



## Minor Subjects in America: Everyday Childhoods of the Long Nineteenth Century

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MINOR SUBJECTS IN AMERICA: EVERYDAY CHILDHOODS OF THE LONG  
NINETEENTH CENTURY

A Dissertation Presented

by

GINA MARIE OCASION

Submitted to the Graduate School of the  
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment  
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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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English

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## DEDICATION

To my friends, family, and colleagues.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you, Ron Welburn, for six years of mentorship and encouragement. Your patient and careful reading, productive feedback, and generous support throughout this process not only challenged my thinking and writing through research, but modeled mentorship that continues to inspire my teaching pedagogy. Thank you to Nick Bromell and Laura Lovett for your commitment to me and this project. As my committee, you all encouraged and allowed me to follow my interests and I'm thankful for the time I've had to work with such a brilliant community of scholars.

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## ABSTRACT

### MINOR SUBJECTS IN AMERICA: EVERYDAY CHILDHOODS OF THE LONG NINETEENTH CENTURY

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In my American studies dissertation, I argue that contrary to dominant discourses of separation between spaces of childhood and adulthood, representations of indigeneity, both explicit and implied, affirm the quotidian presence of social and political structures naturalized through children's culture. Children's literature, Native American autobiographies, and advice literatures historicize gendered inequalities reliant on particular racial representations. In other words, the intersections of gendered and racialized inequalities surface forcefully in these genres as spaces produced to reify the subjugation of minor and marginal identities through historical narratives. I understand children and the spaces they inhabit to constantly negotiate power, agency, and innocence in a way that is both fundamental to national identity, and at the same time made inaccessible to the adult population through age difference and legal subjectivity. However distant, the tensions between adult and child flex as the desire for a malleable offspring comes up against American models of independence, between creating boundaries for children and negotiating these boundaries, all of which make children's culture a complex and complicated space for the study of national identity.

Methodologically, the chapters take up an interdisciplinary approach, reading

representations of women's culture, fantasy, children, and indigeneity within legal frameworks in order to make visible the dynamic ways in which nationhood permeates everyday life. The interpellation of children into white supremacist, patriarchal, heteronormative U.S. national identity is read through primary texts such as *The Tales of Peter Parley*, *The Whole History of Grandfather's Chair* (1841), Margaret Fuller's "The Great Lawsuit," Lydia Sigourney's *Letters to Young Ladies* (1833) and *Letters to Mothers* (1839), and Zitkala-Ša's serial periodical, "Impressions of an Indian Childhood" (1900) and Eastman's serial periodical, "Recollections of the Wild Life" (1893). These diverse texts are in conversation through a theoretical framework that recognizes the coding of behavior and identity, reliant on representations of Native American bodies and culture.



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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION: CHILDHOOD IN HISTORY

*It's a mistake to take innocence strait. To believe its benign publicity, as it were. One does not 'grow up' from innocence to the adult position of protecting it. This view of innocence - the growing-up view - leaves one open to its peculiar dangers. Innocence, that is, works its own violence on adults and children...*

*The Queer Child*

Kathryn Bond Stockton<sup>1</sup>

*Reading, as I use the term, moves beyond mining information from a text or merely extrapolating pertinent facts from the biography of an author. It is, in contrast, a process that highlights the production of meaning through the critical interaction that occurs between a text as a writer has written it and a text as readers read it.*

*The People and The Word*

Robert Allen Warrior<sup>2</sup>

Catherine Maria Sedgwick's *Hope Leslie: Or, Early Times in the Massachusetts*

(1827) addresses the cultural anxieties of nineteenth century families by historicizing the tensions of racial politics, gender boundaries, and class distinctions through the bodies of children in the early settlements of the seventeenth century. The central characters of her plot include Everell Fletcher, 14, Magawosca (Pequod [sp]<sup>3</sup>), 15, her younger brother Oneco, Faith (formerly Mary) Leslie, and the title character, Hope (formerly Alice) Leslie. The story unfolds with the Fletcher's immigration to New England in 1630 aboard the ship *Arabella*. Upon arrival, Mr. Fletcher becomes disillusioned with what he sees as the Old World climate replicated in the new "religious republic" of Boston, and removes

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<sup>1</sup> *The Queer Child* (2009): 12.

<sup>2</sup> *The People and The Word* (2005): xi.

<sup>3</sup> I have retained Sedgwick's misspelling of Pequot because this language creates a cultural distance between the actual Native Americans living in New England, identifying as part of the Pequot people, and the Native characters represented. Since this manuscript is largely concerned with Native representation, Sedgwick's discursive choice is both a violent misrepresentation of Native identity and an act to make visible the appropriation of bodies and culture that is not her own.

his family further west to the frontier settlement of Springfield in 1636, and then again to a homestead a mile outside the village. The geographic migration of the Fletchers aligns and crosses explicitly with the movements and settlements of the Pequot [sp] people as the narrator states, “The first settlers followed the course of the Indians, and planted themselves on the borders of rivers . . . The wigwams which constituted the village, or, to use the graphic aboriginal description, the ‘smoke’ of the natives gave place to the clumsy, but more convenient dwellings of the pilgrims” (16). Thus, the advancement of the pilgrims triggers a simultaneous retreat of the Natives, setting up the central narrative tension of the novel: the closeness of settlers and Indigenous nations, and how the intimacies of individual people replicate and complicate large-scale racial and spatial relationships. Indeed, when choosing to live outside of Springfield proper, Mr. Fletcher was said to deem “exposure to the incursions of the savages very slight, and the surveillance of an inquiring neighborhood a certain evil,” suggesting that safety is actually achieved in the distance from the settler colonial village and in close proximity to Native communities (17). This belief is challenged throughout the novel, shifting perceived spaces of safety and danger as the characters move through the narrative. It is this movement that informs the notions of belonging and intimacies that Sedgwick crafts through the threat of seduction, miscegenation, and the American desire for place: a claim to land, a home for future generations.

These narrative themes are deeply embedded in the American literary canon, represented by the sentimental rhetoric popularized in the nineteenth century and taken up by authors like Sedgwick to reimagine the complexities of colonial identities. Sedgwick’s nostalgic narrative of seventeenth century New England relies on the

movement and attachments of children, echoing the desire to witness normative growth out of a wild state, working out national concerns across the bodies of nationalized youth. Sedgwick's narrative speaks to the the nineteenth century expansion of American borders, the formation of a unified national identity, and the understanding of American institutions from the home to the White House.

Read early in my exploration of American Studies methodologies, *Hope Leslie* frames my readings of children and children's culture in the nineteenth century as a text concerned with both a nostalgic American past through the rendering of colonial New England and the Pequot War, and an imagined American future through the youthful characters. Catherine Maria Sedgwick's attention to the movement of bodies over space calls attention to the geographic influences that pressure where and how the American family established domesticity and community. In *Cradle of the Middle Class* (1981), Mary Ryan traces the formation of the middle class from its origins in the frontier family. She argues, "It must be borne in mind, however, that a frontier is by definition temporary, doomed to extinction probably within the space of a generation. The frontier family, then, is necessarily an ephemeral, perhaps a paradoxical institution" (20). This description of the vanishing frontier interestingly speaks to the instability of the middle class family. While Ryan suggests that the frontier family vanishes within a generation as the border is moved and colonial development continues, Sedgwick portrays a more complicated relationship to this space as both a means for both survival and destruction.

My American studies dissertation, titled "Minor Subjects in America: Everyday Childhoods of the Long Nineteenth Century," takes up these lines through a multi-genre archive of children's literature, Native American autobiographies, and advice literatures.

Texts such as Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Grandfather's Chair* and Lydia Sigourney's *Letters to Young Ladies* historicize gendered inequalities reliant on particular racial representations. I argue that representations of indigeneity, both explicit and implied, affirm the quotidian presence of social and political structures built into children's culture. In other words, the intersections of gendered and racialized inequalities surface forcefully in these genres as spaces produced to reify the subjugation of minor and marginal identities through historical narratives. I understand children and the spaces they inhabit to constantly negotiate power, agency, and innocence in a way that is both fundamental to national identity, and at the same time made inaccessible to the adult population through age difference and legal subjectivity. The tensions between adult and child flex as the desire for a malleable offspring comes up against American models of independence, between creating boundaries for children and negotiating these boundaries, all of which make children's culture a complex and complicated space for the study of national identity.

Methodologically, the chapters take up an interdisciplinary approach, reading representations of women's culture, fantasy, children, and indigeneity within legal frameworks in order to make visible the dynamic ways in which nationhood permeates everyday life. For example, a close reading of Samuel Goodrich's *The Tales of Peter Parley, About America* (1827) engages with both the *Missouri Compromise* (1820) and the *Indian Removal Act* (1830) in order to articulate the physical and ideological divisions written into U.S. legislation, produced on the landscape, and reflected in the bodies legally and culturally outside of citizenship. Indeed, read through this lens, *The Tales of Peter Parley* can be mapped by what it denies and obscures from view, as well

as the places and bodies it offers to young readers. I look to the marginalized subject position of the child in my close readings of literature, histories, legislation, and popular culture in order to uncover how this identity is contingent upon race, class, gender, ability, geographic location, and historical moment. This methodology brings to the surface the ways in which childhood is at once protected, private, and, at the same time, constantly visible for public and state oversight.

The interpellation of children into white supremacist, patriarchal, heteronormative U.S. national identity is read through primary texts such as *The Tales of Peter Parley*, Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Whole History of Grandfather's Chair* (1841), Margaret Fuller's "The Great Lawsuit," Lydia Sigourney's *Letters to Young Ladies* (1833) and *Letters to Mothers* (1839), Zitkala-Ša's "Impressions of an Indian Childhood" (1900) and Charles Eastman's "Recollections of the Wild Life" (1893). These diverse texts are in conversation through a theoretical framework that recognizes the coding of American identity, reliant on representations of Native American bodies and culture. Interpellation, here, refers to the ways in which subjects are inscribed as inside or outside state models of citizenship. As Mark Rifkin pointedly articulates, "Indigeneity puts the state in crisis by raising fundamental questions about the legitimacy of its (continued) existence" (37). I recognize a paradox of national identity wherein Indianness is both required for constructing an exceptional national character and calls attention to the ongoing crimes of cultural extermination, reaffirming the ways in which America is a settler colonial state. Rifkin goes on to argue that "to contain this crisis, state institutions and allied nongovernmental discourses . . . interpellate forms of indigenous sociality, spatiality, and governance that do not fit within liberal frameworks as *kinship*, coding them as aberrant

or anomalous modes of (failed) domesticity when measured against the natural and self-evident model of nuclear conjugality” (37). Rifkin makes visible the ways in which indigenous social and political structures that obscure or question the settler colonial state are coded as outside of normative ways of being. In this moment, the coding is articulated as “kinship,” the signifier creating and holding an essential distance and hierarchical difference between Native and non-Native. Following the narrative lines of subjects coded as “minor” in the U.S., this project is concerned with the interpellation of children into narratives of settler colonial violence and the interpellation of Indigenous peoples into narratives of failure and “child-like” positions of subordination and dependency.

As a foundational pedagogical goal as well as theoretical framework, drawing out representations of Indianness in these nineteenth and early-twentieth century texts problematizes dominant models of American identity. Recalling Native figures brings a fundamental cultural tension to the forefront, provoking readers to grapple with people both invisible and highly visible, both extinct and alive, both history and present. While this tension between Indianness and Americanness has been explored in scholarship addressing adult culture, there is a curious absence in this conversation where children’s culture is concerned. By taking up the term “Indianness” I am drawing on a body of scholarship referencing the representation and imagery of Indian bodies and cultural acts, detached from the lived realities of indigenous peoples in the nineteenth century, and often referencing non-Native appropriation.

I begin with Catherine Maria Sedgwick’s *Hope Leslie* because it brings together history, literature, children, and Natives in such a way that these genres and representations are embedded within each other and reliant on each other, not distinct and



separate. The nineteenth century is an important moment in American history as the production of children's culture provided the space to express the anxieties surrounding America as a nation and Americans as citizens and embodiments of national identity. The nostalgia for *Early Times in the Massachusetts* speaks within a cultural climate that Howard Chudacoff describes as "an ever more complex social structure," that within the space of forty years moved from preindustrial (early 1800s) to early industrialization by way of "Westward migration, accompanied and assisted by new transportation technologies (steamboats and railroads) and by internal improvements (roads and canals), urban growth, foreign immigration, new modes of finance, and, by 1840, . . . a social order that was more diversified and hierarchal than that of the colonial era" (41-42). Thus, in a rapid and proto-industrial political and social climate of expansion, nineteenth century humanists looked to the seventeenth century for representations of possibility and freedom. As a formative moment in the craft of national narratives, and I will examine children's histories as intellectual archives, negotiating and maintaining the borders between Old World nations, Indigenous nations, and its own settler colonial project.

Ideas of productivity in childhood changed with the industrializing social structure and the formation of the middle class. Prior to the eighteenth century, children were understood culturally as most productive when performing as economic agents of the family. In the nineteenth century, children became more productive as agents of nationalism. By this, I mean that childhood as an ideological space, and children as its agents, became separated, at least within the discourse of the middle class family, from adult spaces of labor and capitalist market economies. In this separation, children as innocent and malleable objects became a source of high anxiety as adults used the space

of the child to produce and perpetuate their own national identities. Therefore, children in political discourse moved from exercising direct agency in a shared social reality, to serving as products: objects of adult desire and fantasy for themselves and how they understand their own identity and their own relationship to the nation. These objects are both innocents in need of protection, and powerful in their ability to reaffirm or corrupt the images of exceptionalism that are always at stake in American culture.

Histories written for children, like those written for adults, offer representations of America as a physical and ideological space and Americans as these structures inform individual identity. These narratives require a definable and recognizable national subject. I begin my exploration into the language and ideologies of the American child and childhood with the understanding that children and the spaces they inhabit constantly negotiate power, agency, and innocence in a way that is both fundamental to national identity and at the same time completely inaccessible to the adult population. I argue that children's stories, as a genre, articulate an exchange between children and adults that is otherwise made impossible by the social disconnection of these spaces. It is this tension between adult and child, between a malleable offspring and an independent thinker, between creating boundaries for children, and negotiating these boundaries, that makes children's culture such a complex and complicated space for the study of national identity.

Popular children's histories are representative of a transitional moment in which both past and present are embodied. It is here, in the in-between, that the national subject negotiates the demands of two concurrent, but separate narratives. The visible and implied recognition of racial identity will be explored in the context of Native American representations and the intimacies of Native and non-Native communities in nineteenth

century New England life. Considering Native Americans occupying the same geographic space as post-revolutionary Americans underscores the anxiety to write American identity, nationally and individually, as exceptional and justified in their displacement of Indigenous nations. Children's culture occupies a valuable space in the ambiguity between "Old World" and "New World," offering the potential for a naturalized performance giving credence to the settler colonial right to land and power in North America. The children's history book constitutes a material and intellectual playground where the interpellation of the child into a national subject is learned to be already within the young American. Because these books are narrations of adult desires, they work to translate ideas of origins and citizenship from adult to child, making visible the ideals and characters essential to nation building that are so often hidden in the quotidian experience of the everyday, the unsaid, the taken for natural and normal.

In the space remaining, I will introduce a popular example of a nineteenth century American history, written for the child reader or listener. This history written by Charles Goodrich will ground the following frameworks and argument where I will provide a brief sociohistorical context, situating my primary text research within critical studies of the nineteenth century and childhood studies. My understanding of childhood as a space constructed by adult desires and fear, and children as ideological figures (rather than using a specific age-range definition) is firmly rooted in the current discussions of childhood studies and age studies. I end with a short summary of my chapters.

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In 1825, Reverend Charles A. Goodrich argued for the importance of history to children in the U.S., noting "History sets before us striking instances of virtue, enterprise,

courage, generosity, patriotism; and, by a natural principle of emulation, incites us to copy such noble examples. History also presents us with pictures of the vicious ultimately overtaken by misery and shame, and thus solemnly warns us against vice" (3). Writing this in the preface of *A History of the United States of America, : On a Plan Adapted to the Capacity of Youth, and Designed to Aid the Memory by Systematick Arrangement and Interesting Associations* (1825), Goodrich clearly identifies his audience and objective in the title. This is a history book written and marketed to children, and, as the subtitle suggests, the text is meant to be held within the young reader's mind and memory by "arrangement" and "association." Interestingly, this edition was not structurally or organizationally modified from the history he wrote for adult readers, regardless of the subtitle. The text was abridged in content but the format remained consistent. The subtitle, then, speaks to the marketing practices of the book industry and the sociocultural value placed on an education in American history. Concomitantly, however, it also speaks to the continued importance of historical knowledge through adulthood, and Goodrich's acknowledgment of the necessity to reaffirm, throughout the individual's life, recognition of the self within the national narrative.

The "systematick arrangement," then, speaks to the relationship between books, oral communication, and memory. The American educational model of this epoch was invested in recitation as a primary method for learning and retention. Mary Kelly in *Learning to Stand and Speak* (2006) as well as Sarah Newton in *Learning to Behave* (1994), document the multifaceted objectives of early American education. Newton notes that "The first compulsory school attendance law, a movement that paralleled the rise of the Sunday schools, was enacted in Massachusetts in 1854; . . . These books often

combine advice about social behavior (and etiquette) with traditional conduct fare, instruction many modern parents wish schools continued to provide” (Newton 28). Goodrich’s subtitle implies the populace’s lasting belief in these multiple methodologies, and the inextricable connection between speaking a text, learning ideas, and performing proper conduct. Goodrich’s text is deeply embedded in this history of education, while also acting as a transition into modern methods of education – a model that values reading comprehension over public recitation.

In marking this textual evolution, storytelling as a cultural act shadows recitation and the movement from an oral culture to a reading culture. Looking at children’s histories within the history and genre of stories and storytelling provides a rich context that considers methodology, audience, and purpose. Indeed, the movement from an oral to a reading education is an echo of the more explicit movement of the historical narrative itself. Goodrich’s prefatory note argues that “striking instances” and “pictures” presented in historical narratives have an active engagement in the current moment, serving a distinct purpose in individual and national growth. This suggests that representations of the past have a direct effect on the present and future. National histories, then, teach national identity by way of a narrative in which the reader is always already included in a legacy of historical Americans, following a “natural principle of emulation.” This, by extension, makes the reader complicit in these national ideals. What is at stake for the nation is at stake for the individual – This is more than a general valorization of history.

In this Goodrich is also proposing a national method to the study of history – a psychological identification and recognition of self in historical narratives. The ideals of

a nation are contained in its history, those “striking instances of virtue,” inspiring and teaching citizens how to perform as exceptional within the national collective, how, in fact, Americans can and should understand world history in order to properly embody their own national identity. After all, it is through historical example that Goodrich argues the individual learns how to perform appropriate citizenship. Within the logic of this preface, it is not enough to learn about American patriarchs – Americans must emulate their ancestors. This requires individual participation (and therefore recognition) in national examples of “striking instances of virtue, enterprise, courage, generosity, patriotism,” as well as the ability to recognize “pictures of the vicious.” Goodrich is then placing his history within a transnational context of national building where Americans must consider themselves in relation to a global community. Implied in this preface is the power nations construct by using history as a framework through which the individual citizen understands himself or herself. Not only do citizens understand who they are through their national history, but who they are not. In arguing that history relays “the vicious ultimately overtaken by misery” is to naturalize the violence, subjugation, and imperialism acted upon cultures outside of American structures of normativity.

Goodrich’s sentiments are part of a national preoccupation with historical narratives. His text participates in the widely popularized genre of histories for children which suggests a cultural belief in history’s ability to both ground a nation within a valorized past, and recreate the feeling of complicity in the current national union. In his first chapter of *History as an Art of Memory* (1993), Patrick H. Hutton contextualizes the anxious attention on national histories in nineteenth century western societies as a movement born from the rapid social and economic developments of the industrial

revolution. With change as a defining feature of this epoch, Hutton argues, "The passion for commemoration, therefore, was in some measure tied to the need to reaffirm ties to a world that was passing" (2). Commemoration, then, figures within western societies as a place of stability and imagined permanence, allowing citizens a consistent communal space for identification with cultural and national ideals within a shared reality that is decidedly shifting and unstable. Hutton, here, is arguing that national histories function within communities as a space for the individual to participate in collective memories, "even if its images of stability were themselves little more than representations of present-minded notions about the past" (5). The desire for unification implied in the collectivity of a national memory correlates to the material rise in popularity of national histories written for children in nineteenth century America. In the antebellum years alone, secular as well as American Sunday School presses, published a continuous stream of national narratives to appease this population's growing demand.

In this cultural moment, it is history that creates and perpetuates national identity. Charles Goodrich was among the most successful authors of American histories in this time period. His brother was the highly successful publisher and author Samuel G. Goodrich, and this connection with the publishing market proved invaluable as the production of books became mechanized, lowering costs and growing the market.<sup>4</sup> With this considerable personal advantage, Charles Goodrich wrote and circulated thirty-six

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<sup>4</sup> Among many publications, Samuel G. Goodrich wrote, published, and circulated the children's literature series *The Tales of Peter Parley* (1827). Circulated under his own publishing house, S.G. Goodrich and Co., Goodrich reached readers across America and Western Europe.

versions of *A History of the United States of America* (1823).<sup>5</sup> These included versions for adults, versions for youths, versions with engravings, and versions focusing on specific time periods. I bring in Goodrich's success here as the multiple editions and versions of this history speak to the wide readership and insatiable demand for American history. It is precisely this desire to create and belong to a national collective that interests me.

