 4-15.

enslaved Africans, and Acadians who had contracted the disease in the “miasmatic environment” of Nova Scotia (Gussow 55). Thus, Jones characterized Hansen’s Disease as an invasive disease infecting the United States via “the immigration of foreigners from a leprous country” (55). Jones specifically attributed the prevalence of the disease in Hawaii to the immigration of Chinese workers to the islands and used the example of Hawaii when he warned against “the instrumentality of the filthy, vicious, debased, heathen leprous Chinese” as potential disease vectors within the United States (56). Elsewhere, Jones, who was a Confederate soldier during the Civil War, linked the spread of Hansen’s Disease in the U.S. to “Yellow Peril” and white supremacy narratives, writing: “At the present day Louisiana is threatened with an influx of Chinese and Malays, with filth, rice [sic] and leprous diseases. An inferior and barbarous race transferred from the burning heats of Africa has already been the occasion of the shedding of the blood of more than one million of the white inhabitants of the United States...The contact of a superior with an inferior race must lead eventually to two results: The annihilation of one or the other, or the amalgamation of the two” (56-57). As Jones’s words demonstrate, by the end of the nineteenth century, Hansen’s Disease had become a metaphor for national and racial contagion.

The image of the suffering Native Hawaiian initiates a series of non-sequitur memories that humorously defers the lecture’s advertised material on Hawai’i. On the one hand, this deferral interrupts his white audience’s colonialist consumption of Hawai’i as exotic paradise and economic resource. One reviewer of Twain’s lecture complained

in 1869 of its “irrelevance and senselessness”: “What new or valuable thing did he tell us of the Sandwich Islands? What that we could not have read at home?” (qtd. in Lorch, “Sandwich Islands” 316-7). To certain members of his audience, the usefulness of Twain’s lecture lay in its ability to make the distant lands of Hawai’i legible to American citizens. However, on the other hand, the series of “irrelevant” images inspired by the suffering Native body are all figures of pain, death, and civilizational collapse. One such object is the statue of *St. Bartholomew Flayed* (1562) which Twain saw at the Duomo in Milan during his visit there in 1867. In *Innocents Abroad* (1869) Twain describes the statue as “a coffee-colored” figure “of a man without a skin; with every vein, artery, muscle, every fiber and tendon and tissue of the human frame represented in minute detail. It looked natural, because somehow it looked as if it were in pain. A skinned man would be likely to look that way unless his attention was occupied with some other matter” (175). In both *Innocents Abroad* and the “Sandwich Islands” lectures, the skinless statue haunts Twain as a recurring nightmare and an example of how difficult it is “to get a disagreeable object out of one’s memory” (qtd. in Fatout 4).⁷³

In Twain’s performed stream of consciousness, the apparently dissociated images of the debilitated Native Hawaiian and the statue of the suffering man link contemporary

⁷³ Paul Fatout’s composite text of the “Sandwich Islands” lecture is based mainly on newspaper reports of Twain’s performances between 1869-73. This accounts for St. Bartholomew’s presence in Fatout’s lecture text, despite the fact that Twain’s earliest performances of this lecture predate his voyage on the *Quaker City* that make up the material of *Innocents Abroad*. Twain often used his lectures as testing grounds, exhibitions, or as marketing platforms for his published works, so we can see his inclusion of this material from *Innocents Abroad* in that light. Further, it is a good reminder that Twain’s lectures were not published texts and that he constantly updated, changed their content.

Native bodies with a “curious,” “ancient,” and unrecoverable past (5). This kind of temporalization is another technique of settler colonialism that strives for the erasure of Native peoples from the present and future by relegating them to history, an ideological process that, Jean O’Brien explains, simultaneously bolsters non-Native claims to modernity (xxi). This move denies Indigenous sovereignty via the imposition of settler time on Native peoples and empowers settler colonial notions of “civilization’s” superiority over “savage” peoples.

Interestingly, this moment from the lectures is also reminiscent of “The Petrified Man” (1862) an early squib that Clemens published anonymously four weeks before the first published appearance of the name “Mark Twain” (Driscoll 93). As Kerry Driscoll explains, as Twain revisited the hoax of the Petrified Man many times over the 1870’s, his description of the figure became unmistakably that of a Native man (101-2). Perhaps the statue of St. Bartholomew put Twain in mind of his hoax. In any case, the link between the Native body and the strange, ancient flayed statue enacts, like the petrified Native, the “supplanting of the Indian in the landscape by symbolically relegating him to the past” (Driscoll 95).

Twain distrusted and frequently satirized the civilization/savagery binary (the equivalence within the sometimes-title of his lecture, “Our Fellow Savages of the Sandwich Islands” is but one example) but the objects of his satires of civilization are typically white non-Native hypocrites who deny their obvious barbarism, rather than the temporalized notion of Western society’s modernity versus Natives’ (Hawaiian or

otherwise) primitivity. The goal of these satires is not to advocate for Indigenous rights or to thwart the expansion of United States hegemony, but moral reform that points to the “savage” behavior of the supposedly “civilized” person in order to supplant stuffy Victorian morality with a bracing truthfulness and self-knowledge at the level of the individual: what Marlene Boyd Vallin calls Twain’s “rebellion against the moral hollowness of the dominant culture” (9).

One example of this from the “Sandwich Islands” lectures is Twain’s cannibalism joke. Entering into a discussion of Native Hawaiians’ eating habits (“A Kanaka will eat anything he can bite—a live fish, scales and all, which must be annoying to the fish, but the Kanaka doesn’t mind that.”) he denies the popular “slander” that they are cannibals (Fatout 10). He would then offer “to illustrate cannibalism” if a member of his audience would “lend me an infant” (10). After a long pause as if waiting for someone to actually offer a child, Twain seemed to struggle with disappointment: “it don’t matter. I know children have become scarce and high, owing to the inattention they have received since the women’s rights movement began. I will leave out that part of my program, though it is very neat and pleasant. Yet it is not necessary. *I am not hungry*” (10). The humor here arises from the absurdity of Twain’s offer to eat a baby and his apparent embarrassment that no one volunteered (a comic element coming from his physical manner and thus largely lost in print) but it is also a joke about his American audiences’ expectations of Native Hawaiians’ exotic and dangerous lifeways. Stories of Native cannibalism have been a key element in colonial powers’ (both in both settler and franchise systems)

racialization of Indigenous peoples.⁷⁴ Twain goes against dominant settler fictions by claiming that Native Hawaiians are not cannibalistic, but turns the joke around by revealing that *he* is and, furthermore, that the practice is “very neat and pleasant.” The joke flips the civilized/savagery binary on its head but does not subvert it. He plays on and lampoons his audiences’ hunger for first-hand knowledge about Hawai’i, but again he satirizes individual hypocrisy and moral squeamishness rather than the “comfortable fictions” of Native inhumanity that serve to further erase Native presence in the land (Deloria Jr. 378).

Returning to the image of the “repulsive” Kanaka Maoli suffering from Hansen’s Disease with which Twain opens his lecture allows us to see how settler colonial ideologies of Natives’ innate savagery and inevitable disappearance recur throughout his speech. The spectacle of the debilitated Native body tragically afflicted by settler institutions tells a story about Native Hawaiians’ physical inferiority relative to the hale and hearty Americans who elsewhere in the lecture are depicted as industrious and practical authorities over Hawaiian bodies. Twain claims, “There are about 3,000 white people in the islands...mostly Americans” against the “dwindled” population of 55,000 Natives (qtd. in Fatout 6). The white settlers, he states, are “in fact...kings of the Sandwich Islands; the monarchy is not much more than a mere name” (6). This is partly a joke about the self-importance of non-Native white planters and missionaries, but it also presumes the inevitable replacement of Native Hawaiian government and people with

⁷⁴ See, for instance, John M. Coward, *The Newspaper Indian: Native American Identity in the Press, 1820-90*, University of Illinois Press, 1999.

white non-Native institutions. Twain presents a brief history of America's involvement in Hawai'i that makes this narrative arc clear:

In the old times the king was absolute, his person was sacred and if even the shadow of a common Kanaka fell upon him the Kanaka had to die. There was no help for him. Whatever the king tabooed it was death to touch or speak of. After the king, came the high priests who sacrificed human victims; after them came the great feudal chiefs, and then the common Kanakas, who were the slaves of all, and wretchedly oppressed. Away down at the bottom were the women, the abject slaves of the whole party. They did all the work and were cruelly mistreated...They were a rusty set all around—those Kanakas. By and by the American missionaries came and they struck off the shackles from the whole race, breaking the power of the kings and chiefs. They set the common man free, elevated his wife to a position of equality, and gave a spot of land to each to hold forever. The missionaries taught the whole nation to read and write with facility, in the native tongue. I don't suppose there is today a single uneducated person above eight years of age in the Sandwich Islands. It is the best educated country in the world, I believe, not excepting portions of the United States. (7-8)

Twain's history drastically simplifies and deliberately misrepresents the evolution of Native Hawaiian society and governance in response to growing pressure from haole (non-Native white) officials and missionaries. While Native Hawaiians society was striated into something analogous to western notions of a class system, with the ali'i

(ruling chiefs/nobles) holding significant political, social, and religious power, it is untrue that “the common Kanakas” and women were “abject slaves.” Hawaiian scholar Noenoe K. Silva explains that the *maka‘āinana*, the “ordinary people of the land” (239) “regarded themselves as related much more closely and affectionately” to the *ali‘i* and *kahuna* “than did feudal landlords and serfs” (39). Furthermore, Native Hawaiian epistemology understands all *Kanaka Maoli*, their deities, and the environment as inextricably linked in reciprocal, familial genealogies that is governed by *pono*. The Hawaiian term *pono* has many meanings, but it points to a holistic ethical system of balance and mutual responsibility. Silva quotes Hawaiian historian Lilikalā K. Kame‘eleihiwa’s description of the “relationships among *akua* (gods), *ali‘i*, and *maka‘āinana*”:

Ali‘i Nui were the protectors of the *maka‘āinana*, sheltering them from terrible unseen forces...Should a famine arise, the *Ali‘i Nui* was held at fault and deposed...Should an *Ali‘i Nui* be stingy and cruel to the commoners...he or she would cease to be *pono*, lose favor with the *Akua* and be struck down, usually by the people...A reciprocal relationship was maintained: the *Ali‘i Nui* kept the *‘Āina* [lands] fertile and *Akua* appeased; the *maka‘āinana* fed and clothed the *Ali‘i Nui*. (qtd. in Silva 39-40)

Silva points out that it was common for nineteenth-century non-Native commentators to conflate Native Hawaiian social structures with feudal systems of land tenure (39). Indeed, it was not until the imposition of a capitalist economy after the *Māhele*, the 1848 division of Hawaiian lands into private property, that the relationship

between maka‘āinana and konohiki (traditionally administrators of land districts under the direction of the ali‘i) came to resemble that between tenant and landlord (43). The effect of this rhetorical equivalency, in Twain’s lecture and elsewhere, is to associate Hawaiian culture with backwards, uncivilized behavior in the style of “Old World” European despotism incommensurate with American republican values. Surely the language of slavery in Twain’s lecture added an emotional charge to his characterization of Hawaiian society in the immediate post-Civil War period. Whether or not Twain is being ironic (and it is often difficult to know) his language enables proponents of Hawaiian civilization and, later, annexation/assimilation by identifying Hawaiian culture as in need of American-style freedom.

Furthermore, Twain misrepresents the status of Hawaiian women in his lecture. He claims that prior to the intercession of white non-Native missionaries, Hawaiian women were degraded and enslaved to their husbands. This is yet another common trope in settler fictions about Native peoples. As Tai S. Edwards reminds us, when Europeans arrived in North America, they brought with them entrenched gender roles of masculine outside activity and corresponding female domestic passivity. “This social construction,” Edwards writes, “biased Europeans and Americans in their interactions with Indigenous people, producing misunderstandings. [Native] Women’s labor was just one piece of evidence, not only of their degraded condition, but also of an entire Indigenous society’s lack of civilization” (3). Contrary to such claims, Hawaiian women in the traditional era enjoyed freedoms and exercised power in ways equal to men. Like men, Hawaiian

women embarked on voyages across the Pacific and served in all classes of Hawaiian society, including as ali'i wahine, female ali'i, and kuhina nui, co-ruler with the mō'i (ruler over the archipelago). Keōpūolani and Ka'ahumanu are two examples of powerful Hawaiian women who held enormous power over Hawaiian society. Keōpūolani was the first of the “favored wāhine of Kamehameha I” and the mother of Liholiho and Kauikeaouli, later called Kamehameha II and III, respectively (Silva 32). After the death of Kamehameha I, Keōpūolani acting as ali'i wahine ended the traditional practice of 'ai kapu, “a system of rules that specified that men do all the cooking, that men and women eat separately, and that certain foods...be kapu [forbidden] to women” (28). Noenoe K. Silva also notes that Keōpūolani was among the earliest converts to Calvinism and “greatly influenced the conversion of other powerful ali'i” (32). Additionally, Silva calls the kuhina nui Ka'ahumanu “the most feared and revered of the queens” of Hawaii (32). After the death of Kamehameha I, Ka'ahumanu proclaimed herself joint ruler alongside Liholiho (Kamehameha II) and was another important ally to the early Christian missionaries (34). Contrary to Twain's claim that American missionaries “elevated” the wife of the common male maka'āinana “to a position of equality,” the establishment of capitalism in the islands imposed foreign, westernized gender roles. Nevertheless, Hawaiian women continued to exercise power and resist colonialism from within this containment. Silva provides copious examples of Hawaiian women's resistance across the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, including “veiled communications...through the composition of poems and songs that were published in

the newspaper,” “by becoming keepers of the knowledge of hula,” (which Twain, in the book version of *Roughing It*, calls “lascivious” and “demoralizing” [476-7]) “by sewing the national flag into quilts,” and by memorizing culturally significant mo’olelo (oral history/traditional stories) (Silva 8).

Twain’s erasure of Native presence is more obvious in his “Roughing It” lectures, which Twain performed in the U.S. during the 1871-2 lecture season and for English audiences in 1873 (Fatout 48).⁷⁵ Like his “Sandwich Islands” lectures, the “Roughing It” lectures exoticize the U.S. West for primarily Eastern audiences eager for both real information about the lands and peoples in other parts of the country and humorous presentations of regionalist types. Twain’s performances contributed to the consolidation of a national identity by diminishing for his audiences the vast distances between New England, New York, California, and Nevada and also by making the foreign West imaginatively palatable for Eastern cosmopolitans while remaining just exotic enough. American audiences in the East Coast were able to imagine the contested lands in the West as American space and to celebrate the demonstrable superiority of democratic

⁷⁵ Originally, in 1871-2 Twain toured another lecture where he reminisced about his fellow American humorist Artemus Ward, who had passed away from tuberculosis in 1867. However, he decided to give up that speech after newspapers leaked its content ahead of the tour, in Twain’s opinion spoiling the effect of the lecture’s humor for future audiences. To address this, Twain went against local advertisements and delivered another lecture pieced together from anecdotes and material from *Roughing It*, his forthcoming book about his experiences as a silver miner and reporter in Nevada Territory. The change of program had the dual advantages of providing Twain with fresh comedic material, which always energized him, as well as advertising his book. He had done this before, featuring material from *Innocents Abroad* for his “American Vandal” lecture tour (1868-69) and would do it again for his “Twins of Genius” (1884-5) and “Around the World” (1895), in which he presented material in progress from *Huck Finn* and *Following the Equator*, respectively.

values. The containment and erasure of Native presence in the West is key to this ideological effect.

Twain depicts the desert biome of the Great Basin as empty space, free of people, animals, and history. He begins his lecture by narrating his overland journey by stagecoach. “It was a long ride, day and night, through sagebrush, over sand and alkali plains, wolves and Indians, starvation and smallpox” (qtd. in Fatout 49).⁷⁶ This is the first of two times in the extant texts of the lecture that Twain mentions Native peoples. In the series of pairs that demonstrate the dangers of his adventure, “Indians” are linked with wolves, sand, and disease: just another part of a landscape hostile to (white nonnative) human survival. Curiously, after having named some of most notable flora and fauna of the region, Twain continues to characterize the land as “a desolate, barren, sterile, mountainous, unpeopled country, sagebrush and deserts of alkali” (49). He goes on to further equate the region with inhospitality and death: “You could scarcely cast your eye in any direction but your gaze would be met by one significant object...the projecting horns of a dried shrunken carcass of an ox, preaching eloquent sermons of the hardships suffered by those emigrants, where a soil refused to clothe its nakedness” (49-50). A clear natural order emerges here, where Twain defines “people” as white, nonnative Americans and “barrenness” and “sterility” as lacking in western-style agriculture.

In these opening lines, sagebrush is symbolic of the region’s aridity and infertility as well as its availability for American settlement. First, Twain compares the sagebrush

⁷⁶ Again, I am using Paul Fatout’s composite text of this lecture, based on contemporary newspaper reports. *Mark Twain Speaking*, pp. 48-63.

unfavorably to hay. Sagebrush can thrive in arid, low-moisture environments whereas Twain points out that hay is only found alongside the region's rivers, such as the Carson River, "which clothes the valley with refreshing and fragrant hay fields" (50). Hay's scarcity means that it is difficult to maintain livestock in the American style, causing "the valleys" (presumably different valleys) to be "paved with the remains of...cattle" (50). Unlike hay, sagebrush "as a vegetable for table use...is a failure," only good for making sickly tea that put Twain in mind of baneful home medicinal remedies (50). However, the plant is also "the emigrant's fast friend, his only resource for fuel" for fires and, furthermore, "it is food for the mules and donkeys," which allows "emigrant trains...to pull through with their loads where ox teams would lie down and die of starvation" (50-51). To this day, Northern Paiutes and other Indigenous peoples of the Great Basin use sagebrush in a variety of traditional and ceremonial ways. Traditionally, the Paiutes used it to produce clothing, shelter, baskets, nets, as fuel, and as a source of shade to rest from the sun, and other everyday necessities. Ignorant of or perhaps blind to its ecological and cultural importance to the Indigenous peoples of the land, Twain sees "a manifest Providence in the creation of the sagebrush" in the way emigrant settlers used it to facilitate the invasion of the West (50-51).

Twain's rhetorical purpose in emphasizing the environmental dangers of the overland trip is to amplify and lionize the presence of American civilization, such as it is, in these lands against all odds. His erasure of Native presence from the landscape supports this by making the landscape seem wild and open, available to American

enterprise and ennobling to those who can brave it. When he does acknowledge the presence of Indigenous peoples, Twain presents them as another natural trial to be overcome. The second time he does so is during an anecdote about his first days as territorial journalist. “Have you ever considered what straits reporters are sometimes pushed to in furnishing the public news?” he asks his audience. “Why, the first day items were so scarce, I couldn’t find an item anywhere” (58). Looking around for anything that could stir the public interest, Twain tells of his “luck” when a straggling emigrant train made its way into after an encounter with Native warriors on the road. Historian Michael L. Tate explains that, though the Indigenous Plains nations through whose territories the overland emigrants passed historically treated white travelers peacefully and compassionately, by the 1860s, oppressive governmental policies, more aggressive military presence, and ecological pressures caused by a greater and greater number of settlers moving into the region caused tribes like the Lakota and Cheyenne to mount more organized resistance to white emigration (xiv-xv). However, as Tate also points out, the press in the East and the West typically sensationalized emigrants’ encounters with Native bands, transforming sometimes petty squabbles into full-on slaughters of innocent white women and children (xi-xii). In his lecture, Twain illustrates this tendency. “Disappointed” that the travelers had not come in for more of a bloodbath, Twain invents one out of whole cloth: “I put that wagon train through the bloodiest Indian fight ever seen on the plains. They came out of that conflict covered with glory. The chief editor said he didn’t want any better reporter than I was. I said: ‘You just bring on your Indians

and fetch out your emigrants, leave me alone, and I will make the fur fly. I will hang a scalp on every sagebrush between here and the Missouri border”” (qtd. in Fatout 58). Here, Twain erases real Natives from the landscape and replaces them with (literal) fictions, bloodthirsty savages legible to his audience through hundreds of years of colonial propaganda.

Twain’s erasure of real Native presence in the “Sandwich Islands” and “Roughing It” lectures map these regions as places where white, American subjectivity can be honed and perfected.⁷⁷ As he depopulates these regions of Native Hawaiian and Great Basin peoples, he fills them again with colonial caricatures and white, nonnative American figures. Against the Indigenous caricatures, Twain’s Americans come to the foreground, representative figures of democratic values Twain wished to broadcast to his regional audiences. These values include hearty manliness; autonomy and self-reliance; transparency, authenticity, and honesty; a democratic love of freedom and hatred for despotism; and a midwestern practicality mixed with capitalist entrepreneurialism. Just as his erasure of Native presence hinges on the representation of debilitated, absurd, or violent Native bodies, Twain’s ideal “Americanism” is founded in his portrayal of white bodies in these spaces. These white bodies are variously strong and weak, shrewd and naïve, heroes and liars, but always indicative of a “moral” instructive of proper American values.

⁷⁷ I choose the verb “map” here to point to its ideological and political opposition to the (re)mapping practiced by Sarah Winnemucca Hopkins and other Native activists.

An instance of this can be seen in the character of the sugar plantation owner from California in the humorous anecdote at the beginning of this section. In Twain's joke, the planter is initially sympathetic towards the death of the Native Hawaiian worker's mother and gives him leave to bury her. However, he grows bewildered and resentful as the worker's other mothers continue to die and he continually asks for leave from work to bury them. The anecdote satisfies Twain's audiences' voyeuristic desire to know the "peculiarit[ies] of the Kanakas" (8) but here the planter's character also reflects important cultural values. For one, the man's emigration to California and opening of a sugar plantation demonstrates American entrepreneurialism. Initially, the entire point of Twain's trip to Hawai'i, sponsored by the Sacramento *Call*, was to research and report back on economic opportunities in the islands available to Californian citizens. Translated from Twain's travel letters to his humorous lectures, the planter becomes less indicative of Hawai'i's economic availability than illustrative of the kind of honest yet practical American work ethic that succeeds in the Pacific environment. In this anecdote, the Native worker is meant to stand in for the absurdity and corruption that Twain frequently satirized in his lampoons of modern industrial society. Ironically transposing the cutthroat economic politics of Gilded Age America onto the laconic island culture, Twain characterizes Native Hawaiians as shrewd businessmen and able liars. The Kanaka, he says, "is a born trader, and he will swindle you if he can. He will lie straight through, from the first word to the last. Not such lies as you and I tell, but gigantic lies, lies that awe you with their grandeur, lies that stun you with their imperial impossibility.

He will sell you a molehill at the market price of a mountain, and will lie it up to an altitude that will make it cheap at the money” (8). Twain’s account of the Hawaiians’ keen business sense frames the Native workers’ “custom of calling any woman mother they take a liking to” not as a kinship practice but as a shrewd technique of getting one over on the boss (8). However, the California planter sees through the worker’s apparent ruse and fires him because his “stock of mothers...interferes with business” (9). Sympathetic and fair but not naïve, the planter embodies for Twain’s audiences the proper values befitting a successful and morally upright American man of business.⁷⁸

Other instances of exemplary Americanness in the islands are indirect. Describing Native Hawaiians’ love of dogs, Twain makes clear that he does not mean “the great Newfoundland or the stately mastiff” associated with Euroamerican cultural traditions, “but a species of little mean, contemptible cur that a white man would condemn to death on general principles” (9). Different dog breeds here become markers of racial difference and encode another instance of Twain’s belief in America’s inevitable eclipse of Hawai’i’s Indigenous population. Twain’s depiction of the Natives’ treatment of their dogs further racializes them: “They feed this dog, pet him, take ever so much care of him, and then cook and eat him” (9). Pet-keeping arose as a popular practice in the mid-nineteenth century, and Twain here engages in discourses about pets that policed Victorian social and moral norms by displacing them onto human-animal relationships.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ Of course, there was little “morally right” about American planters’ historical abuse of Indigenous and exogenous immigrant labor on Hawaiian sugar plantations. Rohrer, *Staking Claim*, 61-62.