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In his history of American childhood, *Huck's Raft* (2004), Steven Mintz evokes the Puritanical approach to early childhood education as an imperative for the colonies and future nation:

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Puritans wrote twice as many books in English on proper methods of rearing children as all other groups combined. Precisely because of their belief that children were born in sin, parents had to raise them with great care. Among the Puritans' most important legacies are the beliefs that early childhood is life's formative stage, that children are highly malleable and need careful training, and the parents should be preoccupied with children's spiritual well-being. (17)

In noting the ratio of children's books written and circulated by Puritans in comparison to other religious or cultural sects, Mintz implies that the deeply rooted American fixation on how to create the ideal childhood for exceptional children can be traced back through this long historical legacy. The tension between recognizing childhood as a formative space where identity can be constructed, and the fantasy of early Americans naturally

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<sup>5</sup> Research on *A History of the United States of America* conducted at the American Antiquarian Society in Worcester, Massachusetts.



embodying an exceptional character creates a complex and ambiguous culture for children. This intense focus on creating proper Puritans comes in stark contrast to the fantasy of American identity whereby the traits associated with this nation are naturalized to the extent that formal education is meant to allow these characteristics room to grow. Mintz emphasizes what is at stake by noting, "No earlier people had ever invested greater responsibilities or higher expectations in their children than did the New England Puritans, but this heavy investment produced intense anxiety. The survival and success of the Puritan enterprise hinged on the willingness of the 'rising generation' to maintain their parents' religious beliefs and ideals" (31). I bring in this history of colonial childhood in order to contextualize antebellum children and childhood within a long tradition concerned with perpetuating national identity. Gaining independence from colonial powers created an even greater need and desire for a strong national identity - and an even greater threat of failure to achieve this ideal. The ability to ensure that future generations of Americans uphold and embody the foundational American character has been an anxious and tenuous struggle since before independence, and will continue to echo in our modern conception of children and education.

The antebellum nineteenth century is a critical moment for understanding American childhood. It is within this epoch that the ideologies surrounding children take the form of innocence, and a stark divide is made separating children from corrupting public spaces. While the dominant ideologies of childhood stem from the rhetoric of the developing middle-class, this conceptualization of children and childhood was more myth than reality. Steven Mintz notes, "Capitalist expansion and growth carried far-reaching consequences for children's lives. For the urban middle class, increasing economic

affluence allowed parents to provide an extended, protected childhood; but for the laboring classes, a sheltered childhood was impossible. The demands of a market economy made their children indispensable economic resources, whose labor could be exploited in new ways" (134). Children, then, functioned in a shared reality with the adults in their household and communities that even then, would have made the unknowing intrinsic to innocence impossible. This example is one indicator of the ways in which history frames my inquiry to the nineteenth century literary archive, providing an essential methodology for understanding American systems of age and the ideologies that resonate and reify these structures. The literatures, both popular and canonical, overwhelmingly depict innocence as an indicator of childhood, calling out for a critical engagement with these terms. This dissertation engages in the culturally specific and intersectional representations of childhood, both innocent and not innocent.

This historical portrayal of the child in the antebellum period implies a collective preoccupation with childhood itself as a fantasy. In one of the foundational texts exploring children's culture, *The Case of Peter Pan: Or The Impossibility of Children's Fiction* (1984), Jacqueline Rose argues, "There is no child behind the category of 'children's fiction', other than the one which the category itself sets in place, the one which it needs to believe is there for its own purposes. These purposes are often perverse and mostly dishonest, not willfully, but of necessity, given that addressing the child must touch on all of these difficulties, none of which it dares speak" (10). Rose looks beyond the didactic and structurally simple language of children's literature, to uncover the complex adult desires implied through these texts. Her argument is not concerned with what children learn from reading, but instead, what adults desire children to learn. It is

from this perspective that “some (although by no means all) of the complex meanings concealed inside an expression like 'literature for children' whose very clarity and self-evidence (the idea of a service rendered or a gift) seems to work like a decoy or a foil” (Rose 137). In this way, the genre provides a package that is easily distributed, easily digested, but can provoke a queer response: where youth is valued in measure to the adult mind’s inability to access its ways of knowing and learning about the world.

Complicating this idea of childhood as a projection of adult fantasy rather than an embodied, biological state of being is Kathryn Bond Stockton’s *The Queer Child* (2009). In this text, Stockton challenges the very conventions surrounding modern conceptions of the child by setting up a question: “the child is precisely who we are not and, in fact, never were. It is the act of adults looking back. It is a ghostly, unreachable fancy, making us wonder: Given that we cannot know the contours of children, who they are to themselves, should we stop talking of children altogether?” (5). Understanding children as a cultural idea repositions the child and children’s culture to a place of fantasy. Stockton implies here that an adult preoccupation with childhood is not so much an understanding of the contemporary youth, but rather the adult’s own memories of her own youth. In this way, children are understood culturally as a fantasy and, at the same time, defined by their distance from the adult experience. Stockton’s child is ghostly because it is the past reimagined, living in the present, acting as a repository for the future. Indeed, the American child haunts our culture in diverse and conflicting ways depending on what is at stake.

Understanding childhood and children as “cultural ideas” constructed by adult desires exposes the development into adulthood as a carefully constructed fantasy,

performed as a naturalized reality. Stockton opens this discussion for the possibilities of queerness in, what she describes, as a liminal, childhood space. She expands the possibilities of identity development, arguing that to “grow up” is a fantasy that children internalize; however, this developmental direction is put into question when normative childhood is understood as a cultural fantasy. She argues,

the normative child - or the child who, on its path to normatively, seems safe to us and whom we therefore seek to safeguard at all cost. I am speaking, of course, of the child made strange (though appealing) to us by its all-important 'innocence.' This is a form of normative strangeness, one might say. From the standpoint of adults, innocence is alien, since it is 'lost' to the very adults who assign it to children. Adults retrospect it through the gauzy lens of what they attribute to the child. And adults walk the line - the impossible line - of keeping the child at once what it is (what adults are not) and leading it toward what it cannot (at least, as itself) ever be (what adults are) (30-31).

In this moment, Stockton queers an understanding of “normal” childhood within the dominant culture. While my project will not explicitly engage with queer theory, it is here, in Stockton’s reframing of the child, that I find the language to talk about non-normative identity development as always already embedded within children’s culture. In childhood, there is a delay not only allowed, but structured into the space. It is within this delay – a time that is spent not being an adult, indeed, not allowed to perform as an adult – that *some* children can exercise growth in ways outside the hierarchy of gender normativity and capitalist family economies (this will serve as my working understanding of

queerness within a space of liminal delay). Growing sideways, for Stockton, is a movement away from the normative and normalized behaviors of adulthood and adult desires; in their unreachable and liminal space, children have access to queer growth. This perspective is imperative to my project as Stockton's argument expands the possibilities of research in children's culture by acknowledging this developmental space as culturally framed through biology and sociology as a phase allowed to work outside normalized behaviors. While Stockton is speaking of contemporary childhood, her thinking and theoretical understanding of a childhood as always non-normative has influenced how I approach children's culture in the nineteenth century, careful to establish the ways in which American culture has never stopped talking about the child and pulling through the threads of an intersectional childhood in this historical moment.

To examine children's culture requires an understanding of age as a space for critical study. Karen Sanchez-Eppler comments on the complexities of age studies in *Dependent States: The Child's Part in Nineteenth-Century American Culture* (2005):

Age offers an interesting corrective as a way of approaching cultural analysis, because unlike gender, or race, or even class, age is inherently transitional. We may know that none of these other categories are absolute, but they still retain some experiential boundedness. Childhood, in contrast, is a status defined by its mutability - a stage inevitably passed through.

This may be one of the reasons it has proven so easy to dismiss childhood as a place of cultural meaning, to view childhood teleologically in terms of the goal of adulthood rather than as significant in itself. (xxv)

Negotiating these complexities, Sanchez-Eppler provides clear and useful ways in which children are read and understood in her study as objects of socialization, as forces of socialization, and as children. Her methodology grapples with noticing where these intersections are evidenced, materially and intellectually, allowing the archive to guide the theory in a decolonial practice.

This project will not unpack the complexities of genre studies, but will interrogate the legibility of languages and identities outside dominant structures through children's literature, autobiography, and advice literature. Childhood studies is multidisciplinary precisely because its focus on youth, representation, and mobility require an intersectional interrogation of survival and destruction under the American legal regime which manifests in government recognized identities, marginalized (minor) identities, and the ways in which these subjectivities provide protection or prompt exposure. Because of this approach to childhood, and more broadly, age, my framework will be an aggregation of legal, literary, and historical methodologies. This practice is well established in the analysis of cultural representations by scholars such as Lauren Berlant and Mark Rifkin who, in their many works, have made strong arguments for a persistent acknowledgment of the legal regimes under which subjects are or are not recognized. It is this critical context that I extend into my own project as I work to uncover the material and immaterial ways in which children and women are scripted into out of national belonging.

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My first chapter, "A Children's History of (Native) America: *The Tales of Peter Parley, About America*," considers the interpellation of children into white supremacist,

patriarchal, heteronormative U.S. national identity by way of *The Tales of Peter Parley, About America* (1827). This children's history typifies a number of antebellum children's texts that on the one hand, presume the separation of Indianness from whiteness enacted and enforced by treaties and exclusion acts, yet on the other hand uses Nativeness to limn a distinctive "American" identity. While this tension between Indianness and Americanness has been explored in scholarship addressing adult culture, there is a curious absence in this conversation where children's culture is concerned. Centering my reading of *About America* on images and narratives of Indianness invites an understanding of this text as a contact zone negotiating Native American history and white Euroamerican history.

The theoretical framework for reading through this text takes up Mark Rifkin's settler common sense and the interpellation of subjects into governing structures outlined in his 2011 book, *When Did Indians Become Straight?* In conjunction, Robin Bernstein's *Racial Innocence* (2011) is concerned with the ways in which subjects are inscribed as inside or outside state models of citizenship. To draw out the representation of Indianness in this children's history uncovers what is made opaque by the taxonomy of children's culture and, invisible by its quotidian representations and performances.

Chapter two, "Imagining Futures: Margaret Fuller and Nathaniel Hawthorne on Women, Children, and History in 'the childhood of nations'," considers challenges inherent to American exceptionalism by diversifying the national narrative with the divergent bodies and stories surfacing in the intersections of women's culture and children's culture. I begin with Margaret Fuller's "The Great Lawsuit: Man versus Men. Woman versus Women" published in *The Dial* (July 1843) as a way of constructing a

critical methodology for reading Nathaniel Hawthorne's children's literature, *The Whole History of Grandfather's Chair* (1841), a compilation of three slender works of historical juvenile literature, including *Grandfather's Chair*, *Famous Old People*, and *Liberty Tree*. Before being canonized, Hawthorne was an unnamed author in the *Peter Parley* project, contributing to *Peter Parley's Universal History, on the Basis of Geography, for the Use of Families* in 1837. Persuaded by Goodrich's financial success, and the encouragement of Elizabeth Peabody, Hawthorne took up this familiar trope in his own contribution to juvenile fiction.

Read through the lens of Fuller's early article, I argue that Hawthorne's children's literature does the work of historicizing gendered inequalities reliant on Native American representations, naturalizing the imperialist and patriarchal structures of American empire by way of children's culture. In drawing these narratives to the surface, the co-constitution of white female privilege and Native American disenfranchisement dominate discourses of minor and marginal identities and relationships.

Chapter three, "Lydia Sigourney's Fearful Advice: Indigeneity in *Letters to Mothers and Daughters*," looks closely at Lydia Sigourney's *Letters to Young Ladies* (1833) and *Letters to Mothers* (1839) as advice literatures reaffirming and renegotiating the scripts of female citizenship in the antebellum United States. My close readings consider how the intimacies of Sigourney's *Letters* contribute to the didactic education of American women, carefully addressing the everyday violences experienced under patriarchy with female representations of ability, self-reliance, work, ingenuity, and racial privilege. A close examination of these texts will point to the moments of elasticity and rigidity as female enfranchisement is defined by and against white masculinities, non-



white, and foreign identities. As part of popular culture, in a genre marginalized from canonical works in its, and our, contemporary time, I draw out the intersections of advice literatures and the narratives of national histories as they circulated nineteenth century American children's and young adult cultures. This chapter will continue to take up the power of national identity formation in the quotidian spaces of childhood.

This chapter brings together the fantasy of childhood and citizenship through the medium of stories and storytelling by reading the advice books of Lydia Sigourney as both important women's histories and unfulfilled narratives calling for the strict adherence to a future America, made exceptional by the gender, sexuality, race, and ability of young women. Placing American girlhood at the center of this chapter, this discussion will be in conversation with texts of Indian girlhood, Indian childhood, historical legislation, and popular representation.

The final chapter, "Recalling the Indian: Zitkala-Ša and Charles Eastman on the Promise of Native Childhoods," takes up Charles Eastman's serialized autobiographical stories, "Recollections of the Wild Life" (1893), and Zitkala-Ša's serialized narratives of childhood and boarding school, "Impressions of an Indian Childhood," "School Days of an Indian Girl," and "An Indian Teacher Among Indians." (1900). These autobiographical texts are not only personal accounts of settler colonialism, but sites through which Native American childhoods are constructed to appeal to white Americans through memories seemingly relegated and contained to history. It is through this appeal that the illegibility of Native American childhoods within the hegemonic structures of American white supremacy are directly challenged by these authors and their ability to vivify memories of self and self-making in writing and publishing for a white audience.

This chapter addresses the significance of destabilizing constructions of childhoods in texts that, I argue, work to dismantle American categories of dependency and invisibility for racialized and gendered identities – Work that is made accessible and desirable for white audiences through frameworks of memory and childhood. Indeed, these authors use the craft of memory and the space of childhood in an attempt to exist between the reality of marginalized and disenfranchised life experiences and imagined spaces of Native American sovereignty and power. Where Eastman’s text suggests that Indian boyhood is the most desirable embodiment of race and gender, I interrogate the possibilities, promises, and perils of Indian girlhood through the narrative voice of Zitkala-Ša.

## CHAPTER II

### A CHILDREN'S HISTORY OF (NATIVE) AMERICA: *THE TALES OF PETER PARLEY, ABOUT AMERICA*

*"I hope my little readers will learn this story,  
so that they can tell it all without the book."*

Peter Parley<sup>6</sup>

In 1820, the Missouri Compromise divided the United States along a line defined as the 36°30' parallel, or thirty-six degrees and thirty minutes latitude. While the presence of this latitudinal line around the globe is little more than a disassociated mile-marker on a map, in the antebellum United States, this navigational point was charged with nationalized racial oppression. The 36°30' parallel came to signify a very real boundary between northern and southern states, reifying their opposing views on slavery: an institution indistinguishable from American identity. Just ten years later, the *Indian Removal Act* (1830) passed through the Jackson White House, forcing Southeast Indian nations into territories west, past the Mississippi River. The Act projected onto the river all the significations of a political border – a physical division between nations and races. Indeed, the Mississippi River, like the 36°30' parallel, was specifically used in the legal language enacting these laws of exclusion and oppression. In this moment, the racial divisions within the United States are witnessed on the landscape and reflected in the bodies legally and racially outside of citizenship. The legal adoption of these racial boundaries concretized the building anxieties surrounding a definable American identity. Indeed, Americanness in this moment is best understood by what it denies and pushes, “far west over the mountains” or deep into the South (Goodrich 14). Jacqueline Rose

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<sup>6</sup> Goodrich, Samuel G. *The Tales of Peter Parley, About America* (Boston: S.G. Goodrich, 1827), 133.

points to this emphasis on territory in her seminal text, *The Case of Peter Pan: Or The Impossibility of Children's Fiction* (1984), when she aptly notes, "in the still 'childlike' state of American civilization, history could be read directly off the land (history *based* on geography), whereas if you were after the cultural origins of England, then you had to dig for them" (55). In this moment, Rose draws out a connection between the "child" nation and a readable landscape, arguing that American historical narratives are written on the surface, in plain view. There is a way in which histories for children are echoed in this articulation of nation and narrative: boldly didactic, laboring over a representation that must be misinterpreted as natural.

This reliance on topography masks the legal construction of racial borders across the American landscape, even as these geographies of containment and exclusion are understood as a fantasy: slavery was not a containable social and political structure, and neither was the enduring presence of Indian peoples East of the Mississippi. The contact zones created by such ideological separations complicated an already paradoxical narrative of American experience (Pratt 8). Paradoxical in that the desire to see immaterial ideologies of white supremacist, patriarchal, heteronormative Americanness physically constructed requires the embodied representation of what lies outside this figuration. Taking up this unsettled national territory and unstable national identity, this essay will look to a popular children's history, uncovering a process of interpellation into a national body defined by the "material and metaphoric resonances" of racial borders (Brady 32). Indeed, the nuances of geographic borders and racialized identities are compounded in this study by childhood as a conceptually bordered space of extended leisure *and* constant development.

In 1827 Samuel G. Goodrich published the first of what was to be a wildly successful series, *The Tales of Peter Parley, About America*. Selling upwards of seven million copies, engaging canonical authors, and “exert[ing] immense influence over American audiences”, Goodrich’s Parley occupied a powerful place the antebellum nineteenth century (Levander 48). In the space of twenty-seven years he published seventy-eight books in this series, and many of them have multiple editions. By virtue of this incredible permeation in early America, these children’s books are a site of significant cultural work. Indeed, Nathaniel Hawthorne and his sister, Elizabeth, were famously compelled to write under Goodrich’s name, collaborating on *Peter Parley’s Universal History on the Basis of Geography* (1837). Taking the job for a meager profit, “Evidently, Hawthorne accepted the assignment because he regarded the work as relatively easy. In explaining the project to Elizabeth, he observed, ‘It need not be superiour [sic], in profundity and polish, to the middling Magazine articles’ (XV: 245)” (Wadsworth 4). While Hawthorne considered it a trivial project at best, *Peter Parley’s Universal History* was quickly adopted by U.S. schools and sold over one million copies. Taken up in both schools and homes as an authority in children’s education, the *Peter Parley* series was a common companion for American youths (Wadsworth 4-5). The historical records indicating *Peter Parley* sales and the common reference to this character in the antebellum nineteenth century, including an approval by Lydia Sigourney, affirms the ubiquitous presence of these texts in children’s culture (Roselle 79).

Certainly Goodrich has been recognized as a force in the nineteenth century book market. As early as 1865, Samuel Osgood commented on the eternal life of Peter Parley, the character and familiar storyteller, in *The Atlantic Monthly*. His nostalgic, “Peter

himself lives, and will live, in the graphic histories, anecdotes, sketches of life and Nature, and the rich treasures of pictorial illustration, that have blessed the eyes and ears, the hearts and imaginations of our children”, points to the kind of cultural permanence projected onto the *Peter Parley* series, even after Goodrich himself had passed away (725). Indeed, the mention of “life and Nature” assumes the formative ways in which Parley’s narratives have shaped how readers see what is normal and natural. More recently, Pat Pflieger draws Goodrich and Peter Parley into discussions of popularity, iconicity, and brand development. In “Samuel Goodrich and the Branding of American Children’s Books”, Pflieger argues that “What Goodrich did - consciously or not - was to create probably the earliest brand name in American culture and to pave the way for later brands in children’s literature” (4). As a brand, the *Parley* books operate in popular culture beyond the bounds of the text, indicating a common understanding and trust in Parley’s historical accuracy without, perhaps, referencing any one text specifically. Yet, while Goodrich and his *Parley* series are frequently brought into discussions of nineteenth century children’s culture, the content of these popular books are frequently denied exploration in favor of a focus on publishing practices, market success, and Goodrich himself. Short mentions of didactic practices and desires for fact over fantasy give way to the ways in which these objects have circulated in the long nineteenth century book market.

The first in the series, *The Tales of Peter Parley, About America* negotiates complex nationalist ideologies in a form digestible to young children, containing the contemporary unease of Indian removal in an extended historical story. Written from a moment in U.S. history invested completely in resolving the contention over what was to

become of “America,” Goodrich created the model for many authors of children’s books to come by balancing the didactic desires of an adult consumer with the playfulness attractive to a child listener/reader. Structurally, *The Tales of Peter Parley, About America* is temporally split between the narrative frame (Goodrich’s contemporary moment) and the narrative tale (beginning just prior to the Revolutionary War). The story begins with an elderly Peter Parley inviting the young reader to join the children in the narrative frame as he recalls from memory his own lived history, which, significantly, coincides with the Revolutionary War and the newly formed autonomous American nation. Through a series of adventures and close calls, Parley not only witnesses the unfolding of American history, but also acts as an agent of the revolution by fighting in the war and re-telling his story.

This essay considers the interpellation of children into white supremacist, patriarchal, heteronormative U.S. national identity by way of *The Tales of Peter Parley, About America*. In this reference to the interpellation of subjects into a government structure, I am following Mark Rifkin’s argument made in *When Did Indians Become Straight?* (2011) and Robin Bernstein in *Racial Innocence* (2011) where this process is described as a discursive coding of behavior and identity. Interpellation, here, refers to the ways in which subjects are inscribed as inside or outside state models of citizenship.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> As an example of the ways in which interpellation has been employed in scholarship that has influenced this project, Robin Bernstein describes this process as an enscription “that combines narrative with materiality to structure behavior” (76-7). Similarly, Mark Rifkin takes up this process to describe the ways in which “state institutions and allied nongovernmental discourses, like late-nineteenth-century and early-twentieth-century anthropology, interpellate forms of indigenous sociality, spatiality, and governance that do not fit within liberal frameworks as *kinship*, coding them as aberrant or anomalous modes of (failed) domesticity when measured against the natural and self-evident model of nuclear conjugality” (*When Did Indians Become Straight?* 37).

Like many works intended for an adult audience, this series addresses itself to several tightly intertwined problems confronting antebellum U.S. culture. I recognize a paradox of national identity wherein Indianness is both required for constructing an exceptional national character and calls attention to the ongoing crimes of cultural extermination, reaffirming the ways in which America is a settler colonial state. While this tension between Indianness and Americanness has been explored in scholarship addressing adult culture, there is a curious absence in this conversation where children's culture is concerned. Centering my reading of *About America* on images and narratives of Indianness invites an understanding of this text as a contact zone negotiating Native American history and white Euroamerican history. While the language of treaties and exclusion acts separates these histories, they are concomitantly conflated in abstract ideas of exceptionalism and the physical occupation of territories. By taking up the term "Indianness" I am drawing on Philip Deloria's usage as a way of referencing the representation and imagery of Indian bodies and cultural acts, detached from the lived realities of indigenous peoples in the nineteenth century, often referencing non-Native appropriation. To draw out the representation of Indianness in this children's history uncovers what is made opaque by the taxonomy of children's culture and, invisible by its quotidian representations and performances (what Mark Rifkin terms, settler common sense). This paradox of national character extends to the privileges of citizenship.

The early American imperative to define proper citizenship implies that this position of recognition and agency in the nation cannot be taken for granted. Indeed, who had the potential to be a citizen was a process of flux. The subject positions of American youths are always already negotiating the borders of minor citizenship and mature



subjectivity in naturalized narratives of belonging. By implicating the American youth as both readers (subjects) and characters (objects), Goodrich's children's history positions actual (male) children as agents of nationalism. Precisely because *About America* is addressed to children, the impossibility of resolving this paradox is drawn into a narrative negotiation where the tensions are made visible. Because this paradox of national character and the problems of citizenship were in fact so intertwined, we should not be surprised to find these issues weaved together in this history. My aim is not to identify how a specific child read and understood the *Peter Parley* histories, but rather how the naturalization and normalization of Parley's narrative of U.S. history scripts the interpellation of white American children into the hegemonic structures defining proper citizenship. That is, to understand this *Peter Parley* tale as an object that white children willfully looked to as a way of modeling and provoking proper citizenship.

*"Did you ever see an Indian?"*

The basic plot of Parley's first tale follows the coming-of-age of a white American boy while America itself is in a state of becoming. Young Peter Parley is drawn out of his domestic haven and into the paradox of American identity. Under the protection of an Indian guide, Wampum, Parley is introduced to, and tries-on, the joys of Indian boyhood. During this experience, Parley propels into a series of events that unfold across New England. His path is a wide circle beginning in Boston then moving to Northampton, MA, Brattleboro, VT, Hartford, CT, New York city, Newport, RI, New Hampshire, and back to Boston. Geographically, then, Parley's movement through the

narrative mirrors that of early settler colonials: contact with Indians ignites the plot, which then moves rapidly outward.

Paralleling this spatial progression, Parley journeys toward citizenship and the critical terms of this subject position, defined by multiple historical narratives told along the way. Stories of North America, Columbus, Mexico, Peru, and the Revolutionary War are just a few of the narratives offered by this children's history that disappear under the all encompassing title, *About America*. This movement through diverse histories offers the young audience a comparative perspective, representing a wide range of national identities. But, eventually, we find Parley right where he belongs: armed and fighting for American independence in the Revolutionary War.

Even before the plot begins, however, old Peter Parley addresses the child reader and introduces the complexities of Indian representation. Through the narrative frame, the storyteller asks, "And do you know that the very place, where Boston stands, was once covered with woods, and that in those woods lived many Indians? Did you ever see an Indian? Here is a picture of some Indians" (11). What follows is an image of two Indian figures: one smokes a pipe in a headdress and the other brandishes a weapon in full paint. Both figures pictured are male and constructed with visible signifiers that make these Indians both familiar and strange to their white audience (fig. 1). Parley extends the image on the page with this description: "The Indians used to go nearly naked, except in winter. Their skin is not white, like ours, but reddish, or the color of copper. When I was a boy, there were a great many Indians, that lived at no great distance from Boston" (12).

6. And do you know that the very place, where Boston stands, was once covered with woods, and that in those woods lived many Indians? Did you ever see an Indian? Here is a picture of some Indians.



Who once lived in the woods where Boston now stands!

Figure 1: Peter Parley

Here we see dimensions of difference and disappearance reaffirm what has already been normalized and taken as self evident in the nineteenth century. Readers are asked to think about Native Americans as long gone and hauntingly familiar, spatially close and temporally far away. White children are invited to consider Indians living in the Boston area, and yet that familiar geography is made strange by Parley's historical perspective. The elderly storyteller inextricably links an Indian presence with a forest environment, or an environment without the infrastructure of a modern city. Even in the city's colonial beginning, Parley positions Indians close by, yet decidedly outside Boston proper. This geographic maneuver reinforces the essentialized connection between

Indians and the wilderness. For Goodrich's audience, the impossibility of seeing an Indian living in a city is naturalized through the shifting landscape, mined for resources in a rapidly industrializing mid-nineteenth century Boston; however, the notion of Boston as a common space that connects white American children to Indian bodies suggests an intimate, overlapping spatial history. Indeed, by beginning his story of America with this historicization of territory, Parley conflates Native American and white settler colonial space. The implication is then that old Parley's narrative *About America* cannot be separated from narratives of Indianness. In other words, Boston is foregrounded through the narrative frame to be both familiar and strange, forest and city, and a contact zone that reifies the constant colonialist project at play throughout the temporal shifts in *About America*. Old Parley describes the disappearance of Indian bodies in conjunction with a modernizing Boston metropolis, framing the appropriation of indigenous lands as a normative, progressive evolution. While this version of American history dominates popular understanding today, I am pointing to the ways in which the language of white supremacy is embedded into geography for children. In other words, how children reading this text were encouraged to see identity written into environment.

An extended reading of the cultural landscape offered in this discussion of Boston and the accompanying image points to the ways in which representations of Americanness depend upon Indianness. To "go nearly naked" assumes a lack of clothing that, for a white Euroamerican audience, racializes the need for bodily protection. This generalized characterization of Indian cultures infers the ability to be physically vulnerable to the environment without harm, naturalizing embodied differences in this racial construction. Indeed, the most important lack is whiteness itself. Parley's concern

for skin color separates Indians from Americans as he explicitly acknowledges his white audience. What is “ours” in this moment reflects a national promise based on exclusion (Berlant 18-9). Robin Bernstein points to this discursive attachment of innocence to whiteness, arguing that whiteness is inherent in the conception of childhood itself (33). Thereby, Goodrich’s audience is interpellated into a world where whiteness signifies American and makes possible the privilege of childhood that naturalizes the invisibility of all non-white young people.

When Parley addresses the reader questioning, “And do you know . . . that in those woods lived many Indians? Did you ever see an Indian?” he affirms a narrative of Indian invisibility by emphasizing the inability to physically *see* Indian bodies. Parley assumes this of his audience, thus inviting them to participate in the rhetoric of Native American disappearance. Within the logic of old Parley’s narrative and the accompanying image, if Goodrich’s audience is unable to identify Indian bodies, children are to understand that the empirical evidence points to extinction. However, this encription into white America’s settler colonial origins does not render Native American histories as categorically separate from the early national period of U.S. history (Bernstein 76-7). Rather, Goodrich’s narrative implies that the representation of Native American history is essential and recognizable to his white audience. A tale about America, is also a tale about Native Americans and it is this complication that Parley can neither untangle, nor render invisible.

Because of this narrative paradox, Parley takes control of Native American representations through images as well as through language. Negotiating these identity politics early in the text, Parley contains the Indian figure by controlling how his

audience reads the Indian body through a narrow image of dress, gender, and race. In other words, along side narrative representations of Indians as “naked”, “reddish”, and essentially bound to the woods, Goodrich offers a picture. This image pins down the possibilities for Native identities to a definable representation of authentic Indianness. In her article “Indians and Images,” Cathy Rex argues that representations of Indian bodies imagined by white settler colonials, “produced the Natives as a visual, social reality, which was at once utterly othered and simultaneously knowable and visible” (65). This image speaks to the ways in which Euroamericans desired an accessible Indian body. Rex points to the paradoxical ways in which the Indian body was taken up as both a figure too different to acknowledge as human and familiar enough to render visually and through narrative. The two figures brought together in the image above are a compilation of Indianness crafted through the colonial gaze. An image like this ensures that Goodrich’s young audience had indeed, not identified an Indian population living and working in Boston. Indianness is, in this text, detached from the living, self identifying, subjecthood of Native American peoples in antebellum New England. For a subject to recognizably embody Indian identity, *he* must look the part.

Indeed, the image itself expresses the concomitant desire for and repulsion from Native Americans. The figure in a full headdress smokes a pipe, wearing a heart-shaped pendent around his neck, and long pants with no shoes. While the figure’s gaze is decentered, both of his eyes are visible to the reader. This is the ‘good Indian’. His relaxed stance with legs wide, the visible offering of the wampum belt, and the heart around his neck all imply readable emotions and a benign character, open to the white reader. In opposition, the Indian on the right looks squarely at his counterpart so the

viewer only has access to his profile. He raises his arm and his weapon to the Indian on the left (although the direction of the blade is unclear) while clutching a scalp in his other hand. With moccasins on his feet and a fully painted body, this figure threatens with the possibility of physical violence. Coupling these figures in the same frame provides two modes of seduction to white settler colonials: the benevolent Indian that offers his history willingly, and the malevolent Indian that resists settler intrusions. The image of this duality at the beginning of Parley's tale suggests that for white Americans, Native Americans "simultaneously posed the possibility of violence and resistance as well as an opportunity for colonial instruction and civilization" (Rex 70). As Rex persuasively argues, the simultaneous embodiment of contradicting characteristics lies just under this image, and yet the separation of good and bad through nuanced physical details implies an inability to reduce the Indian figure to one body. The Indian body, from this early moment in white childhood, becomes a repository for the anxieties surrounding their own in-process national identities as settler colonists.

Parley bookends his preface and Native American existence by noting: "There are no Indians near Boston now; they are nearly all dead, or gone far west over the mountains. But, as I said before, when I was a boy, there were a good many in New England, and they used often to come to Boston to sell the skins of wild beasts, which they had killed" (14). Native Americans are carefully contained as dead or far away, "over the mountains." Qualifying the ambivalent connections between Euroamerican origins and Native American territory, old Parley reminds his audience of the spatial distance maintained throughout his narrative. Indeed, Parley carefully clarifies that Indian contact was made through trade, not through shared living space. At this point in the narrative, old Parley

anxiously attempts to craft a narrative of Native American history that can disappear, be grieved but also forgiven, and ultimately and most importantly can be confined to the past. The mountains themselves mask the artifice of the border as natural topography. The nostalgic, “when I was a boy,” reinforces the temporal space between white children and Indians that was represented physically in the “nearly naked” and “reddish” bodies repeatedly confined to a long-ago history.

*“He had been a chief, or some great man among the Indians once . . .”*

This children’s history was published in 1827, three years before the *Indian Removal Act* (1830) was passed through the Jackson White House. The *Indian Removal Act* provided the following rights:

- 1) The right of the President to 'exchange' land with Native Americans,
- 2) The right of the president to 'extinguish' Native American land rights, and
- 3) The rights of the exchanged lands to the Native tribes for the life of the tribe.

Specifically aimed at the removal of Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Muscogee-Creek, and Seminole tribes from the boundaries of newly defined southern states (Georgia, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Missouri, Mississippi, Alabama), the Act nonetheless had powerful implications for Northeastern tribes. The popular rhetoric surrounding Indian Removal was rarely defined regionally; rather, a ubiquitous presence was conjured by an increasingly racialized signifier. Northeastern tribes were not pressured to leave because they had already been made politically invisible and powerless:



Surrounded by the whites with their arts of civilization, which by destroying the resources of the savage doom him to weakness and decay, the fate of the Mohegan, the Narragansett, and the Delaware is fast overtaking the Choctaw, the Cherokee, and the Creek. That this fate surely awaits them if they remain within the limits of the States does not admit of a doubt.

This moment in Andrew Jackson's 1829 State of the Union speech explicitly asserts the already completed extinction of Mohegan, Narragansett, and Delaware tribes, erasing their contemporary presence for a national audience. "Fate", it seems, had already pronounced a deadly blow to Northern tribes, and here threatens those in the South. Jackson renders invisible the national, state, and quotidian structures working to eradicate Native tribes from within newly formed state borders – fate, it seems is a force akin to (manifest) destiny.

Regional specificity is never incorporated into the *Indian Removal Act* itself, although the boundary line is clearly "west of the river Mississippi." The rhetorical work leading up to this law is triumphantly claimed by Andrew Jackson in his presidential message to the 21<sup>st</sup> Congress: "It gives me pleasure to announce to Congress that the benevolent policy of the Government, steadily pursued for nearly thirty years, in relation to the removal of the Indians beyond the white settlements, is approaching to [sic] a happy consummation." Indeed, the narrative of the *Indian Removal Act* had been in a constant state of becoming since the territorial space of North America became a contact zone for colonial powers and Native American nations.

And, as the language defining America shifts by way of the occlusion of peoples and inclusion of metaphorical and material borders, there is a way in which children have a central role. Like the 36°30' parallel, the *Indian Removal Act* was the product of a national narrative that institutionalized white supremacy. As Jackson announced to the Union, the language necessary to define a national argument on Indian removal had been circulating, building, and integrated into the cultural consciousness of those living within the United States for thirty years prior. Goodrich's *The Tales of Peter Parley, About America* puts children at the center of this discussion of national origins: a legacy of "benevolence." The fantasy of benevolence and the reality of structural violence are negotiated within the space of the child. The language with which future citizens come to understand their own national identity is entwined with Native American representations.

As old Peter Parley lets slip through an inability to omit Indians from his history, northeastern Indian invisibility within legal discourse did not render their social and cultural presence obsolete. The concomitant visibility/invisibility projected onto the figure of the Indian is taken up in this critical moment to create a stable narrative of America. After all, Goodrich's most desired success is pedagogical: a readership that "will learn this story, so that they can tell it all without the book" (133). In this way, the production of knowledge in *About America* positions the child reader as an already active agent of nationalism, priming him for full civic engagement through the naturalization of racial difference.

But even as the narrative frame removes Indians to a place "over the mountains", or, more poignantly, under the ground, Parley's tale is still dependent on the representation of Indian characters. Through the framework of storytelling, Parley

remembers and re-tells a narrative of his days as an adolescent in colonial America. He begins with:

When I was about twelve years old, an Indian, by the name of Wampum, came to my father's house in Boston. He had been a chief, or great man among the Indians once, but he was now poor. . . . He asked my father to let me go home with him. He told me of the excellent sport they had in shooting squirrels and deer where he lived; so I begged my father to let me go, and he at length consented. (14-15)

In this moment we learn that Wampum had been a chief (which implies cultural Capital), but now is economically (and culturally) poor. It is significant that the Indian figure is named Wampum because this signifier is a reference to trade and an essential commodification of Native American culture appropriated by white settler colonialists. Wampum beads, within the context of northeastern Native American communities, are used as a means for communication and commemoration. This cultural value was misunderstood by colonists and re-imagined to be a form of currency between tribes.<sup>8</sup> Wampum, the character, is then imbued with a double consciousness: he is both a commodity used by white settler colonials (the Parley family) as a way to access Indianness, an object of Native American history, and an Indian subject, refuting the invisibility of northeastern Indians with his position as an agential character in this history of America.

Wampum's status as a 'good Indian' hinges on his relationship with Parley's father. Later in the story, Parley relays a moment outside of his narrative when Wampum

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<sup>8</sup> From Alice Nash's September 24<sup>th</sup> lecture in her course titled, "Indigenous Peoples of North America" at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, 2013.

was “attacked by some sailors in the streets of Boston” and Parley’s father saved his life (15). This debt makes Wampum available to young Parley, and it becomes clear at the end of the lengthy quote above that Wampum is Parley’s key to autonomy. It is through this character that young Parley is drawn out of his domestic nest and into the frontier where he is separated physically and culturally from his family and city. He “begged” his father to allow for his removal to Northampton, and it is precisely this desire to follow an Indian into the woods that becomes a naturalized American narrative. While young Parley’s need to leave home in order to achieve masculine maturity is an old trope evinced in a wide literary and storytelling tradition, the use of the Indian figure, here, entwines Indianness with the male child’s progression toward white American adulthood.

Parley’s recollection of this early encounter with Wampum establishes Indianness as a cultural value when combined with white racial privilege. Wampum’s Indianness appeals to young Parley; there is an “excellent sport” in playing Indian. Philip Deloria powerfully uncovers the American cultural value of appropriating Indianness when he argues, “At the Boston Tea Party and elsewhere, Indianness provided impetus and precondition for the creative assembling of an ultimately unassemblable American identity. From the colonial period to the present, the Indian has skulked in and out of the most important stories various Americans have told about themselves” (5). Deloria, here, historicizes the ways in which the Indian figure has been used by white American men as a means of constructing a narrative of unity, even before a nation had been declared. Indianness, when performed by white American men, allows, and, in *About America*, encourages, an alterity from the Euroamerican character caged in by a long historical past tied to stratified social structures and strict proprieties. Young Peter Parley is “begging”

for the performative flexibility Indianness provides. Appropriating this representation of Native identity makes tangible the fantasy of authenticity and autonomy embedded in colonial representations of the noble savage, contributes to the exceptionalism desired for American identity, and legitimizes settler colonial land holdings.

Granted permission to follow Wampum to Northampton, young Parley first hears the story of America through his Indian guide, quoted here at length:

But a little more than a hundred years ago, there were no white men in this country. There were none but red men or Indians. They owned all the lands, they hunted, and fished, and rambled where they pleased. The woods were then full of deer and other game, and in the rivers, there were a great many salmon and shad. At length, the white men came in their ships from across the sea. The red men saw them, and told them they were welcome. They came ashore. The red men received them kindly. The white men built houses, and they grew strong, and drove the red men back into the woods. They killed the children of the red men, they shot their wives, they burned their wigwams, and they took away their lands. The white men had guns, the Indians had only bows and arrows. The red men fought and killed many white men, but the white men killed more of the red men. The red men were beaten. They ran away into the woods. They were broken hearted, and they died. They are all dead or gone far over the mountains, except a few, and we are poor and wretched. (18-20)

While the speaker here is racially and temporally placed in a pre-America moment, this history is already familiar to the American child reader. This tightly contained narrative

of Native existence begins with the essential connection between Indians and the woods, then white men built houses made of those woods, which then extends into an increase in colonial violence and indigenous resistance, finally cumulating in the most explicit echo from the narrative frame: “They are all dead or gone far over the mountains, except a few, and we are poor and wretched.” Indeed, the sentence just prior, “They were broken hearted, and they died”, fits into a narrative of sentimental progressivism implying that the feeling of sympathy is a de-colonial, anti-racist emotion, absolving the white reader of personal participation in the structures of power that continue to oppress and suppress non-white people. Karen Sanchez-Eppler has argued for the inherent connection between sentimental fictions and imperialist capitalism in *Dependent States* (2005). She notes, "Sentimentality is, among other things, the genre that accompanied American expansion and industrialization. The literary preference for producing tears, for voicing what we often describe as 'excessive,' repetitive emotion coincided with the advent of mass production and its way of making surplus" (146). Therefore, the repetition of sentimental rhetoric not only evokes a liberal fantasy, but also fits into the logics of an expanding capitalist society where emotion is devalued precisely because it is in excess. The last sentence of this Native American history is, strikingly, the very same language old Parley used earlier in the narrative. This repetition reinscribed white supremacy by reinforcing old Parley’s authority with Wampum’s identical remark, naturalizing settler colonial dominance.

This children’s history *About America* is the framework through which the inherent paradoxes of racialized, nationalized identities and representations of American exceptionalism are negotiated through repetitive vanishing and carefully constructed

memories. Mark Rifkin reflects on the banality of the constant “vanishing” of the material and immaterial Indian body throughout American history, and, indeed, the paradox of “always vanishing” and yet “always present” is strongly embedded in this children’s history. Repetition is used as a mnemonic device that constantly works to naturalize narratives of national identity. The banality of this didactic practice in *About America* works to naturalize and historicize the national narratives that are, below the surface, always active and in-process settler colonial ideologies.