⁷⁹ See, for instance, Harriet Ritvo, *The Animal Estate: The English and Other Creatures in the Victorian Age*, Harvard UP, 1987; Sarah Amato, *Beastly Possessions: Animals in Victorian Consumer Culture*,

The shock and disgust Twain expresses at the Native Hawaiians' mistreatment of their dogs registers a moral judgement that suggests the Hawaiians violate certain western social codes of affection located in the special bond between man and dog: "I couldn't do that. I would rather go hungry for two days than devour an old personal friend in that way" (9-10). This is another joke at the expense of the Natives' "peculiar ways," yet Twain's identification with his audiences on the stage suggests that this is another way in which white, American values are superior to Native ones. He leads members of his "mainland" audiences to identify with him against the Natives' practices, indirectly locating American values in the observation of proper affection due towards "old personal friends."

Farcical depictions of white Americans' failures to live up to proper values further underscore such moral lessons. After proclaiming that he could never himself eat his pet dog, Twain acknowledges that "many a white citizen of those islands throws aside his prejudices and takes his dinner off one of those puppies—and after all it is only our cherished American sausage with the mystery removed" (10). The punchline humorously deflates the high moral tone of his rebuke—and sets up the aforementioned bit where he offers to perform an example of cannibalism for the audience—by drawing incongruous equivalences between Hawaiian dog and American sausage. It is possible to read this satirical moment as anticipating later muckrakers' critiques of American corporate

University of Toronto Press, 2015; Monica Flegel, *Pets and Domesticity in Victorian Literature and Culture: Animality, Queer Relations, and the Victorian Family*, Routledge, 2015; and Philip Howell, *At Home and Astray: The Domestic Dog in Victorian Britain*, University of Virginia Press, 2015.

corruption, such as Upton Sinclair's expose of the meatpacking industry in *The Jungle* (1905). However, it is more legible within the earlier colonial discourse that voiced a fear of the dissolution of white bodies and western cultural values in Native spaces. As Richard Slotkin has demonstrated, the literature and culture of the early republic imagined "the solitary, Indian-like hunter of the deep woods" as its "most significant, most emotionally compelling myth-hero," embodied in figures like Daniel Boone and James Fenimore Cooper's Hawkeye (21). The dark flip side was the white man who overidentified with the Native and abandoned the national quest of civilizing and settling the "wilderness." In this moment, Twain deploys the figure of the white man "gone native" as a joke, but since such a figure registers in the popular American imagination as a transgression of racial and national boundaries, the joke also serves to reinforce the idea of the superiority of western values over Indigenous customs.

His replacement of real Natives with fictional "Indians" allows Twain to represent the West as a dangerous proving ground for American masculinity. Elsewhere in the "Roughing It" lecture, he vacates sacred Indigenous sites of Native history and presents it as free and open natural space available for Americans' physical and spiritual growth. For thousands of years prior to the arrival of white explorers, the Wá·šiw (Washoe) people lived in the lands around dáʔaw, "the lake." Traditionally, the Wá·šiw followed different food sources according to cycles of seasonal availability. "Summers were spent at dáʔaw and all parts of the territory. Large Cutthroat Trout lived in all the lakes and streams along with freshwater clams and other fish once plentiful, sustained the people

throughout the year,” while in the fall the Wá·šiw gathered t’ágim (pinion nuts) and málun (acorns) from the surrounding mountains and hunted rabbit and other game (“Washoe History”). dáʔaw and its tributaries were an equally important source of food, providing Large Cutthroat Trout, freshwater clams, and other staples of the Wá·šiw diet (“Washoe History”). Today, many Wá·šiw still live in the area around dáʔaw and continue to harvest traditional plants “for practical and medicinal uses” (“Washoe History”).

In the “Roughing It” lecture and elsewhere in his writings, Twain calls dáʔaw Lake Tahoe, the name by which the sacred body of water is known to most Americans. In a flight of unironic eloquence that Twain and his contemporary reviewers refer to as his “word paintings,” Twain celebrates the lake’s natural splendor, emphasizing its still and quiet emptiness. He invites his audience to envision the scene:

There it is, a sheet of perfectly pure, limpid water, lifted up 6,300 feet above the sea—a vast oval mirror framed in a wall of snow-clad mountain peaks, above the common world. Solitude is king, and in that realm calm silence is brooding always. It is the home of rest and tranquility and gives emancipation and relief from the griefs and plodding cares of life. (Fatout 53)

In his discussion of what he calls “the aesthetic of Mark Twain the *flâneur*,” James E. Caron points out that Twain’s “word paintings” reveal a “very American...privileging of what is ‘natural,’ based upon a perceived beauty in the natural world” (370).

Reconfiguring Caron’s language slightly, I would add that such moments in Twain’s

lectures go beyond reflecting an American aesthetic; as in other examples of travel writing, Twain's word paintings present literary fictions of the landscape vacated of human presence and made ideologically available for the privilege of American self-making.

The Wá·šiw attest that dáʔaw is "the center of the Wá·šiw world...both geographically and spiritually" ("Washoe History") but here the absence of Native bodies enables the renewal of American ones. Twain's tells his audiences about a "shadow" of a man who "had come [to Lake Tahoe] deliberately to die" and to find "what comfort he may whilst life ebbed away" (Fatout 54). The man's illness is never specified, but it is marked by a peculiarly morbid obsession with the accoutrements of death. Twain says that the man "brought along a plan of his private graveyard, and pictures and drawings of different kinds of coffins and hearses, and such things; and he never did anything but sit around and study that graveyard, and figure at coffins...trying to make up his mind which kind he liked best, or which kind would be most becoming" (54). Infirmary and death are thus associated with aesthetics, mass consumer culture, and a kind of overcivilization that comically and perversely manifests in the transformation of the man's obsession with what, in *Walden*, Thoreau dismisses as "the superfluities"—the meaningless, material comforts of life—into meaningless, material comforts of death (14). The "pure, magnificent air of Lake Tahoe" not only cures the man's physical infirmity, but these other afflictions as well. Twain says when he next saw the man, he "was chasing mountain sheep over mountains seven miles high, with a Sharps' rifle" and "had used up

his graveyard plans and things for wadding and had sent home for some more” (Fatout 54). The man’s miraculously renewed health and vigor promise a similar return to authenticity at the national level. Just as the wild purity of Lake Tahoe’s vistas “emancipates” the unnamed man from his unhealthy lethargy, so does American settlers’ expansion into these places promise a like spiritual renewal for the postbellum nation.

There is an interesting coda to this discussion of Twain’s word painting of Lake Tahoe. Across the nineteenth century, many white officials presumed to bestow new names upon dáʔaw as they each sought to inscribe American sovereignty upon the land. In 1844, John C. Frémont named the lake Lake Bonpland when he encountered it on an expedition through the Sierra Nevada mountains in which he was guided, in part, by Sarah Winnemucca Hopkins’s grandfather, who was called Truckee. Then, in 1853, it was identified on official California state documents as Lake Bigler, named after John Bigler, the state’s third governor. In 1862, a survey conducted by the Department of the Interior named it Lake Tahoe, which the cartographer, William H. Knight understood to be a Native word meaning “water in a high place” (South Lake Tahoe Chamber of Commerce). The name was still not settled when, in 1869, Mark Twain expressed his vitriolic hatred for the name “Tahoe” at length in *Innocents Abroad*. The passage is worth quoting in its entirety:

Sorrow and misfortune overtake the legislature that still from year to year permits Tahoe to retain its unmusical cognomen! Tahoe! It suggests no crystal waters, no picturesque shores, no sublimity. Tahoe for a sea in the clouds: a sea

that has character and asserts it in solemn calms at times, at times in savage storms; a sea whose royal seclusion is guarded by a cordon of sentinel peaks that lift their frosty fronts nine thousand feet above the level world; a sea whose every aspect is impressive, whose belongings are all beautiful, whose lonely majesty types the Deity!

Tahoe means grasshoppers. It means grasshopper soup. It is Indian, and suggestive of Indians. They say it is Pi-ute [sic]—possibly it is Digger. I am satisfied it was named by the Diggers—those degraded savages who roast their dead relatives, then mix the human grease and ashes of bones with tar, and “gaum” it thick all over their heads and foreheads and ears, and go caterwauling about the hills and call it mourning. These are the gentry that named the Lake.

People say that Tahoe means “Silver Lake”—“Limpid Water”—“Falling Leaf.” Bosh. It means grasshopper soup, the favorite dish of the Digger tribe,—and of the Pi-utes [sic] as well. It isn’t worth while, in these practical times, for people to talk about Indian poetry—there never was any in them—except in the Fenimore Cooper Indians. But they are an extinct tribe that never existed. I know the Noble Red Man. I have camped with the Indians; I have been on the warpath with them, taken part in the chase with them—for grasshoppers; helped them steal cattle; I have roamed with them, scalped them, had them for breakfast. I would gladly eat the whole race if I had a chance. (205)

Fascinatingly, whereas two years later Twain's romantic flights require the erasure of Native bodies, here the very name Tahoe triggers a barely containable irruption of bastardized Native history and continued presence in the land. Surprisingly, given his usual comedic style, Twain is here seemingly unable to control the incongruity between dáʔaw's natural sublimity, rightly reflective of an imperial Christian God, and the radically different Indigenous traditions contained in the lake's name. He is repulsed by visions of Native funereal customs (perhaps a version of Wá·šiw or Northern Paiute cremation) and dietary habits (Northern Paiutes and other Great Basin tribes did in fact hunt grasshopper, an important source of protein in their seasonal foodways). As colonial maps fail and Indigenous place names and history begin to pour through the cracks, it is as if Twain's carefully curated literary self begins to crumble at the level of language. The whole passage ends in a bizarre, orgiastic image of cannibalistic violence where punctuation barely separates the headlong rush of dependent clauses. Boundaries begin to blur as personal and national identity categories of Clemens, Twain, Native, white, civilized, and savage all collapse till it is no longer clear where Clemens ends and the Indian begins.

This moment is telling for the way it reveals the foundational principles of settler colonialism. Twain was a meticulous stylist and editor and was talented at cultivating a particular version of himself to elicit specific reactions from his audience. What, then, is his intended effect here? What does his manufactured loss of composure signal to us, his audience? I believe it signals, as I have argued here, that Twain's work expressed the

notion that American identity was incompatible with the continued presence of Indigenous peoples in the land. Indeed, it requires the absolute consumption of the Native for its own coherence. Continued Native presence, even in the Anglicized and mistranslated trace of an Indigenous language, is enough to destabilize the entire fabric of settler reality that is predicated on the elimination of the Native and the assumption of white, non-Native indigeneity. Mark Twain, like the settler state, is wholly a construct of language and narrative. All three begin to break down when failure of the state to eliminate the Native is acknowledged.

CHAPTER 4

REFUSAL AND SELF-DEFINITION IN THE DIALECT HUMOR OF ALEXANDER POSEY AND PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

From its beginnings in the early nineteenth century, U.S. dialect writing has been associated with humor. Dialect writing, the transformation of the spoken vernacular of certain geographically, ethnically, or culturally distinct groups into textual aesthetics, enjoyed immense popularity among social and political satirists as a way to mask their criticisms as common “horse sense” or “crackerbox philosophy.”⁸⁰ Putting one’s derogations of state authorities or cultural elites into the mouths of farmers, immigrants, housewives, or formerly enslaved people concealed the critique by making light of it. Furthermore, the ironic distance of the speaker’s positionality put their critique nearly beyond the reach of retaliatory state power. As popular dialect writer Finely Peter Dunne explains, “while it might be dangerous to call an alderman a thief in English no one could sue if a comic Irishman denounced the statesman as a thief” (qtd. in Jones 37). As with medieval fools, American dialect humor enjoyed a certain safety in its performance of naivety and buffoonery. However, the guise cut both ways. Many nineteenth and early-twentieth-century writers employed dialect to perpetuate harmful racial and ethnic stereotypes. For instance, blackface minstrelsy, in which white, male performers would

⁸⁰ Chapter 2 of Gavin Jones’s *Strange Talk*, “The Cult of the Vernacular,” provides an excellent overview of the diverse political work of dialect literature throughout the nineteenth century. See *Strange Talk*, 37-63. For early studies of the “crackerbox philosopher” tradition in American humor, see Jennette Tandy, *Crackerbox Philosophers in American Humor and Satire*, Columbia UP, 1925 and Walter Blair, *Horse Sense in American Humor, From Benjamin Franklin to Ogden Nash*, Russell & Russell, 1962.

“blacken up” their faces with burnt cork and adopt “Black dialect,” was one of the most popular entertainment forms in the nineteenth century. The demeaning caricatures of minstrelsy became so ingrained in white consciousness that even Black intellectuals such as W. E. B. Du Bois found themselves obliged to refute them at the outset of their reform messages. Thus capable of bolstering oppression and voicing resistance, “dialect,” as Gavin Jones insists, “was much more than a humorous gimmick” (37).

This chapter analyzes the politics at work in the humorous dialect writings of two of the nineteenth century’s most prolific writers of dialect, the Muscogee (Creek) writer, poet, and journalist Alexander Lawrence Posey (1873-1908), and African American writer, poet, journalist, and dramatist Paul Laurence Dunbar (1872-1906). Posey’s most famous dialect writings are the *Fus Fixico Letters*, a series of seventy-three letters, published between 1902 and 1908 in the *Eufaula Indian Journal*, in which Posey satirizes Muscogee Creek National and Indian Territory politics. Paul Laurence Dunbar earned widespread fame and notoriety for his poetry, novels, and songs written in a performative version of African American dialect. There is some benefit to reading Posey and Dunbar together. The two have striking similarities. They are almost exact contemporaries, meaning that not only did they come of age and reach literary distinction around the same time, but they also faced similar pressures from being non-white writers in Gilded Age America. Of course, these pressures were different for Natives and African Americans; for instance, Posey did not have to navigate the treacherous conventions of minstrelsy in composing his art as Dunbar did. Nevertheless, the fact that Posey and Dunbar wrote in

the same medium in the same cultural and literary milieu has meant that discussions of their works have tended to be dominated by binary systems of literary and political valuation inherited from the end of the nineteenth century. Namely, Posey's dialect writing has typically been interpreted on a scale ranging from conservatism or "traditionalism" to progressivism, the terms of which derive from non-Native perspectives on the history of Indigenous resistance and/or adaptation to settler colonialist policies. Likewise, criticism of Dunbar's dialect poetry oscillates between denouncement of Dunbar's perceived complicity with minstrel tropes and a subversive linguistic masking cloaking his critique of white racism.

Both schemas—traditionalism vs. progressivism and complicity vs. masking—are historically contingent and framed by the politics of recognition and assimilation. The traditionalist/progressivist binary refers to political positions that some Native peoples adopted in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in response to efforts by the U.S. government to dissolve the sovereignty of the tribal governments and assimilate Native peoples into the fabric of the United States as American citizens. "Progressives" were those Native individuals who supported assimilationist policies, while "traditionalists" were those who did not. As expressions of a positionality with respect to the United States rather than toward Indigenous culture or questions of sovereignty, these terms, as Muscogee (Creek) literary critic Craig S. Womack writes, have little relevance to actual Native politics (133). According to Womack, labeling Posey a "progressive" reduces the complexity of his politics and his aesthetics, both of which were deeply influenced by

Muscogee (Creek) culture (135). Similarly, the complicity/masking binary that has determined so much criticism of Dunbar's dialect poetry entraps Dunbar within a positionality to an early-twentieth-century politics of racial uplift, which is itself overdetermined by African Americans' ability to conciliate white society's vision of Black bourgeois respectability. Forced to either reify offensive white stereotypes or don the mask of subversive resistance, Dunbar cannot escape some relation to whiteness. In always referring their subjects to some subjectivity within white society, these binaries imagine whiteness as omnipresent and all-encompassing.

My readings situate Posey and Dunbar outside these binaries by analyzing their humorous dialect writings not as reactions to white forms or logics but as positive explorations and expressions of kinship and joy. Kinship networks describe the relationships that obtain within Native communities among families, home-groups, clans, towns, and nations. For thousands of years prior to colonization, these relationships organized Indigenous social life and government. Though many Indigenous peoples track kinship and tribal belonging through blood (e.g. Muscogees, Cherokees, and many other nations determine clan membership matrilineally), kinship does not require blood relation and thus transcends the non-Native, colonial construct of "blood quantum" that racializes tribal membership.⁸¹ The politics of blood quantum infuse the *Fus Fixico* Letters in the

⁸¹ The 1887 General Allotment Act, also known as the Dawes Act, sought to force Native assimilation by dividing or "allotting" Native reservation lands into private property. Prior to the passage of the Act, reservation lands were held in common by members of Native nations, and legislated by tribal governments whose sovereignty over the lands was protected through various treaties between these nations and the United States. Initially, the Dawes Act required tribal governments to create tribal rolls, official lists of every citizen of the nation. However, the Curtis Act of 1898 invalidated the Dawes Rolls and replaced them

main characters' identification of themselves and others as "fullbloods." Yet, reading the letters within the context of Posey's other, non-dialect writings and paying attention to his lifelong immersion in Muscogee culture shows how kinship, more than blood quantum, informs the political satires of the Fus Fixico Letters. Rather than present the "fullbloods" Hotgun, Toofpafka Micco, and Chitto Harjo as obstacles to Muscogee progress, Posey's dialect humor, written in "fullblood" dialect voice, points to the endurance of Muscogee culture within kinship networks.

Specifically, I argue below that Posey's writings are marked by the recurring image of the sofky pot. For Posey, sofky, a traditional but divisive dish, is synonymous with his youth, tradition, and Muscogee identity. As the nexus of images of Muscogee labor, domesticity, and tradition, what Timothy Petete and Craig Womack call the "Creek

with federal enrollment lists, based on data collected by hundreds of BIA bureaucrats and field workers. Posey was employed as one the latter.

The U.S. government's official tribal enrollment lists are based on the racializing idea of blood quantum. Blood quantum is a settler notion based in the ideology of race. It purports to measure an individual's Native ancestry, or "blood," and was used by U.S. policymakers to determine who they would consider legitimate citizens of Native tribal nations for the purpose of allotting private property and, later, for managing individuals' claims to federal support programs designed for Native Americans.

Prior to the eighteenth century and well into the nineteenth, tribal governments determined "citizenship"—itself a settler concept—according to complex Indigenous notions of belonging, such as kinship. However, as many Native nations adopted constitutional governments in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, some adopted enrollment policies that reflected the Western discourse of blood. The Native Governance Center attributes many contemporary Native nations' observance of blood quantum policies to certain stipulations within the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934, which required tribal governments to include citizenship criteria based in blood quantum in their national constitutions.

For more on blood quantum and its complex history in relation to tribal governance and citizenship, see Melissa Meyer, "American Indian Blood Quantum Requirements," in *Over the Edge: Remapping the American West*, edited by V. Matsumoto and B. Allmendinger, University of California Press, 1999, pp. 231-49; Paul Spruhan, "A Legal History of Blood Quantum in Federal Indian Law to 1935," *South Dakota Law Review*, vol. 51, no. 1, 2006, pp. 1-50; Stremlau, *Sustaining the Cherokee Family*; Kimberly Tallbear, *Native American DNA: Tribal Belonging and the False Promise of Genetic Science*, University of Minnesota Press, 2013; and the Native Governance Center's "Blood Quantum and Sovereignty: A Guide," available at <https://nativegov.org/resources/blood-quantum-and-sovereignty-a-guide/>.

literary sofkey pot” expresses the continuing importance of vital kinship networks as the fertile ground for Muscogee political writing (Petete and Womack 10). Much like the common pot that, as Lisa Brooks explains, symbolizes the vast network of relations by which Indigenous peoples in the Northeast understand the ethics of mutual obligation that govern Native space, the sofky pot represents Muscogee space, a locale, defined by the values of hospitality, reciprocity, debate, and consensus. Humor emerges in their councils not merely as an aesthetic choice, but as an expression of Muscogee identity.

Alongside my reading of kinship in the Fus Fixico Letters, I offer fresh readings of selected humorous dialect poems by Paul Laurence Dunbar. I read these poems as politically-informed artistic explorations of Black joy. In *The Politics of Black Joy: Zora Neale Hurston and Neo-Abolitionism* (2021), Lindsey Stewart extrapolates from Hurston’s essays on Southern Black life and folkways a political theory of Black joy that transcends what Stewart calls “the dialectic of Black enchantment and Black tragedy” (6). The dialectic describes the way that Black emancipatory politics since the nineteenth century has been determined by “the abolitionist’s staging of Black sorrow and the minstrel’s show of Black joy” where both positions presume “that Black life is tragic without white intervention” (7). As Stewart points out in her study, the representation of Black joy articulates a position beyond this dialectic by privileging a politics of refusal rather than of resistance, echoing calls from activists in Native American and Indigenous Studies such as Audre Simpson. The performance of Black joy rather than Black resistance entails a shift from a relationality to white oppression toward a “flourishing

relation of the self to the self (or, in the case of Black joy, how Black folks relate to each other)” (9). I argue here that the dialectic of Black enchantment and Black tragedy Stewart describes also subtends the discourses of racial uplift that determined much African American political activism in Dunbar’s time. Moreover, the dialectic aptly describes the polarities of opinion within criticism of Dunbar’s dialect poetry, which I describe below. Interpreting Dunbar’s dialect poems as performances of Black joy rather than minstrel shows (subversive or otherwise) allows us to understand Dunbar as an artist and activist interested in depicting Black life in modes other than oppression. Furthermore, such a perspective gives us new understanding of the role of humor in Dunbar’s dialect. Rather than a racialized trait of Black character or a performative mask, humor here *is* the sign of Black joy, an aesthetic that encodes “Joy and culture in the language” (Wilson).

My analyses of Posey and Dunbar are based on close readings of selections of the two writers’ dialect humor and other, non-dialect texts that inform the political work of their dialect writing. For Posey, I focus mainly on the political satire and the depiction of kinship in the *Fus Fixico* Letters, which I contextualize alongside representations of kinship in his journals, particularly the *Journal of the Creek Orphan Asylum* (1897-1900) and the *Journal of the Creek Enrollment Field Party* (1905-06) and his orations and essays, particularly his short story “Chinnubbie and the Owl” (1893). The thoughts and ideas expressed in Posey’s journals and essays shed considerable light on his immersion in Muscogee culture and the kinship networks that defined his life during the allotment

era and the writing of the Fus Fixico Letters.⁸² My section on Dunbar focuses on the dialect poems “When de Co’n Pone’s Hot” and “The Party.” My choices here are intentional, since William Dean Howells chose to excerpt these poems at length in his famous review of Dunbar’s *Majors and Minors* (1896) in *Harper’s Weekly* (Jarrett 227-30). To Howells, these were the poems that purported to demonstrate “the simple, sensuous, joyous nature of [the Black] race” and to showcase Dunbar as “the pure African type” (qtd. in Jarrett 227, 225). It should be noted that Howells’s appraisal of “the joyous nature of the race” differs greatly from Stewart’s idea of political Black joy. Howells refers to the artificial joy of the minstrel stage and plantation tradition, white fictions which wielded nostalgia to erase Black suffering (Stewart 7). That kind of joy is always a sign of white oppression. My readings of these specific poems aim to free Dunbar from the racially essentialist terms that have framed debate about his work since Howells and to show Dunbar’s appreciation for humor as an emancipatory, not a conciliatory, gesture.

⁸² The “allotment era” refers to the period from about 1887 to 1935 when Native nations withstood intense efforts from the U.S. government to assimilate Native individuals into U.S. culture. The beginning of this period is typically associated with the passage of the Dawes Act (1887) which began the process of transforming tribally-held reservation lands into private property, also known as allotment. During this period, the U.S. government passed several other policies aimed at forcibly acculturating Native peoples, including kidnapping Native children and enrolling them against their will in boarding schools.