Young Parley responds to Wampum’s story by reflecting, “I did not understand his story very well, but when I go back to Boston, thought I, I will ask my grandfather all about it” (20-1). His inability to understand this narrative of racialized violence lets slip the constant work necessary to conceal how a story of American origins disappears the existence of Native Americans. Through the logic of old Parley and Wampum, Indians are dead, far away, poor, and wretched; however, the Indian speaking must then be confined to one of these subject positions. While Wampum describes himself as poor, he has also described the freedom and “excellent sport” of his life as an Indian male. So much so, that young Parley was seduced by his proximity to white American conceptions of noble savagery, and left Boston with the desire to access this identity. It is young Parley’s inability to place Wampum in the narrative that closes off Native existence that subverts the language of natural extinction, and Darwinian conceptions of survival. The deference to his grandfather is a motion to confirm the authority of white male patriarchs. This is a position old Peter Parley, through the narrative frame, and Samuel Goodrich, from outside the text, are deeply invested in maintaining. Ultimately, this reflection

scripts for the child reader a critical methodology for knowledge accumulation that privileges white men.

The repetition already visible in this narrative of Native American disappearance is addressed twice more as Parley's story continues to unfold. These short echoes of the same narrative over and over anxiously revive the rhetoric of Indian invisibility, but does so only through the repeated reappearance of Indian bodies and histories. Toward the end of Parley's adventure, he arrives home once more and makes the appeal to his grandfather mentioned previously:

I need not say that I had become very much interested in the Indians.

Wampum had told me that once there were none but Indians in all

America; that then they owned the lands, and were powerful and happy; but

that the white men had got away their lands, and reduced the Indians to

weakness and misery. I was therefore anxious to hear the history of the

Indians. . . . So I asked my old grandfather, who knew all about it, to tell

me the story of America. Accordingly, he told it to me and I found it very

interesting. (56-7)

Demonstrating his competence as an audience, and modeling behavior for the child reader, Parley repeats back what has been told to him. The historical narrative desired in *About America* is clarified here: It is "the history of the Indians" that Parley desires, holding Indian people as objects that become visible only in relation to his own subject position. When he asks for "the story of America", Parley is not referencing U.S. history. Indeed, the Revolutionary War has not yet begun. Instead, young Parley is asking for



access to a narrative of white supremacy that ensures his own racial privilege. The story of America, here, is the history and demise of Native Americans.

The last iteration is during the Revolutionary War by an Indian voice (later revealed to be Wampum): “White man, said he, listen to me. Once the red man was King over these woods and waters. The mountains and rivers were his. Then he was rich and happy. At length the white men, thy fathers, came. The red man bade the welcome. But they were ungrateful and treacherous. When they grew strong, they drove the red men over the mountains, and took their lands” (125-6). In this final story of first contact, Wampum’s narrative interestingly shifts. He directly implicates young Parley in the destruction of Native peoples described over and over in *About America* by making visible the legacy of settler colonial violence reinscribed through each new generation. While this moment continues to script the performance of Americanness by crafting an origins narrative that naturalizes the fall of Indians and the rise of white settlers, Wampum does not leave young Parley unscathed.

The persistent retelling of Native American displacement and disenfranchisement, by the end of this history, emphasizes how dependent narratives of America are on Indian visibility. Indeed, this text is concerned with origins (the history ends with Independence) and the formation of an American character, both call upon the Indian as a source of conflict and resolution. Representations of Indianness and white, middle-class boyhood dominate this narrative precisely because models of nineteenth century American citizenship depend upon the continued performance of these ideals. The white, American, male child reader is both the impetus for the publication of *About America* and the ideal outcome. The threat to American boyhood building through young and old Parley

throughout the narrative becomes apparent in this final history lesson as Wampum addresses the young man he knows well by his race and gender rather than his name. Young Parley, in this moment, has moved from a position of minor citizenship to mature subjectivity. His character is confronted with the ephemerality of childhood and cannot remain innocent when recognized within the logic of settler colonial violence. Parley is now recognized as an active agent of settler colonial violence, no longer privileged as an observer.

*“I was therefore anxious to hear the history of the Indians”*

While the title of this history, *About America*, may claim national specificity, the narrative itself is constantly accessing stories and making space for bodies outside the explicit domain of the mid-nineteenth century United States. For the white male child, *The Tales of Peter Parley*, *About America* invites a connection to the privileges of white racial identity and a powerful national history. The instructive and playful characteristics of this children’s history give slight coverage to the constant and insidious settler colonial violence enacted on indigenous bodies and land. Moving through time, from the narrative frame to the story within, Peter Parley participates in the quotidian re-inscribing of Indians as invisible through the re-constitution of white Americans as the only Americans. However, this discursive violence can only be enacted through the repetitive revival of Indian bodies, voices, and histories throughout the text.

The significance of this children’s history lies with its audience. Native American stories dominate this space *About America*, as do the visual representations of Indian

bodies. There is an essential connection, illustrated in this children's history, between conceptions of Indians, children, and citizenship. Minor subjects are the fulcrum of this contact zone where antebellum nineteenth century political unease surrounding national futurity was exacerbated by the desire for a unified and exceptional historical narrative that is teachable, performable, and framed with the language of nature and fate so as to mask the labor of didactic texts and embodied performance. Anna Mae Duane has argued that the marginalized position of child subjects has historically masked the essentialized and romanticized notions of childhood, naturalized in the humanities and sciences (6). By denaturalizing childhood as a space existing firmly outside of national and political desires, this essay contributes to an ongoing conversation about the ways in which Indian identities are constructed and represented for white children in the nineteenth century. That is, the ways in which settler colonial ideologies are reproduced in children's culture and embedded within narratives of national identity and embodied citizenship. The precarity of American futurity is extended by an understanding of Americanness that is reliant on non-white narratives of origins, and children as always already implicated in the systemic disenfranchisement of Indian nations. The appropriation of Native American history serves as both the foundation and the earthquake constantly threatening to undo a coherent and progressive narrative of America.

### CHAPTER III

#### IMAGINING FUTURES: MARGARET FULLER AND NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE ON WOMEN, CHILDREN, AND HISTORY IN “THE CHILDHOOD OF NATIONS”

*The white family is the guardian of a certain structure. Society is the sum of all the families. The family is an institution, precursor of a much wider institution: i.e., the social group or nation. The main lines of reference remain the same. The white family is the educating and training ground for entry into society.*  
Frantz Fanon's *Black Skins, White Mask*<sup>9</sup>

*There is no branch of literature that better deserves cultivation, and none that so little obtains it from worthy hands as this of Children's books. . . . There is too much among us of the French way of palming off false accounts of things on children to do them good, . . . “purified for the use of childhood,” and telling stories of good little girls, and sweet little girls, or brave little boys; oh! all so good! or so bad! and, above all, so little, and everything about them so little! – Children, accustomed to move in full-sized apartments, and converse with full-grown men and women, do not need so much of this baby-house style in their literature. . . . The books that were written in the childhood of nations suit an uncorrupt childhood now. They are simple, picturesque, robust. Their moral is not forced, nor is the truth veiled with a well-meant, but sure-to-fail, hypocrisy. Sometimes they are not moral at all, only free plays of the fancy and intellect. There, also, the child needs, just as the infant needs to stretch its limbs, and grasp at objects it cannot hold. We have become so fond of the moral that we forget the nature in which it must find its root; so fond of instruction, that we forget development.*  
Margaret Fuller on Children's Books (1845)<sup>10</sup>

In the quotation above, Margaret Fuller, the nineteenth century women's rights advocate, writer, and public intellectual, calls attention to the genre of American children's literature as more than a space for repetitive didacticism. Rather, children's stories can be read as an indicator of national character and progress. She argues that where the French reduce their children's stories to simplified narratives at an incredible distance from lived reality, the American genre upholds an exceptional moral and national character by focusing on play and fantasy. Fuller characterizes French children's

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<sup>9</sup> “The Black Man and Psychopathology,” 127

<sup>10</sup> This quote was originally published in the *New-York Daily Tribune* in 1845, but reprinted in a collection edited by J. Myerson, *Margaret Fuller: Essays on American Life and Letters* (1978).

stories as “false,” implying an essential ill propriety, and perhaps even harm, in allowing American children access to these “purified” narratives. She argues that these texts are empty of complexity, simplified to a good/bad dichotomy, creating a contrived and artificial space that belittles the natural intelligence of American youths.

Contrary to the French ideas of childhood, Fuller understands American children as fledgling participants in adult society and capable of intelligent conversation “with full-grown men and women.” Therefore the “baby-house style” of the French variety is particularly unfit for an American audience. She positions American narratives naturally fitting the “uncorrupt” and “free” children of the United States. The American child, implicitly and explicitly characterized as different and superior to children of the Old World, needs and deserves a literature unique to their specific place within the “childhood of nations.” Fuller argues that only texts created with the ideological investments of the new nation can match the image of American children. Importantly, her description of American children’s stories as “simple, picturesque, robust” reflects the child she imagines consuming these works, therefore, asserting the necessity of the medium matching the (idealized) audience in character. Emphasizing the potentiality of American children’s culture, her descriptions imply that U.S. literature naturally creates a space conducive to growth and development, contrary to the over-worked and obtuse moral fictions repeated in French texts. Perhaps most interesting in this statement of exceptionalism is Fuller’s insistence that American children’s stories are more than tools for instruction: they are essential for the development of future citizens. This distinction between instruction and development defines the chasm between French and American ideologies made visible through their children’s culture. In Fuller’s comparison, the

French emphasis on instruction implies a child lacking the natural tendencies for morality and intellect. For Fuller, then, the French cultural emphasis on “good little girls,” and “brave little boys” points to an audience where goodness and bravery are not inherent – these characteristics must be taught by way of endless (and tedious) repetition. To then transfer this foreign literature to American children would be to understand as equivalent the morals, values, and natural ability of those in the Old World and those in the “new,” and therefore, to threaten the exceptionalism of U.S. citizens and nation. Fuller emphasizes the natural superiority of the child born and raised within the American experiment by arguing for the developmental freedom experienced through ‘free play, fancy and intellect.’ ‘To develop’ within the context of Fuller’s argument is then to exercise the characteristics naturally possessed, clearly differentiated from the artifice of ‘instruction.’

Fuller’s discussion of children’s literature provides a productive perspective on culture because of her attention to the politics of the international book market. Bringing French children’s literature into her discussion of the American genre, she constructs a comparison to show that only the “childhood of nations” can facilitate the proper development its generations. But while Fuller’s description of the French genre is situated to uphold the modes of American “free play” and condemn the “baby-house style,” the last of the quoted line betrays the conflation of these conventions. “We” speaks to a collective domestic desire for the very stories Fuller finds threatening to the American character. Indeed, the very necessity of this article in the 1845 *New-York Daily Tribune* reveals the popularity of the French style, if not the prominence of these books in the children’s market. By identifying children’s culture as a formative space for not only

future Americans, but future America, Fuller makes visible the ways in which minor bodies are always already “move[ing] in full-sized apartments.” In other words, the American child reader holds unexpected agency in nineteenth-century political scripts.

Nineteenth-century American educational institutions and ideals were directly influenced by the national desire for a distinctly American character. Even before national sovereignty, the New World was conceptualized as transcendent of Old World civilizations through exceptionalist ideologies such as John Winthrop’s famous characterization of the colonies as “a city upon a hill” in 1630. This rhetorical maneuver, ingrained in our national legislation and imprinted in everyday culture, crafts a strong and vibrant thread evident throughout the history of America, from contact to our current moment. To be “a city upon a hill” implies a literal and figurative position of authority as the colonies, and later the sovereign nation, relied heavily upon the fantasy of an American leader, advancing the spiritual, economic, and social realities of humanity. In her history of national exceptionalist rhetoric, *American Exceptionalism* (1998), Deborah Madsen argues, “The history of America is a history of redemption – of individuals as well as of the nation itself – and this commitment to America as an exceptional nation is reflected in the way the lives of public leaders have been written as continuing the spiritual biography of America, as the nation and its people work towards the salvation of all humankind” (14). This characterization of exceptionalist rhetoric as a *commitment* throughout history stresses what is at stake for America, both as an ideal and as a coherent and unified nation. Indeed, as Madsen points out, “the spiritual biography of America” written through public leaders requires “the salvation of all humankind” – a colonial initiative enacted through white benevolence. And the threat of failure is a strong

undercurrent to the pervasive and forceful exceptionalism that is repeated and perpetuated through legislative precedence and political climate.

This chapter will examine challenges inherent to American exceptionalism by privileging the “minor” bodies and stories surfacing in the intersections of women’s culture and children’s culture in order to reconsider the dominance of a national narrative that denies these narratives. Major texts include Margaret Fuller’s “The Great Lawsuit: Man versus Men. Woman versus Women” published in *The Dial* in July 1843 and Nathaniel Hawthorne’s work of children’s literature, *The Whole History of Grandfather’s Chair* (1841). Read together, these texts speak back to the major intersections of this dissertation. I begin by asking how privileging representations of women’s culture, legislature, fantasy, children, and indigeneity destabilize structures of heteropatriarchy and white supremacy necessary for America to be the ‘city on a hill.’ Published two short years after *Grandfather’s Chair*, a close reading of Fuller’s early article will guide the central argument of this chapter: that Hawthorne’s children’s literature does the work of historicizing gendered inequalities reliant on particular racial representations, affirming the quotidian presence of these social and political structures in children’s culture as well as spaces articulated as explicitly adult. In other words, the intersections of gendered and racialized inequalities and children’s culture surface forcefully in histories written for children as a space to work out how minor and marginal identities and relationships are naturalized through historical representations. My motivating question being, what does Fuller bring to light in Hawthorne’s work, which I read as outside the “baby-house style” and without a protective veil? I take up these queries through Hawthorne and Fuller because of their high visibility in the antebellum period: Hawthorne publishing widely



though literary magazines and Fuller through *The Dial* and her organized “conversations.” To state in précis, this chapter follows Fuller’s argument for a distinctly American children’s literature, interrogating the texts of a canonically distinguished American writer to uncover an American practice that is at once history, literature, and fantasy for children.

Before being canonized, Hawthorne was an unnamed author in the *Peter Parley* project, contributing with *Peter Parley’s Universal History, on the Basis of Geography, for the Use of Families* in 1837. Persuaded by Goodrich’s financial success, and the encouragement of Elizabeth Peabody, Hawthorne took up a familiar trope in his own contribution of juvenile fiction. I will consider Hawthorne’s writing for children within the legacy of the *Peter Parley* series, looking specifically at the ways in which national history is fictionalized to model minor citizenship, differently embodied by the white American children in the narrative frame. Ultimately, I argue that Hawthorne’s representations of Indianness develop into a ubiquitous presence that no longer depends upon the representation of an Indian body. Indianness as an abstraction is appropriated into the rhetoric and hegemonic modes of being an American child. Therefore, my work here will be to uncover what the lack of an Indian body hides – the powerful and pervasive Native American haunting in a national identity that constantly reaffirms the U.S. imperialist white supremacist capitalist patriarchy.

As Anne Scott MacLeod has argued, “Writing for children, adults bring to bear their own experiences of childhood, their ideas of what childhood is or ought to be, their commitment to the conventions of their own time, and their concerns for their own society’s problems and progress” (*American Childhood*, vii). Juvenile literature

influences the community by reflecting current social struggles, and promoting change. Children became increasingly important within American culture during the early nineteenth century, particularly as Jacksonian nationalism required the production of autonomous individuals. While MacLeod examines the shift to moral didacticism in literature for children as an active agent in education and the family structure, Gillian Brown asserts that “In Hawthorne’s account of American history, we see not just the romantic composition of nationalism but also the imaginative configurations whereby children, fancy, and nation become so firmly linked that ever after this association has seemed a natural fact” (“Hawthorne’s American History,” 122). By connecting children to history, Hawthorne argues for the importance of childhood education in nationalism, whereby future Americans “believe the past is a crucial part of themselves” (Brown “Hawthorne’s American History,” 132). Thus, Hawthorne’s juvenile audience is naturalized into national politics through their attachments to his historical fiction.

The past, present, and future are all arranged around the fireplace: the historic chair, Grandfather, and four grandchildren, Laurence, Clara, Charley, and Alice. This opening scene invests the domestic with an almost magical potential for mutual recognition facilitated by the room itself: Grandfather asserts, “From generation to generation, a chair sits familiarly in the midst of human interests, and is witness to the most secret and confidential intercourse, that mortal man can hold with his fellow. The human heart may best be read in the fireside chair” (65). The chair then, an essential presence in this dynamic of intimacy, holds both the bodies in conversation and bears witness to what is said. In this way, the chair seems to make possible these moments of unveiled discourse while also retaining the exchange through the generations in its ability

to exist outside the bounds of mortality. With the domestic chair as a device with which to read, truthfully, the human heart, Grandfather suggests that within the proximity of a home, where only the objects are “witness,” trust and transparency create the conditions for the most sensitive intercourse to transpire among men. Indeed, the chair invites both the generational speakers and their secrets to unload their weight, holding both the physical bodies and the intangible mass of ideas. Using this scene of domestic legacy as an introduction into American history, Hawthorne exposes the tensions between spatially determined gender performances in a national culture obsessed with a masculinity defined by soldiers, businessmen, and statesmen in Jacksonian America.

In antebellum nineteenth-century popular and political culture Andrew Jackson came to embody idealized American manhood, a masculine standard American men had previously been without. A militant advocate for the American empire through manifest destiny, Jackson’s particular persona as soldier, pioneer, and self-made man crafted a narrative of individualism in American culture still evident today. David Greven described Jackson as “a symbol for a newly American form of male identity, one predicated on the purgation of effeminacy, weakness, cultivation” (4). This need to project a masculine image dependent on the visible subjugation of others was also extended to repudiate popular images of aristocracy, however contradictory to his personal wealth. In this way, masculine value came to be measured by economic and social conquest.

Michael Kimmel describes three masculine types competing for prominence in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries: “the Genteel Patriarch,” “the Heroic Artisan,” and “the Self-Made Man” (137). The “Genteel Patriarch” is characterized as the refined

aristocrat, carrying on the class distinctions and tastes of the Old World. The “Heroic Artisan” is a model of hardworking and virtuous men, working for their self-reliance rather than upward social movement. The “Self-Made Man” is a nineteenth-century American ideal, the belief in wealth, success, and social mobility earned through individual ingenuity and hard work. With Jackson as the paragon and the success of mercantile capitalism, the self-made man became the American masculine paradigm.

Hawthorne’s children’s literature both predates and answers Fuller’s call for “fancy and intellect” in American children’s culture, as opposed to other popular representations such as Jacob Abbott’s *Rollo* series. The force of the *Rollo* stories sought to establish the masculine ideals of “obedience, industry, duty, and order,” structuring the gender values of its juvenile audience (Berry, “Discipline and (Dis)order,” 100). Abbott was a teacher, minister, and author, and he cultivated a pedagogy within children’s publishing in service of a Christian education. From developmental milestones such as learning to speak to the exercise of autonomy through European travel, the didactic concerns of the *Rollo* book series stress Abbott’s desire to shape the next generation of citizens into Jacksonian men. This includes a range of somewhat contradictory skills like the practice of deferment held alongside a willingness to lead and work independently. Abbot’s stories eschew domestic concerns in favor of the development of work ethics, adventure, and capitalism. Like Anne Scott MacLeod, Jani Berry examines the unstable cultural context of Jacksonian America as a catalyst for the explicitly instructive and hugely successful *Rollo* series, arguing that such moral virtues as industry, honesty, and obedience “are the virtues Abbott considers necessary for an ordered society, and they function to protect children from the chaos of Jacksonian American – and to protect

Jacksonian America from them” (104). In this way, the *Rollo* series both recognizes the violence of a social structure invested in Jackson’s masculine performance, and concomitantly reinforces the necessity of this masculine model. Rollo’s gender identity is reconstructed and reinforced in each book, which suggests the imperfect rendering of this gender model in the performance of American boyhood and the cultural imperative to continue writing precisely because this work is never complete. Each new child born is one with the potential subvert the national model if proper training is not implemented, demonstrating children’s literature’s importance as a powerful tool in communicating and perpetuating national ideologies. The narrative repetition of *Rollo at Work; or The Way to be Industrious* (1848) argues that these societal virtues must be learned at an early age and fostered with continuous reinforcement.

*Rollo at Work* is a collection of six anecdotes illustrating a young boy’s, Rollo’s, development into adulthood. Abbott introduces Rollo as always already industrious, working “his [own] little garden” at the tender age of “between five and six years old” (7). This bit of labor then lends itself to his next task, first at picking up wood chips, then stacking wood. He has an older model, Jonas, to correct his work ethic and embody the self-motivation and desire for success that sustains self-made manhood. The narrator unambiguously describes Jonas’ self-motivation, listing his completed tasks: “Jonas had finished mending the wheelbarrow, and had put it in its place, and was just going away himself into the field”, providing Rollo and young listener/reader with the proper performance of an industrious attitude to emulate, or surrogate (17). Jonas advises Rollo to “Work moderately, but *steadily*; - that is the way” (19). This simple tale of the movement from a leisurely boyhood to productive manhood contrasts sharply with

*Grandfather's Chair*, stories that illustrate the contradictions in idealized notions of normative gender performance. In Hawthorne's children's literature, the dialogue around what is gender, and how gendered identities are experienced, popularized in intellectual conversations and in the press, frames and informs the complex ways in which his historical narratives grapple with white supremacy and sexism through representations of Native American subjectivity and invisibility, female autonomy and violence against the female body.