The Sofky Pot: Kinship and Community in the Fus Fixico Letters

In Fus Fixico Letter No. 39 (January 1904), Posey's "full blood" characters⁸³ Hotgun, Toofpafka Micco, Wolf Warrior and Kono Harjo celebrate the New Year together at Kono Harjo's home in a scene of Muscogee domesticity:

Well, so Kono Harjo's wife was made some more sour bread and some more suck-ko-nip-kee and some blue dumplings and some more good hickory nut sofky, and some old time Indian dishes like that, for New Year; and Kono Harjo was sent word to Hotgun and Wolf Warrior and Tookpafka Micco to come over and help eat it up so he could throw the scraps out to his squirrel dogs. (Posey, *Fus Fixico* 152)

This scene precedes the four Muscogee men's characteristically humorous chat about the changes wrought in Muscogee lands by white encroachment ("Well, so they was lots a changes been made up to Muskogee and you couldn't hardly locate yourself if you didn't had a policeman" [153].) Scenes such as this have predominantly been read as part of Posey's agenda within the Fus Fixico Letters to portray full blood Muscogees as backwards-looking detriments to progress. However, this perspective misreads Posey by

⁸³ The settler discourse of blood permeates Posey's writing and that of his contemporaries, such as Charley Gibson, George Washington Grayson, Chitto Harjo, and Chief Pleasant Porter. Designations of full and mixed blood seem problematic to modern readers, but Indian Territory writers used the terms frequently and (usually) non-derogatorily. In the allotment era, the labels fullblood and mixed blood became nearly synonymous with political positions. Fullbloods were typically considered rural and conservative, resistant to change and antagonistic towards the United States's assimilatory policies. Mixed bloods, those of Native and white heritage, were typically considered urbane, progressive, and talented in the "white" realms of politics and business. Throughout this chapter I follow Posey in identifying Fus Fixico, Hotgun, and the other characters of the Fus Fixico Letters as "full blood," though I try to avoid the ready assumption that such characters and communities automatically hold conservative political opinions.

constructing an ironic distance from his “full blood” subjects that does not accurately reflect either the facts of Posey’s biography or the drift of his political satire.

Scenes such as the one above demonstrate how Posey couched his satires of Muscogee and Indian Territory politics within a network of Muscogee kinship represented here by the image of the sofky pot. Sofky (also spelled “sofkey” or “sofkee”) is a Muscogee dish prepared by cooking cracked corn in water and lye. The result is a soupy kind of grits that varies in consistency from something like porridge to a liquid one drinks. Depending on methods of preparation and how long it has been left to ferment, sofky can be very sour and is regarded as a delicacy among the Muscogee, though some don’t like it (Petete and Womack 10). Despite its strong smell and taste, sofky is a staple of Muscogee hospitality. According to Pamela S. Wallace writing for the *Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*, sofky “is served in most any setting where food is shared, such as in homes and at various community gatherings” (Wallace). Timothy Petete (Seminole) and Craig S. Womack trace the sofky pot as a recurring motif seemingly “universal among Creek writers” (9). For Posey and later Muscogee poets Thomas E. Moore and Acee Blue Eagle, the preparation and consumption of sofky is an opportunity to make fun of Muscogee men’s laziness, yet it also “creates a major sense of place and scene” (9-10).

I argue that, as the nexus of images of Muscogee labor, domesticity, and tradition, what Petete and Womack call the “Creek literary sofkey pot” expresses the continuing importance of vital kinship networks as the fertile ground for Muscogee political writing.

Much like the common pot that, as Lisa Brooks explains, illustrates the complex interplay of relationships through which Northeastern Indigenous peoples comprehend the ethical imperative of mutual obligation that shapes Native space, the sofky pot represents a both Muscogee space, a locale, defined by the Muscogee values of hospitality, reciprocity, debate, and consensus. The sofky pot becomes another kind of talwa, a Muscogee town, the basic unit of Muscogee governance and sovereignty and, as they gather around it, Fus Fixico and Posey's other "full bloods" partake in the rituals of council that have guided Muscogees for generations. In conversation they deliberate the future of the Muscogee Nation and determine their stance on national issues that, through their debate, are revealed to be imminently local concerns. More often than not, their councils reach a consensus of refusal, a determination to continue to live outside the dictates of both U.S. and Muscogee Nation policies in the alternative society of Muscogee kinship.

The dialect humor of the Fus Fixico Letters looks different from the perspective of the sofky pot. The Letters are written in a Muscogee English dialect that Posey and his contemporary Muscogee journalist and writer Charles Gibson called "Este Charte" (in Mvskoke, *stijaati* or "red man") English (Womack 136). Whereas other forms of literary dialect in vogue across the continent at that time held their regional or ethnic subjects at a distance through the technique of the frame narrative, Fus Fixico's first-person reportage of his friends' conversations in Este Charte English conjures for his readers "an extremely strong sense of place" and community (136). Previous scholarship that has emphasized the political satire of the Letters tends to overlook the local scene in favor of

the national. The Letters' comedy rises from conversations between "full-blood" Muscogee friends Hotgun, Toofpafka Micco, Kono Harjo, Wolf Warrior, and Fus Fixico and their thoughts on Indian Territory politics. While sometimes Fus and his friends "bump up against the changing times," their conservatism is rarely the butt of the joke (136). Instead, the groups' jokes and barbs are primarily a means of exchange: the social language that constructs the Muscogee community. Viewing Posey's dialect humor this way does not mean that the Letters construct Muscogee community only in antagonistic relation to outside politics. On the contrary, the Letters do not revolve around their political satire; the humor serves as the means to keep the fabric of the community strong.

Finally, I contend, that viewing the Letters from the vantage point of the sofky pot provides a new view of Posey's Muscogee politics, one not determined by a limiting tension between tradition and so-called progress. In *Red on Red* (1999) Craig Womack delineated a new, "more Muskogee-centric portrait of Posey," one that emphasizes his "immersion in Creek nationalism, history, politics, and culture" (132). Womack's version of Posey is a complicated figure: a champion of Muscogee sovereignty, yet one who believes firmly in the promise of progress for Indian Territory and who remains "ambivalent...about Creek traditionalism" (134). My focus on the Posey of the sofky pot builds on Womack's portrayal by investigating more thoroughly Posey's multi-faceted portrayals of Muscogee traditionalism in and beyond the Fus Fixico Letters. What emerges is a portrait of Posey that refuses to be defined only on a spectrum of non-

Native-defined progressivism, and whose values are those of kinship, reciprocity, and justice for Muscogee communities.

I begin by demonstrating the recurrence of the sofky pot motif in Posey's early writings while enrolled as a student at Bacone Indian University. Then, I present new readings of some of the Fus Fixico Letters emphasizing the internal, community-facing focus of their putatively outward-facing political satire. The Letters, I show, are not only about lampooning Indian Territory politics; they also seek to sustain Muscogee community through a turbulent moment in the people's history. Finally, I conclude this section with a brief analysis of Posey's use of the Este Charte dialect and its relation to his community-focused politics.

Posey's character and sense of humor developed out of his tight-knit Muscogee kinship network. As a youth, he spent his days among the Upper Creek communities of Tuskegee and Bald Hill, in Indian Territory (Littlefield 11-21).⁸⁴ His mother, Nancy Posey, recited to Alexander the traditional Muscogee stories, such as the misadventures of the trickster Chufee. "According to her children [Nancy] was a gifted storyteller who

⁸⁴ The town, or talwa in Mvskoke, is traditionally the principle governing unit of Muscogee society. Prior to their deportation to Indian Territory, Muscogee towns were politically and geographically divided into Upper and Lower Towns. As Muscogee-white encounters increased across the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries through trade, war, and diplomacy, the Lower Towns developed a reputation for welcoming more Euro-American influences than citizens in the Upper Towns, which caused Lower Towns to be considered more "progressive" and the Upper Towns more "conservative" or traditionalist. After clans, Muscogee political and social identity was most closely tied to one's town, so when Muscogee emigrants lit new fires in Indian Territory and established new towns, they bore the names of the old towns in the Muscogee homelands east of the Mississippi. These towns retained their status as Upper or Lower Towns in these new lands regardless of any real geographic relationship to each other. Thus, Tuskegee, was an Upper Town due to its traditionalist leanings while Eufaula, a little to the North, was considered a Lower Town. For more about Muscogee social organization before and after Removal, see Womack, *Red on Red*, ch. 1 and Debo, *The Road to Disappearance*, chs. 1, 3-4.

occupied their time during winter nights with tales of their people's creation, migration, and history and of the legendary personages and animals that peopled that mystery world of long ago" (24). Nancy was a member of the prominent Wind Clan and since clan membership is passed down matrilineally among the Muscogees, Alexander belonged to the Wind Clan, too. In one version of the Muscogee story about the creation of the clans as recorded by non-Native historian Angie Debo, long ago a heavy fog descended upon the land and swallowed up everything. As the people wandered lost in the fog, they bumped into each other and grasped hands, thus forming clans. Sometimes these groups would encounter an animal in the fog and took it as their clan totem. When a wind from the east finally dispelled the fog, the easternmost group of people who didn't have an animal and who were the first to see the land and sky became the Wind clan (15).⁸⁵

At Bald Hill, Posey grew up within a few miles of many of his maternal relatives and clan fellows (Littlefield 35). Throughout Alexander's childhood, the Posey family attended services at the Tuskegee town Baptist church, where Nancy's father, Alexander's grandfather, Pahosa Harjo Phillips, was pastor (34). Clan and family members traveled from miles around for weekly services, gathering in great numbers in vast encampments around the church grounds (34). In this setting, young Alexander socialized with his kin and heard hymns and prayers recited in Mvskoke, the Muscogee language. No doubt he also turned his talent for trickery to teasing the assembled

⁸⁵ Though it is difficult to find sources on the significance of specific clans in Muscogee social and ceremonial life, several sources attest allusively to the Wind clan's power and prestige and its importance in Muscogee national politics. For examples, see Debo, *Road to Disappearance* 14 and John Walton Caughey, *McGillivray of the Creeks*, University of Oklahoma Press, 1938, 8.

churchgoers, a favorite pastime among the Muscogees (39). Later Muskogee poet Louis Little Coon Oliver remembers attending “Indian church gatherings” in his youth in the Muskogee town of Okfuskee, Oklahoma, where he noticed that the preachers would often go off together under the pretense of having intense religious conversations but were often only telling jokes (53).⁸⁶ Alexander and his adopted brother, Tom Sulphur, were notorious for their practical jokes played at the expense of family and neighbors alike (26-7). In addition to this clan society, Posey was also influenced by his father, Hence Posey’s, tall tales embellished from real life and featuring neighbors and personalities from around Bald Hill, like the Graysons, a family of Muskogee freedmen, or the old prophet Chalogee who once, Hence related, accidentally flooded Limbo Creek while trying to summon rain for the local farmers (32). Hence told his son his stories about the Graysons in an affected Black dialect, which influenced Posey’s later early dialect stories featuring fictionalized versions of their freedmen neighbors (38).

When he was fourteen, Posey’s father determined that the best path forward for his eldest son would be to learn to speak fluent English and to earn an American-style education. Hence’s decision was based in his conviction that such skills were necessary for his children to thrive in the world they were inheriting. At fifteen, Posey enrolled at Bacone Indian University in Muskogee town. Bacone was established in 1880 by Baptist missionaries in order to train Indigenous youths to become teachers and missionaries. In

⁸⁶ Louis Littlecoon Oliver (1904-1991) was also known by his Muskogee name Wotkoce or Wotkoce Okisce. Like Posey and other influential Muskogee thinkers and writers like Acee Blue Eagle and Thomas E. Moore, Oliver was an alumnus of Bacone Indian University, graduating in 1926.

the twentieth century, Bacone would transform from a site of religious instruction and cultural assimilation to become “a site where Indian identities could flourish” (Neuman 1). Historian Lisa K. Neuman describes the unique atmosphere that developed at Bacone in the 1930s and 40s, in which teachers and administrators invited Indigenous pupils to engage in the creative exploration of their Native identities. Through a process Neuman calls “Indian play,” Native students “used humor and inventive wordplay” to negotiate popular images of “Indian” identity circulating in both Native and non-Native contexts to the ends of “challenging white stereotypes of Indians, exposing the differences among diverse American Indian communities, recognizing the effects of colonialism on American Indians,...questioning how schools run by European Americans could benefit Native students” and developing “important new Indian identities” (20).

Though the curricular revolution Neuman describes took place half a century after Posey matriculated to Bacone in 1890, Posey’s time at Bacone was nevertheless marked by his exploration of “Indian identities.” Though “progressive” in their espousal of education, republican government, and other markers of the attainment of “civilization” measured by Western metrics, the Native identities that emerge in Posey’s school writings and orations continue to define Nativeness in terms of relationality and reciprocity, key values based in the Muscogee kinship traditions in which he was raised. For instance, in “The Indian: What of Him?” (1892), the earliest of several commencement orations he delivered to the Bacone student body between 1892 and ‘94, Posey articulates a future-looking Native identity based in a history of innovation,

adaptation, and resilience: “In spite of broken treaties, obstacles, removals, privations, and fatiguing marches to unknown wilds, tribes have become nations. Within the bounds of the Indian Territory, they have founded governments, courts of justice, asylums and prisons, with such facilities as belong to a prosperous people, whose motto is to give justice and receive justice in return” (Posey, *Chinnubbie* 83). Adaptation is at the center of this picture of Native identity, the means by which peoples like the Cherokees and Muscogees continue to thrive as nations. They thrive, Posey suggests, because progress is never outside of the basic frames of kinship. In the example above, the motto “to give justice and receive justice in return” reflects values of mutual obligation, respect, and reciprocity deeply embedded in Muscogee and other Indigenous cultures. Describing Native nations’ enthusiasm for education, Posey writes: “the Indians of the Territory have granted charters for the erection of institutions, and set apart a certain per cent of their revenues for the encouragement of learning. Every neighborhood is to be favored with a school house for the instruction of its youths” (83). Posey’s emphasis on the neighborhood as the scene of instruction for Native youths reflects his understanding of the importance of the *talwa* as the basic social unit of Muscogee society. His vision of education rooted in and fostered by the nurturing ties of kinship in every Muscogee town is vastly different from the genocidal model announced by Richard Henry Pratt, founder of the Carlisle Indian School, which sought to “kill the Indian to save the man.”

At Bacone, Posey also wrote four stories featuring a Muscogee protagonist named Chinnubbie Harjo: “Chinnubbie Harjo, the Evil Genius of the Creeks,”

“Chinnubbie and the Owl,” “Chinnubbie Scalps the Squaws,” and “Chinnubbie’s Courtship.” These stories were published in Bacone’s newsletter, the *B.I.U. Instructor*, but only the second and third stories remain.⁸⁷ Posey’s biographer, Daniel Littlefield, Jr., calls the Chinnubbie stories “the most significant works” of Posey’s early period (*Alex Posey* 50). Like his orations, Posey’s Chinnubbie stories explore Native identity, this time through the techniques and subjects of Muscogee oral tradition amplified with Posey’s wit and humor. “Chinnubbie and the Owl” (1893) is a playful interrogation of Native identity through a storytelling contest.

“Chinnubbie and the Owl” is a narratively complex sketch, consisting of a core story and two narrative frames. In the first frame, a preface, an unnamed narrator introduces Chinnubbie, “a humorist of unquestioned excellence,” and explains that the story to follow comes down through oral tradition from “the prophets—the keepers of the oral library” (Posey, *Chinnubbie* 35). The second frame sets the scene, “the twilight of a lovely summer day, while the chiefs, medicine men, and warriors were grouped in a circle around the blazing campfire” smoking and telling stories (35). A prophet in the group calls for a storytelling contest and announces that the teller of the most original personal tale shall take home a prize, a “costly bow and twelve arrows” (35). After some disappointing stories, Chinnubbie joins the contest and tells his tale. In his youth, he relates, he wandered from home and became hopelessly lost in a deep forest. Eventually he came upon an owl and is transfixed with comical horror. The owl has apparently asked

⁸⁷ See Matthew Sivils’s introduction to the Chinnubbie stories and Posey’s other extant short fiction: Posey, *Chinnubbie*, 27-34.

him the question, “Who?” paralyzing Chinnubbie with indecision. He finally determines to outwit the owl by asking it questions and walking around its tree in a wide circle. The owl mimics everything Chinnubbie does, repeating all his questions back to him and following his circular movement by turning its head until the owl twists its head so far that it pops off its body. The owl commands Chinnubbie to “Take my head and place it in your belt, it will guide you to your home in safety!” (38) When Chinnubbie finishes his story, the prophet declares him the winner of the contest. Departing from the group the next morning, Chinnubbie offers one last mysterious but stirring speech: “Few, few there are on whom such a fortune smiles and many, many on whom it frowns. Few are born to win. Warn, ye gods, if such as ye there be, warn, I pray, the bears, the fallow deers, the bisons, the pumas of the forest, and the foes of my heroic clan!” (39) and departs. Though the party expects him back that night, it is years before Chinnubbie returns. In the conclusion of the story, the narrator relates that Chinnubbie’s belated return was met with “wild enthusiasm” and that he “was not rebuked for the inexcusable falsehood that he had told on the morning of his setting out, for that was forgotten in the ecstasy of joy on his reappearance” (39).

Posey’s story is clearly influenced by Muscogee oral culture as Alexia Kosmider and others have pointed out. The scene of the campfire storytelling contest “mirrors Creek verbal tradition” where tellers would swap tales in a ritualized fashion (Kosmider 72). Furthermore, Posey’s story alludes to Muscogee peoples’ understanding of stories as communal property, “the oral library,” which are handed down from generation to

generation, changing and adapting but always transmitting some wisdom (72-3).

Community is constructed through the act of storytelling, “the campfire is made more cheerful and happier when such stories are told, and the mind is released from the bonds of its cares and solitudes” (Posey, *Chinnubbie* 36). Chinnubbie’s campfire is another aspect of the sacred fires of the Muscogee talwas, the central gathering point of the “people of one fire,” another version of the sofky pot.

Moreover, resolution in each of the complex story’s frames involves some return to this community and to the estranged individual’s place within it. The central conflict of Chinnubbie’s story, the existential crisis of the owl’s question “Who?”, is resolved through his re-immersion in Muscogee community through the medium of storytelling. The youthful Chinnubbie begins his story lost in “pathless forests.” The lack of paths in the forests is a symbolic separation from his people, connections which are restored once Chinnubbie solves the owl’s strange riddle. When Chinnubbie claims the owl’s head that will guide him back to his town, it is described as both a physical return as well as a return to the embrace of kinship: “Like a child obeying the command of its affectionate mother, I heeded the behest of the falling head, and...I journeyed in safety back to my home, from which I had long been absent” (38). After having won the prize of the bow and arrows as well as the accolades of the prophet who proclaims his story “as true as the reality of day and night,” Chinnubbie strengthens the bonds of kinship through his warning to the game of the forest about the hunting prowess of “my heroic clan” (39). Even the humorously deflating ending of Posey’s story—Chinnubbie does not go hunting,

but aimlessly wanders on another “tramp”—is marked by feasting and dancing at Chinnubbie’s return after many years (39).

In these early writings, Posey returns to the setting of the cooking fire and the image of the sofky pot as anchor points for the Muscogee community. At Bacone, Posey’s sense of personal identity expanded, as did his idea of what it meant to be Muscogee at the dawn of the twentieth century. As can be seen in his orations, he began to develop the political positions that earned him his reputation as a “progressive” among non-Natives. After he graduated from Bacone in 1894, Posey served the Muscogee Nation in various political roles. He served in the House of Warriors, the lower house in the bicameral Muscogee government, and was appointed as the Superintendent of the Creek Orphan Asylum from 1895-1897. During these years, Posey wrote poetry. As a student, he had published some verse alongside his prose in the *B.I.U. Instructor* under the telling pseudonym Chinnubbie Harjo. Now he published them under his own name in territorial journals like *Twin Territories*, an illustrated magazine published in Muskogee town, the *Indian Journal*, and the *Muskogee Phoenix* (Posey, *Lost Creeks* 29). Through the nineteenth-century system of newspaper exchange as well as the appearance of a few poems in *The Red Men*, the literary magazine of the Carlisle Indian School in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, Posey began to attract literary attention from outside of Indian Territory. However, Posey mysteriously “did his best to reject the exposure of his work beyond his homeland” (29-30). In a note published in the *Philadelphia Press*, Posey demurred: “I write exclusively of the West, of home scenes and places, and fearing that my local

allusions might not be appreciated elsewhere, I have never made any attempt to get a hearing in the East” (30). Posey’s reasoning here doesn’t quite add up. For one, the majority of the poems that were earning him national attention were romantic in influence and style. Although a few of them, like “Husse Lotka Enhotulle (To the West Wind),” did indeed feature the “scenes and places” of Indian Territory, many of them did not. We might thus read Posey’s prioritization of his local subjects and readers as a refusal of the politics of recognition. As Littlefield and Sivils note, “Posey must have known that the American reading public was at that time much drawn to Indians and to Indian subjects” (Littlefield, qtd. in *Lost Creeks* 30). Foregoing literary celebrity meant rejecting the exoticizing stare of the white cognoscenti. It is thus, perhaps, not a coincidence that Posey then chose to give up poetry and take up journalism. In 1902, he bought the Indian Journal Publishing Company, the publisher of the *Indian Journal*, and began his tenure as that paper’s editor. As editor, Posey focused on local news items and abandoned the romanticism of his poetry for a wry, humorous journalistic voice that appealed to common readers. When the first Fus Fixico Letters appeared in the *Indian Journal* in late 1902, they marked Posey’s turning inward to the Muscogee community.

The Fus Fixico Letters satirize the major political issues facing the Muscogee Nation between 1902 and 1908, namely the allotment of Muscogee tribal lands and the question of statehood for Indian Territory. It is important to first understand these historical events in order to understand the Letters’ political work. Allotment refers to the U.S. federal policy of dividing up tribal nations’ communally-held land, reassigning

individual lots to tribal citizens as private property, and buying the “surplus lands” from the Native governments. Through allotment, the U.S. government dispossessed the nations of Indian Territory of 1,815,189.22 acres of land (Ellinghaus 25). The process of allotment began with the passage of the General Allotment Act of 1887, which authorized the President to break up communally-held reservation lands into individual parcels and allot the plots to officially enrolled tribal citizens. The 1887 Act did not dictate who would be considered tribal citizens, but deferred to each Native nation to determine eligibility for itself.⁸⁸ Additionally, many nations located in Indian Territory, including the Muscogee Nation, were originally exempt from the terms of the 1887 Act. That is, they were not compelled to allot their lands by force. However, pressure from white settlers such as the Boomers, persuaded Congress to establish the Dawes Commission in 1893. At first, the Dawes Commission sought to persuade the Native governments in Indian Territory to voluntarily allot their lands. Leaders of the Native nations staunchly refused allotment. In response, the U.S. government passed the Curtis Act (1898) which authorized the Dawes Commission and its contracted representatives to prepare new tribal citizenship rolls for the nations of Indian Territory in preparation for forced allotment of tribal lands. Prior to the passage of the Curtis Act, every Native nation stipulated their own criteria for tribal membership, based on clan or (in the case of the

⁸⁸ John P. LaValle, “The General Allotment Act “Eligibility” Hoax: Distortions of Law, Policy, and History in Derogation of Indian Tribes,” *Wicazo Sa Review*, vol. 14, no. 1, Indigenous Resistance and Persistence, Spring, 1999, pp. 251-302.

Muscogees) town belonging. Katherine Ellinghaus describes how the Curtis Act determined tribal eligibility:

[T]he commission prescribed six criteria by which an Indian could become eligible for enrollment. The first and clearest path to enrollment was “inheritance of Indian blood.” Blood was not, however, on its own a path to citizenship, but became so only when “coupled with continuous affiliation and residence with one of the Five Tribes” as well as previous recognition and enrollment. The other five legal paths to enrollment had nothing at all to do with racial background. Pursuant to earlier treaty stipulations, citizenship might be attained through tribal adoption; through intermarriage; by being an ex-slave or their descendant (except the Chickasaws); and finally by appeal to a U.S. court in Indian Territory, or any other legally constituted court, committee, or commission designated by one of the Five Tribes. (31-2)⁸⁹

⁸⁹ The “Five Tribes,” or the “Five Civilized Tribes,” refers to the five southeastern Native nations that were considered by non-Natives to be the most “civilized” Indigenous peoples based on their adoption of Western forms of agriculture, government, education, and lifestyle. The “Five Tribes” include the Cherokees, Muscogees, Choctaws, Chickasaws, and Seminoles. Due to the location of their traditional homelands in what is today considered the U.S. South, these peoples frequently encountered European and American governments and settlers beginning in the fifteenth century and developed close economic and diplomatic ties with many colonial cultures. Over the course of centuries, intermarriage between Native and non-Native peoples strengthened these ties. Beginning in the nineteenth century, the southeastern peoples were among the first Native nations to adopt constitutional governments and American agricultural techniques, such as homestead farming and chattel slavery, in response to increasingly strident calls for their removal from their homelands. As discussed in Chapter 2, Americans masked their lust for Indigenous lands underneath the contradictory rhetoric of civilization that simultaneously worried that Natives’ proximity to white culture would debase their “purer” society and disparaged Natives for “wasting” land that whites considered profitable for growing. Advocates for Native rights such as Elias Boudinot could respond to such arguments by pointing to the Cherokees’ and other southeastern nations’ “civilized” practices. As this history makes clear, the non-Native designation “Five Civilized Tribes” problematically encodes racist, hierarchical notions of civilization.

The undermining of Native sovereignty in the language of the Curtis Act opened the way for the dissolution of tribal governments and the incorporation of Indian Territory into the new state of Oklahoma in 1907.⁹⁰ However, this process was far from inevitable. As the *Fus Fixico* Letters show, the citizens of the nations of Indian Territory actively deliberated the future of their people. While for many statehood seemed a foregone conclusion, Native peoples hotly debated exactly what United States citizenship would look like. Some advocated that Indian Territory should pursue statehood on their own and join the U.S. as its own state separate from Oklahoma Territory. This choice was attractive because, though it meant the formal dissolution of tribal governments, Native leaders would wield greater political power in the eventual state and thus their peoples could retain a greater power of self-determination. Conversely, others supported the single-state option, by which the Indian and Oklahoma Territories would seek statehood jointly and be admitted into the U.S. as one combined state. Posey supported the single-state initiative, condemning Muscogee Principal Chief Pleasant Porter's call for a Native-controlled state not "a logical one, but based in sentiment" (Littlefield 151). Posey believed that single-statehood would bring more economic development to Indian Territory (Posey, *Fus Fixico* 57).

⁹⁰ For detailed accounts of the politics of allotment and statehood and the Native and non-Native political actors who shaped their outcomes, see Debo, *The Road to Disappearance* and *Still the Waters Run: The Betrayal of the Five Civilized Tribes*, Princeton UP, 1968; Ellinghaus, *Blood Will Tell*; Littlefield, *Alex Posey and The Fus Fixico Letters*; McLouglin, *After the Trail of Tears*; and Stremlau, *Sustaining the Cherokee Family*.

Posey began as a single-state advocate but by the spring of 1903, he espoused the idea of a separate state governed by Natives (152). In May of that year, Green McCurtain, Principal Chief of the Choctaw Nation, called for a pan-tribal convention at the town of Eufaula to establish a committee on the statehood question and to draft resolutions to present to the U.S. Congress in support of a separate state. Posey served as secretary of this convention and was later appointed as the Muscogee National representative on the Executive Committee for Independent Statehood of the Five Civilized Tribes (154).⁹¹ A third party of Muscogees refused to countenance the question of statehood and flatly rejected all assimilatory policies from within or without the Muscogee Nation. Led by Chitto Harjo (Crazy Snake) these separatists, whom Posey and others called “Snakes” after their leader, insisted that the United States abide by the Treaty of 1832, which guaranteed the Muscogee Nation their lands west of the Mississippi “as long as the grass and water runs” (239). In fact, this guarantee lay not in the Treaty of 1832, but in President Andrew Jackson’s Letter to the Creek Indians on March 23, 1839: “Beyond the great river Mississippi, where a part of your nation has gone, your father has provided a country large enough for all of you, and he advises you to remove to it. There your white brothers will not trouble you; they will have no claim to the land, and you can live upon it, you and all your children, as long as the grass grows or the water runs, in peace and

⁹¹ It is unclear why Posey switched positions on the statehood question. Littlefield suggests that Posey may have doubted the viability of an independent state initiative because he believed the tribal governments of Indian Territory to be inefficient. Impressed by Chief McCurtain’s political competency, Posey was convinced. However, Littlefield also suggests that Posey may have simply been swayed to whatever position he felt the most politically popular (153-5).

plenty” (Jackson). Though Posey admired the Snakes’ idealism, he dismissed their belief in “the restoration of ancient customs and methods of holding Creek lands” as “an impossibility” (qtd. in Littlefield 240).

The Fus Fixico Letters engage in political conversations about allotment, statehood, and other issues facing the Muscogee Nation in ways that center the local Muscogee community’s experience and opinions of such political processes. One of the ways in which the Letters present this community perspective is by reversing the typical flow of the news. When other, non-Native media sources described the *Journal* and the Fus Fixico Letters, writers imagined Posey using his journalism to reach out to isolated full blood readers and make national news legible to them. For instance, in 1903 the *Georgia Columbus Ledger* wrote: “The *Journal* is printed in ordinary country newspaper English, except for one editorial column, in which the dialect favored by the Creeks is used. These Indians have never been able to accustom themselves to the English idiom and greatly appreciate the editor’s effort” (8). Here, the editors of the *Ledger* describe Posey as a producer of knowledge for the consumption and edification of his readership. The paternalism of this model is heightened by the *Ledger* writer’s emphasis on literacy. Posey, half-white and fluent in English, uses dialect to reach an audience of illiterate full bloods who presumably would otherwise be incapable of understanding the political issues facing the Muscogee Nation. Similarly, the *New York Times* writes that Posey’s “comments on the Statehood situation...have done much to establish the Indian in the opinion that he should have a State wherein he may control” (3). Here again Posey is

imagined as wielding his editorial power to impose his political opinion on the Muscogees. Eastern papers envisioned the *Journal* as a kind of colonial enterprise, another version of the Baptist missions or religious schools that worked to acculturate Native peoples to U.S. norms. But the Fus Fixico Letters do not follow this paternalistic pattern. It is common for Fus Fixico to open his early letters with an announcement like: “So I will sent you some news to put in this time” (Posey, *Fus Fixico* 52). For instance, Letter No. 10 (February 1903) begins, “Well, so I send you some more news to put in Injin Journal” (69). Here it is Fus, a fullblood reader, who delivers the news to the *Journal*, reversing the colonial flow of knowledge to privilege the community’s voice over the *Journal*’s editorial one.

Moreover, through this reversal of authority, the very nature of political news changes. Fus and his friends, who begin as marginal voices in the Letters but eventually totally eclipse the author, report the minutiae of their daily lives as news fit to print so that things like weather, local crop harvests, small-scale goings-on in regional urban centers, and their neighbors’ activities become the news. In the first paragraph of Letter No. 1 (October 1903), Fus reports:

Well, I hope you and your families is well, but I got very bad cold in my head. I was take my dogs and went possum hunt last night and catch nothing but bad cold. Guess I pull off my coat too quick when I get too hot trying to stay with my dogs. When I rise up this morning my head is almost busted and I can’t breathe hardly. I feel like I been in calaboose all night in Eufaula. (52)

Only after sharing his personal news does Fus move on to address recent politics. Even then he reports it anecdotally, through the experience of a friend, Hagee:

Well, Hagee was come back from Okmulgee yesterday. He got lots news to tell about Creek council. He says it ain't do nothing but run in debt. He say it will be good thing when we get deeds so we can shut up that old council house if we can't rent it to some mens like the Dawes commission that's got lots of time and money from Washington. (52)

“News” like Hagee’s trip to Okmulgee travels by word of mouth in the Muscogee community first before being written down and reported to the newspaper by Fus. The Letters thus prioritize the activities and opinions of community members over the detached, supposedly objective representation of allotment. Rather than translating the news into dialect to inform ignorant readers, the Fus Fixico Letters refigure Muscogee citizens as agents of change within national events and demonstrate how the news—the process and results of allotment—actually happens at the level of the community.

This perspective in the Fus Fixico Letters may reflect the way that Posey’s family adapted to allotment. As has been pointed out, Posey supported allotment because he believed that individual farmers owning their land would economically transform Indian Territory and uplift all its inhabitants. However, evidence shows that the Posey family selected land allotments that would allow them to maintain their large kinship network and keep their extended family close by. In 1899, Posey’s father applied for allotments for himself, Nancy, and their children (except Alex), nine individuals altogether. They

applied for allotments all within a few miles of each other in lands around Bald Hill. In 1902, Alex applied for allotments for himself and his two sons, Irving and Kipling, in the same area. The Posey family all lived and worked together in the same area, farming each others' allotments and visiting extended family members in nearby towns. Posey and his family traveled to Bald Hill often, but Posey also used his journalism to keep kinship ties alive. Daniel Littlefield writes that during his editorship of the *Journal*, Posey used local columns to report the local comings and goings of rural Muscogees—mostly his extended family in the nearby towns of Artussee and Mellette—in much the same way that Fus writes about his full blood acquaintances (141-2). Thus, the reversal of news in the Fus Fixico Letters reflects the real ways that the Posey family sustained kinship ties despite allotment's efforts to sever these connections.

The Poseys used their allotments to maintain their extended family together, but Fus, Hotgun, and Toofpafka Micco have other ideas. The characters' reactions to allotment are the source of much humor in the Letters. In the early Letters, Fus is eager to get his hands on the deed to his allotment so that he can sell it to white land speculators. Initially, the U.S. government and Muscogee Nation did not allow allottees to sell their land, so Fus here is acting illegally, which explains why he is so anxious to get get his deed. In Letter No. 3 (November 1902) he complains, "I don't know what I do if I don't get my deed pretty soon. The land buyer say he can't give me but 15 c[ents] for

5860
5861
6119

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
COMMISSION TO THE FIVE CIVILIZED TRIBES,
MUSKOGEE LAND OFFICE.

APPLICATION FOR HOMESTEAD ALLOTMENT.

I, Alexander L. Posey, do hereby make application to have the lands hereinafter described set apart as homesteads for myself and those whom I lawfully represent, the same being a part of the lands already selected by me as allotments for myself and those whom I lawfully represent, as follows:

ROLL No.	NAME.	Relation to First Named Person.	SUBDIVISION OF	Sec.	Town	Range	Acres	100ths
3671	Alexander L. Posey		N.E. 1/4 of N.E. 1/4	17	10	15	40	
3672	Irving Posey	Son	S.W. 1/4 of S.E. 1/4	16	10	15	40	
3673	Kipling Posey	Son	N.E. 1/4 of S.W. 1/4	17	10	15	40	

Dated at Enfauca, Indian Territory, this 16 day of April, 1902.

WITNESSES TO MARK:

Alex L. Posey

Figure 4. Posey's application to the Dawes Commission for allotment lands for himself and his two sons, Irving and Kipling Posey, dated April 16, 1902. "Oklahoma, United States records," National Archives and Records Administration. Southwest Region.

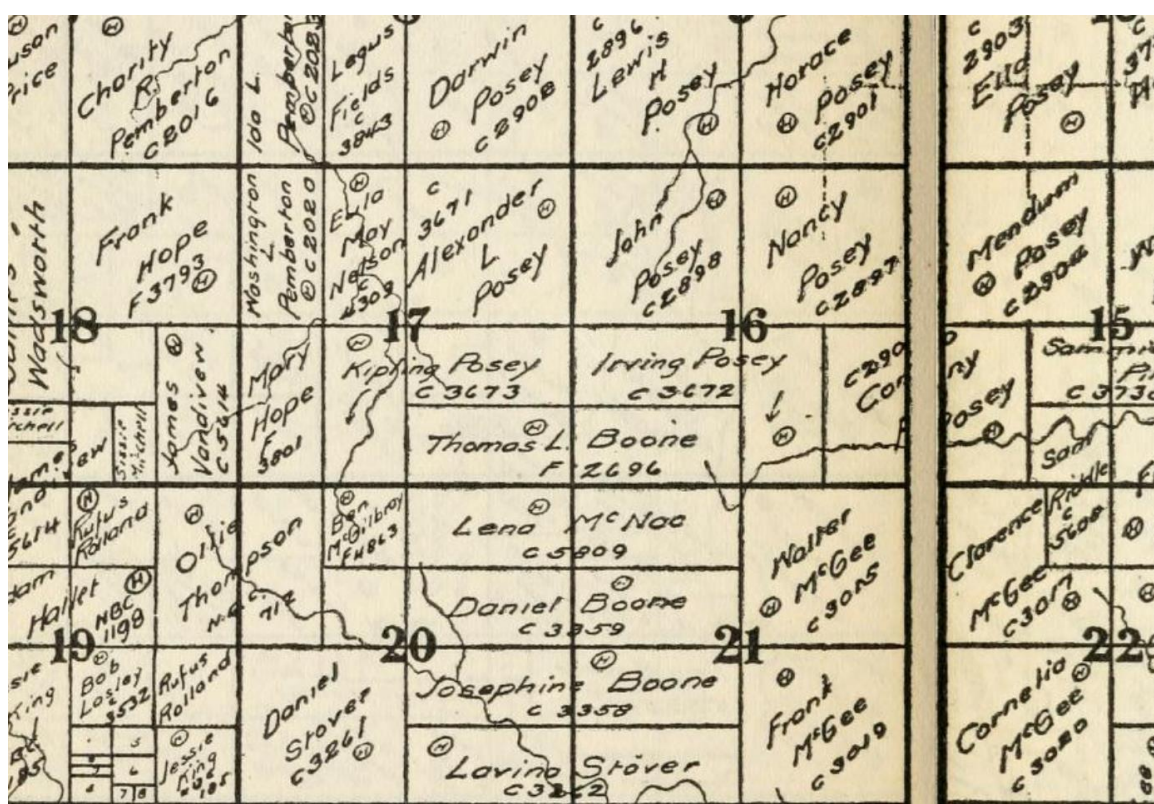


Figure 5. Fig. 2: A map showing the Posey family's contiguous allotments, circa 1910. Posey's plot occupies Section 17, Town 10, Range 15. E. Hastain. *Hastain's Township Plats of the Creek Nation*. Model Printing Co., 1910, 214.

my land if them deeds don't show up" (Posey, *Fus Fixico* 56). However, in the meantime, Fus figures out that he can charge purchases to his allotment at white businesses in town without actually holding his deed. Borrowing against the value of one's allotment was called "buying on land." In Letter No. 1 (October 1902) he writes, "I was up to Muskogee last week and buy heap stuff on my land. Them white mens was good to me. Next time I go to Checotah, or maybe Eufaula, and buy stuff the same way" (52). Fus's tricks show how many Muscogees took advantage of the Dawes Commission's disorganization to capitalize on allotment to benefit themselves and their families.

The full blood characters Hotgun and Toofpafka Micco react differently to allotment. Hotgun and Toofpafka Micco are both Snakes, followers of Chitto Harjo, and so reject allotment as a betrayal of the 1832 Treaty. Many full bloods, Snakes or not, simply refused to apply for allotment. In Letter No. 4 (December 1902) Fus reports that Hotgun and his fellow Snake Choela "was druther have a ticket to Mexico instead of a deed" and Fus worries that "if Porter don't hurry up maybe they go horseback or 'foot'" (58). Some Snakes and other full blood separatists considered emigrating to Mexico as an alternative to forced assimilation into the U.S. Fus pokes fun at Hotgun and Choela by suggesting that the only reason they haven't emigrated yet is because they, too, are waiting on Porter to follow through with their train tickets. Like Fus, Tookfpafka Micco also seeks to sell his allotment land, though not for any personal gain. Fus reports on a conversation with Tookpafka Micco:

“Toofpafka Micco he say he druther had a deed to his land than a big name in the newspaper. When I ask him what he do after he sell his land, he say he don’t know... Then he say was let the future take care of its own self like a calf when it was get too old to suck. Guess so Toofpafka Micco was made up his mind to drink sofky and eat sour bread and be glad like a young cat with a ball a yarn before the fire place in the winter time.” (87-88)

Like Hotgun, Choela, and Chitto Harjo, Toofpafka Micco’s response is another refusal of allotment. Even though he looks to sell his land, he does so in order to be left alone. Though Fus teases Tookpafka Micco that he will do nothing but lay around, eat, and drink, Toofpafka Micco’s “I don’t know” is a politically viable rejection of the idealized portrait of Native farmers, working individually to improve their lands and become productive U.S. citizens. As Rose Stremlau points out in her study of Cherokee families’ responses to allotment, strategically claiming plots to sustain family ties, selling land for personal profit, or simply refusing allotment altogether are all acts of sovereignty and demonstrate the myriad ways that Native individuals and families adapted to allotment (152).

Although Fus teases his full blood friends’ hardline resistance to “progress,” his humor does not berate or mock them. Indeed, humor is one of the ways that community is constructed in the Fus Fixico Letters. The Muscogee writer Louis Little Coon Oliver attests to the commonplace nature of humor among the Muscogees. “I know that other tribes have professional clowns who arouse much laughter by their antics and freakish

actions,” Oliver writes. “We the Creeks do not have professional clowns, but every man is a clown unto himself, verbally” (53). Oliver describes how the Muscogeese, like other peoples, use humor to socialize and build community. “They are good at finding something in every little thing, no matter how insignificant, or crass...where ever the Creeks meet, whether in twos, fours or a crowd, there will be chuckles, laughter and at times roaring laughter” (53). In a way that mirrors the separatist Snakes’ revivification of traditional Muscogee lifeways at Hickory Grounds, Fus and his full blood friends use humor to socialize and embody the values of the talwa and the sofky pot in the face of allotment’s attempted decimation of Muscogee kinship. An example of this can be seen in Letter No. 50 (July 1904) in which humor, political discussion, and traditional Muscogee social organization fuse meaningfully:

Well, so, the wind was from the south and Hotgun and Toofpafka Micco and Wolf Warrior and Kono Harjo they was light they pipes and get in the shade a the catapa tree, and talk on politics, while the women folks was go out and pick up some dead wood and start a fire under the sofky pot and make the smoke bile out a the chimley like it was put near dinner time. The old squirrel dog he was out a the fence corner and get in the way ‘round the kitchen door and keep order ‘mong the chickens and choates.

“Well, maybe so” Hotgun he say, “the boll weevil was ruin the cotton and the chintz bug was get in his work on the corn and the Big Man at Washington was put a few more kinks in the red tape a the Loyal Creek payment, but all the

same the Japs was still doing a Rushing business and they was lots a good prospects in the Flowery kingdom.”

(Toofpafka Micco and Wolf Warrior and Kono Harjo they was grunt and listen close and kind a keep one eye on the kitchen.) (Posey, *Fus Fixico* 187)

Fus’s description establishes the ways that the full bloods’ community maintains a traditional Muscogee social organization. Like many other southeastern nations, Muscogees adhere to a gendered division of labor that, generally, assigns men governmental, religious, cultural, and extra-familial responsibilities and assigns women the responsibilities pertinent to sustaining family and community relationships (Innes 234).⁹² Observing this division, the Muscogee women mentioned in the Letter maintain the sofky pot while Fus, Hotgun, and the others engage in political discussion.⁹³ The men observe the decorum of socialization by smoking together before engaging in the topic of discussion. Turning to politics, Hotgun humorously includes the U.S. President and Congress in his list of grievances against boll weevils, “chintz” (chinch) bugs, and other

⁹² This is only part of the picture. As Pamela Innes explains, non-Native scholars’ descriptions of binary, gendered social roles in Muscogee society are only partially accurate and do not capture the complexity of Native social, political, or ceremonial practice (235). Boundaries between gender roles often blurred, and these categories became even more complex as Muscogee society adapted allotment and statehood through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. See Innes, particularly 233-35.

⁹³ As Rose Stremmler points out, the gendered division of labor within many Native societies led nineteenth-century non-Native observers to decry Native men as lazy and Native women as drudges. Assimilation discourse was partly fueled by these mischaracterizations. Advocates believed that the institution of private land ownership would instill a work ethic in Native men and allow Native women to turn their attention more fully to what white Americans perceived to be the domestic labor of women, keeping house and raising children. However, the Muscogees, like many other southeastern nations, observed complex sustenance and ceremonial practices that caused the need for labor to shift throughout the year. Thus, it was not uncommon for Native women to farm while, to non-Native spectators, men appeared to do no labor whatsoever when, in reality, the labor assigned to men occurred elsewhere at a different time. See Stremmler, 77.

agricultural pests working against the Muscogees. The Loyal Creek payment refers to money that the United States owed to a faction of Muscogees whose families had remained “loyal” to the Federal government during the U.S. Civil War. Since the signing of the 1866 Treaty between the U.S. and the Muscogee Nation at the closing of the war, the U.S. had delayed disbursing these funds. To Muscogees like Nancy Posey, who continued to agitate officials at Muskogee about her mother’s Loyal Creek claim thirty years after it was filed, the “red tape” Hotgun describes was another way that the U.S. sought to undermine the economic and cultural power of Native families (Littlefield 141). Hotgun’s joke creates an in-group among the assembled Muscogees, constructing a sense of community around their shared grievances against the United States.⁹⁴

Another joke in Letter No. 50 is Hotgun’s extended analogy of the Russo-Japanese War to explain a local political squabble then ongoing in Muskogee. Briefly, Muskogee Mayor Samuel Rutherford and Councilman Morgan Caraway disagreed on how to fill the office of the city recorder, left vacant by the previous recorder’s recent death. Caraway claimed the privilege of a political appointment while Rutherford insisted on holding an election for the position. According to Daniel Littlefield, the question was hotly debated in the Indian Territory press (186). Hotgun’s long joke compares this

⁹⁴ A further interesting detail here is Fus’s note that “the wind was from the south.” In an undated poem entitled “To Wahilla Enhotulle (To the South Wind)” Posey apostrophizes to the south wind, willing it to “take me, Wind, into / Thy confidence, and tell / Me, whispering soft and low, / The secrets of the dell.” In Posey’s poem, the wind can grant the speaker privileged insight into Nature, another kind of community: “The pass-word of the leaves / Upon the cottonwood; / And let me join them in / Their mystic brotherhood.” Positioned at the beginning of Letter No. 50, the south wind is once more for Posey a sign of connection, conversation, and sharing stories. Posey, *Song of the Oktahutche: Collected Poems*, ed. Matthew Wynn Sivils, University of Nebraska Press, 2008, 77-8.

small-scale debacle to the international conflict of the Russo-Japanese War. That War was an imperial conflict between Russia and Japan, who both desired to establish their own “spheres of influence” in Korea and Manchuria (today part of China and Mongolia). Hotgun expresses admiration for the Japanese, equating Mayor Rutherford’s defense of Muscogee voters to Japan’s “spunk.” They were both “fine scrappers,” he said, “They was fight to win and they efforts was crowned with success” (Posey, *Fus Fixico* 187).

While for the readers of the *Muscogee Phoenix* this joke was very topical, for modern readers its interest lies in the way that Hotgun’s alignment of Muscogee and Japanese courage reflects his sense of Muscogee sovereignty. To Hotgun, Mayor Rutherford and the Japanese are both underdogs who surprised everyone with their abilities (“they was both about the same size and they was both get the right sow by the ear.”) (187). While Rutherford was white and not Muscogee, his fight against the town council’s autocratic policies reflects the Snakes’ fight against the Muscogee Nation’s and the United States’s exercise of arbitrary power over the Muscogee people. In Hotgun’s version of the story, Rutherford defends the public’s right to self-government: “The people know who they druther had to jolt ‘em with the cost and trimmings, or assignment on the rock pile” (187). Similarly, Chitto Harjo defended the Muscogees’ right to continue to live on their land under their own laws and rejected assimilatory policies as having been decided without the consent of people whose lives they affected. In testimony before a Senate investigative committee in 1906, Chitto Harjo protested unlawful and unjust decimation of Muscogee lands under allotment: “I never agreed to

the exchanging of lands and I never agreed to the allotting of my lands” (40). Like the Japanese, Hotgun sees the Muscogees as also facing down an imperial power in the United States. While Hotgun’s long joke is an example of Posey’s penchant for humorous understatement, the complex identification of the Muscogees with figures of political resistance at the local, national, and international levels also enunciates a strong sense of Muscogee sovereignty that contributes to the communal voice of the Fus Fixico Letters.