*"You cannot believe it, men; but the only reason why women ever assume what is more appropriate to you, is because you prevent them from finding out what is fit for themselves. Were they free, were they fully to develop the strength and beauty of woman, they would never wish to be men, or manlike."*<sup>11</sup>

Margaret Fuller's sharp articulations of social and political dissonance built her popular and literary notoriety in nineteenth century New England. Verbal sparring with Ralph Waldo Emerson and creating access to education for women through weekly conversations, Fuller's desire to cultivate a platform for speaking and connecting with an audience speaks directly to her work as editor of *The Dial: A Magazine for Literature, Philosophy, and Religion*. Two years prior to her discussion of American children's literature in the *New-York Daily Tribune*, Fuller opened the July 1843 edition of *The Dial* with an article later extended into her most famous work, *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (1845). "The Great Lawsuit: Man versus Men. Woman versus Women" makes an argument for a national recognition of female enfranchisement in and outside of the home by framing the discussion of unequal gender politics within a rhetoric of case law. Her title provocatively frames plaintiff and defendant as not women against men or men

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<sup>11</sup> Fuller "The Great Lawsuit," 23.

against women, but rather the individual bringing a case against the masses of both men and women. While the literature I read in this chapter is wrapped in the fantasy of what might have been and what might be, in conversation with Fuller's "American" desire for "free plays of the fancy and intellect," her article is an attempt to navigate the American regime in which she lived; a regime where her legal subjectivity existed only in relation to men. Bringing a case against women and men presupposes the legal subjecthood and recognition necessary to participate in the legal system. Fuller's title subverts the popular representation of a legal system that explicitly subjugates female bodies and black and brown bodies. Interestingly, to do this she re-images Shakespeare's Miranda as an American prodigy, an example of fulfilled female subjectivity. In this project she takes creative liberty with Prospero's parenting and disappears Caliban completely. Thus, Fuller's reimagining of this early modern drama speaks to the ways in which she is re-imagining female citizenship at the expense of the American Other. Her article ends with a focus on futurity and a discussion of reproduction and the conditions of reproductive possibility that, as we shall see, provides dimension to the children's literature that interacted intimately with families and youths in the nineteenth century.

The first lines of Fuller's "Lawsuit" acknowledge her case as deeply historical, but perpetually awaiting judgment. She states, "This great suit has now been carried on through many ages, with various results. The decisions have been numerous, but always followed by appeals to still higher courts. How can it be otherwise, when the law itself is the subject of frequent elucidation, constant revision?" (1). Temporally, then, this case like the law itself exists in a liminal state where permanence and predictability shift under the constant movement of a social contract that lives in the bodies of those in power.

Fuller sets up her case to be read as not an isolated concern of the nineteenth century, but rather a conversation, a critical argument that cannot be foreclosed because it lives in law, an always-in-process system of governance.

Prefacing her argument for the potentiality of female civic engagement, Fuller points to the ways in which colonization and capitalism create inhuman conditions. In a moment reproduced in *Women in the Nineteenth Century*, she notes, “The name of the Prince of Peace has been profaned by all kinds of injustice towards the Gentile whom he said he came to save. But I need not speak of what has been done towards the red man, and the black man. These deeds are the scoff of the world; and they have been accompanied by such pious words, that the gentlest would not dare to intercede with, ‘Father forgive them, for they know not what they do’” (7-8). Essentially disrupting narratives of exceptionalism, Fuller points to the ways in which Christianity is subverted to make possible legislation of genocide, oppression, and dehumanization, visible to the “world.” She frames this U.S.-based culture of supremacy with the shameful gaze of a global community. And yet, as quickly as Fuller points to the “red man, and the black man” she does “not speak of what has been done,” to these subjects, thus extending the narrative silence and making an argument for what remains unspeakable. In this way, these non-white bodies are taken up as a contextual reference for American inequalities and the historical systems of white supremacy made possible by the manipulation of religious doctrine. As a device, this emphasis on racial oppression sets the tone for questioning the existing systems of power.

Fuller’s one-dimensional emphasis on gender forecloses an intersectional critique of American systems of power. Without articulating the ways in which race and gender



together create unique experiences of privilege and disenfranchisement, her gender argument assumes the discussion of white bodies, white women, and a case for enfranchisement into a state of white supremacy. This is not to say that women of color are not included in this manifesto for female empowerment: Fuller takes up stereotypical representations of people of color in order to subvert the dominant scripts for a white, female gender performance. For example, disrupting the narrative that an American woman's work is always secluded, private, and quiet, Fuller draws on a representation of "Indian" woman and uses class status as an illustration of the potential expansion of female gender roles. She argues, "Not only the Indian carries the burdens of the camp, but the favorites of Louis the Fourteenth accompany him in his journeys, and the washerwoman stands at her tub and carries home her work at all seasons, and in all states of health" (12). Pointing to the ability of these raced and classed women to carry the weight of their communities, Fuller crafts a comparison that seeks to graft the recognition of labor modeled here onto white middle class women's work. While the sentiment that female labor manifests in multiple ways complicates a masculine market economy model by acknowledging the diverse ways in which economies are supported, Fuller's description uses non-white bodies in narratives of Americanness while still foreclosing the possibility for recognition, inclusion, and ideological change that acknowledges a diverse history and population. Indeed, the Indian's labor is foregrounded in this argument to draw on stereotypes of Indigenous women and their relationship to physical labor, but is this shared sense of what labor "is" quickly moves to unraced (white) bodies that also do work, French women of Court and the washerwoman at her tub. The phrasing, "Not only the Indian" works to build upon what is already known, that the Indian woman

is capable and willing to bear the physical labor required of her. What it does not do is include the Indian woman's work in an argument for recognition of value, both economic and cultural.

An examination of the "evidence" for Fuller's case points back to an abolitionist movement, if only for a moment: "It is not surprising that it should be the Anti-Slavery party that pleads for woman, when we consider merely that she does not hold property on equal terms with men; so that, if a husband dies without a will, the wife, instead of stepping at once into his place as head of the family, inherits only a part of his fortune, as if she were a child, or ward only, not an equal partner" (11). In an attempt to exemplify the injustice of white women's relationship to property, Fuller compares women to slaves by pointing to a (white) woman's inability to hold assets on the same terms as her (white) husband. Thus, ignoring, or perhaps rendering unspeakable, the realities of a system of slavery in which black bodies were reduced to property in a market economy. The connection between the Anti-Slavery party and woman, for Fuller, is a flat line analogy of systemic oppression. In the same way the Indian woman's work functions as a narrative device to draw attention to white women, this argument uses the abolitionist movement as a tool for talking about gender disparity. In doing so, Fuller obscures the violence of a system predicated on the ideological and material investment in human property. Her next comparison between women and children implies an essential connection between women, wards, children, and slaves: all dependents to the white male adult. Her tactic draws the extreme oppressions of all these subject positions into one: the white (adult) woman and in doing so makes secondary the unique and vulnerable conditions of bodies written explicitly out of narratives of Americanness.

Fuller's portrait of female potential is directly invested in reimagining and reinvesting in an Anglo, Old World cultural representation of idealized women. Dissatisfied with a woman's limited choice between the roles of wife and mother or teacher, Fuller re-imagines Shakespeare's Miranda to embody the possible potential for educated women in the United States. Indeed, Phyllis McBride argues in her article, "In Her Father's Library," that, "While Shakespeare's Miranda follows the script written for her (by marrying Ferdinand, and because of Jacobean marriage and property laws, subsequently forfeiting her educational and literary inheritance to him), Fuller, herself an American Miranda, makes it clear that *her* Miranda scripts her *own* role" (135). In sum, *The Tempest* stages a shipwreck on an island carrying the King of Naples, his courtiers, and Antonio the Duke of Milan (who has usurped his brother Prospero's dukedom) leaves its passengers stranded. Prospero (the "true" Duke of Milan) and his daughter Miranda live on the island, served by Ariel and Caliban. Miranda and one of the courtiers (Ferdinand) meet and fall in love, and Prospero manages their courtship with his "magic." In a moment also reproduced in *Women in the Nineteenth Century*, Miranda and her father are described, quoted here at length:

Her father was a man who cherished no sentimental reverence for woman, but a firm belief in the equality of the sexes. She was his eldest child, and came to him at an age when he needed a companion. From the time she could speak and go alone, he addressed her not as a plaything, but as a living mind. Among the few verses he ever wrote were a copy addressed to this child, when the first locks were cut from her head, and the reverence expressed on this occasion for that cherished head he never

belied. It was to him the temple of immortal intellect. He respected his child, however, too much to be an indulgent parent. He called on her for clear judgment, for courage, for honor and fidelity, in short for such virtues as he knew. In so far as he possessed the keys to the wonders of this universe, he allowed free use of them to her, and by the incentive of a high expectation he forbade, as far as possible, that she should let the privilege lie idle. (15)

Miranda's father is described here without idealized expectations of "True Womanhood" for his daughter. He sees her not as an object, but as a person with a mind to be cultivated with the privileges of leisure and a library, "keys to the wonders of this universe." His love for her is framed by respect and devotion, in comparison to pedestal adoration. Many have recognized the resonances of this description in Fuller's relationship with her own father, Timothy Fuller, Jr. A precocious child, Fuller was invited into her father's library and formed an acute attachment to Shakespeare's plays. A well-educated man, Timothy chose to tutor his daughter, and their unique bond hinged on his unwavering expectations for her intellectual ability. The moment above shows a similar scene of patriarchal benevolence as Miranda is described through the craft and image of her father. His knowledge of her is the reader's introduction, negotiating a fine balance between a fantastical idealization and a recognition of her potential. McBride argues, "Because this description depicts Miranda's father as benevolent and remarkably generous, Fuller continues to put her male readers at ease" (134). It is through the male gaze of her father that Miranda becomes, for Fuller, the new standard for American women, and an argument is made for masculine enlightenment, as well as female freedom.

And thus, it is through a reimagined, but still fully intact patriarchy that Fuller argues, “Of Miranda I had always thought as an example, that the restraints upon the sex were insuperable only to those who think them so, or who noisily strive to break them” (13). Fuller extends Shakespeare’s use of Miranda which draws on the Latin etymology, *mirari*, which carries the meaning, to admire. Fuller’s Miranda is a model for women and young girls, a person who calls attention to female potential with a powerful influence. An American Miranda casts aside any restraint to the exercise of her will, quietly and without show. This ability to think and act outside the binds of nineteenth century female gender roles presumes a significant amount of privilege in knowledge, whiteness, and wealth. Through this, Fuller asserts that there is something essential in an Anglo woman that is hindered by the artifice of male restraints.

The conspicuous absence of Caliban, and in fact any romantic desire, in the American Miranda’s narrative draws Fuller’s discussion of enfranchisement away from the negotiation of power and desire. Significantly, *The Tempest’s* central tension is in relation to place and power, an essential colonial concern as maintenance of power over people and land is retained for profit. This distance between gender role reform and discussions of indigeneity are reinforced in key moments across the article, when Native peoples and places can be rewritten into the role of a minor ward. In a moment pointing to the triumphs of female vision and ingenuity Fuller proclaims, “We may accept it as an omen for ourselves, that it was Isabella who furnished Columbus with the means of coming hither. This land must pay back its debt to woman, without whose aid it would not have been brought into alliance with the civilized world” (25). The debt owned, then, crystalizes the ways in which women’s rights are expressed at the expense of the racially

marginalized, oppressed, and colonized peoples of the Caribbean and the Americans. To recognize the history of settler colonialism in the United States is to reckon with a legacy of debt held by the “woman” that made exploration and expansion possible. Aligned with ideologies of western imperialism, Fuller’s wish for future American Mirandas gains political relevance through proximity to power.

The last lines of her article in *The Dial* call forward to a woman of the future: “And will not she soon appear? The woman who shall vindicate their birthright for all women; who shall teach them what to claim, and how to use what they obtain? Shall not her name be for her era Victoria, for her country and her life Virginia? Yet predictions are rash; she herself must teach us to give her the fitting name” (47). Here, Fuller’s reimagined America depends on the miraculous appearance of a woman warrior, a woman strong enough to reclaim her right to power. This future woman seems to be American women’s pathway to redemption, and it is through her teaching that the dependent conditions of woman will shift away from the minor and marginal identities taken up in this article. While Fuller’s reconfiguration of gendered identities into a continuum, “Male and female represent the two sides of the great radical dualism. But, in fact, they are perpetually passing into one another. Fluid hardens to solid, solid rushes to fluid. There is no wholly masculine man, no purely feminine woman,” allows for movement and recognition, these last lines seem to affirm her desire for a female conqueror rather than a revolutionary reimagining of diverse identities held in common space (43). Subverting the systems of power expressed through nomenclature, Fuller waits for the women who will teach others what to call her. In this, a heightened emphasis on futurity is assumed. Her metaphoric language brings large-scale shifts in

ideology into the intimacies of the family and home in order to image the possible future for woman, given this liminal present, and the balance of a historic debt.

The future woman, the girl child in the present, occupies the powerful place of potential: A seat both historically informed and not yet solid in its form. Reading Hawthorne through Fuller challenges the simplicity of the representations offered. Both authors take up children in their literature in order to tell stories about the past. As Fuller's narrative ends with her desired gender performance deferred to the future, Hawthorne includes children in this conversation around American identity, suggesting their own unique position as future subjects of a new Nation, in the legacy of an old History. Her thesis revolves around the informed child, and Hawthorne's history practices this theory of exposure and critical thinking, self-consciously giving and hiding information from both the child audience and the children in the frame.

*“Oh, how I wish that the chair could speak!” cried he. “After its long intercourse with mankind—after looking upon the world for ages—what lessons of golden wisdom it might utter! It might teach a private person how to lead a good and happy life—or a statesman how to make his country prosperous!”*<sup>12</sup>  
said Laurence of Grandfather's Chair

Hawthorne's *The Whole History of Grandfather's Chair* is comprised of three slender works of historical juvenile literature, *Grandfather's Chair* (1841), *Famous Old People* (1841), and *Liberty Tree* (1841). Loosely referencing the structural framework of Goodrich's *Peter Parley* series, Hawthorne's history for children profiles famous colonists and Americans, privileging particular patriarchs for their work in literary studies and parenthood, as well as explorers and capitalists. These vignettes of past patriarchs are contained by the framework of Grandfather and his grandchildren, and as he tells them

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<sup>12</sup> *The Whole History of Grandfather's Chair*, 204

these stories their response and ensuing conversations about characters, themes, enjoyment, and morals propels the narrative forward. By choosing to center his history on an antiquated chair, Hawthorne makes explicit the intimacies of the marketplace and the domestic: figuring his narratives around the physical occupation of an object in both spaces subverts a simple binary representation. The tension in this rendering of the social paradigm is inherent in the text's form as both a reference and a remaking of New England's historical patriarchs. The history is at once both domestic and a commodity to be bought and sold, an object linked to childish spaces and bodies and a national legacy.

In the preface to this collection, Hawthorne offers an explanation for wrapping his vignettes in fantastical liberties. He notes, "In writing this ponderous tome, the author's desire has been to describe the eminent characters and remarkable events of our annals, in such a form and style, that the YOUNG might make acquaintance with them of their own accord" (5). Describing this project with the seriousness of academic rigor in a package that is not only accessible but attractive to young people, Hawthorne is quick to point to his book's intervention which is predicated on the genre chasm between youth and adult. Indeed, in the very typeface of the page, "YOUNG" in all capital letters emphasizes the prominence of this age and implies the significance of connecting the future with a shared history.

The chair itself is central to this narrative project, positioned as a physical fulcrum that leverages American history, lineage, and futurity through the ownership of vital Americana: "The chair is made to pass from one to another of those personages, of whom he thought it most desirable for the young reader to have vivid and familiar ideas, and whose lives and actions would best enable him to give picturesque sketches of the times"



(5). Thus, preparing the reader, or auditor, for what is to come and how to engage in the history presented, mainly through recognition of property and ownership as foundational to participatory civil and political life. To advocate for himself, he argues:

There is certainly no method, by which the shadowy outlines of departed men and women can be made to assume the hues of life more effectually, than by connecting their images with the substantial and homely reality of a fireside chair. It causes us to feel at once, that these characters of history had a private and familiar existence, and were not wholly contained within that cold array of outward action, which we are compelled to receive as the adequate representation of their lives (5-6).

In a break from traditional narratives of history written from the perspective of great public deeds, Grandfather seeks to illustrate an emotional and personal life for the individuals that have come to represent his own national identity and ideology. Suggesting that these historical portraits are more than shadow, indeed, they are tactile when illustrated in relation to the home. The domestic then, is a narrative device to “house” sites of historical resurrection; a place where characters of the past are allowed a dynamic existence that includes an emotional life and intimate attachments. This is in stark contrast to a one-dimensional portrait of a public works. In all, this children’s history is a discourse on the pre-America through the ownership of a “fireside chair” that is brought from England but is made American by attachment to famous patriarchs and occupation of space.

The Fourteenth Amendment of the Constitution, ratified in 1866 officially defined “Who are citizens of the United States and of the States; their privileges and immunities”<sup>13</sup> in the first section:

All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges of immunities of citizens of the United States.; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law, nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws” (Sec .1., Article XIV).

Thus drawing on the Fourth and Fifth Articles in the Bill of Rights which state, respectively, “The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated” and ‘No person shall . . . be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor shall private property be taken for public use, without just compensation.” Cited more than any other Constitutional Amendment, the Fourteenth was put into place because people were worried the 1866 Civil Rights Act would be rescinded which extended citizenship to black men and abolished the system of slavery by denying the “claim for the loss or emancipation of any slave ; but all such debts, obligations, and claims shall be held illegal and void” (Sec .4., Article XIV). This statement of eligibility and birthright citizenship was tempered in the following section where representation is apportioned according to “the whole number of persons in each State, excluding Indians not taxed”

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<sup>13</sup> Library of Congress

(Sec .2., Article XIV). Native Americans were not allowed access to U.S. citizenship until the twentieth century ratification of the Indian Citizenship Act (1924). While the complexities of incorporation into the State are multifaceted and dependent of specific geographic and temporal frameworks, I draw this legislation in here to point to the ways in which maintaining property is a basic and fundamental right for U.S. citizens, reiterated in these foundational documents, and Native Americans are explicitly excluded from this narrative around rights to obtain and maintain property ownership. Through this framework of worth, debt, and deferment, and Margaret Fuller's investments in childhood, Hawthorne's history offers an opportunity to fill an archival silence that historicizes the co-constitution of youth culture, race, and age.

*Grandfather's Chair* affirms for the reader the knowledge that the chair will be inherited by the grandchildren, reckoning with the idea that American futurity depends upon a curated lesson in American history through the legacies of property ownership. Indeed, Americana takes on a very literal significance through the materiality of the very chair Grandfather occupies, putting the political theory at play in legislation to methodological work in this children's history. This narrative frame provides a common thread for conversation around the individual portraits offered. His history begins with the English Earl of Lincoln, moves through such famous persons as Anne Hutchinson, Reverend John Elliot, George Washington, and, of course, Grandfather. Grandfather and his grandchildren, Laurence, Clara, Charley, and Alice, move the significance of such stories from history to their present in their ability (or inability) to relate and be entertained by the American patriarchs. And yet, I argue that reading these stories through the thread of property ownership, these children are already acknowledged

within these histories as part of their own lineage, a legacy endowment that secures their potentiality and affirms the privileges of citizenship.

The remaining portion of this reading is concerned with the seventh and eighth chapters of *Grandfather's Chair*, beginning in the narrative frame with a short conversation around the execution of Mary Dyer, then moving quickly into a vignette on Reverend John Eliot titled, "The Indian Bible." This pairing of the violence against Dyer and the white savior figure of Eliot, devoted to a disinterested cause wrapped in an "inevitable" narrative of Native disappearance speaks to the central concern of this project: aligning the ways in which Native American bodies and cultures are cast into performances of invisibility in order to affirm the performances of (potential) agency by white women and white children.

Grandfather begins chapter seven with the intent to tell his grandchildren about Quaker persecution, focusing on Mary Dyer, one of the Boston martyrs. He describes the Puritanical punishment for deviance stating, "They were thrown into dungeons; they were beaten with many stripes, women as well as men; they were driven forth into the wilderness, and left to the tender mercies of wild beasts and Indians" (40). In this way, the Puritans' treatment of the Quakers is framed against the "mercies" of animal and Indian, reversing a colonial binary where settler is always civilized and the Other is always savage. This condemnation of Puritan rules and rituals extends through the selective portrait of Dyer where she becomes known to the children as a woman with conviction and a faith strong enough to support the Christian God's message. Having been banished from Boston because of her faith, she was compelled to return at the risk of her own death and, "if Grandfather had been correctly informed, an incident had then

taken place, which connects her with our story. This Mary Dyer had entered the mint-master's dwelling, clothed in sack cloth and ashes, and seated herself in our great chair, with a sort of dignity and state. Then she proceeded to deliver what she called a message from Heaven; but in the midst of it, they dragged her to prison" (40-1). Executed in 1660, Dyer's imprisonment and death in the gallows was preceded by her "message from Heaven" delivered through the vehicle of Grandfather's chair. Thus described, the chair is a space of spiritual refuge which allowed Dyer access to her higher calling.

While the children had multiple responses to her death, Charley's desire was to fight for Dyer and Laurence's response was to appreciate "the beauty of her death" (41). The narrator notes that, "It seemed as if hardly any of the preceding stories had thrown such an interest around Grandfather's chair, as did the fact, that the poor, persecuted, wandering Quaker woman had rested in it for a moment. The children were so much excited, that Grandfather found it necessary to bring his account of the persecution to a close" (41). This, then, was the most powerful narrative these children had heard, and what their excitement implies, I argue, is recognition of Dyer's larger narrative, suppressed here but saturating popular culture in both New England and England. Grandfather is moved to silence the story of Mary's "monstrous" birth, but this narrative is too pervasive to be absent from her story. The tension between displaying history and making invisible this violence against women articulates what, precisely, is most "American" about this children's story. Drawing out the story of Dyer, here, both contextualizes this conversation for a modern reader and does the work of privileging this minor storyline with considerable weight in relationship to my reading of *Grandfather's Chair*.

A close friend and follower of Anne Hutchinson's religious practices, Mary Dyer was a public persona in the Antinomian controversy. Pregnant with her third child in 1637, she went into an early labor with Anne Hutchinson and Jane Hawkins as midwives but the birth was tragic and delved quickly into notoriety on both sides of the Atlantic.<sup>14</sup> Johan Winsser points to the Puritanical practices of reading hyperbolic biblical metaphors into the lives of the community, informing the real threat a severely malformed stillborn female infant had for Mary Dyer. Seeking council, Reverend John Cotton,

advised Hutchinson to conceal the birth. Cotton had two principle reasons for giving this advice. First, he had known of other 'monstrous' births that had been concealed and though that therein God might intend only the private instruction of the parents and the few others who had been in attendance. . . . Second, and most to his credit, had this been his own child, Cotton would have desired that it should be concealed. In the quiet of the night and the deep of the forest the child was secretly buried. (Winsser 23)

The stakes for Mary Dyer were so high that she evaded the mandate to register the birth, but eventually talk of the stillborn girl child reached the highest levels of colonial government. Massachusetts Governor John Winthrop wrote a famous tract documenting the infant body, as, "So monstrous and misshapen, as the like has scarce been heard of: it had no head but a face, which stood so low upon the brest, as the eares (which were like an Apes) grew upon the shoulders" (Winsser 24). News of this "monstrosity" was disseminated widely in print. Reverend John Eliot described transmitted the news across the Atlantic to a Reverend Thomas Brookes in London when he requested a confirmation

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<sup>14</sup> Johan Winsser "Mary Dyer and the 'Monster' Story," 23.

of its occurrence. Eliot described the body as “a most hideous creature, a woman, a fish, a bird, & a beast all woven together” (Winsser 24). Both accounts distance the stillbirth from the humanity of a dead child, playing heavily on the death as a metaphoric punishment for Dyer’s sins against Puritan theology. In this way, the body is carefully articulated through animal imagery: ape, creature, fish, bird, beast, but still gendered, woman. As Anne Myles argues, “In these accounts, the connection between giving birth to a monster and *being* a monster is so direct it need not even be named explicitly, except as a sign of God’s just punishment” (4). Public knowledge of her “monstrous” birth made her a highly visible member of the New England community.

In 1652, Dyer traveled to England with her husband, and remained there when he returned to Rhode Island. In her extended stay, she converted to the tenets of Quakerism in the 1650s and returned to New England in 1657. Upon return she was identified as a Quaker and banished from Massachusetts. Her 1660 trial and subsequent execution in *Grandfather’s Chair* was her third re-entrance into the state, wherein she had been pardoned twice before. And perhaps the kernel for his narrative around her “message from heaven,” Myles documents a query posed to Dyer during her last trial, questioning: “‘Whether she was a Prophet?’ she responded that ‘She spake the words that the Lord spake in her; and now the thing is come to pass’” (7). She was the only woman executed during the Quaker persecution, her death taking place publicly in the Boston Commons.

Mary Dyer’s life and death occupy two short pages in *Grandfather’s Chair*, but the narrative threads that begin here, violence against women, white female martyrdom, and potential agency for public women are reliant on objectification and denial of Native American bodies and cultures of the attached vignette. While Dyer occupies the chair

temporarily, she is never actually in possession of it. The chair itself was given to Rev. John Eliot by Captain John Hull, the mint-master of Massachusetts; therefore, a relationship between money and the appropriation and annihilation of Indian cultures are directly connected by the “lineage” of this property.

The first minister of Roxbury is described through his knowledge of Native language, his primary labor being Indian conversation. In order to connect his grandchildren with this “apostle to the Indians,” he provides select historical context for the complex relationships between Indian and English colonists. He begins, typically, with the arrival of the Pilgrims at Plymouth, noting that “there had been a very grievous plague among the red men; and the sages and ministers of that day were inclined to the opinion, that Providence had sent this mortality, in order to make room for the settlement of the English. But I know not why we should suppose that an Indian’s life is less precious, in the eye of Heaven, than that of a white man. Be that as it may, death had certainly been very busy with the savage tribes” (42). A sentimental acknowledgment of human life lost is present in this narrative of mass and mysterious Indian deaths. While this appears to question rights of discovery, or manifest destiny, this Anglo-centric narrative fails to recognize other European contact sites and timelines. While the English occupied the Patuxet village, now known as Plymouth, beginning in 1620, there had been significant European contact as early as Giovanni da Verrazzano in 1542.<sup>15</sup> The plague Grandfather mentions within this narrative of passive agency is in reference to the 1617 epidemic. In his historicization of King Philip’s War, Daniel Mandell writes that “Among those most affected were the Patuxets, part of the Wampanoag tribe, who lived along the

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<sup>15</sup> Mandell, 7-9.



bay that Smith had named Plymouth: many died, perhaps up to 90 percent, and many villages were completely decimated or abandoned by the few survivors” (9). While Grandfather’s dates are carefully relayed, his narrative is intentionally crafted to project a singular understanding of “first” contact.

I argue that part of this intention was to uphold a narrative of discovery dependent on colonial property law. Mandell notes that

Puritan attitudes resulted in part from the European notion of discovery, which awarded sovereignty and territorial rights to whichever (European) nation first claimed a particular part of the Americas, and their embrace of the legal doctrine *vacuum domicilium*, which held that those who ‘improved’ a particular area (i.e., grew crops or raised cattle on it) had the right to that land—and the colonists felt (incorrectly) that the Natives were hunters rather than farmers. (11)

Therefore, by incorporating other European points of contact into his narrative, Grandfather would be putting into question the validity of the English, and in the long historical timeline of this children’s book, American, claims to the North American territory. The echoes of colonial property law depended on “discovery” was famously at play in the nineteenth century with the Supreme Court Case: *Johnson & Graham's Lessee v. McIntosh*, 21 U.S. 8 Wheat. 543 543 (1823). This case reaffirmed rights of discovery wherein it legislated that private individuals may not buy land title directly from Indian tribes or nations, and those currently held are not recognizable in federal courts. (MacIntosh bought land from the U.S. government while Johnson and Graham were heirs to that same land through a direct purchase.)

Settler colonial violence is represented in multiple ways in Grandfather's history and the 1636 Pequot War figures largely. He states to the children: "The Connecticut settlers, assisted by a celebrated Indian chief, named Uncas, bore the brunt of this war, with but little aid from Massachusetts. Many hundred of the hostile Indians were slain, or burnt in their wigwams. Sassacus, their sachem, fled to another tribe, after his own people were defeated; but he was murdered by them, and his head was sent to his English enemies" (43). Never explicitly mentioning this conflict as the Pequot War, he does use accurate nomenclature when describing the Mohegan sachem, Uncas, who allied with the English and Sassacus as the Pequot sachem. Nor does he care to explain the title of "sachem," instead relying on their abilities to infer this as an indicator of tribal authority. Of course, these alliances and conflicts were more complicated than Grandfather's narrative allows, but it is important to note that he is not distinguishing diverse Indian tribes and nations. This discursive manipulation of autonomous Indians nations obscures their already sophisticated networks of trade, property, governments, and long standing inter-tribal negotiations of power. Mandell notes that "Most of the colonies favored the Mohegans, despite suspicions of the tribe's ambitious sachem, Uncas, thereby alienating the powerful Narragansetts and on several occasions coming perilously close to a major war in the region" (3). Thus, allowing a glimpse into the many ways in which particular Native nations allied with the English for a more powerful position in relation to other Native nations.

These stories of mysterious Indian death and Indian death in war culminate in Grandfather's adulations of Eliot and his missionary objective:

I have sometimes doubted whether there was more than a single man, among our forefathers, who realized that an Indian possesses a mind, and a heart, and an immortal soul. That single man was John Eliot. All the rest of the early settlers seemed to think that the Indians were an inferior race of beings, whom the Creator had merely allowed to keep possession of this beautiful country, till the white men should be in want of it (43).

Eliot, even before his vignette begins, is set up to represent the paragon of intelligent sympathy; Grandfather argues here that his position as a scholar and writer allowed him to access humanity even in the Other. Salvation, for Eliot, was achieved by cultural genocide, persuading Indians to cast off all forms of Native American cultural belonging and instead perform the lifestyle of an English Puritan. As Mandell has stated, there is a wide body of scholarship on Eliot's historical impact and judgments of his character. Overall, "the consensus is that he, like other Puritans, was (by modern standards) inflexible and authoritarian and immediately condemned cultural ways he could not understand" (40). His conversion tactic was conceived through "a translation of the Bible into the Indian tongue. It was while he was engaged in this pious work, that the mint-master gave him our great chair. His toil needed it, and deserved it" (44). Again, the singular article introducing "Indian tongue" denies the many languages circulating the New England, and instead creates a singular narrative of "Indianness" that can be easily manipulated into simplistic binaries serving settler colonialism. It is significant here to note that Eliot was *given* "our great chair" because his task was so impressive as to move a mint-master to relinquish an heirloom of incredible history to this scholar of "the Indian tongue." This section closes with Laurence reflecting on his affective experience in

witnessing Eliot's bible in translation: "I have seen it in the library of the Athenaeum; and the tears came into my eyes, to think that there were no Indians left to read it" (44). The destruction implicit in Eliot's missionary purpose was so dominating that Laurence had no choice but to assume that there were no "Indians" in his contemporary time.

Opening the "The Indian Bible," Grandfather again feels compelled to impress upon the children the gravity and commitment of such a project:

"My dear children, what a task would you think it, even with a long lifetime before you, were you bidden to copy every chapter, and verse, and word, in yonder great family Bible! Would not this be a heavy toil? But if the task were, not to write off the English Bible, but to learn a language, utterly unlike all other tongues—a language which hitherto had never been learnt, except by the Indians themselves, from their mothers' lips—a language never written, and the strange words of which seemed inexpressible by letters; —if the task were, first to learn this new variety of speech, and then to translate the Bible into it, and to do it so carefully, that not one idea throughout the holy book should be changed—what would induce you to undertake this toil? Yet this was what the Apostle Eliot did." (45).

He invites them to imagine a toil that would consume a lifetime. First, to learn and invent a method for documenting a language wholly outside the structural forms of European language families; Then, to translate a document not only large, but incredibly subject to interpretation. With this description, "Apostle Eliot's" intellectual capabilities are firmly established in high regard, but Grandfather deceptively creates the illusion that the

Reverend worked alone. The work of James the Printer, Nipmuc, is referenced in the historical record as an integral component of this project. He both “helped Eliot translate the Bible into Algonquian” and “helped print Eliot’s Bibles at Harvard College” (Mandell 122, 96). Thus, Eliot needed a Printer for both the symbolic resources of language studies and the production of physical Bibles.

This intense attention to Eliot as a singular story, an “Apostle of the Indians” is in response to the complicated ways in which Native conversion played out politically. Mandell argues that “The expansion of Christian influence, even by Indian agents, was seen by both Natives and colonists as an extension of colonial authority, threatening Native sovereignty and leadership and facilitating English land purchases” (42). Therefore, in gaining the allegiance of Native Americans across New England, his own authority and power expanded to manage the affairs of large land grants and the communities therein.

Eliot’s narrative around indigeneity is inscribed firmly into a Judeo-Christian worldview, where “he believed that the red men were the descendants of those lost tribes of Israel of whom history has been able to tell us nothing, for thousands of years” (45-6). This refusal to acknowledge disparate tribe’s and nation’s specific cultural history, community practices, and belief systems subjugates these bodies to a narrative where they are scripted as perpetual children in the world of their unknown forefathers.

Indeed, Eliot’s desire to subjugate all Native Americans to the both colonial law and Christian tradition became the central focus of his life. Grandfather adds, “He dared hardly relax a moment from his toil. He felt that, in the book which he was translating, there was a deep human, as well as heavenly wisdom, which would of itself suffice to

civilize and refine the savage tribes” (48). There is a deep connection here between the writer and the savior that Grandfather extends out for the grandchildren to witness. This equation, positioning his own work as the key to salvation, when reduced, implies a heretical understanding of self where the writer Creates like the Christian god and the writer Saves like a Christian god. Hawthorne’s subtle positioning of Eliot as a writer first and foremost belies his own agenda as a writer that is working on a project outside of the canon (like children’s literature).

To impress the point further, Grandfather includes a comparison of Eliot with the highest scholars of Greek and Latin only to highlight their ignorance. These scholars are described as “stammer[ing] over the long, strange words, like a little child in his first attempts to read” (46). In this moment, the gray-haired scholars digress back into their own minor subject positions, and are robbed of their understanding of language. However, this is not to say that the position of a child subject cannot be literate:

the apostle call to him an Indian boy, one of his scholars, and show him the manuscript, which had so puzzled the learned Englishmen . . . Then would the Indian boy cast his eyes over the mysterious page, and read it so skilfully [sic], that it sounded like wild music. It seemed as if the forest leaves were singing in the ears of his auditors, and as if the roar of distant streams were poured through the young Indian’s voice. Such were the sounds amid which the language of the red man had been formed; and they were still heard to echo in it. (46-7)

This moment calls attention to the narrow parameters of canonical studies and suggests that a strenuous knowledge set is needed to reach and create consuming audiences, such

as Native Americans that speak and read in Algonquian (and white American children). These audiences require a commitment to translation as their own subject positions are outside of these minor identities. Effectively, this argument elevates writing for Indigenous communities and writing in children's culture. At the same time, this new theoretical approach to letters does not rescript the potentiality of the audience. There remains a deeply invested rhetoric binding Indian identities to nature rather than humanity.

In this way, it is possible to move forward in time from Eliot to the grandchildren without dissonance. Laurence explains, "My heart is not satisfied to think, . . . 'that Mr. Eliot's labors have done no good, except to a few Indians of his own time. Doubtless, he would not have regretted his toil, if it were the means of saving but a single soul. But it is a grievous thing to me, that he should have toiled so hard to translate the Bible, and now the language and the people are gone! The Indian Bible itself is almost the only relic of both'" (49). For the second time, Laurence, the potential academic, the sympathizer, and the grandchild most like the evolved American citizen Grandfather crafts through these narratives, repeats his claim of Native extinction. More so, their own identities are held within the most popular object of settler colonial methodology, a Bible. Interestingly, Laurence's remarks which end with a final and seemingly unwavering knowledge of Native American devastation is met with Little Alice's whispered desire: "I want to kiss good Mr. Eliot!" (49). Charley's response deviates from this sentimental preoccupation with affection for Eliot when he changes the subject to ask after the English captain in King Philip's War. Grandfather responds with: "I assure you, Charley, that neither Captain Church, nor any of the officers and soldiers who fought in King Philip's War, did

any thing a thousandth part so glorious, as Mr. Eliot did, when he translated the Bible for the Indians,” thus attempting to draw the youngest boy back into the appropriate affective response (50). However, Charley will not be dissuaded and the last line of the chapter reads: “‘Let Laurence be the apostle,’ said Charley to himself, ‘and I will be the captain’” (50). This line exposes Grandfather’s rhetorical failure to conscript Charley into his system of values, and it does so by making visible how inaccessible Charley’s childhood is to Grandfather.

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In the preface to *The Whole History of Grandfather’s Chair*, Nathaniel Hawthorne writes: “The author’s great doubt is, whether he has succeeded in writing a book which will be readable by the class for whom he intends it” (6). In a moment of transparency, Hawthorne belies his own anxiety in failure: crafting a narrative for an audience that will not read its pages. But still further, his use of the third person, “the author” rather than a first person “I” implies a critical distance between the storyteller on the page and writer himself. This space makes room for the admission of potential failure, the “great doubt” that will prove his work successful or not. The use of “readable” rather than a more concrete term of possession or love or consumption of the book seems to suggest the multiple ways in which his intended audience could potential possess the book without having access to its meaning.

Hawthorne’s unease in his preface is not simply whether or not his audience will find the book or hold the book, but rather, will his prose create access to knowledge? Writing for children, Hawthorne seems acutely aware of the divide between himself and his audience; perhaps even a recognition of how little he understands the ways a young



person in the world receives and processes information. It is this admission that separates Hawthorne from authors like Jacob Abbott who distance the ideological negotiations prominent at this time, in favor of a simple narrative thread carrying the moral of the story to its ideal end. Instead, Hawthorne turns to doubt, confirming the complexities of a youthful mind not contained, a mind still open to exercising potentially disruptive social performances. Where Fuller's article rhetorically sues for recognition of female potential, it also reifies a white woman's place as always already within legal subjecthood, recognized by the U.S. judicial system, legible within the courtroom itself. To sue for rights, assumes the privileges of citizenship, and this legal subjecthood is taken up in Hawthorne's book through the thread of property ownership.

Reading Hawthorne's children's book through the lens of Margaret Fuller brings youth culture into conversations around the co-constitution of gender and race, representing scripts of white womanhood and Native American subjectivity in a method to examine how the narratives of white subjectivity are dependent upon representations of Indian characters. Indeed, in *The Transit of Empire* Jodi Byrd argues that,

Indianness has served as the field through which structures have always already been produced. Within the matrix of critical theory, Indianness moves not through absence but through reiteration, through meme, as theories circulate and fracture, quote and build. There prior ontological concerns that interpellate Indianness and savagery as ethnographic evidence and example, lamentable and tragic loss, are deferred through repetitions. How we have come to know intimacy, kinship, and identity within an empire born out of settler colonialism is predicated upon

discourses of indigenous displacements that remain within the present everydayness of settler colonialism, even if its constellations have been naturalized by hegemony and even as its oppressive logics are expanded to contain more and more historical experiences. (xviii)

This pointed articulation of the function of Indianness in cultural production frames the necessity of “praying Indians” and hard working Indian women in two texts that build on a distinctly American origins story in order to expand potential agency for white women and white children. In short, the deferment of a critical gaze on Native American representations begins and depends on the interpellation of childhood into the “oppressive logics” of settler colonialism.

## CHAPTER IV

### LYDIA SIGOURNEY'S FEARFUL ADVICE: INDIGENEITY IN *LETTERS TO MOTHERS AND DAUGHTERS*

*Hath any being on earth a charge more fearfully important than that of the Mother?*

Lydia H Sigourney  
Preface to *Letters to Mothers* (1839)<sup>16</sup>

*Yet the autobiographical isn't the personal.*  
Lauren Berlant<sup>17</sup>

Since *The Real Housewives* franchise began in 2006, Bravo's "first ladies" have dramatically undermined persisting conventions around housewife archetypes. Foremost are the ways in which a diverse collective of women take-up and identify themselves through that very keyword they were hired to embody. As the show expanded geographically from Orange County, California to include six other cities domestically and four additional cities world-wide, the women profiled have gained a celebrity unique to reality television.<sup>18</sup> In that, the banal lived experience of women loosely defined as housewives are made exceptional by their public visibility. In addition, the prominence of *The Real Housewives* series in popular culture has created access to work and capital gain for these women explicitly outside of their homes. But the financial success many of these women have achieved through new and existing business opportunities is in constant tension with the unstable staging of "housewife" that they are all "real[ly]"

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<sup>16</sup> Sigourney, L. H. 1839. *Letters to Mothers*. New York: Harper & Bros.  
<http://catalog.hathitrust.org/api/volumes/oclc/4819799.html>.