The image of the sofky pot recurs, framing the political discussion of Letter No. 50. As we have already seen, the letter opens with Fus’s description of Muscogee women gathering wood for the fire under the pot. Throughout the letter, Hotgun and Toofpafka Micco’s discourse is punctuated by humorous parentheticals in which Wolf Warrior and Kono Harjo, the chorus of the Fus Fixico Letters, grunt their affirmation to the conversation and impatiently eye the meal preparation. Then, as Hotgun’s story ends, political discussion is curtailed as the women call the men to eat:

“City Lawyer Ram-it-in-all [W. F. Rampendahl] he wrinkle his brow and act wise like the old squirrel dog. He say, ‘Well, maybe so nobody else but you was think so but I was in favor of leaving it with the people ’cause they votes was worth more than Tear Away and his pikers. So that’s my opinion.’ ”

(Tookpafka Micco and Wolf Warrior and Kono Harjo they give long grunt and about that time the women folks was holler, “Hombuxche!”) (Posey, *Fus Fixico* 189).

Community is created by the men's unanimous approval of Hotgun's storytelling, and affirmed by the women's call to gather, "hombuxche" meaning roughly "make ready to eat" (Littlefield 110). The threads of humor, politics, and Muscogee community weaving through the Letters combine in the image of the sofky pot.

Later Fus Fixico Letters continue to embody Muscogee values of kinship and sovereignty as Fus and his friends turn their attention to the issue of impending statehood. As mentioned above, though Posey was an earlier bandwagoner for Indian and Oklahoma Territories' admission into the U.S. as a single state, by the fall of 1905 his editorials avidly supported separate statehood for Indian Territory. The apex of the separate statehood movement was the Sequoyah Convention, a constitutional convention, convened in August 1905 for the purpose of framing a constitution for the proposed state of Sequoyah. Though ultimately unsuccessful, the Sequoyah movement was one of the most important stands for Indigenous sovereignty in Native American history. In Letter No. 57 (September 1905), Hotgun calls the resolutions of the Sequoyah Convention "a declaration of independence that was had its foundation on every hearthstone in Injin Territory" (Posey, *Fus Fixico* 218).⁹⁵

⁹⁵ For more on the Sequoyah Convention, see Amos D. Maxwell, "The Sequoyah Convention," *The Chronicles of Oklahoma*, vol. 28, no. 2, 1950, pp. 161-92, and Maxwell, "The Sequoyah Convention, Part II," *The Chronicles of Oklahoma*, vol. 28, no. 3, 1950, pp. 299-340; Robert L. Tsai, "The Sequoyah Convention: 1905," in *America's Forgotten Constitutions*, Harvard UP, 2014, 152-84; and Nicholas Rinehart, "Chief Pleasant Porter: Preeminent Mediator of Creek and American Worlds," 2020, Texas Christian U, Honors Thesis, TCU Digital Repository, https://repository.tcu.edu/bitstream/handle/116099117/40246/Rinehart__Nicholas-Honors_Project.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.

However, separate statehood was not without anxiety. The Fus Fixico Letters between September 1905 and March 1906 oscillate between enthusiasm about the Natives' political future and worried passages about the changes that statehood would bring to Muscogee lifeways. In Letter No. 57, Hotgun relates Chief Pleasant Porter's speech at the Sequoyah Convention, in which the Muscogee principal chief foretold that "the fullblood Injin was about to die and go to the Happy Hunting Grounds. He want you to take his sofky patch and make a big farm out of it, and raise wheat and oats and prunes and things like that instead of flint corn and gourds" (220). In Letter No. 58 (September 1905) Hotgun and Toofpafka Micco imagine what "the future state" will look like (222).

Then Hotgun he say, "Well so everything be different then, like you say. Instead a kings and warriors in the council house, we was had boodlers and machine makers in the legislature; and instead of a chief, we was had a governor to slice the pie and call out the militia; and instead a fish frys, we was had clam bakes and free lunches; and instead a sofky and peruny, we was had the best Kentucky and Milwaukee could afford; and instead a the pestle and mortar, we was had goff sticks; and instead a sofky patches, we was had tennis courts; and instead a grassfed fillies, we was had airships; and instead of stomp dances, we was had social functions, where the womens was wear necklaces instead a tarrapin shells and shirt waists, and the men was divide they hair between the eyes. (223)

It would seem that Hotgun and Toofpafka Micco followed progressives' prognostications that statehood heralded the disappearance of traditional Muscogee culture. Politicians like Chief Porter seemed to ironically tie the rise of the movement for Indigenous self-determination to the demise of the rural full bloods' way of life. It is possible, in this light, to read the humor in passages like the one above merely masks the full bloods' deep anxiety over their imminent vanishment.

However, depictions of kinship in Hotgun's and Toofpafka Micco's discussions of statehood undercut the discourse of vanishment to focus instead on Muscogee adaptability. For instance, Letter No. 59 (October 1905) looks forward to the ratification of the Sequoyah constitution by the people of Indian Territory, prompting Hotgun to imagine that "maybe so, this time next year be lots a hamlets in the commonwealth of Sequoyah day-dreamin' roun' the court house square, waitin' for the fall trade up an' the circus calliope to come 'long an' break the monot'ny" (227). First, Hotgun's use of the word "commonwealth" instead of "state" is interesting because it bases his vision of the future in his belief in the primacy of Muscogee people's sovereignty.⁹⁶ More important, however, are the "hamlets" Hotgun sees peacefully gathering around the court house square. This image of whole towns coming to the local center of government

⁹⁶ While there is no legal significance in the title of commonwealth versus state, only Virginia, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, and Kentucky identify themselves as commonwealths in their state constitutions. Anna Price suggests that the framers of those documents chose to call their governments commonwealths to "[highlight] that the states' governments were intended to serve the well-being of the people." Unlike these other states' constitutions, the Sequoyah constitution did not explicitly call itself a commonwealth. See Price, "What's in a Name? The Four U.S. States That Are Technically Commonwealths," *In Custodia Legis: Law Librarians of Congress*. 23 August 2023, <https://blogs.loc.gov/law/2023/08/whats-in-a-name-the-four-u-s-states-that-are-technically-commonwealths/>. Interesting.

administration to partake in big calendar events like seasonal market days or the traveling circus strongly evokes the traditional social organization of Muscogee talwas. In ceremonies like the annual Green Corn ceremony, also called the “busk,” the citizens of each town would gather at the town square, which Louis Littlecoon Oliver also calls the Big House (Chukorako), at the center of which was rekindled the sacred fire (5). The busk and other festivals throughout the year were important religious observances, but they were also times for social gathering and the renewal of kinship bonds (Debo 21-2). At these gatherings, Muscogees danced, sang, bathed, ate, smoked, played ball, married, divorced, and socialized. The gatherings that Hotgun foresees adapt these practices rather than replace them and, as with allotment, point to the ways that Muscogees worked within the new systems of statehood to sustain traditional forms of kinship and community.

Hotgun’s vision of Muscogee adaptation may have been inspired by Posey’s recent experiences traveling among the full blood communities in rural Indian Territory. In 1904, Posey left journalism to work for the Dawes Commission. Formed after the passage of the Dawes Severalty Act (also called the General Allotment Act) in 1887, the Dawes Commission was tasked with the responsibility of convincing the tribal governments of Indian Territory to accede to the U.S. Government’s plan to dissolve the tribal governments and distribute, or allot, commonly-owned tribal lands to every individual as parcels of private property. The allotment process required thorough lists of every identifiable tribal citizen of every Native nation living on reservation lands. After

the passage of the Curtis Act of 1898, in which Congress granted itself the authority to create these tribal membership rolls, the Dawes Commission hired hundreds of bureaucrats and fieldworkers to record the names, ages, tribal, and town affiliations of every individual tribal citizen eligible to claim an allotment.

These “Dawes Rolls” were partly based on existing tribal rolls, which recorded the names of tribal members based on each Native nation’s own membership criteria. However, the final Dawes Rolls largely ignored Indigenous ways of reckoning belonging and instead adopted harmful blood quantum tests to determine who would be recognizable to the federal government as a citizen of a Native nation. Still today, the federal government requires that a Native applicant demonstrate 1/4 “Indian blood” to be eligible for many services available to Native communities (Native Governance Center).

Blood quantum and allotment had devastating effects on the Native nations of Indian Territory, which persist to this day. Through the parceling out of tribal lands, the U.S. government dispossessed Native peoples of more than 3 million acres of Native land (Carter). Many Native individuals who refused to comply with allotment policies in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries were assigned random lots by the Commission. Frequently these random lots were arid, remote, or otherwise unsuitable to sustain an individual’s livelihood, resulting in bankruptcy and foreclosure which further dispossessed Native families of even these meager land holdings (Stremlau). Many Native families continue to feel the generational effects of this land theft as more than 1 in 4 Native individuals today live in poverty (Crepelle).

Furthermore, contemporary Native nations still contend with the effects of blood quantum. Some Native critics of tribal governments' continued use of blood quantum metrics point to the fact that, as a colonial construct, blood quantum is a method of "paper genocide" (Hilleary). Blood quantum artificially shrinks tribal enrollment numbers, further alienating Native individuals from their communities and prohibiting important cultural practices. This also threatens Native nations' sovereignty since, as Jill Doerfler notes, "if a nation doesn't have any citizens, there's no nation...no relationship that has to be maintained, and no services that need to be provided. The government could eliminate the whole budget line of the Bureau of Indian Affairs" (qtd. in Hilleary). Practices implemented by the Dawes Commission in the final decades of the nineteenth century significantly disrupted the Native communities of Indian Territory.

Posey assisted the Dawes Commission as a fieldworker, collecting evidence in rural Muscogee communities in order to verify the individuals who were listed on the Muscogee town rolls but whom the Commissioners had not been able to identify and to get these so-called "lost Creeks" "enrolled" on the final Dawes rolls (Littlefield, 187-95). In 1904, Posey worked under the chief clerk of the Creek enrolling division as an interpreter and in 1905 he was put in charge of a Creek enrollment field party. Posey describes the purpose of this field party in the journal he kept during that time. As he explains, "Our business is to secure additional evidence in applications for enrollment, search for "lost Creeks" and conciliate the "Snakes"" (Posey, *Lost Creeks* 121). Due to the remoteness of the Muscogees he sought out and the Snakes' resistance to allotment,

“the work must be done on the roadside, at the hearthside and in the cotton patch”
(121).⁹⁷

Posey’s journal entries do not reflect the Commission’s settler-colonial desire to exclude individuals from tribal membership; they instead record how the traditional protocols of kinship continued to define Muscogee social life in these remote communities. Locating “lost Creeks” was often difficult and Posey and his notary, Drennen C. Skraggs, had to rely on the testimony of relatives or neighbors to verify individuals’ identities. Sometimes they found that the people they sought had passed. Posey records the testimony of these individuals’ children and neighbors, who remembered them to Posey and shared stories about their relatives’ lives. Posey’s journal also frequently notes the hospitality of the people he meets. On September 15, Posey and Skaggs gathered testimony from a March Thompson, whom they find “barbequing beef to feed his renters” (126). Posey relates a humorous anecdote, perhaps told to him by Thompson himself, in which Thompson found himself unable to feed some of his hired farm hands from his livestock so he allowed them to eat from his orchard. “At supper time,” Posey writes, “there was still nothing to eat and the workmen adjourned to a neighbor’s house to satisfy the inner man. While they were eating someone down the

⁹⁷ It should be noted that, in the same way that Sarah Winnemucca Hopkins’s service to General Howard during the Bannock War cause many Northern Paiutes today to view her as a traitor to her people (Chapter 3), Posey’s service on behalf of the Dawes Commission has tainted his memory among some contemporary Muscogees. As an agent of the Dawes Commission, Posey was directly complicit in the unlawful theft of lands from not only the Muscogees, but from all the nations of Indian Territory. Over the next several decades, allotment proved catastrophic for many, many Native families while U.S. corporations profited from the sale of “surplus” tribal lands and, later, rich oil deposits on many foreclosed allotment parcels.

road was heard whistling and presently March came into sight. Riding up he dismounted and soon joined his hungry haymakers in their good fortune” (126). On October 27, they “Visit Cindy—the thriftiest Indian woman known hereabouts” (132). In addition to noting Cindy’s good standing in her community, Posey describes how Cindy cares for her relatives’ graves: “There is a graveyard near by where a number of her relatives are buried. Over their [15] graves she has had erected veritable houses, besides which the common Indian grave house would pale into insignificance. The house over her mother’s (Kinita) grave is big enough to live comfortably in” (133). Posey’s sharp sense of humor is quick to laugh at the idea of Thompson’s helping himself to his neighbor’s repast or Cindy’s mother’s gargantuan grave house. What Posey positions as punchlines are exactly the acts of kindness, reciprocity, and social responsibility that mark the persistence of Muscogee values.

Interestingly, Thompson and Cindy are also exemplary of how Muscogees have adapted traditional cultural practices to maintain their values amidst “progress.” Thompson, a Muscogee, has rented his allotment lands to renters as Posey’s father and other “progressive” Muscogees did, thereby profiting off of allotment. Yet, his relationship with his hired workers and renters is not structured by the capitalist logic of tenant and landlord but by the laws of Muscogee reciprocity. He cares for them by sharing his food, but when he cannot, they can all rely on Thompson’s neighbors to share what they have to make sure everyone is fed. The grave houses that Cindy has erected over her relatives’ graves provide a more concrete example of adaptation. Grave houses

are small structures made of stone or wood that Muscogees erect over the graves of deceased relatives. According to Melissa Harjo-Moffer, archives and records technician for the Muscogee (Creek) Nation Oklahoma, “the idea behind [the grave houses] is that even if the spirit wanders, they’ll always have somewhere to come home to” (qtd. in Fourkiller). Autumn Fourkiller (Cherokee) describes how the practice of building grave houses developed sometime in the mid-nineteenth century as a way to translate ancient tribal practices to the new realities of removal: “Before, tribe members were buried beneath the home so that the spirit remained in residence with loved ones. Sources differ on when the shift to separate houses for the dead began, but it’s thought to be associated with that forced relocation—perhaps during the removal, on the trail, or when the traumatized tribes resettled in what was then called Indian Territory, now Arkansas and Oklahoma.” Fourkiller further notes how this development was influenced by many Muscogees’ adoption of Christianity. She quotes an interview with RaeLynn Butler, Manager of the Historical and Cultural Preservation Department of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation and a member of the Raccoon Clan, in which Butler explains: “The thing about spirit houses...is they are a mix of modernity and the past. They exist on a spectrum between Christianity and our traditional religion” (Fourkiller). According to Butler, the erection of Muscogee grave houses is the shared responsibility of the family and community. “Only men can build the house, and it must be completed within four days of death. Women can aid in painting and decorating the house, and the design is up to the

family” (Fourkiller). The same protocols guided the building of Cindy’s grave houses: “I made this place myself...with a man’s help” (Posey, *Lost Creeks* 133).⁹⁸

The journey of the Creek enrollment field party certainly inspired Letter No. 61, perhaps the most moving evocation of kinship in the Fus Fixico Letters. In it, Hotgun announces that his “ol’ time frien’, Yadeka Harjo, was finished ‘is days an’ go to be a good Injin” (Posey, *Fus Fixico* 235). “Go to be a good Injin” is Hotgun’s ironic way of saying that someone died, playing on the inhuman nineteenth-century axiom commonly attributed to General Philip Sheridan.⁹⁹ Yadeka Harjo was a Muscogee man whom Posey and Skraggs interviewed in 1905. In his journal, Posey describes him as “blind and very old—thinks he may be a hundred years old—came here from the “Old country”—an advocate of the simple life—doesn’t care for U.S. citizenship” (Posey, *Lost Creeks* 130). Letter No. 61 (March 1906) is Hotgun’s eulogy to Yadeka Harjo. As he remembers

⁹⁸ In her article, Autumn Fourkiller describes many Muscogees’ reticence to discuss grave houses. The tribal sources she spoke with who refused to share information with her all noted the sacred nature of the information she sought as well as the history of abuse that has occasioned the sharing of traditional knowledge outside of Indigenous communities: “A slew of tribal members, officials, and historians—even those from my own community—were unwilling to speak about this topic. Protecting Native lines of thought is considered incredibly important, especially given the ways being Native was weaponized against communities in the past....They also shared their fears about this article, about the ways words could be twisted, and how Indigenous traditions are often characterized as primitive just because they do not fit into the white, Western model of logic and sourcing.” My inclusion of certain details about these Muscogee practices and beliefs does not intend to portray these practices as primitive but to indicate the ways that Muscogees in Posey’s time and today continue to protect “Native lines of thought” from the pressures of assimilation.

⁹⁹ In tracing the origins of this phrase, historian Wolfgang Meider casts doubt that it originated with Sheridan. Meider shows how, though the phrase was widely attributed to Sheridan in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, it may have started as a misquotation or rumor. Regardless of whether or not Sheridan said it, Meider shows that the epigram circulated widely through the nineteenth century in various forms and became irrevocably attached to Sheridan’s name. See Meider, ““The Only Good Indian is a Dead Indian”: History and Meaning of a Proverbial Stereotype,” *Journal of American Folklore* vol. 106, 1993, pp. 38-60.

Yadega Harjo to his friends, Hotgun recalls how their friendship was based on reciprocity of “good will” and not the transactional expectations of politics or business:

We come together from the Ol’ Country, an’ live close neighbor to one ‘nuther. He come to my house an’ I go to ‘is house, an’ we set down an’ talk till dinner time an’, maybe so, stay all night. All time we cultivate big friendship an’ small sofky patch. We didn’t visit one ‘nuther ‘cause we had business. He didn’t had nuthin’ I want to get holt of ‘cept good will, an’ I didn’t had nuthin’ he like to have ‘cept the same thing. So when he see me ridin’ up to ‘is front gate, he wasn’t ‘fraid he had to go on my note or vote me for office. Same way, when I see ‘im comin’, I wasn’t uneasy. (Posey, *Fus Fixico* 235)

It is possible to read Letter No. 61 as another regretful contemplation of the vanishing Muscogee full bloods and their “simple life.” In Hotgun’s eulogy, Yadega Harjo’s passing suggests the passing of the days of the “big friendship an’ small sofky patch.” Furthermore, Letter No. 61 was written and published in early spring of 1906, when it began to become clear to Posey that the U.S. Congress would not accept the ratified Sequoyah constitution or the Native governments’ separate-state solution (Littlefield 237). Perhaps this realization turned Posey maudlin and nostalgic for the full blood communities he had recently toured through.

A close reading shows that Letter No. 61 ultimately avoids reiterating the vanishing Native trope and discloses a triumphant vision of Muscogee sovereignty and perseverance in the land more in line with Hotgun’s and Yadega Harjo’s Snake politics

than the progressives' doom-and-gloom. Following the passage above, Hotgun remembers the last time he spoke to Yadeka Harjo. He quotes Yadeka Harjo's message in order to pass on his wisdom to his friends:

“I play close ‘tention an’ my ol’ time frien’, Yadeka Harjo, he go on an’ say,
 ‘Well, so I pass through many days; maybe so I was put near hundred years ol’; I
 couldn’t tell. So what I say is ol’ man talk. Long time ago He That Looks Over Us
 give the Injins more lan’ than any other people. He put a big ocean on the east
 side of it an’ a big ocean on the west side of it. Then he put summer on the south
 side an’ winter on the north side. He put gold an’ silver in the hills an’ fishes in
 the streams an’ game in the woods an’ on the prairies. He give the Injin the bow
 an’ arrow an’ tol’ ‘im to be happy.’” (Posey, *Fus Fixico* 236)

Letter No. 61 ends rather abruptly there. Littlefield suggests that the letter is unfinished, a “sentimental and awkward” fragment (234), but I argue that its ending instead evades closure. The final image of the Muscogee Creator filling the land with ample resources and bidding the people to be happy combines the deep-time of Muscogee oral history with an equally infinite vision of the future. It points to the teaching, common to many Native nations, including the Muscogee, that reckons time on a scale of seven generations back into the past and seven generations forward into the future. The Creator’s gift of the bows and arrows to the people so that they may hunt the animals of the land underscores the basic tenets underlying the Muscogee values of reciprocity and social obligation: the idea of mutual responsibility and happiness within the shared space of the land.

Furthermore, the ending to Letter No. 61 allows readers to see how the project of the Fus Fixico Letters as a whole carries on the kinship practices Yadeka Harjo describes. Yadeka Harjo's final message is a call to happiness and happiness, Hotgun suggests, lies in the balance of his and Yadeka Harjo's unassuming friendship. Neither man sought to take anything from the other, but only to give good will and receive it in turn. Such a balance also characterizes the relationship between Fus, Hotgun, Toofpafka Micco, Kono Harjo, and Wolf Warrior as they meet to smoke, talk, and eat at least once a month in the newspaper columns. Hotgun's and Yadeka Harjo's friendship is structured by hospitality, reciprocity, and the free flow of conversation: "He come to my house an' I go to 'is house, an' we set down an' talk till dinner time an', maybe so, stay all night." Many of the Fus Fixico Letters quoted in this chapter begin and end in this same way. The parallels suggest that the Fus Fixico Letters are not only a public forum for a redefinition of politics from a Muscogee perspective, but also an active attempt to capture in language the creative, constructive social energy of the sofky pot.

"one scrumptious time!": Black Joy in Dunbar's Dialect Poems

While critics like Daniel Littlefield readily identify Posey as a humorist, few acknowledge the humor of Dunbar's poetry.¹⁰⁰ That Dunbar intended his dialect poems to be funny is clear; he entitled the second section of *Majors and Minors* containing that volume's twenty-four dialect poems "Humor and Dialect." However, the ugly history of

¹⁰⁰ Littlefield calls him "the greatest Indian humorist before Will Rogers" (164).

minstrelsy, which cloaked racial degradation and violence as comedy, has caused many to approach Dunbar's humor with caution. Twentieth-century African American literary critics, eager to identify the field of African American literary studies with the modernist techniques and progressive racial politics of the Harlem Renaissance, cast a wary eye on Dunbar's dialect performances, accusing him of perpetuating harmful Black stereotypes (Jones 183-4). Although fellow poet James Weldon Johnson praised Dunbar as "the first to use [dialect] as a medium for the true interpretation of Negro character and psychology," including "its humor, its superstitions, [and] its shortcomings," he also derided the Black dialect aesthetic as "an instrument with but two full stops, humor and pathos" and blamed the limitations of dialect for the popularity of the "happy-go-lucky, singing, shuffling, banjo-picking" "Sambo" type that artists of the Harlem Renaissance were then working to overcome (xxxiii, xl). Gayl Jones, Houston Baker, and Henry Louis Gates, Jr. more or less follow Johnson's critique, reiterating Dunbar's failure "to register his authentic black voice in the tradition of Western poetry" (Gates 115).¹⁰¹ Kevin G. Gaines implies that the humor of Dunbar's poetry derives from "the mass culture of Progressive Era journalism" and "the minstrel trappings, and working-class settings" of popular culture (184). Though Dunbar's work attempts to "exploit and flout" such racial conventions, Gaines writes that Dunbar was "seldom free from the constraints of white audiences" who interpreted his dialect verse within the schema of plantation fiction and

¹⁰¹ Gavin Jones provides summaries of Johnson's, Jones's, Baker's, and Gates's critiques in *Strange Talk*, 183-4.

minstrelsy (184). These critics are apt to view Dunbar's humor as, at best, an aesthetic failure or, at worst, regurgitated minstrel tropes.

Recent criticism has largely abandoned this older view of Dunbar as imprisoned by white literary forms in favor of a Dunbar who used popular forms to encode trenchant social and political critique. However, as scholarly attention has shifted away from Dunbar's relation to with minstrel types, so too, it seems, has attention to his humor. Gavin Jones is one of the few recent critics to write about the humorous techniques of Dunbar's poetry. In *Strange Talk* (1999) Jones employs the language of humor to describe Dunbar's subversive technique of signifying on white literary forms. For example, she explains that in Dunbar's oral performance of his dialect poem "The Colored Band," in which he performs a cakewalk, "Dunbar was underscoring for his friends...his knowledge of African-American parodic rituals that reappropriate white culture by infusing it with a satirical black difference" (191). Jones makes clear that in such dialect poems as "An Ante-bellum Sermon" Dunbar does not "[conform] to the 'humorous' stereotypes" of the plantation tradition, but employs parody and satire as the modes of his "counterdiscourse" (192). Jones's reassessment follows other revaluations of Black humor's political meaning and social utility, such as comedy historian Mel Watkins's contention that "surreptitiousness and trickery were the principal defenses against repression" for Black folks during the Jim Crow era (35). While such views of Black humor have informed a few critics' interpretations of Dunbar, the older caution still prevails, and no full study of Dunbar as a humorist has yet appeared.