<sup>17</sup> Preface to *The Female Complaint* (2008)

<sup>18</sup> The franchise includes: Orange County, New Jersey, New York, Atlanta, Washington, D.C. (cancelled), Beverly Hills, Miami, Athens, Greece, Israel, Vancouver, and Melbourne, Australia (As of September, 2014)

performing. In what I will argue is a historically predictable maneuver, many of these reality stars have participated in the enterprise of authorship precisely because the book market offers the possibility of maintaining this tension between embodied and performed identities. With books ranging from etiquette, LuAnn deLesseps', *Class with the Countess* (2009), to recipes, Teresa Giudice's *Fabulicious!* (2011), these women capitalize on their public identities by merging the conventions of autobiography and advice, producing texts with an emphasis on the familiar and intimate qualities of personal relationships and family. For example, most of these books include familial anecdotes, reference moments of tension or intimacy from filming, and include personal photographs of the author. Marketed to the Bravo TV viewer, there are twenty-one books by Housewives available today, many of which are bestsellers (Brandi Glanville's *Drinking and Tweeting* (2013) and Bethenny Frankel's *Naturally Thin* (2009) are two of the most successful). While *The Real Housewives* are easily dismissed as ephemeral (at best), trivial and anti-feminist (at worst), these women have established a powerful popularity that deserves serious inquiry. And while this chapter will not do that much needed and powerful work, I bring them in here in order to trace back the significance of their authorial projects. In the wake of Lauren Berlant, I too am most interested in "normal national culture" (*The Queen of America* 13). This chapter, like the others in this dissertation, takes up texts outside canonical distinction, texts that interact with everyday life in ways that cannot be distinguished from the quotidian practices of middle-class, white America in the nineteenth century. And like Berlant's critical reading in *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City* (1997), I approach an archive of popular ephemera

asking “what it might take to make linked kinds of knowledge, power, and experience no longer seem separate” (13).

As alluded to above, women crafting literary representations that merge autobiography and advice for middle class audiences of (young) women has a long historical legacy. In *Learning to Behave* (1994), Sarah Newton aggregates a bibliographic record of conduct literatures in the United States precisely because these “nonliterary” texts have largely faded out of the historical memory, hidden in libraries and homes, and concealed under a plethora of genre nomenclature (conduct, advice, etiquette, housekeeping, childrearing, female health, etc). Extending beyond the temporal boundaries of a discretely independent American nation, literatures encouraging and defining practices of appropriate gender circulated widely in England and the colonies. Indeed, “the earliest new Americans brought with them both a belief in and an understanding of the conduct tradition, as well as copies of favorite texts, . . . The conduct book stood ready to serve the children of the New World, just as it had first served the Old” (Newton 14). Grounding American practices of popular literary representations firmly in an Anglo-Saxon tradition, the proliferation of the advice genre in the nineteenth century (and in contemporary culture through “Dear Abby” magazine columns and celebrity culture) is in some ways a call back to a national desire to reconnect to a lineage of bourgeois, white status performance.

Because of the immense diversity in texts produced generally around the proper performance of American citizenship, Sarah Newton defines a series of recognizable conventions to identify conduct books, and thus, narrow the scope of her project to a manageable size. Does it say it’s a conduct book? Does the content focus on character

formation? Is the advice gender specific? Does the author assume a familiar relationship with the reader? Is the tone didactic? (9-10). While these questions may imply a straight forward strategy for categorization, the nineteenth century American book market did not produce popular texts easily contained within one genre. Indeed, conduct books were not the only genre “generated in the United States for the purpose of making both native-born and immigrant occupants literate in national culture and its locals: states, townships, counties, school districts, villages, and so on” (Berlant 150). And Newton admits the constant challenge of defining genre boundaries when “conduct-of-life advice may appear in any of a number of rhetorical guises, including parental advice, polite conduct, fiction, poetry, essay, and sermon” (Newton 6). While Newton’s investigative search through antiquarian libraries and estate sales produced a much needed and valued bibliography, my work in this chapter will inevitable unravel the neatness of her genre definitions.

This chapter looks closely at Lydia Sigourney’s *Letters to Young Ladies* (1833) and *Letters to Mothers* (1839) as advice literatures reaffirming and renegotiating the scripts of female citizenship in the antebellum United States. My close readings will consider how the intimacies of Sigourney’s *Letters* contribute to the didactic education of American women, carefully addressing the everyday violences experienced under patriarchy with female representations of ability, self-reliance, work, ingenuity, and racial privilege. A close examination of these texts will point to the moments of elasticity and rigidity as female enfranchisement is defined by and against white masculinities, non-white, and foreign identities. As part of popular culture, in a genre marginalized from canonical works in its, and our, contemporary time, I draw out the intersections of advice

literatures and the narratives of national histories as they circulated nineteenth century American children's and young adult cultures. A critical look at these texts will continue to take up the power of national identity formation in the quotidian spaces of childhood. This chapter brings together the fantasy of childhood and citizenship through the medium of stories and storytelling by reading the advice books of Lydia Sigourney as both important women's histories and unfulfilled narratives calling for the strict adherence to a future America, made exceptional by the gender, sexuality, race, and ability of young women. Placing American girlhood at the center of this chapter, this discussion will be in conversation with texts of Indian girlhood, Indian childhood, historical legislation, and popular representation.

In the course of my study of nineteenth century American culture, critical and popular attention to Lydia Sigourney and her work have intersected with the trajectory of this dissertation in many ways. In Daniel Roselle's biography of Samuel Griswold Goodrich, Sigourney is mentioned for her praise of *Peter Parley's Universal History on the Basis of Geography* (1837), a history that Nathaniel Hawthorne authored with his sister, Elizabeth: "In six months it ran through four editions, was introduced into many of the best schools in the United States, and received the plaudits of Lydia Sigourney, who considered it 'one of the best works of its talented and indefatigable author' [Goodrich, not Nathaniel or Elizabeth Hawthorne]" (79). What strikes me most about this inclusion, is Sigourney's position as a powerful commentator on value. *Parley's Universal History* was widely successful, as the publishing record shows, proving to be flexible enough for both the home and the school. But, in addition, Roselle was compelled to also include Sigourney's approval of both the text and the "author." Her authorial persona constructed

by the immediate desires of a nationalizing public is represented here as the foremost authority on popular didactic texts. With her approval, the banalities of yet another *Peter Parley* history are masked with national significance. Sigourney's presence in this biography creates a narrative around popular knowledges of this children's history, reading Goodrich as not only a successful and innovative publisher, but also the creator of a franchise that is in line with dominant definitions of national value and virtue. Her voice, her approval, and her advice are the subjects of this chapter.

With a similar archival interest across the pond, Elizabeth Langland candidly argues for "the 'garbage' of history" in order "to assess women's roles as producers of representations" (7). Langland makes a powerful claim for "nonliterary" texts on domestic discourses as she seeks to uncover the work of producing and maintaining the Victorian 'Angel in the House' mythology, emphasizing the ways in which this idealization contributes to the hegemonic structures governing England's economy and politics (8). She states:

My objects of examination are the texts of domestic novels in conjunction with other, nonliterary representations of domesticity: domestic tracts, etiquette guides, household management manuals, ladies' magazines, cookery books, charitable treatises, and architectural directories. My central concerns are the revision of historical narratives of the female subject, the elucidation of literature, and the illumination of a changing conception of bourgeois woman. (11)

Like this chapter, Langland's project seeks to uncover the ways in which domestic representations are produced outside canonical literatures and dominant historical



narratives. By taking up the everyday as a critical space for identity formation, she is able to acknowledge the power in domestic ideology as both “a patriarchal ideology regulating interactions between men and women *and* a bourgeois ideology justifying the class system and supporting the social status quo” (my italics 18). Complicating the position of women in discourses of domesticity, Langland here is able to trace the ways in which women are both subject to the oppressive rhetorics of patriarchy and enforcers of class privileges. Importantly, Langland destabilizes the self-evident, popular understandings of the domestic genres quoted above by arguing that “these nonliterary materials did not simply reflect a ‘real’ historical subject but helped to produce it through their discursive practices. These were documents aimed specifically at enabling the middle class to consolidate its base of control through strategies of regulation and exclusion” (24). This text has been a powerful source for this project in that her book takes up a desire to critically engage the materials of everyday life in order to make meaning of historically disenfranchised subject positions. Langland carefully defines the terms of her argument through the theoretical work of Walter Benjamin’s understanding of phantasmagoria which focuses on representational value (in a shift from Karl Marx’s use value) and Catherine Gallagher’s attention to “the ‘micro-politics of daily life’ (‘Marxism’ 43)” (6, 7). In sum, “To make this move from discursive formations largely in the hands of men to those practices shaping women’s lives opens up a new way of thinking about middle-class homemakers in nineteenth-century Britain. It takes what has seemed to many a trivial world of etiquette, household management, and charitable visiting and reveals how effectively power may operate when its manifestations appear insignificant and inconsequential” (7-8). Langland’s project carves a literary space to value conduct and

advice genres, and her insightful weaving of cultural and literary theorists crafts a web of support for the study of everyday ephemera in this chapter.

What Langland has found pervasive in England, many scholars of American literature and culture have noticed and taken up as well. In his seminal book on the history of American childhood, Steven Mintz comments on the eighteenth century profusion of didactic tracts, noting, "A flood of advice books, philosophical treatises, novels, plays, and poems condemned prolonged submission to paternal rule and defended youthful freedom as a natural right. This antipatriarchal, antiauthoritarian ideology helps to sensitize the colonist to arbitrary British colonial authority" (52). Bridging the Atlantic, Mintz acknowledges the familiarity colonists and early Americans had with the advice form, and the expediency with which it was taken up for national independence. Popular interest in advice books, here, are recognized as a real force in political attitudes, and the legacy of this genre was made new again by Sigourney and women like her in the post-Revolutionary years.

Courtney Weikle-Mills writes of the late eighteenth century domestic climate in her 2008 article, "Learn to Love Your Book" as she extends the conversations around republican motherhood to "an equally significant theory of 'republican childhood'" (38). She provocatively argues,

I suggest that the simultaneous rise of affectionate readership and the assertion that citizens were "free" was not coincidental. The rhetoric of free citizenship that gained currency in the eighteenth century and contributed to the formation of the American nation was intensely dependent on the status of child readers and their affections. As a result,

the concepts of affection and freedom, childhood and citizenship, literacy and liberty have remained entangled well into the twenty-first century.

(35)

In other words, the pleasures of intimacy were recognized early in the history of America as a powerful form of attachment that can be replicated and echoed structurally between the individual and things and ideas, as well as between people. Indeed, the relationships between American children and books are highly cultivated public intimacies where national citizenship is desired and expected from within a domestic space. Weikle-Mills powerfully states that “Children’s books, which entailed both an extension of parental power and a translation of parent into text, acted as an intermediary step in this chain of political associations, creating an affectionate relationship that was training for, and enactment of, the citizen’s relationship to nation and law” (Weikle-Mills 38). What she astutely points to, here, in the eighteenth century affections of children for their books, speaks remarkably to the advice literatures of the nineteenth century I take up in this chapter. Presumed and provoked intimacies are written into the epistolary form of these literatures and advertised through their titles – *How to be an American Young Lady*, and *How to be an American Mother* – convey the agreement both audience and author have entered into knowingly, and perhaps, with affection.

Lauren Berlant has heavily influenced this project, and this chapter specifically, with her study of popular culture in *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City* (1997), public intimacies and women’s culture in *The Female Complaint* (2008), and speaking specifically on didactic literatures, “Uncle Sam Needs a Wife: Citizenship and Denegation.” Here, she concisely articulates what is at stake for the authors and readers

of texts like Sigourney's: "Since the 1840s . . . Produced by federal, state, and local governments for immigrants, students, and the military, and by private organizations for immigrants and new citizens like women and children, these manuals provide for us an image of the nation as it is imagined to be. What kinds of citizen subjectivity do these texts generate, and what images of a common culture are enfranchised by the vote?" (150). Concerned mostly with twentieth century citizenship manuals for newly politically enfranchised women, Berlant's chapter both complicates and clarifies the connections between genre, (potential) citizen, and nation. Furthermore, she positions conduct literatures that most often find materialization in ephemeral forms as an institutionalization of American identity. Indeed, the multiple ways in which the "right" way to engage in the nation is a subjective representation that indicates an unstable praxis constantly written and re-written. I included the question posed at the end the quote above as a telling provocation of Berlant's investments in the connection between suffrage and citizenship. Responding to her essay, I imagine this chapter as a narrative tracing backward this negotiation of women's affective and effective subject position in the nation. Indeed, the "common culture" iterated here, is the primary concern of my archive and my project as a whole.

In addition, Berlant's description of a "manual" has helped me extend the knowledges of "conduct" Sarah Newton has detailed through her bibliographic work. Berlant's project, in this chapter, looks closely at the work this genre actually does rather than how to constitute the genre. Therefore, her focus is on where readers of this archive can make visible the ways in which the didactic speaks to lack, desire, attachments, and nation, going beyond the formal analysis of conduct literatures. She argues that,

A manual is a pragmatic pedagogic genre: a transformational environment in which abstract and bodily knowledge actually merge to change an object into something different and yet more itself - in this case, into a socially intelligible form of person whose politico-ethical sensorium is in the right order. The citizenship manual's technologies of the self are manifested through inculcated gestures and taken-for-granted repetitions that enable the emerging subject to seem continuous with her intention, her identity, her public qualities, and her agency, in the intelligible terms and values of civil society. Thus one might say that the law of the genre is to teach the subject how to pass as having always been a full citizen. (150)

While I have already acknowledged the differences in time period and specific subgenres of advice in the manual form, this moment begins an important investigation into "technologies" of popular culture. In characteristic Berlant fashion, she pinpoints exactly the tension maintained in embodied citizenship with a nod to the ways in which "abstract and bodily knowledge" are drawn into the pedagogy of advice in order to embed in the potential citizen, the fantasy of having always already been in waiting/wanting. This moment calls out the potential citizen's quotidian existence within political life as the seamless mask hiding the everyday repetitions that come to be "taken-for-granted." To reiterate the goals for this chapter: I seek to critically engage in the everyday materials of nineteenth century American culture by way of Lydia Sigourney's *Letters*, asking precisely what Berlant begins here, "What kinds of citizen subjectivity do these texts

generate, and what images of a common culture are enfranchised” by way of popular approval and quotidian enforcement.

In the study of the nineteenth century American everyday, Lydia Sigourney holds a unique position as both a cultural producer and celebrated cultural icon/product. Nina Baym articulates Sigourney’s success, commenting on her diverse portfolio of published works in three genres: “prose sketches--chiefly pious, legendary, or historical; didactic works--including exemplary biographies, histories, and advice manuals; and poetry” (American National Biography). Baym notes that “most popular was *Letters to Young Ladies* (1833), which had almost thirty editions in England and the United States during Sigourney's lifetime.” Recognizing the prominence of this book in popular culture, especially in relation to her other, widely successful writings, most notably her elegiac verse, is what brings “to light . . . the representations out of which historical narratives are built and the hidden traces of labor” (Langland 7-8). In other words, by centering this discussion of youthful citizenship on Sigourney, I argue that by tracing back her legacy of advice writing, this work is revealed as labor invested in the craft of Americanness. This work in the articulation and didactic instruction of future and minor citizens can be hidden from dominant narratives and stored in children’s and women’s culture.

Born in Norwich, Connecticut, Sigourney (née Lydia Howard Huntley) received her education under the patronage of Jerusha Talcott Lathrop, and Lathrop’s nephew, Daniel Wadsworth. With the resources gained from her advanced education, Sigourney founded two schools for girls and began her publishing career supported by her benefactor. Her publishing career continued throughout her marriage to Charles Sigourney, and was eventually the sustaining force of their household when her

husband's business failed. Over the course of her life and career, "She wrote prolifically and enjoyed enormous success; at her death she was the best known woman poet in the United States" (American National Biography). In her article "Reinventing Lydia Sigourney", Baym argues that "Here, in short, was a woman whose example could instruct all would-be literary women as to what they could do, what they should do, and also what they had better not do. Here also was a life in which a modern success story of upward mobility through hard work and self-sacrifice led to an affirmation of traditional class structure. The social construction of Lydia Sigourney began, then, in her own lifetime" (385). In this article, Baym argues that Sigourney has three discrete authorial personas: grieving poet, preceptress, and historian. While Baym suggests that Sigourney's "preceptress" persona, or, "the female of love and ritual", is distinct from the "historian", I am interested in the ways in which *Letters to Young Ladies* and *Letters to Mothers* are both an invocation "of republican and Victorian domestic ideologies" and histories that served to memorialize marginalized narratives (390-391).

*"The red browed woman"*<sup>19</sup>

Written eleven years prior to *Letters to Young Ladies*, Lydia Sigourney published a five-canto poem titled, "Traits of the Aborigines" (1822). An expression of her increasing involvement in anti-removal campaigns, "Traits of the Aborigines" quotes the advocacy efforts of Margaret Ann Scott (Cherokee) petitioning Moravian missionaries with the inhuman treatment of Indians in the South. As a "principle speaker" for the

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<sup>19</sup> Sigourney, Lydia H. *Tales and Essays for Children*. Hartford: F.J. Huntington, 1835., 14.

Cherokee anti-removal petition, Scott was an active participant in council sessions and well known by those U.S. officials mediating removal efforts.<sup>20</sup> Tiya Miles has brought the activism of middle class, white women on behalf of Indians into conversation in order to contextualize their voices in the vibrant and already existing political resistance of Native women, acting publicly in their communities and in policy work to advocate for their nations, for their land, and for their gendered autonomy. In short, taking up the Indian cause was a popular and acceptable thing for white women to do, and as an influential woman of letters, Sigourney threw her weight behind this movement alongside women like Catherine Beecher.

In “Traits of the Aborigines,” Sigourney takes on the voices of Native Americans in a narrative beginning with a pre-Columbus, “New Continent” and ending with eradication, “Over a black drear desert, and no voice/ Of rustic labour, or of cheerful song/ Survives” (3, line 1; 128, lines 895-7). Weaving narratives of western empire and resistance, this is her most ambitious book-length poem; however, Sigourney frequently turns to narrations of the plight of Indians throughout her career. Indeed, *Pocahontas, and other Poems* (1841) leads with its title poem, and many of the following verses are deeply concerned with crafting a sympathetic Native identity. Included in this collection is “Indian Girl’s Burial”, circulated much earlier in *The Western Adventurer, and Herald of the Upper Mississippi* (Oct. 14, 1937).<sup>21</sup> Philip D. Jordan traced back the subject of this

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<sup>20</sup> Miles, Tiya. 2009. “Circular Reasoning’: Recentring Cherokee Women in the Antiremoval Campaigns”: thinking specifically about Judge Thomas Chase of Baltimore (228), superintendent of Indian trade, Thomas McKenny (229), and the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM).

<sup>21</sup> Jordan, Philip D. 1932. “The Source of Mrs. Sigourney's 'Indian Girl's Burial’.” *American Literature* 4 (3): 300-305.



poem, uncovering the historical narrative Sigourney found so provocative. He found that in correspondence with the founder of *The Western Adventurer*, Thomas Gregg, Lydia Sigourney was solicited/moved to write her elegy after reading the obituary Gregg had printed in the August 12<sup>th</sup>, 1837 issue of the same publication. Prefacing Sigourney's poem is this editorial distinction:

Some weeks since we noticed the death and burial of Ka-la-we-quois, a young Indian Girl, who died in the vicinity of this place, on the 10th of August last. The notice met the eye of the esteemed authoress, whose name is given below, who has kindly sent us the following poem, in relation to it, which we take great pleasure in laying before the public.—

EDITOR ADVENTURER. (303)<sup>22</sup>

Ka-la-we-quois double vulnerability is exposed in her illness and early death and the threat of misrepresentation in Gregg and Sigourney's writing. A telling recognition of Sigourney occurs here, as a woman known for her popular funeral elegies. The preface implies Sigourney's active engagement in, and desire for, memorialization as her inspiration stems from an actual death. Indeed, Nina Baym comments on the essentialized connection between this writer and her most famous genre noting, "The Sigourney of the consolation elegy, the funerary poem, the Sigourney obsessed with dead children and dead mothers, has been constituted by a succession of audiences" (387). This assertion of multiple audiences is reaffirmed in the editor's preface above as Sigourney's authorial persona is both created and reinforced in Iowa as it was in the Northeast. What becomes visible in the acknowledgment of "Traits of the Aborigines" and "Indian's Girl's Burial",

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<sup>22</sup> Reprinted in full in Philip D. Jordan's article: "The Source of Mrs. Sigourney's 'Indian Girl's Burial'."

two examples of her extensive writings on Indigenous cultures and bodies, are the ways in which her voice comes to represent the normative pleas of sentimental colonialism. Indeed, “The voice of the sentimentalist is louder than the voice of the Native. The association is a paradigmatic representation of Europeans and Euroamericans who appropriate and define Native peoples according to their own conventions and conceptions” (Hafen 38). In many ways this is obvious and prominent in Sigourney’s work, especially writing in a journal for *The Western Adventurer* about the death of an Indian woman; which was, in itself, an uncommon occupation of the obituaries in an American periodical.