In this section, I focus on the humor of a few of Dunbar's most iconic dialect poems and argue that his humor articulates what Lindsey Stewart calls a "politics of Black joy." My thesis assumes two things: one, that Dunbar is a humorist and, two, that his humor is strategic and political, rather than merely popular or naive. Put differently, I assume that Dunbar was funny *on purpose* and that he knew what he was doing. My position differs from that of early critics such as Howells and Johnson who view humor as an essential racial trait or as a basic truth of Black people's psychology. Humor, like dialect, is a performance, an aesthetic choice Dunbar makes and the medium through which he depicts Black joy. As Stewart explains it, the artistic depiction of Black joy articulates Black humanity in a way that escapes the totalizing oppression and pathological suffering that, according to neo-abolitionism (the forms that Black liberation take post-Emancipation), defines the Black American experience (Stewart 15-21). Black joy, then, is not a stance of resistance to oppression and, more importantly, an expression of Black humanity that is deeply political even as it appears to eschew traditionally political themes. I argue that in many of his dialect poems, but especially in "When de Co'n Pone's Hot" and "The Party," Dunbar uses humor to articulate a politics of Black joy that posits a third position for Black liberation outside of what Stewart calls the "dialectic of Black enchantment and Black tragedy," which partially subtended the late-nineteenth-century ideology of racial uplift and its attendant respectability politics. In what follows, I describe the relation I see between uplift, respectability, and Black

enchantment/tragedy in order to situate my reading of Dunbar's poetry as escaping these frames.

At the turn of the twentieth century, the intraracial discourse of racial uplift attempted to prescribe what viable Black political expression looked like. After the "failure" of Radical Reconstruction and the withdrawal of Federal troops from the South in 1877, Southern legislatures passed a slew of anti-Black statutes/laws aimed at severely bracketing emancipated peoples' civil rights in the Southern states. These "Jim Crow" laws segregated public facilities, including bathrooms, train cars, and lunch counters, and kept African Americans from fully participating in national life as citizens of the United States. The Supreme Court's decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) determined that these oppressive laws did not violate African Americans' protections under the Fourteenth Amendment. In response to such legal repression, Black intellectuals and political leaders developed an ideology they referred to as racial uplift. Uplift describes a constellation of moral, economic, and political strategies which aimed to "improve African Americans' political, social, and economic conditions in the United States" (Lee 233). Many leading voices of uplift preached the doctrine of respectability, which problematically linked "race progress" to Black individuals' performance of white, bourgeois values like "industriousness, righteousness, and self-reliance" (233). Men like W. E. B. Du Bois and Booker T. Washington stressed the importance of education to personal and racial advancement, though their approaches and emphases differed. Washington promoted a program of Black economic advancement through education in the trades and manual

training and espoused a gradualist approach to African Americans' participation in politics. Conversely, Du Bois championed higher education for African Americans and pressed more assertively than Washington for Black political engagement. Both positions had their adherents and detractors, and during his lifetime, Dunbar oscillated between the Washingtonian and Du Boisian schools of thought.

As they sought to define the best way forward for racial and civil advancement, Black activists also had to contend with the demeaning, racist cultural stereotypes promulgated by blackface minstrelsy. Minstrelsy reached new heights during Jim Crow as a discourse to mock and discredit emancipated Black people's efforts to achieve social equality with whites. As Kevin G. Gaines explains, racial uplift's imposition of a bourgeois moral economy was partly a response to minstrelsy's identification of Blackness with immorality, laziness, and lasciviousness (67). A common technique of minstrelsy was to depict the Old South as an idyllic time marked by harmonious race relations. Within such fictions, Black people were content in their enslavement. Some even claimed that Black people had benefited from enslavement. Critics of Booker T. Washington's Tuskegee Institute accused Washington of perpetuating minstrel stereotypes when he claimed that enslavement had given Southern Blacks opportunities to learn trades and manual skills. Other elite proponents of uplift risked pathologizing or demonizing Black poverty when they stressed the "self-help" politics of uplift. Du Bois is one such intellectual who differentiated between less affluent, less well-educated lower

classes of African Americans and the “better class” of Black Americans, whose burden it was to exemplify and embody racial progress (14).

I argue that what Lindsey Stewart calls “the dialectic of Black enchantment and Black tragedy” can be seen in the intraracial class politics of racial uplift. Stewart’s term explains the tendency in the United States to see Black life only within the binary terms of humorous minstrel stereotypes (enchantment) or abjection (tragedy). Stewart develops her idea from her readings of Zora Neale Hurston, but it is not anachronistic to contextualize the dialectic she describes in the political milieu of the Gilded Age. Stewart’s dialectic is made up of “the abolitionist’s staging of Black sorrow and the minstrel’s show of Black joy” (7). Blackface minstrels’ caricatures continued well into the twentieth century, but after Emancipation the abolitionists’ exhibition of Black misery is replaced by the uplift advocates’ moral crusade. Like the abolitionists, for whom “Black life is seen to be tragic without northern, white political intervention,” proponents of uplift regarded Black life as tragic without the civilizing forces of education, labor, family, or any other of the values enshrined by uplift’s moral advocates. In his famous essay “The Talented Tenth” (1903) W.E.B. Du Bois invokes tragedy as “the rule” of Black life, to be alleviated only by the “thrift, ability, and character” of “a saving remnant”:

And yet so sure as this Talented Tenth is pointed out, the blind worshippers of the Average cry out in alarm: "These are exceptions, look here at death, disease and crime—these are the happy rule." Of course they are the rule, because a silly

nation made them the rule: Because for three long centuries this people [white Americans] lynched Negroes who dared to be brave, raped black women who dared to be virtuous, crushed dark-hued youth who dared to be ambitious, and encouraged and made to flourish servility and lewdness and apathy. But not even this was able to crush all manhood and chastity and aspiration from black folk. A saving remnant continually survives and persists, continually aspires, continually shows itself in thrift and ability and character. Exceptional it is to be sure, but this is its chiefest promise; it shows the capability of Negro blood, the promise of black men. (43)

Stewart also notes Du Bois's characterization of Black spirituals as "sorrow songs" in *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903) as another example of "a 'Race attitude' that mandates that we emphasize sorrow in our representations of Black life" (19).

Another place we might locate Stewart's dialectic in the late nineteenth century is in what Gene Andrew Jarrett calls "minstrel realism." Minstrel realism describes the different aesthetic standards to which white cultural commentators like William Dean Howells held African American realist writers. Focusing on Howells's review of Dunbar's *Majors and Minors*, Jarrett shows that Howells's appreciation for Dunbar lay primarily in what he perceived to be the poet's racial authenticity, accessible to Howells via Dunbar's use of dialect as well as his photograph in the frontispiece of *Majors and Minors*. Stewart writes that "the South is often portrayed as a land of Black enchantment, as the hub and home of much-celebrated Black cultural products, such as our food,

music, and dance traditions” (2). Similarly, Howells romanticized Dunbar’s poetry by “playing up the dialect’s racial authenticity” and linking it with a minstrelized notion of Black psychology that essentialized humor and joy as racial traits.¹⁰²

Uplift’s emphasis on bourgeois respectability as the best path forward for Black liberation and the minstrel tradition’s hijacking of humor as a weapon of racist attack discountenanced humor as language of political activism. Both Black and white critics wrote about the humor of Dunbar’s poetry in ways that inscribed him within the terms of the dialectic of enchantment and tragedy. James Weldon Johnson, whose remarks from the Preface of *The Book of American Negro Poetry* (1922) I quote in the introduction to this chapter, dismisses dialect writing such as Dunbar’s as “an instrument with but two full stops, humor and pathos” (xl). Humor, for Johnson, was indelibly linked with white nostalgia and was inadequate to describe Black life in urban centers like Harlem or Chicago (xl). The white press celebrated/lionized Dunbar using the same language. In 1900, *The Washington Post* praised *The Strength of Gideon and Other Stories*, Dunbar’s 1899 collection of short fiction, for the way Dunbar portrayed the “humor and pathos...of African American life” (qtd. In Jarrett, *Dunbar* 371). Similarly, in a review of the same work, the *New York Journal* noted “the fidelity and unrestrained humor of which this

¹⁰² Jarrett also points out that Howells’s review, which became the preface for Dunbar’s next poetry collection *Lyrics of Lowly Life* (1896) “did for Dunbar what various prefatory or concluding letters, signatures, guarantees, and/or tales had done for ex-slave authors: to authenticate a “newfound black voice” (“Entirely Black Verse,” 522). Like the more demeaning forms of minstrelsy, minstrel realism propounded a sense of Black life wholly defined by Black authors’ alleged proximity to white ideas of Black culture. This similarity further aligns Howells’s “minstrel realism” with the white gaze of the enchantment/tragedy dialectic.

exponent of the characteristics of his race is capable” (371). These reviews illustrate the way that, Stewart says, Black joy has historically been “reduced to enchantment, stripped of its critical power, and fashioned as the romance of Black life in the South” (3). Thus, while many early white critics tended to read Dunbar’s humor as a mark of his racial authenticity and many early Black critics read in it his complicity with harmful and nostalgic white literary forms, the humor of Dunbar’s dialect poetry ultimately escapes both these frames in its portrayal of Black joy.

As Stewart argues, the critical power of Black joy lies in its refusal to engage in the politics of recognition. Following the Mohawk scholar Audra Simpson, Stewart defines (a)political acts of refusals against acts of resistance. “Resistance,” she writes, “locks us into a life and death struggle with our oppressor for recognition. In contrast, refusal withholds recognition of the oppressor’s power or authority to define our lives” (33). Since the 1990s, critics have reclaimed Dunbar’s legacy by focusing on the subtle ways his poems subvert and resist racist codes and tropes. His famous poem “We Wear the Mask,” first published in *Majors and Minors*, has rightly come to be seen as Dunbar’s mission statement in this respect:

We wear the mask that grins and lies,
 It hides our cheeks and shades our eyes,—
 This debt we pay to human guile;
 With torn and bleeding hearts we smile
 And mouth with myriad subtleties. (Dunbar, *Poetry* 71)

These lines describe the way Dunbar approached his poetry, especially his poems in dialect, which he felt white audiences deeply misunderstood. However, “We Wear the Mask” is not *only* about resistance. It is also about refusal, as the second stanza indicates:

Why should the world be over-wise
In counting all our tears and sighs?
Nay, let them only see us, while
We wear the mask. (71)

The speaker’s refusal is an act of self-definition. They present a mask of “grins and lies” to the world that thinks it knows them, and so they control the terms of recognition. The speaker does not evade or deny the realities of racism, as indicated in the lines, “We smile, but oh great Christ, our cries / To thee from tortured souls arise.”¹⁰³ However, rather than confront the oppressor with the truth, the speaker finds power in denying the world’s view of abject Blackness. Dunbar achieves something similar here to the “*enactment* of refusal through a performance of indifference” toward racism that Stewart sees in Zora Neale Hurston’s writings (Stewart 39). According to Stewart, the performance of indifference is essential to the politics of Black joy because it “decenter[s] racism in representations of southern Black life” (42). The speaker of “We

¹⁰³ I take Gene Jarrett’s point that we should be careful not to racialize Dunbar’s poetry too quickly. Many of his poems contain no clue or reason for readers to assign Blackness to their speakers, except of course our awareness of Dunbar’s race. Unless a poem is explicitly about race, then, we do Dunbar a disservice by making him speak to racial matters as if nothing else inspired him to write. However, “We Wear the Mask” is so widely understood as a credo of subversive Black art that it seems actually more harmful to opt for the narrower interpretation. It is, of course, possible that the speaker of the poem describes only their own private agony which must be hidden beneath a carefree veneer and there is something to be said about privileging this personal experience above the racial one.

Wear the Mask” enacts indifference toward racism in their blasé attitude toward what the world “dreams” about African Americans. Attention is then recentered in the final line, which becomes a triumphant assertion of power: *We wear the mask!* Although “We Wear the Mask” is not about Black joy, it is certainly a statement of refusal.

Dunbar’s poem “When de Co’n Pone’s Hot” enacts a politics of Black joy through its strategic refusals. “When de Co’n Pone’s Hot” clearly traffics in minstrel tropes, with its references to “picaninny,” the minstrel caricature of Black childhood, and “mammy,” the ubiquitous embodiment of Black maternity for the white gaze.

Approaching the poem as a minstrel performance influences an understanding of the poem’s humor. One might laugh at what appears to be the speaker’s hyperbolic and ridiculous enthusiasm for hot corn pone, a Southern dish associated with Blackness and poverty (Engelhardt 52). The poem becomes a “coon song,” a minstrel production that burlesqued the “gastronomical delights of chicken, pork chops and watermelon” and associated them with Blackness on the stage (Johnson, qtd. in Williams-Forson 59). In such a reading, the speaker’s joy becomes suspect, an instance of the “happy ducky” motif that was a hallmark of the plantation tradition (59). Indeed, the speaker’s ironic reference to the throne of God as “de Mastah’s th’one” in line 42 hints at the poem’s antebellum setting and the figures’ status as enslaved people (Dunbar, *Poetry* 57).

While reviewers like Howells were apt to see in Dunbar’s use of such tropes a realistic representation of the Southern Black emotional experience,¹⁰⁴ the poem’s

¹⁰⁴ This despite the fact that Dunbar himself was not from the South. [[I would include this fact in the body, or, more precisely, that he grew up in Ohio.]]

minstrel motifs are part of its strategic refusal of the white gaze. In two moments of refusal, at lines 13-20 in the second stanza and lines 33-34 in the third, the speaker demonstrates a range of emotional experience that escapes the narrow bands of the “happy darky” type. Lines 13-20 read:

When you set down at de table,
 Kin’ o’ weary lak an’ sad,
 An’ you ‘se jes’ a little tiahed
 An’ purhaps a little mad;
 How yo’ gloom tu’ns into gladness,
 How yo’ joy drives out de doubt
 When de oven do’ is opened,
 An’ de smell comes po’in’ out;

(Dunbar, *Poetry* 57)

The range of emotions the speaker describes—weariness, sadness, depression, anger, doubt—greatly exceed the emotional register of the “happy darky.” Though the speaker jovially describes the way that the smell of corn pone dispels these bad feelings, the very existence of the bad feelings in the first place belies the type. Similarly, in lines 33-34, the speaker anticipates the hot corn pone and reflects “An’ you want to jump an’ hollah, / Dough you know you’d bettah not” (57). Well, why not? The exaggerated show of appreciation and anticipation fit right in with minstrel performance, do they not? The speaker practices a conscious moment of self-control that once again plays against type.

In such moments, the speaker of the poem exercises an emotional agency that escapes the definitions imposed on them by whites.

The poem's focus on food enacts another refusal of white knowledge of Black life. The speaker celebrates certain kinds of food while refusing others:

When de cabbage pot is steamin'
 An' de bacon good an' fat,
 When de chittlins is a-sputter'n'
 So 's to show you whah dey's at;
 Tek away yo' sody biscuit,
 Tek away yo' cake an' pie,
 Fu' de glory time is comin',
 An' it's 'proachin' mighty nigh,

(Dunbar, *Poetry* 57)

Minstrel shows fetishized Black appetites by associating them with certain kinds of food such as watermelons, chicken, pork, and cornbread. Often, minstrel shows demonized Blackness by criminalizing their consumption: the “chicken-stealing Black man” is another common minstrel type. However, many of these popular food associations have their roots in Black Americans' experiences in enslavement. For instance, many enslavers “paid” their field workers in rations of pork and corn, making chittlings and cornbread prepared with lard staples of enslaved people's diets. In the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, the low price and general availability of pork and corn versus other

kinds of meat and grain caused many rural African American families to continue to prepare these meals. Minstrel tropes targeting specific foods often aimed to discredit them, making them “symbol[s] of black people’s unfitness for citizenship,” as William Black has observed about the watermelon (65).

The speaker’s conspicuous refusal of specific foods—soda biscuit and cakes and pies—associated with bourgeois respectability in favor of symbolically-freighted foods like cabbage, pork, and corn, highlights the intersections of class and race that informed those choices for African Americans. Both white and Black social reformers emphasized the moral dimension of Black families’ culinary choices. Reformers in settlement houses aimed at the rural and urban white poor pathologized pork, grease, and corn, traditional staples of the rural diet, as “unwholesome” (Engelhardt 62). Flour biscuits, more expensive and labor-intensive than corn bread, were considered healthier and thought to reflect the bourgeois values of “cleanliness and thrift” (62). Likewise, the politics of respectability for Black families entailed a more refined diet that reflected the northeastern sensibilities of white bourgeois kitchens and consciously rejected traditional Southern foodways’ minstrel associations (Wallach 42-3). Such prescriptive food politics made claims about Black identity based on the food Black people consumed. The speaker’s refusal of biscuits and cake, those markers of middle-class status and refined taste, denaturalizes the association between corn bread, pork, and Black identity, by revealing the cultural and historical forces structuring these foodways. That is, the

speaker's refusal draws our attention to the choices they *do* make and cause us to ask why.

Importantly, the poem's refusals do not divulge these deeply personal foodways to the reader. They function as what Audra Simpson calls an "ethnographic limit," a discursive point where disclosure of cultural knowledge meets the representational sovereignty of a people ("On Ethnographic Refusal," 78). Nevertheless, the speaker's playful dissemblance—the tantalizing emphasis they place on the specificity of their refusals—invite us to investigate the deep relationship between African American foodways, liberation, and Black joy. In the chapter on hoecakes in her book *Grain and Fire: A History of Baking in the American South* (2022) food historian Rebecca Sharpless shares the testimonies of many emancipated African Americans interviewed by the Federal Writers Project (FWP) in the 1930s. Unlike the writers of the plantation tradition who used Black foodways to romanticize the antebellum South, or abolitionists who overrepresented enslaved people's hunger and privation, these oral histories represent Black people's actual memories of watching their family members, often women, prepare the food they ate. These speakers remember not only the details of the recipes and methods of food preparation, but also frequently the joy that such meals occasioned. Austin Penn Parnell recounts the painstaking way her grandmother baked corn "ash cakes": "She could put [the cake] together and take it in her hand and pat it out flat and lay it on the hearth. It would be just as round! That was the art of it!" Once it was finished baking, he continues, "We'd get that hoecake out of the ashes and wash it off

until it looked like it was as clean as bread cooked in a skillet...The bread would have a good firm crust on it. But it didn't get too hard for us to eat and enjoy" (119). Another interviewee, Alex Montgomery, remembers the rare occasion of combining bread and molasses: "We had thick black lasses an' sometime we got a piece uf bread an' dug a hole inside uf it an' den filled dat hole wid lasses, an' dat wus jes' like cake to us. All de cake we eber had to eat wuds made wid meal and lasses" (121). There is a link here between these FWP interviewees' memories of joy associated with the domestic space of the hearth and the communal act of eating and the highly rhetorical, highly political dialect performance of "When de Co'n Pone's Hot." These stories are bittersweet and no doubt their personal reminiscences are colored by nostalgia, but these people speak to an emotional facet of Black life that cannot be contained or understood within the dialectic of Black enchantment or Black tragedy. Their self-definitions escape the dialectic, just as the poem seeks to do.

Humor, refusal, dissemblance also structure "The Party," Dunbar's most explicitly self-conscious exploration of Black joy. "The Party" is a narrative poem, a comic monologue performed by an enslaved Black speaker to a non-racially-specific listener, in which the speaker describes a "gread big pahty" in which enslaved "folks f'om fou' plantations was invited" (Dunbar, *Poetry* 83). As Joanne Braxton notes, the poem's sensitive depiction of Black joy decenters whiteness and refuses the abolitionist focus on Black tragedy: "antebellum black folk are imagined on their own time and in an Afrocentric environment where they enjoy each other's company and where they are self-

identified rather than focused on the master or the degree of their oppression: they are not bent under the driver's lash or bowing and scraping to the master" (xxvii). Tracking the poem's many comic refusals and attending to what exactly they refuse clarify the terms of the poem's project of Black self-definition. There are two interrelated strategies of refusal in "The Party": first, the speaker's refusal to give over authorial representative control over the narrative they are telling; and second, their dissembling depiction of the partygoers' antics which refuse the racializing minstrel gaze.

At several points in the poem, the speaker seems to be interrupted by their audience, a listener whose voice we never hear. In these moments, we are clued into the interruption by the speaker's derisive repetition of the question. For instance, while they are describing the partygoers' finery, the speaker suddenly stops to ask: "Who was dah? Now who you askin'? How you 'spect I gwine to know? / You mus' think I stood an' counted evahbody at de do'" (83). There is humor in the speaker's mockery of what they evidently think is an invasive question. Later, the speaker describes a partygoer's failed attempt to dance. The dancer trips and falls into the fireplace. Once more they are interrupted: "Did it bu'n him! Sich a question, why he didn't give it time; / Th'ow'd dem ashes and dem cindah evah which-a-way I guess / An' you nevah did, I reckon, clap yo' eyes on sich a mess; / Fu' he sholy made a picter an' a funny one to boot, / Wif his clothes all full o' ashes an' his face all full o' soot" (84).¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁵ The speaker's imagery in this scene intentionally references blackface minstrelsy, as I explain in more detail below.

In both these moments, the listener's annoying interjections represent attempts by outsiders to butt in and take control over the speaker's narrative. In turn, the speaker's refusals and mockery of these attempts deny the listener the control they seek and maintain the speaker's agency and authorial power over the story of the party. Agency and representative control were things that Dunbar desperately sought in his professional career. Privately, he struggled with the "irrevocable harm" Howells's review of *Majors and Minors* had done to his reputation (qtd. in Jarrett 374). After that review, the white literati perceived Dunbar as not only a literary celebrity but also as a representative of his race. The irrevocable harm of Howells's review was the idea he promulgated that Dunbar's poetry, particularly his dialect poetry, granted any white reader unfettered access to the poet's interior self that was, according to Howells, as Black as his skin. Dunbar gives voice to his yearning for self-definition in his poem "Sympathy" (1899). The metaphor of the caged bird that sings as it bruises its wings against the bars of its cage, straining for freedom, represents the poet's desire to control his own voice and destiny. The bird's "plea" for "freedom" is misunderstood by others as a "carol of joy or glee," but the speaker understands too well (102).

The speaker of "The Party" further enacts self-definition in their dissembling representations of their fellow partygoers, the second strategy of refusal in the poem. As with the domestic joy of "When de Co'n Pone's Hot" or the birdsong in "Sympathy," the depiction of real humor and Black enjoyment in "The Party" is in danger of being misread as a minstrel performance. Intuiting this, the speaker anticipates such a

misreading through the subtle tactic of evoking and then immediately undercutting minstrel tropes. For example, the speaker says that the enslaved women at the party were so beautiful, their dresses so fine, and their hair so perfectly done that “Ef you ‘d seen ‘em wif deir mistus, could n’t swahed to which was which” (83). The speaker is keenly aware of the racist trope, common to white minstrel performance of the cakewalk, of enslaved people dressing up nicely and “putting on airs” to resemble their enslavers and other elite whites. By conjuring that image first in their ironic assertion that the women looked so good you couldn’t tell the difference between the enslaved women and their enslavers, the speaker diffuses its power. Similarly to how making fun of oneself first tends to dull the blow of mockery from others, the speaker’s evocation of minstrel imagery short-circuits its operation.

We see this again in the example of Harvey Jones, who the speaker says spends the whole party jealously watching another man, Isaac, court Malindy Jane. Harvey evidently has had his eye on “Lindy,” and the sight of her “hangin’ to [Isaac’s] elbow...seemed to stick him lak a tho’n” (83). To save face, Harvey “laughed with Viney Caheth, tryin’ ha’d to not let on” even though “a pusson would ‘a’ noticed f’om de d’rection of his look / Dat he was watchin’ evry step dat Ike an’ Lindy took” (84). Harvey’s forced laughter is another refusal. At one level, his refusal to “not let on” preserves his pride. At the level of the poem’s politics of self-definition, the speaker anticipates and undercuts the minstrel trope of monstrous, unrestrained Black male sexuality. The poem’s depiction of Harvey Jones’s frustration is a far more humane

representation that does not deny or suppress Black sexuality (as some proponents of uplift were wont to do) but finds humor and joy in it.

The poem's two strategies of refusal come together in the example of Scott Thomas, the young Black man mentioned above whose failure to keep time in a line dance sends him sprawling into the fireplace. The anecdote, 17 lines, is excerpted below:

Dat was bettah 'n young Scott Thomas, tryin' to be so awful smaht.

You know when dey gits to singin' an' dey comes to dat ere paht:

“In some lady's new brick house,

In some lady's gyahden.

Ef you don't let me out, I will jump out,

So fa' you well, my dahlin'.”

Den dey 's got a circle 'roun' you, an' you's got to break de line;

Well, dat dahky was so anxious, lak to bust hisse'f a-tryin';

Kep' on blund'rin' 'roun' an' foolin' 'twell he giv' one gread big jump,

Broke de line, an lit head-fo'most in de fiah-place right plump;

Hit 'ad fiah in it, mind you; well, I thought my soul I 'd bust,

Tried my best to keep f'om laffin', but hit seemed like die I must!

Y' ought to seen dat man a-scramblin' f'om de ashes an' de grime.

Did it bu'n him! Sich a question, why he did n't give it time;

Th'ow'd dem ashes and dem cindahts evah which-a-way I guess,

An' you nevah did, I reckon, clap yo' eyes on sich a mess;

Fu' he sholy made a picter an' a funny one to boot,
 Wif his clothes all full o' ashes an' his face all full o' soot. (83)

The speaker presents Scott's story in such a way that it opens an epistemic gulf between the reader and full understanding of the action of the poem. Beginning with line 44, "You know when dey gets to singin'..." the speaker switches to a tone of intimate familiarity. Details cease to be specific and begin to rely on shared memory. The song the speaker sings is a "ring-song" called "Built My Lady a Fine Brick House," or just "Fine Brick House." As folklorist Edwin F. Piper describes them, such songs were sung to keep time and rhythm in high choreographed "dance games." No central authority existed for either the songs or the dances, making them community performances handed down from person to person through tradition and repetitious play (265). The speaker's familiar tone reinforces the folk nature of the song and dance. The effect here is to create an in-group and out-group made of those who "get it" and those who don't. While knowing how the dance is supposed to go surely adds to the humor of the scene, more important than recognizing the song is recognizing that the speaker doesn't identify the song for the reader.

Without specific cultural knowledge, the reader is alienated. This is another way the speaker exercises representational control over the narrative. The poem then confronts the reader with the embodiment of their epistemic alienation in the final image of the humiliated Scott Thomas, pulling himself from the fireplace, with his face covered in soot. Scott evokes the burnt cork white minstrels would use to darken their skin for

blackface performances, the ultimate symbol of whites' presumption of privileged access to and racial knowledge of Black life. In his eagerness to participate in the ring dance despite not knowing the steps—that is, in his eager desire for immediate transparency and access to specific, intimate cultural knowledge—Scott Thomas already represents the white gaze. Rendering that figure again as a minstrel in blackface is the ultimate decentering of whiteness and rejection of white folks' “knowledge” of Blackness. The poem asserts that even as they claim racial superiority, cultural outsiders (such as the elite mis-readers of Dunbar's poetry) will only ever “only see us, while / We wear the mask.”

Joy in the Language

There is an interesting connection between how “The Party” presents the underground, intracultural transmission of the ring dance and the afterlife of the poem itself. In the one hundred years since its publication, “The Party” has circulated within Black families, has been passed down from parents and grandparents to children, and recited between friends. It has almost become folklore itself, a piece of Black Americana. In an essay about Dunbar and his legacy among contemporary Black poets, poet and Yale Professor of African-American studies Elizabeth Alexander remembers how, when she was a child, her father “would occasionally recite Paul Laurence Dunbar's ‘The Party’ ...joyfully and apropos of nothing but exuberance” (395). Later in her life, Alexander writes, she discovered in conversation with another poet, whom she does not identify, that *her* father spontaneously recited “The Party,” too. “This sameness was surprising to both of us,” Alexander writes; “I had thought of my father's recitation as

being unique to our family, part of our own particular orality, our family syllabus. But the coincidence...gave me a sense of Dunbar as a poet whose legacy was intimately related to black home space and oral practice” (395). Wondering where her father had learned “The Party” and what it meant to him, Alexander asked him: “he said ‘The Party’ was...a poem that many of his Harlem friends knew. In his group of boys, he said, you knew that ‘if you recited it, someone would join in with you’” (396). Like the speaker and partygoers in the poem, Alexander’s father and his friends were “being black together, marking black space with this poem” (396).

The New York-based singer and storyteller Karen Wilson also attests to the virality and “particular orality” of Dunbar’s poem. In an interview recorded in 1999 as part of Boston University’s Favorite Poems Project, Wilson recounts a story similar Alexander’s:

This poem was given to me by my mother, first. She would hold my hand as we walked from Broadway to Amsterdam on 150th Street in New York City, in Harlem...And she would speak in her normal kind of Virginia—very, almost British—speech. But then she would just start: *Dey had a gread big pahty down to Tom’s de othah night; Was I dah? You bet!* And then she would tell me, “That’s by Paul Laurence Dunbar.” (Wilson)

These recitations of “The Party” were part of a larger intergenerational “passing down” between her mother and her daughter. For her, the poem represents “a sense of culture

and joy in the language, joy *in* language” that was passed down within her family (Wilson).

Alexander’s and Wilson’s relationships to “The Party” point to how the Black dialect and humor in Dunbar’s poems are in themselves acts of self-definition. At a time when Black speech was pathologized by educators and bastardized by white minstrels to demean and mock Black Americans’ efforts to defend their civil rights, Dunbar refuses to be alienated from Black speech. As Caroline Gebhard writes, “Dunbar understandably viewed black dialect as his patrimony. In it, he saw far more than a way to reach white audiences: the true inheritors of this speech...were African Americans like himself” (165). As I have shown through my readings of his poetry, Dunbar used dialect to decenter white definitions of Blackness as sorrowful, nostalgic, tragic, or naive. Instead, he explored Black domestic and social spaces defined by care, love, and the joy of shared experiences. He refused the dour abolitionist discourses of plantation life to picture lively party scenes where enslaved people marked Black space through dancing, stories, and laughter. Though he faced the obstinate ignorance of critics who condescended to him about the meaning of Black speech and the “truth” of Black life, Dunbar refuses and makes his language the site of joy and pleasure.

The joyful domestic spaces Dunbar conjures in these poems are thus similar to the Muscogee sofky pot that recurs throughout the *Fus Fixico* Letters. The sofky pot announces a politics that rejects the progressive/conservative binary that constrains our thinking of Native political subjectivity. Imagining Native political agency as always

either progressive or conservative/traditionalist contains the possibility for meaningful political activism to some position on a spectrum that always centers assimilation to the American system. Even as they address territorial politics, the Fus Fixico Letters foregrounds how Muscogee people relate to each other, rather than to the United States. In focusing on the continuity of Muscogee culture rather than on its interruption or erasure, the Letters unsettle the notion that the only way forward for the Muscogee people lies in political recognition by the U.S. Typically, scholars have interpreted the Letters' satirical humor as working against the assimilatory pressures of allotment and statehood, either as acts of resistance or as a salve that helps dull the pain of oppression. As I have shown, humor also structures the generative community space of the sofky pot, articulating Muscogees' relationality to the people and the future that often refuses political recognition as the basic terms of its existence.

CONCLUSION

On June 9, 2024, as I was writing the Introduction to this dissertation, Sterlin Harjo, the co-creator and head writer of *Reservation Dogs* along with Taika Waititi, accepted the 2024 Peabody Award on behalf of the show's producers, writers, cast, and crew. Established in 1941, the Peabody Awards recognize excellence in American broadcasting, including television, radio, documentaries, news, podcast, video games, and virtual reality formats. The slogan "Stories That Matter" reflects the Awards' mandate to honor stories and storytellers that showcase "the pressing social issues and the vibrant emerging voices of our day" ("Our Story"). 2024 is the second time *Reservation Dogs* won the Peabody. Accepting the show's first award in 2022, Harjo speaks to *Reservation Dogs*'s desire to "show Natives as who we are and to also highlight our humor" as "important to who we are and our survival" ("Ethan Hawke Presents"). In his acceptance speech two years later, Harjo again highlighted the importance of "finally tell[ing] the truth of who we are" ("Sterlin Harjo Accepts").

The show, which ended in 2024 after three seasons, has been critically acclaimed for its representation of Indigenous life, youth, community, and most particularly, Native humor. Like other Indigenous writers, critics, and scholars who attest to the cultural and social importance of humor for Native people, Harjo above identifies humor with Indigenous survival. In an interview with Kate Aurthur for *Variety* just after *Reservation Dogs*'s first Peabody win, Harjo explains that the show's deft tonal movement between grief and humor comes from his immersion in Native humor. "I think that [humor has]

always been close to tragedy, because it's about survival," he says. "Humor has always been about survival. It's like laughing in the face of all of this tragedy that's surrounding us" (qtd. in Aurthur). Writers from other historically oppressed groups have made similar claims regarding relationship between humor, community, and survival. On the subject of laughter and joking among Jewish prisoners in Nazi concentration camps during the Holocaust, Stephen Lipman writes: "laughter was a part of their lives, a part nurtured by their suffering. They found humor, sometimes sardonic humor, in all aspects of their disrupted existence" (9). He continues:

...humor was both a psychological weapon and a defense mechanism. It was a social bond among trusted friends. It was a diversion, a shield, a morale booster, an equalizer, a drop of truth in a world founded on lies" (10).

As Harjo's comments on the humor of *Reservation Dogs* attests, Native humor is survivance. The term is Gerald Vizenor's, from his 1999 book *Manifest Manners: Narratives of Postindian Survivance*, where he writes, "Survivance is an active sense of presence, the continuance of native stories, not a mere reaction, or a survivable name. Native survivance stories are renunciations of dominance, tragedy and victimry" (vii). Linking humor to survivance encompasses and exceeds notions of laughter's therapeutic and psychological benefits as a reaction to trauma, pointing beyond that to a sense of humor as a refusal of settler narratives that claim the totalizing influence of colonization on Native life and forefronts depictions of Native people as only abject, poor, sick, angry, missing, murdered, depressed, and oppressed. Such narratives are Indigenous peoples'

equivalent to Lindsey Stewart's dialectic of Black enchantment and tragedy discussed in Chapter 4. As a praxis of survivance, humor does not reject the fact of trauma and tragedy in Native life, but insists that this is not the whole picture. As Tracy Rector (Choctaw-Seminole) and Taylor Hensel (Cherokee) write, "Celebrating and amplifying joy doesn't mean the pain, hardships, and harsh realities of life go unacknowledged or ignored. Instead, it means elevating delight and allowing that to carry us through the adversities and obstacles along the way, serving as an important counterbalance that can enable us to live full and purpose-filled lives" ("Joy").

The humor of the early Native writers presented in this study is not often joyful. It is, on the whole, bitter, biting, sardonic, and sarcastic—and rightfully so. However, it is also compassionate in its goal to build bridges between Native and white communities and to foster intercultural communication, cooperation, and understanding. As noted in the Introduction to this study, Taiaiake Alfred cites such relationships as crucial to the future of all cultures and as the ultimate goal of Indigenous diplomacy. In interviews, Sterlin Harjo and Taika Waititi frequently describe their shared, inclusive view of comedy and laughter, how humor invites others in. "Most of the time people are very precious with Native people," Harjo says, "that's kind of how the world is trained to view us. We realize we need to bake into [*Reservation Dogs*] permission to laugh with us" (qtd. in Gross). Elsewhere, Waititi echoes Harjo's sentiments. "Comedy is a great way of pulling people in and going, 'Hey, we're all friends. Get comfortable. You're racist,' ...People check themselves and they go, 'Am I allowed to laugh at this?'" (qtd. in

Keegan). For Harjo and Waititi, the invitation to laugh with Native comedians is an important step in decolonizing audiences' misconceptions about Native life. "One of the things [he and Harjo] connected on was our disdain for how we appear onscreen in white productions," Waititi remembers. "Indigenous characters, they're always stoic. They're always the people who talk to trees and play flutes on mountaintops. They're never funny, they're never normal" (qtd. in Keegan).

What would laughing with nineteenth century Native writers do? How would it change our view of the period, of these writers, of the history of Native political activity and resistance more generally? There is nothing funny about the United States's genocidal attempts over the last 250 years to eliminate Indigenous people, what David Michael Smith has called the "Indigenous Holocaust." However, naming joy when we see it, such as in historical Native writers' choices to laugh at adversity rather than succumb to it, is crucial to our fuller understanding of the diverse ways that Indigenous communities have responded to settler colonial attacks on their humanity and culture. Recognizing that early Native people's political protests could be funny places Apess, Ridge, Winnemucca Hopkins, and Posey back into relation with Harjo, Waititi, Dallas Goldtooth, Bobby Wilson and other voices in Native comedy today and shows how the issues that these nineteenth-century writers responded to are the same issues that motivate Indigenous comedians today. Then and now, Native humor defies death, inspires resilience, and builds community around stories of the past and shared visions of the future.

WORKS CITED

Addison, Joseph. *The Spectator* 23. March 27, 1711.

<http://www2.scc.rutgers.edu/spectator/text/march1711/no23.html>. The Spectator Project.

Ahmed, Sara. *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life*. Duke UP, 2012.

Albanis, Sophia. “‘The Chieftain’s Weary Daughter’: The Feminist Legacy and Mainstream Appropriation of Sarah Winnemucca.” Bachelor’s Honors Thesis, University of Oregon, June 2017.

Alexander, Elizabeth. “Dunbar Lives!” *African American Review*, vol. 41, no. 2, 2007, pp. 395-401.

Alfred, Taiaiake. *Peace, Power, Righteousness: An Indigenous Manifesto*. Oxford UP, 1999.

“An Indian Daily Paper: Edited by the Only Indian Humorist, Who is an Advocate of State Rights for His Race” *New York Times*, 5 July 1903, 3.

Angel, Myron. *History of Nevada*. Thomson & West, 1881,
<https://archive.org/details/historyofnevada00ange/page/n7/mode/2up>. Internet Archive.

Antelyes, Peter. *Tales of Adventurous Enterprise: Washington Irving and the Poetics of Western Expansion*. Columbia UP, 1990.

- Apress, William. *A Son of the Forest*. William Apress, 1829,
<https://archive.org/details/sonofforestexper00inapes/page/n5/mode/2up>. Internet
 Archive.
- . *Indian Nullification of the Unconstitutional Laws of Massachusetts Relative to the
 Mashpee Tribe; or, The Pretended Riot Explained. On Our Own Ground: The
 Complete Writings of William Apress, A Pequot*, edited by Barry O'Connell.
 University of Massachusetts Press, 1992, pp. 163-274.
- Arnold, Laura. "'Now...Didn't Our People Laugh?' Female Misbehavior and
 Algonquian Culture in Mary Rowlandson's *Captivity and Restauration*." *American Indian Culture and Research Journal*, vol. 21, no. 4, 1997, pp. 1-28.
- Aurthur, Kate. "From Daniel's Death to Native Humor, 'Reservation Dogs' Showrunner
 Sterlin Harjo Answers Our Burning Questions." *Variety*, 15 June 2022,
<https://variety.com/2022/tv/news/reservation-dogs-sterlin-harjo-daniel-death-native-humor-1235294333/>.
- Bakhtin, M. M. *The Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, edited and translated by Caryl
 Emerson, University of Minnesota Press, 1984.
- Bendik-Keymer, Jeremy. "How to Be Foolish in Being Angry: Against Sarcasm." *The
 Blog of the American Psychological Association (APA)*, 29 July 2022,
<https://blog.apaonline.org/2022/07/29/sarcasm-and-philosophy/>. APA Online.
- Benson, Ivan. *Mark Twain's Western Years*. Russell & Russell, 1966.

- Berkove, Lawrence I. *Sagebrush Anthology: Literature from the Silver Age of the Old West*. University of Missouri Press, 2006.
- Bickham, Troy. "American Indians in the British Imperial Imagination, 1707-1815." *British North America in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, edited by Stephen Foster, Oxford UP, 2014, pp. 227-54.
- Black, William R. "How Watermelons Became Black: Emancipation and the Origins of a Racist Trope." *The Journal of the Civil War Era*, vol. 8, no.1, March 2018, pp. 64-86.
- Blair, Walter. *Native American Humor*. Chandler Publishing Co., 1960.
<https://archive.org/details/nativeamericanhu0000blai/page/n5/mode/2up>. Internet Archive.
- Bogel, Frederic V. *The Difference Satire Makes: Rhetoric and Reading from Jonson to Byron*. Cornell UP, 2000.
- Bridgman, Richard. *Traveling in Mark Twain*. University of California Press, 1987.
- Brooks, Lisa. *The Common Pot: The Recovery of Native Space in the Northeast*. University of Minnesota Press, 2008.
- Bureau of Indian Affairs. "What is a federally recognized tribe?" U.S. Department of the Interior, 2 Oct 2020, <https://www.bia.gov/faqs/what-federally-recognized-tribe#:~:text=A%20federally%20recognized%20tribe%20is,funding%20and%20services%20from%20the>.
- Burns, Louis F. *A History of the Osage People*. The University of Alabama Press, 2004.

- Caison, Gina. *Red States: Indigeneity, Settler Colonialism, and Southern Studies*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2018.
- Calcaterra, Angela. *Literary Indians: Aesthetics and Encounter in American Literature to 1920*. University of North Carolina Press, 2018.
- Camfield, Gregg. "Power and Politics." *A Cultural History of Comedy in the Age of Empire*, edited by Matthew Kaiser, Bloomsbury Academic, 2020, pp. 143-70.
- Canfield, Gae Whitney. *Sarah Winnemucca of the Northern Paiutes*. University of Oklahoma Press, 1983.
- Caron, James E. *Mark Twain: Unsacred Newspaper Reporter*. University of Missouri Press, 2008.
- Carpenter, Cari M. "Choking Off That Angel Mother: Sarah Winnemucca Hopkins's Strategic Humor." *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 26.3 (Fall 2014): 1-24.
- Carpenter, Cari M. and Carolyn Sorisio. *The Newspaper Warrior: Sarah Winnemucca Hopkins's Campaign for American Indian Rights, 1864-1891*. University of Nebraska Press, 2015.
- Carter, Kent. "Dawes Commission," *The Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*, n.d., <https://www.okhistory.org/publications/enc/entry?entry=DA018>.
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). "Hansen's Disease (Leprosy)." 2 Aug. 2023. <https://www.cdc.gov/leprosy/index.html>. Center for Disease Control. Accessed 10 Feb. 2024.

- Chapman, Mary. "'Living Pictures': Women and *Tableaux Vivants* in Nineteenth-Century American Fiction and Culture." *Wide Angle*, vol. 18, no. 3, 1996, pp. 22-52.
- Cherokee Nation, "Remember the Removal," n.d., <https://www.cherokee.org/about-the-nation/remember-the-removal/our-journey/>.
- Clark, William Bedford. "How the West Won: Irving's Comic Inversion of the Westering Myth in *A Tour on the Prairies*," *American Literature* vol. 50, no. 3, Nov. 1978, pp. 335-47.
- Cohen, Matt. *The Networked Wilderness: Communicating in Early New England*. University of Minnesota Press, 2009.
- Colin G. Calloway. *Pen and Ink Witchcraft: Treaties and Treaty Making in American Indian History*. Oxford University Press, 2013.
- Coulthard, Glen Sean. *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition*. University of Minnesota Press, 2014.
- Chiles, Katy. "William Apess's Native Collaborations." Unpublished manuscript. University of Tennessee, Knoxville.
- Creel, Von Russell. "Raymond, Charles W." *The Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*. 3 Nov. 2015.
<https://www.okhistory.org/publications/enc/entry?entry=RA022>.

- Crepelle, Adam. "Federal Policies Trap Tribes in Poverty," *Human Rights Magazine*, vol. 48, no. 2, Feb 2023,
https://www.americanbar.org/groups/crsj/publications/human_rights_magazine_home/wealth-disparities-in-civil-rights/federal-policies-trap-tribes-in-poverty/.
- Dale, Edward Everett and Gaston Litton, eds. *Cherokee Cavaliers: Forty Years of Cherokee History as Told in the Correspondence of the Ridge-Watie-Boudinot Family*. University of Oklahoma Press, 1939.
- Day, Donald. "Life of George Washington Harris." *Tennessee Historical Quarterly*, vol. 6, no. 1, March 1947, pp. 3-38.
- De Quille, Dan. *The Big Bonanza: An Authentic Account of the Discovery, History, and Working of the World-Renowned Comstock Lode of Nevada*. Introduction by Oscar Lewis. Knopf, 1947.
- Debo, Angie. *The Road to Disappearance: A History of the Creek Indians*. University of Oklahoma Press, 1941.
- Deloria Jr., Vine. *Custer Died For Your Sins*, 1969, University of Oklahoma Press, 1988.
<https://archive.org/details/custerdiedfory00delo/page/148/mode/2up>. Internet Archive.
- Denier, Tony. *Parlor Tableaux; or, Animated Pictures*. Samuel French, 1868. *National Fairground Archive*, University of Sheffield. Adam Matthew,
[http://www.victorianpopularculture.amdigital.co.uk.utk.idm.oclc.org/Documents/Details/NFA_Parlor Tableaux or Animated Pictures](http://www.victorianpopularculture.amdigital.co.uk.utk.idm.oclc.org/Documents/Details/NFA_Parlor%20Tableaux%20or%20Animated%20Pictures). Victorian Popular Culture.

Dickson-Carr, Darryl. *African American Satire: The Sacredly Profane Novel*. University of Missouri Press, 2001.

Donahue, Timothy. "Joaquin's Head: Theatrical Punishment, Public Address, and Novelistic Politics in the United States—Mexico Borderlands." *J19: The Journal of Nineteenth-Century Americanists*, vol. 4, no. 2, 2016, pp. 391-417.

Doolen, Andy. *Territories of Empire: U.S. Writing from the Louisiana Purchase to Mexican Independence*. New York: Oxford UP, 2014.

Doten, Alfred. *The Journals of Alfred Doten, 1849-1903*. Vol. 1. Edited by Walter Van Tilburg Clark. University of Nevada Press, 1973.

<https://archive.org/details/journalsofalfred0000dote/page/n7/mode/2up>. Internet Archive.

Driscoll, Kerry. *Mark Twain among the Indians and Other Indigenous Peoples*. University of California Press, 2018.

Du Bois, William Edward Burghardt. "The Talented Tenth." *The Negro Problem: A Series of Articles by Representative American Negroes of Today*, edited by Booker T. Washington, J. Pott, 1903, pp. 33-75.
https://www.google.com/books/edition/The_Negro_Problem/A8RtAAAAMAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=0. Google Books.

Dunbar, Paul Laurence. *The Collected Poetry of Paul Laurence Dunbar*, edited by Joanne M. Braxton, UP of Virginia, 1993.

—. “England as Seen by a Black Man,” *The Independent*. 16 Sep. 1897, p. 4.

<https://www.proquest.com/magazines/england-as-seen-black-man/docview/90523768/se-2>. ProQuest.

Eastman, Max. *The Enjoyment of Humor*. Simon and Schuster, 1936. Google Books.

Edwards, Tai S. *Osage Women and Empire: Gender and Power*. University of Kansas Press, 2018.

Egan, Ferol. *Sand in a Whirlwind: The Paiute Indian War of 1860*. 1972. University of Nebraska Press, 2003.

Ellinghaus, Katherine. *Blood Will Tell: Native Americans and Assimilation Policy*. University of Nebraska Press, 2017.

Ellingson, Ter. *The Myth of the Noble Savage*. University of California Press, 2001.

Ellsworth, Henry L. *Washington Irving on the Prairie, or A Narrative of a Tour of the Southwest in the Year 1832*, edited by Stanley T. Williams and Barbara D. Simison, American Book Company, 1937.

Emmerson, Phil. “Thinking laughter beyond humor: Atmospheric refrains and ethical indeterminacies in spaces of care.” *Environment and Planning A*, vol. 49, no. 9, 2017, pp. 2082-2098.

Engelhardt, Elizabeth S.D. *A Mess of Greens: Southern Gender and Southern Food*. University of Georgia Press, 2011.

“Ethan Hawke Presents ‘Reservation Dogs’ with a Peabody Award.” *YouTube*, uploaded

by Peabody Awards, 6 June 2022,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3xuuXAG4XWg>.

Executive Orders Relating to Indian Reserves, From May 14, 1855, to July 1, 1902.

Government Printing Office, 1902. <https://www.oregon.gov/ode/students-and-family/equity/NativeAmericanEducation/Documents/Executive%20Orders%20Relating%20to%20the%20Siletz%20Coast%20Reservation.pdf>

Fagan, Kristina Rose. “Laughing to Survive: Humour in Contemporary Canadian Native Literature.” 2001, University of Toronto, PhD dissertation.

Fatout, Paul, ed. *Mark Twain Speaking*. University of Iowa Press, 1976.

Fourkiller, Autumn. “In Search of the Origins of Native American Grave Houses in Oklahoma.” *Atlas Obscura*, 24 Jan. 2022.

<https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/grave-houses-oklahoma>.

Gaines, Kevin G. *Uplifting the Race: Black Leadership, Politics, and Culture in the Twentieth Century*. UNC Press, 1996.

Gates, Henry Louis. *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African -American Literary Criticism*. Oxford UP, 1988.

Gebhard, Caroline. “‘Inventing a Negro Literature:’ Race, Dialect, and Gender in the Early Work of Paul Laurence Dunbar, James Weldon Johnson, and Alice Dunbar-Nelson.” *Post-Bellum, Pre-Harlem: African American Literature and*

- Culture, 1877-1919*, edited by Barbarba McCaskill and Caroline Gebhard, NYU Press, 2006, pp. 162-178.
- Gibson, William M. "Mark Twain and Howells: Anti-Imperialists." *The New England Quarterly*, vol. 20, no.4, Dec. 1947, pp. 435-70.
- Goeman, Mishuana. *Mark My Words: Native Women Mapping Our Nation*. University of Minnesota Press, 2013.
- . "Land as Life: Unsettling the Logics of Containment," in *Native Studies Keywords*, edited by Stephanie Nohelani Teves, University of Arizona Press, 2015, pp. 71-89.
- Goodwin, C. C. *As I Remember Them*. Published by a Special Committee of the Salt Lake City Commercial Club, 1913.
- Granville, Ganter. "'Make Your Minds Perfectly Easy': Sagoyewatha and the Great Law of the Haudenosaunee," *Early American Literature*, vol. 44, no. 1, 2009, pp. 121-46.
- Grenda, Christopher S. "Thinking Historically about Diversity: Religion, the Enlightenment, and the Construction of Civic Culture in Early America," *Journal of Church and State*, vol. 48, no. 3, Summer 2006, pp. 567-600.
- Gross, Terry. "'Reservation Dogs' co-creator says the show gives audiences permission to laugh," *Fresh Air*, *NPR*, 19 Sep. 2022, <https://www.npr.org/2023/08/18/1194376133/reservation-dogs-co-creator-says-the-show-gives-audiences-permission-to-laugh>.

Gussow, Zachary. *Leprosy, Racism, and Public Health: Social Policy in Chronic Disease Control*. Routledge, 2021.

Harjo, Chitto. "Keep Our Treaties," in *Say We Are Nations: Documents of Politics and Protest in Indigenous America Since 1887*, edited by Daniel M. Cobb, UNC Press, 2015, pp. 36-41.

Harris, George Washington. *Sut Lovingood's Yarns*, edited by M. Thomas Inge. New Haven: College & University Press, 1966.

Hebard, Andrew. *The Poetics of Sovereignty in American Literature*. Cambridge University Press, 2012.

Hilleary, Cecily. "Some Native Americans Fear Blood Quantum is Formula for 'Paper Genocide'." VOA, 24 July 2021, https://www.voanews.com/a/usa_some-native-americans-fear-blood-quantum-formula-paper-genocide/6208615.html. Voice of America.

Holm, Nicholas. "'Against the Assault of Laughter': Differentiating Critical and Resistant Humour." *Comedy and Critical Thought: Laughter as Resistance*, edited by Iain MacKenzie, Rowman & Littlefield, 2018, pp. 31-44.

Hopkins, Sarah Winnemucca. *Life Among the Piutes*. University of Nevada Press, 1994.

Horton, Jessica L. "Ojibwe *Tableaux Vivants*: George Catlin, Robert Houle, and Transcultural Materialism." *Art History*, vol. 39, no. 1, Feb. 2016, pp. 124-151.

Hutcheson, Francis. *Logic, Metaphysics, and the Natural Sociability of Mankind*, edited by James Moore and Michael Silverthorne, Liberty Fund, 2006,

<https://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/hutcheson-logic-metaphysics-and-the-natural-sociability-of-mankind>. Online Library of Liberty.

Inge, M. Thomas, “A Bibliography of George Washington Harris.” *Sut Lovingood’s Nat’ral Born Yarnspinner: Essays on George Washington Harris*, University of Alabama Press, 1996.

Innes, Pamela. “The Interplay of Genres, Gender, and Language Ideology Among the Muskogee.” *Language in Society*, vol. 35, no. 2, 2006, pp. 231-59.

Irving, Washington. *A Tour on the Prairies. The Complete Works of Washington Irving, Volume XXII: The Crayon Miscellany*, edited by Dahlia Kirby Terrell, Twayne Publishers, 1979, pp. 5-124.

—. *Bracebridge Hall: or the Humourists: A Medley. The Complete Works of Washington Irving, Volume IX*. Edited by Herbert F. Smith. Twayne Publishers, 1977.

—. “Traits of Indian Character,” *Analectic Magazine*, 3. February, 1814, p. 145.

Jackson, Andrew. “Letter to the Creek Indians,” edited by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/342176>. American Presidency Project.

Jacobs, Devery. “LOLing is Good Medicine: How Indigenous People Use Humour For Survival,” *Refinery 29*, 21 June 2021, <https://www.refinery29.com/en-ca/2021/06/10477340/how-indigenous-people-use-humour-for-survival>. Accessed 17 June 2024.

- Jarrett, Gene Andrew. ““Entirely Black Verse from Him Would Succeed”: Minstrel Realism and William Dean Howells.” *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, vol. 59, no. 4, 2005, pp. 494-525.
- . *Paul Laurence Dunbar: The Life and Times of a Caged Bird*. Princeton UP, 2023.
- Johnson, James Weldon. “Preface.” *The Book of Negro American Poetry*, Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1922, pp. vii-xlvi.
- Jones, Gavin. *Strange Talk: The Politics of Dialect Literature in Golden Age America*. University of California Press, 1999.
- Jordan, Tracey. “Joaquin Murieta, *Cherokee* Outlaw-Hero: Yellow Bird’s Vindication of Cherokee Nature.” *Arizona Quarterly: A Journal of American Literature, Culture, and Theory*, vol. 60, no. 3, Autumn 2004, pp. 1-32.
- Justus, James H. *Fetching the Old Southwest: Humorous Writing from Longstreet to Twain*. Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2004.
- Kaplan, Amy. *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture*. Harvard UP, 2002.
- Keegan, Rebecca. “Taika Waititi: ‘Am I Allowed to Laugh at This?’” *Hollywood Reporter*, 31 May 2023, <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/movies/movie-features/taika-waititi-next-goal-wins-reservation-dogs-representation-1235503336/>.
- Kersten, Holger. “Mark Twain’s “Assault of Laughter”: Reflections on the Perplexing History of an Appealing Idea,” *The Mark Twain Annual*, vol. 16, no. 1, 2018, pp. 64-76.

- Kiley, Frederick and J. M. Shuttleworth, eds. *Satire from Aesop to Buchwald*. The Odyssey Press, 1971.
- Killick, Tim. *British Short Fiction in the Nineteenth Century: The Rise of the Tale*. Ashgate Publishing Company, 2008.
- King, Tiffany Lethabo. *The Black Shoals: Offshore Formations for Black and Native Studies*. Duke UP, 2019.
- Kongerslev, Marianne. "Enduring Laughter: Introduction to the Special issue on Native and Indigenous Humor," *Studies in American Humor*, vol. 6, no. 2, 2020, 254-64.
- Konkle, Maureen. *Writing Indian Nations: Native Intellectuals and the Politics of Historiography, 1827-1863*. University of North Carolina Press, 2004.
- Kosmider, Alexia. *Tricky Tribal Discourse: The Poetry, Short Stories, and Fus Fixico Letters of Creek Writer Alex Posey*. University of Idaho Press, 1998.
- Knack, Martha C. *Boundaries Between: The Southern Paiutes, 1775-1995*. University of Nebraska Press, 2004.
- Lape, Noreen Groover. "'I Would Rather Be with My People, but Not to Live with Them as They Live': Cultural Liminality and Double Consciousness in Sarah Winnemucca Hopkins's *Life Among the Paiutes: Their Wrongs and Claims*." *American Indian Quarterly*, vol. 22, no. 3, Summer 1998, pp. 259-279.
- Leary, Lewis. "Irving and the Comic Imagination," *Critical Essays on Washington Irving*, edited by Ralph M. Aderman, G.K. Hall & Co., 1990.

Lewis, Oscar. "Introduction" to Dan De Quille, *The Big Bonanza: An Authentic Account of the Discovery, History, and Working of the World-Renowned Comstock Lode of Nevada*, Knopf, 1947, pp. i-xxv.

Lincoln, Kenneth. *Indi 'n Humor: Bicultural Play in Native America*. Oxford UP, 1993.

Lipman, Steve. *Laughter in Hell: The Use of Humor During the Holocaust*. Jason Aronson, Inc., 1993,
<https://archive.org/details/laughterinhell00stev/page/10/mode/2up?view=theater>.
 Internet Archive.

Littlefield, Daniel F. *Alex Posey: Creek Poet, Journalist, and Humorist*. University of Nebraska Press, 1992.

Lopezina, Drew. *Through the Indian's Looking-Glass: A Cultural Biography of William Apess, Pequot*. University of Massachusetts Press, 2017.

Lorch, Fred. *The Trouble Begins at Eight: Mark Twain's Lecture Tours*. Iowa State UP, 1968.

—. "Mark Twain's 'Sandwich Islands' Lecture and the Failure at Jamestown, New York, in 1869." *American Literature*, vol. 25, no. 3, Nov. 1953, pp. 314-25.

Maungwudaus. *An Account of the Chippewa Indians, Who Have Been Travelling Among the Whites, in the United States, England, Ireland, Scotland, France and Belgium*. Published by the author, 1848.

McBride, Christopher. *The Colonizer Abroad: Island Representations in American Prose from Herman Melville to Jack London*. Routledge, 2004.

McCree, J. Woodrow. *Washington Irving's Critique of American Culture: Sketching a Vision of World Citizenship*. Lexington Books, 2021.

McKenzie, Michael. "My Heart is in my Native Land: The Tragic Relocation of the Wadatika." *Columbia: The Magazine of Northwest History*, vol. 35, no.4, Winter 2021, pp. 10-17.

Meek, Barbara A. "And the Injun Goes 'How!': Representations of American Indian English in white public space," *Language in Society*, vol. 35, pp. 93-128.

Meek, Ronald L. *Social Science and the Ignoble Savage*. Cambridge University Press, 1976.

Mergen, Bernard. *At Pyramid Lake*. University of Nevada Press, 2014.

Merish, Lori. "Print, Cultural Memory, and John Rollin Ridge's *The Life and Adventures of Joaquin Murieta, the Celebrated California Bandit*." *Arizona Quarterly*, vol. 59, no. 4, Winter 2003, pp. 31-70.

Morris, Linda A. "American Satire: Beginnings Through Mark Twain." *A Companion to Satire: Ancient to Modern*, edited by Ruben Quintero, Blackwell Publishing, 2007, pp. 377-99.

Morning Astorian, 30 Sept. 1882, p. 3 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/82601113/>. Newspapers.com.

Mt. Silver, Alyssa, Caroline Wigginton, and Kelly Wisecup. "Materials and Methods in Native American and Indigenous Studies: Completing the Turn," *Early American Literature*, vol. 53, no. 2, 2018, pp. 407-44.

- Nabokov, Peter ed. *Native American Testimony: An Anthology of Indian and White Relations, First Encounter to Dispossession*. Thomas Y. Crowell, 1978, <https://archive.org/details/nativeamericante00newy/page/n7/mode/2up>. Internet Archive.
- Native Governance Center, “Legacies of Allotment and Indigenous Resistance,” n.d., <https://nativegov.org/resources/allotment-legacies-guide/>.
- Neuman, Lisa K. *Indian Play: Indigenous Identities at Bacone College*. University of Nebraska Press, 2014.
- Oliver, Louis Littlecoon. *Chasers of the Sun: Creek Indian Thoughts*. The Greenfield Review Press, 1990.
- Ontko, Andrew Gale. *Thunder Over the Ochoco, Vol. 1: The Gathering Storm*. Maverick Books, 1993.
- “Our Story,” Peabody Awards, n.d., <https://peabodyawards.com/our-story/>.
- Peters, Mwalim. *A Mixed Medicine Bag: Original Black Wampanoag Folklore*. Talking Drum Press, 2007.
- . “Laughter Keepers: Exploring the Medicine Clown Tradition of the Wampanoag.” *Moshe Cohen*, 28 May 2021, <https://moshecohen.net/laughter-keepers-exploring-the-medicine-clown-tradition-of-the-wampanoag-by-mwalim/>.
- Petete, Timothy and Craig S. Womack. “Thomas E. Moore’s *Sour Sofkee* in the Tradition of Muskogee Dialect Writers.” *Studies in American Indian Literatures*, vol. 18. no. 4, Winter 2006, pp. 1-37.

- Pinckney, Thomas. "Great Victory Over the Creek Indians." *The National Intelligencer*, 18 April 1814.
- Piper, Edwin F. "Some Party-Play Games in the Middle West." *The Journal of American Folklore*, vol. 28, no.109, 1915, pp. 262-289.
- Posey, Alexander. *Chinnubbie and the Owl: Muscogee (Creek) Stories, Orations, and Oral Traditions*, edited by Matthew Wynn Sivils. University of Nebraska Press, 2005.
- . *Lost Creeks: Collected Journals*, edited by Matthew Wynn Sivils. University of Nebraska Press, 2009.
- . *The Fus Fixico Letters*, edited by Daniel F. Littlefield, Jr. and Carol A. Petty Hunter. University of Nebraska Press, 1993.
- Rector, Tracy and Taylor Hensel. "Joy Is an Act of Reciprocity." *South Seattle Emerald*, 24 Nov. 2023, <https://southseattleemerald.com/2023/11/24/joy-is-an-act-of-reciprocity/>.
- Reynolds, Guy. "The Winning of the West: Washington Irving's *A Tour on the Prairies*." *The Yearbook of English Studies*, vol. 34, "Nineteenth Century Travel Writing," 2004, pp. 88-99.
- Rex, Cathy. *Anglo-American Women Writers and Representations of Indianness, 1629–1824*. Routledge, 2015.
- Ridge, John Rollin. *The Life and Adventures of Joaquin Murieta: The Celebrated California Bandit*. 1854. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1954.

Rifkin, Mark. ““For the wrongs of our bleeding country”: Sensation, Class, and Empire in Ridge’s *Joaquin Murieta*.” *Arizona Quarterly: A Journal of American Literature, Culture, and Theory*, vol. 65, no. 2, Summer 2009, pp. 27-56.

—. *Settler Common Sense: Queerness and Everyday Colonialism in the American Renaissance*. University of Minnesota Press, 2014.

Robertson, William. *The History of America*. Robert Wilson, 1777. Evans Early American Imprint Collection. University of Michigan Library Digital Collections. <https://name.umd.umich.edu/N25924.0001.001>.

Rohrer, Judy. *Staking Claim: Settler Colonialism and Racialization in Hawai’i*. University of Arizona Press, 2016.

Ross, John. Excerpt from “Letter from John Ross, principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation of Indians,” Digital Public Library of America, <https://dp.la/item/71ae06db03ac5869432da505c6a75d45>

Rowlandson, Mary. *The Sovereignty & Goodness of God, Together, With the Faithfulness of His Promises Displayed; Being a Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson*. Samuel Green, 1682, <https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/851/pg851-images.html>. Project Gutenberg.

Rowe, John Carlos. “How the Boss Played the Game: Twain’s Critique of Imperialism in *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur’s Court*.” *The Cambridge Companion to Mark Twain*, edited by Forrest G. Robinson, Cambridge UP, 1995, pp. 175-193.

—. *Literary Culture and U.S. Imperialism: From the Revolution to World War II*. Oxford University Press, 2000.

Saunt, Claudio. *Unworthy Republic: The Dispossession of Native Americans and the Road to Indian Territory*. Norton, 2020.

Sharpless, Rebecca. *Grain and Fire: A History of Baking in the American South*. UNC Press, 2022.

Silva, Noenoe K. *Aloha Betrayed: Native Hawaiian Resistance to American Colonialism*. Duke UP, 2004.

Silver, Andrew. *Minstrelsy and Murder: The Crisis of Southern Humor, 1835-1925*. Louisiana State UP, 2006.

Silverstein-Wilmott, Cory. "Object Lessons: An Ojibwey Artifact Unraveled. The Case of the Bag with the Snake Skin Strap." *Textile History*, vol. 34, no.1, 2003, pp. 74-81.

Simpson, Audra. *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life Across the Borders of Settler States*. Duke UP, 2014.

—. "On Ethnographic Refusal: Indigeneity, 'Voice,' and Colonial Citizenship." *Junctures*, vol. 9, 2007, pp. 67– 80.

—. "The Ruse of Consent and the Anatomy of 'Refusal': Cases from Indigenous North America and Australia." *Postcolonial Studies*, vol. 20, no. 1, 2017, pp. 18-33.

- Slotkin, Richard. *Regeneration Through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600-1860*. Wesleyan UP, 1973.
- Smith, Adam. *Lectures on Jurisprudence*, edited by R. L. Meek, D. D. Raphael, and P. G. Stein, Liberty Classics, 1982.
- . *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, 1759, G. Bell and Sons, 1911,
<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.49015000787300&seq=7&q1=%22savage%22+>. Hathi Trust.
- Smith, Linda Tuhiwai. *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, Zed Books, 1999.
- Smith, Michael David. *Endless Holocausts: Mass Death in the History of the United States Empire*. Monthly Review Press, 2023.
- “Songs, Dances, & Ceremonies.” *Nuwupaiute.com*, Martineau Visual Media, 2023.
<https://www.nuwupaiute.com/dances-ceremonies>.
- South Lake Tahoe Chamber of Commerce. “History of Lake Tahoe.” *Tahoeinfo.com*. Archived 2 May 2007. Accessed 19 Feb. 2024.
<https://web.archive.org/web/20070502000925/http://www.tahoeinfo.com/visit/history.htm>. Internet Archive.
- “Sterlin Harjo Accepts the Peabody for Reservation Dogs.” *YouTube*, uploaded by Peabody Awards, 17 Jun 2024,
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tm4RyiU_ISA&t=23s.

Stewart, Linsey. *The Politics of Black Joy: Zora Neale Hurston and Neo-Abolitionism*.

Northwestern UP, 2021.

Stimson, Frederick S. "William Robertson's Influence on Early American Literature,"

The Americas, vol. 14, no. 1, July 1957, pp. 37-43.

Stremlau, Rose. *Sustaining the Cherokee Family: Kinship and the Allotment of an*

Indigenous Nation. UNC Press, 2011.

Tate, Michael L. *Indians and Emigrants: Encounters on the Overland Trails*. University

of Oklahoma Press, 2014.

"The Creek Indians Have a Newspaper: Daily Publication in Indian Territory, Has One

Column Given Up to Dialect" *Columbus Ledger* (Georgia) 4 September 1903, 8.

Twain, Mark. *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, edited by Shelley Fisher Fishkin, E.L.

Doctorow, and Albert E. Stone, Oxford UP, 1996.

—. *Innocents Abroad*, edited by Shelley Fisher Fiskin, Mordecai Richler, and David E. E.

Sloane, Oxford UP, 1996.

—. *Roughing It*, edited by Shelley Fisher Fiskin, George Plimpton, and Henry B.

Wonham, Oxford UP, 1996.

—. *The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County, and Other Sketches*. 1867. New

York: Oxford University Press, 1996.

Üngör, Uğur Ümit and Valerie Amandine Verkerke. "Funny as Hell: The Functions of

Humour During and After Genocide." *European Journal of Humour Research* 3

(2/3): 80-101.

- Vallin, Marlene Boyd. *Mark Twain: Protagonist for the Popular Culture*. Greenwood Press, 1992.
- Vizenor, Gerald. *Manifest Manners: Narratives on Postindian Survivance*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994.
- . “Trickster Discourse,” *American Indian Quarterly*, vol. 14, no. 3, Summer 1990, pp. 227-87.
- Wallace, Anthony F. C. and Timothy B. Powell. “How to Buy a Continent: The Protocol of Indian Treaties as Developed by Benjamin Franklin and Other Members of the American Philosophical Society.” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, vol. 159, no. 3, September 2015, pp. 251-28.
- Wallace, Pamela S. “Sofkey,” *The Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*, Oklahoma Historical Society, 15 Jan 2010, <https://www.okhistory.org/publications/enc/entry?entry=SO003>.
- Wallach, Jennifer Jensen. *Every Nation Has Its Dish: Black Bodies & Black Food in Twentieth-Century America*. UNC Press, 2019.
- Washoe Tribe of California and Nevada. “Washoe History: A Brief Summary.” 2020. <https://washoetribe.us/aboutpage/4-Page-washoe-history>.
- Watkins, Mel. *On the Real Side: Laughing, Lying, Signifying—the Underground Tradition of African-American Humor that Transformed American Culture, From Slavery to Richard Pryor*. Simon & Schuster, 1994.

- Watson, Margaret G. *Silver Theatre: Amusements of the Mining Frontier in Early Nevada, 1850-1864*. The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1964.
- <https://archive.org/details/silvertheatreamu00wats/page/n10/mode/1up>. Internet Archive.
- Webster, Alison. "Francis Hutcheson, Political Ideals." *Life: The Human Quest for an Ideal*, edited by Marlies Kronegger and Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka. Springer Science and Business Media, 1996, pp. 61-70.
- Williams, Stanley T. *Life of Washington Irving*, vols. 1-2. Oxford University Press, 1935.
- Williams-Forsen, Psyche A. *Building Houses out of Chicken Legs: Black Women, Food, & Power*. UNC Press, 2006.
- Wilson, Karen. "Dunbar, 'The Party'." *Favorite Poem Project*. Boston University. n.d.
- <https://www.favoritepoem.org/poems/the-party/>.
- Wisecup, Kelly. "Practicing Sovereignty: Colonial Temporalities, Cherokee Justice, and the "Socrates" Writings of John Ridge." *Native American and Indigenous Studies*, vol. 4, no. 1, Spring 2017, pp. 30-60.
- Wolfe, Patrick. "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native." *Journal of Genocide Research*, 8.4 (2006): 387-409.
- Wolloch, Nathaniel. "The Civilizing Process, Nature, and Stadial Theory," *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, vol. 44, no. 2, 2011, pp. 245-59.
- Womack, Craig S. *Red on Red: Native American Literary Separatism*. University of Minnesota Press, 1999.

Zanjani, Sally. *Sarah Winnemucca*. University of Nebraska Press, 2000

Zuck, Rochelle Raineri. "William Apess's Indian Nullification: Narrating Mashpee Wampanoag Sovereignty in Nineteenth-Century America and Beyond." *Early American Literature*, vol. 58, no. 2, 2023, pp. 395-422.

VITA

Henry Yates Kirby was born in Virginia in 1989. He received his Bachelor of Arts in English from Virginia Tech in 2012 and his Master of Arts in English from the same institution in 2014. In Fall 2019, he began a PhD program at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. During his time in the program, he developed his research interests in Early American literature, history, Indigenous Studies, early and nineteenth-century African American literature, and humor. He completed his dissertation directed by Katy Chiles and earned his PhD from the University of Tennessee in 2024. He hopes to continue his research into Early American literature and teach at the college level.