Gregg’s obituary recognizes the “seldom . . . recorded” deaths of Native Americans, itself taking up the sentimental conventions typical of Sigourney’s elegies. He memorialized the death (consumption) of this young Indian woman by bringing up white American culture’s neglect of Indigenous suffering only to move rapidly outward, to include all Indian people: “But though the cold world may know it not, there are hearts among these simple savage foresters, that melt with emotions of maternal tenderness, and throb with the keen pangs of separation. Those who heard the dismal wail of that swarthy matron, as they deposited the remains of her child beneath the sod of the prairie—.”<sup>23</sup> In Gregg’s obituary the juxtaposition of the “cold world” and the “simple savage foresters” reinforces the essential lack of place for Indians in his “[white] world.” Significantly, this world, while “cold” with indifference, can be “melt[ed]” with the pleas of a mother for her child. The humanity of Native peoples is made legible through the suffering of a mother and the death of a child. Taken in this light, it is easy to see

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<sup>23</sup> Jordan "The Source of Mrs. Sigourney's 'Indian Girl's Burial'," 303.

Sigourney's attraction to this narrative. Gregg implies with a dash that there is an unspeakable grief in witnessing this mother's "dismal wail" – a space the funeral elegy seeks to fill.

Sigourney's verse rewrites this moment with the lines:

Pale faces gather round her,—  
They mark the storm swell high,  
That rends and wrecks the tossing soul,  
But their cold, blue eyes were dry.  
Pale faces gazed upon her,  
As the wild winds caught her moan,—  
But she was an Indian mother,—  
So, she wept those tears alone.<sup>24</sup>

The "cold world" of Gregg's prose becomes unambiguous whiteness in Sigourney's lines, signified by "Pale faces" and "blue eyes." Whiteness here is the sea, ambivalent to the Indian mother adrift in its waters. "Indian Girl's Burial" is a prime example of the ways in which a sentimental acknowledgment of settler colonial destruction of Indigenous peoples becomes essential to constructions of white, American womanhood.

In the recognition of systemic Indian disenfranchisement, and the subsequent perpetuation of the disappearing Indian narrative, white middle class American women take up this cause in order to replace these marginalized bodies as authentic subjects embodying the "natural" characteristics of an unrealized utopian America. Sigourney actively engages in memorializing Indians through prose, creating a narrative where

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<sup>24</sup> Jordan "The Source of Mrs. Sigourney's 'Indian Girl's Burial'," 304.

Indian bodies ceased to exist – except anachronistically. In their stead, she herself, and the young women she reached through her advice literatures, come to occupy a place of Indigeneity that was left open precisely because Indian bodies were discursively relegated to the past. The white women that participate in this violent discursive action are able to embody the appropriate historical sensibilities because they remember and forget, and grieve and are forgiven. In other words, Indian mothers must always fail at their most primary responsibility, the survival of their children, in order to make discursive space for white American women to claim a position of national significance.

“Indian Girl’s Burial” is only one example of Sigourney’s willingness to reconstruct narratives of indigeneity for a white audience; and this desire is not relegated to her adult audiences. Published between *Letters to Young Ladies* (1833) and *Letters to Mothers* (1839), *Tales and Essays for Children* (1835), is a collection of eleven short stories and one hymn, “On the Death of Infants.” The first story in the collection, “The Lost and Found”, is a captivity narrative where eight-year-old Charles Morton disobeys his parents and goes swimming in a fast river after school. The current sweeps him up, his family and community give him up for drowned, but in an early plot twist, he was actually saved by two Indian men. The men bring Charles to an island that is solely inhabited by an Indian couple, and the (unnamed) Indian woman’s father. Over time, Charles comes to replace the boy child this family has buried, and they form attachments through oral histories as “[t]he Indian woman often entertained him with stories of her ancestors” (14). Through these stories, the Indian woman and young Charles formed bonds of intimacy and shared knowledge, which leads up to her most significant history, one of origins and endings. She states, “Once the whole land was theirs, . . . and no white

man dwelt in it, or had discovered it. Now our race are few and feeble, they are driven away and perish. They leave their fathers' graves, and hide among the forests. The forests fall before the axe of the white man, and they are again driven out, we know not where. No voice asks after them. They fade away like a mist, and are forgotten" (15). This story of destruction is reaffirmed by the contained setting, an island set apart from the mainland, and the limited Indian presence: three adult Indians with no children/future.

With the Indian woman as his access point, young Charles was emotionally moved with sympathy for the settler colonial violences experienced through expansion and eliminationist policies. The narrator notes that "[t]he little boy wept at the plaintive tone in which she spoke of the sorrows of her people, and said '*I will pity and love the Indians, as long as I live*'" (15, Sigourney's italics). Discursively, this moment makes visible several important and interrelated possibilities for American futurity. Charley's tears make evident the sentimental connection to the Indian woman, a visible indicator of his "right" feelings. Charley's visible emotion models for the child reader/listener how to respond to the Indian woman's story of displacement, oppression, and eradication. The young American claims "pity" and "love" in the same breath; an attempt to reconcile the spectral presence of Indians in American history. This moment speaks to the ideal sensitivities of American boys, but it also opens Sigourney's collection of essays, structurally leading with a story of captivity and redemption.

Central in both the child's elegy and the children's story is the Indian figure. Indeed, as Sarah Revett argues, Indians haunt "early American literature, residing at the gap between romanticized Indians and a forcibly displaced population. Early American writers faced the challenge of how to narrate a history that included genocide, violence,

and displacement, . . . American Indians appear in early American texts as specters of historical representation” (626). And it is this “challenge” that I am interested in pulling to the surface of Sigourney’s work. Her interest and desire to represent, if not replace/inhabit, Indianness is visible on the surface of these texts, but what can be made of an Indian haunting that is not so embodied and seems not quite so central? In the remaining space of this chapter, I will be reading her *Letters* through this perspective, pointing to ways in which Sigourney represents performances of motherhood, girlhood, and Indianness in interrelated and unexpected ways.

*“I have a little story to tell children about the advantages of obeying their parents”<sup>25</sup>*

Lydia Sigourney’s *Letters* codify American mythologies of mobility, transition, and growth. Addressing mothers and young ladies on the how-tos of citizenship, here, denotes membership in a political community that requires obligations and provides privileges. This female and minor inclusion in a national (and very public) membership which requires training draws out the proper performance of womanhood and childhood, signifying the ways in which the personal is a matter of political importance. In *Racial Innocence*, Robin Bernstein articulates the ways in which the scripts for women and children are dependent on the maintenance of patriarchy and white supremacy. She argues that “women, girls, and boys, as effigies, or bodies in performance, possessed different abilities to surrogate, or perform, the elements of domesticity – including 'purity' or passionlessness” (40). And, as an aside, Bernstein’s rewriting of childhood as effigy

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<sup>25</sup> Sigourney, Lydia H. *Tales and Essays for Children*. Hartford: F.J. Huntington, 1835: 1.

speaks particularly to the frequency with which Lydia Sigourney's illustrates "the best daughters, [as] dying or dead, nobly offering themselves up to a devouring paternal need" (Giffen 268). This ability to perform sexual and racial innocence is embedded into the national framework wherein the discourses of American democracy are reliant on these bodies performing on the everyday stage of the household, the township, the church, and the school. Innocence here is the key: both sexual and racial innocence are dependent on "a state of deflection: a constantly replenishing obliviousness . . . a not-knowing or obliviousness that can be made politically useful" (Bernstein 41). Sigourney's advice books practice this deflection in a space of perfect paradox. The very purpose of these publications is to indoctrinate young people into the codes and practices of American culture, but in so doing there must also be the possibility for the performance of innocence.

Lydia Sigourney prefaces the second edition of *Letters to Mothers* by naming her intended audience directly: "addressed to mothers", foreshadowing the intimacies to come with: "You are sitting with your child in your arms. So am I. And I have never been as happy before. Have you?" (vii). The use of the second person here frames Sigourney's overt desire for recognition as a woman, a mother, and a friend, asking the reader to identify with her own authorial voice through a mother's love. This cultivation of affection draws on a national culture that naturalizes a subject's love for country, "childhood and citizenship, literacy and liberty" ("Learn to Love Your Book" Weikle-Mills 35). Thus, what Sigourney takes up in *Letters to Mothers* is an appeal that would have been so familiar to her audience that its extension into women's culture would serve as a didactic bridge signifying the closeness of these spaces.

Sigourney's preface makes explicit, and more expansive, what Weikle-Mills drew out of Sarah Fielding's *The Governess* (1749; first American edition, 1791) and Hannah Webster Foster's *The Boarding School* (1798). Sigourney's narrator, the letter writer, sits with her child in her arms, modeling the proper affection for not only her book and advice, but for her child. In this way, her first lesson asks mothers to exercise affectionate parenting as the primary performance of female citizenship. The "I" and the "you" are written into discursive cohesion, the writer is the reader, and the bodily closeness of mother and child affirm the pinnacle of female pleasure: an act of loving a child and the act of making visible that love to other mothers. Enfranchisement into civic acknowledgment hinges on visible performances of motherhood.

This persuasive appeal to love is expressed in the first epistolary chapter of *Letters to Young Ladies*. She argues, "Suffer me, then, with the urgency of true friendship, to impress on you the importance of a just estimation of time. Consider how much is to be performed, attained, and conquered, ere you are fitted to discharge the duties which the sphere of woman comprehends" (10). Sigourney here participates in a discursive settler colonial project, using the language of imperialism (perform/attain/conquer) in order to convince young American women to realize themselves as civic actors. In this moment of affectionate demands, she writes her young audience into settler colonial legibility. Her appeal to friendship in conjunction with "suffer[ing]" and "urgency" reinforces the necessity of her letter and the possibility of the reader's rejection.

Articulating the precise pedagogical goals of the advice manual, Lauren Berlant argues that this genre constructs



a transformational environment in which abstract and bodily knowledge actually merge to change an object into something different and yet more itself – in this case, into a socially intelligible form of person whose politico-ethical sensorium is in the right order. The citizenship manual’s technologies of the self are manifested through inculcated gestures and taken-for-granted repetitions that enable the emerging subject to seem continuous with her intention, her identity, her public qualities, and her agency, in the intelligible terms and values of civil society. Thus one might say that the law of the genre is to teach the subject how to pass as having always been a full citizen. (“Uncle Sam Needs a Wife” 150)

In this way, the technology of the advice manual is to indoctrinate seamlessly the individual and the national culture, making it seem as if the American subject was born in a state of patriotic knowing. The particularities of a U.S. subject’s sensorium apparatus encompasses a disparate grouping of emotional, ideological, and bodily knowledges. In other words, Berlant points to the ways in which it is not enough to know the laws and histories of the U.S. empire; one must also feel aligned in affection and protection for and with the Nation. She names the advice book’s ability to mirror and validate its readers as its primary “technology” because this form of recognition provides the space necessary to make invisible the quotidian practices of civil subject performance. And, as I drew out in the chapter on *Peter Parley* and representations of Indianness, nineteenth century American children’s culture – carefully crafted by adults – is constantly attempting to deny the didactic impulse of its products in order to extend the fantasy of born citizens, naturalizing American identities.

In what follows I will point to issues brought forward in *Letters to Young Ladies* that later appear again in *Letters to Mothers*. There are significant cross interests between these two advice manuals and pulling to the surface moments of repetition and dissonance will give a complex picture of the ways in which models of citizenship are dependent on age, gender, race, and class.

Corsets figure prominently in both *Letters to Mothers* and *Young Ladies*, signifying the ways in which Sigourney saw the use of this object in pervasive fashion practices as culturally significant; symbolic of female restraint and subjugation. To mothers she

plead[s] for the little girl, that she may have air and exercise, as well as her broth, and that she may not be too much blamed, if in her earnest play she happen to tear, or soil her apparel. I plead that she be not punished as a romp, if she keenly enjoy those active sports which city gentility proscribes. I plead that the ambition to make her accomplished, do not chain her to her piano, till the spinal column which should consolidate the frame, starts aside like a broken reed; nor bow her over her book, till the vital energy which ought to pervade the whole system, mounts into the brain, and kindles the death-fever (*Letters to Mothers* 73).

Her pleading appropriates the pious evocation to god for salvation, provocatively figuring mothers as higher powers. Sigourney argues that daughters need more than food to sustain growth; they also need space and movement and leeway in their performance of female childhood. She acknowledges the way clothing acts as a form of surveillance and punishment whereby the evidence of play is left in the folds of cloth. In this way, a girl

child's clothing reveals her activity, making her vulnerable to adult discipline. Sigourney, here, is advocating for inclusion of "active sports" in the formative development of "genteel" girl children.

In addition to sports, Sigourney points to the ways in which the pressures to excel at music and academia can mutilate the child form, stunting growth, breaking, and bowing the body. She argues that these embodied effects of the rigor and training necessary for recognition as an accomplished young lady threaten the quality of their health and leave space for the wasting disease of consumption. These physical manifestations of a girl child regulated by strict parental desires for class are made urgent by the visible threat of upward social movement. Sigourney "admit[s] that the ranks and stations are not very clearly defined, and that the lower classes sometimes press upon the higher. This is in accordance with the spirit of a republic, and all should be willing to pay some tax for the privileges of a government, which admits such an high degree, and wide expansion, of happiness" (*Letters to Young Ladies* 31). Thus, Sigourney causally connects a distinctly American fantasy of class movement with the expectations impressed on young women, visible in the unnatural restrictions and unhealthy regulations written on the female body. Women, are then assumed to be the visible family marker for class status, both upward and downward, and Sigourney views the pressure to appear accomplished as more than a fashion, but rather an indicator of national climate.

For American women in the upper classes, their domestic help was a constant reminder of the precarity of their class status: "If our domestics draw back from the performance of what the spirit of feudal times, or aristocratic sway might exact, a remedy still remains; to moderate our wants, and study simplicity in our style of living. . . . She

who is content to live more plainly than her neighbors, and dress more simply than her associates, when reason, or the wishes of her friends require it, has gained no slight ascent in true philosophy” (*Letters to Young Ladies* 31). What Sigourney is arguing against is a reactionary intensification in the fashion and performance of class due to the lower classes’ movement away from Old World servitude. The “remedy” to this threat of misidentification, instead, is an ideological shift to an internal recognition of elitism that does not require the European pomp. A ghostly Indianness figures largely here as Sigourney asks her readers to recognize their own essential Americanness, an authenticity drawn from Native American representations.

This reliance on appropriating ideological projections of Indianness for an authentic performance of Americanness surfaces throughout children’s culture in the nineteenth and twentieth century. Lydia Maria Child, a contemporary of Sigourney’s, “connects nature and nation, implying that to become authentic Americans, the children must understand the intimate connection between ‘wild’ and ‘domestic’” (Kilcup 320). Or, rather, the essential “wild” of American childhood, and the movement of this Indian exercise from an outward expression to an inward identity as age “domestic[ates].” Indeed, “For Child’s contemporaries, ‘nature’—the material, nonhuman world—was often embodied as Indian; the reviewer of the history of New Hampshire exemplifies how the period identified ‘the savage’ with ‘impenetrable forests’ and ‘their dusky shades’” (Kilcup 318). A belief in the health of “air and exercise,” even that which may “tear, or soil her apparel,” can then be seen as a way American children, even girl children, are encouraged to occupy “nature,” and thus, occupy Indian identity. This, then, connects back to Sigourney’s plea to live “plainly,” mainly articulated through women’s fashion.

Indeed, her health chapter in *Letters to Mothers* is almost entirely devoted to raising daughters; her main issues addressing the difficulties of arranging marriages for sickly daughters and the tyranny of the corset. She argues that a mother's protection has no limits, implying an extension of power beyond her daughter's marriage: "It is not sufficient, that we mothers protect your younger daughters while more immediately under our authority, from such hurtful practices. We should follow them, until a principle is formed by which they can protect themselves against the tyranny of fashion. It is true, that no young lady acknowledges herself to be laced too tight" (*Letters to Mothers* 81). A daughter, therefore, lives under the authority of her mother throughout her marriage, and cannot be relied upon to make healthy choices for herself well into legal adulthood (marriage for women). Instead, Sigourney encourages mothers to continue their practice of protection, especially in the fight against fashion and a desires of young women who will never be "laced too tight." For their daughters' good, mothers enforce their standards of beauty and health. Sigourney notes, "Why should we not bring up our daughters, without any article of dress which could disorder the seat of vitality. Our sons hold themselves erect, without busk or corset, or frame-work of whalebone. Why should not our daughters also? Did not God make them equally upright? Yes" (*Letters to Mothers* 82). Corsets, in this view, threaten the marriageability, and the lives, of young women. Sigourney points to the capacity to stand erect as a gift equally bestowed on men and women, answering her own rhetorical question to insure the proper reader response. If physically, men and women are capable of "holding themselves erect" without artifice, it is not their posture that corsets correct. Rather, instead Sigourney implies the unequal,

and in fact physically harmful, ways in which American women are asked to perform their respectability, and thus eligibility, for matrimony.

In *Young Ladies*, Sigourney takes a more explicit approach, chiding youthful, and gendered, vanity with a vaguely medical argument: “But the influence of this habit on beauty is far less to be deprecated than its effect upon health. That pulmonary disease, affections of the heart, and insanity, are in its train, and that it leads some of our fairest and dearest to fashion’s shrine to die, is placed beyond a doubt, by strong medical testimony” (*Letters to Young Ladies* 44). Less a plea and more a punishment, Sigourney details the depravity of these beauty trends with pulmonary disease, insanity, and death. Dramatically she poses: “Is it possible that thousands of our own sex, in our own native land, annually lay, with their own hand, the foundation of diseases that destroy life, and are willing for fashion’s sake thus to commit suicide?” (*Letters to Young Ladies* 45). The intensity of this address in comparison to the same issue taken up in *Letters to Mothers* is remarkable. While the physical violence of the corset is addressed in both *Letters*, here Sigourney questions the viability of an American future when such a trend is fashionable. Unknowingly perhaps, Sigourney walks into a statement that seems vulnerable to misuse. In the U.S. empire, white, middle class women with citizenship privileges are assumed to be born, or naturalized from birth, into a role of Republican Motherhood. To wear a corset, then, is understood by Sigourney to be an act of political defiance, perhaps rendering the female body incapable of marriage, let alone reproduction—through the death or disfigurement of thousands of young women.

Her force betrays the ways in which the age of her reader invokes a methodologically different advice structure. Carroll Smith-Rosenberg’s important article,

"The Female World of Love and Ritual," speaks to the ways in which female intimacies were profoundly structured into normative social training, especially for women where "The roles of daughter and mother shaded imperceptibly and ineluctably into each other, while the biological realities of frequent pregnancies, childbirth, nursing, and menopause bound women together in physical and emotional intimacy" (9). In the shift from reading *Letter to Mothers* to reading *Letters to Young Ladies*, this paradoxical acknowledgment of young girls as always already a mother-in-training is exposed in the way Sigourney writes to youths in comparison to the careful and intimate "conversation" between friends in *Letters to Mothers*. In this way, there lies exposed a dissonance between generations, where young ladies do not naturally grow into their mother's roles, but instead must be coerced and disciplined into American adulthood. Indeed, Smith Rosenberg notes that the need for a strong female circle to support and guide young women into full female citizenship was necessary practice: "In this process of leaving one home and adjusting to another, the mother's friends and relatives play a key transitional role. Such older women routinely accepted the role of foster mother; they supervised the young girl's deportment, monitored her health and introduced her to their own network of female friends and kin" (18). The popular acceptance of Sigourney's advice literatures depended upon these patterns of "routine" supervision by older women.

Sigourney lingers over corsets for an extensive period of time in *Letters to Young Ladies*, detailing tight lacing and the diseases this habit provokes in the minds and bodies of women. She goes so far as to say that "A showy style of dress, is peculiarly inappropriate to those who are pursuing their education. It indicates that something besides study, has taken possession of the heart" (*Letters to Young Ladies* 52).

Navigating the precarious status of women as valuable national citizens with intrinsic civic duties, she cautions young women against conspicuous visibility by linking directly their outward appearance and their inner identities. Thus, indoctrinating young ladies into patriarchal structures of oppression by enforcing normalized codes of decency and respectability; these characteristics demand a particular and narrow performance of gender, race, and sexuality.

Acknowledging existing systems of power and identifying where, in the hierarchies of authority, young ladies are situated, Sigourney argues, “Good manners, to be consistent, must be founded on a principle of justice. Their tribute of deference and respect should be first paid where it is due; to parents, teachers, ministers of religion, civil rulers, superiors in knowledge, and those whose whitened heads bear the crown of time and virtue” (*Letters to Young Ladies* 56).<sup>26</sup> Female justice, then, is defined by deference to those in positions of power and advanced age. Young women, in this figuration, are asked to acknowledge age as an essential indicator of knowledge. This system of power reinforces the author’s ability to provide essential advice and privileges a distinctly American legacy with a lengthy discussion of George Washington’s mother in *Letters to Young Ladies*.

Where women fit into a patriarchal national narrative is a pressing concern for Sigourney who negotiates through these “letters” of advice where female citizenship can expand and where the subsequent contraction of female movement occurs. Tracing back a female line, dependent on founding fathers’ ideologies, expands the historical picture of significant American women. The historical fictions produced through her representation

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<sup>26</sup> Letter IV: On Manners and Accomplishments



of Washington's mother at the celebration in Fredricksburg after the close of the Revolutionary War speaks to the ways in which the heavy thread of exceptionalism is sewn: "Such an effect had her simplicity of garb, and dignity of bearing, upon the officers accustomed to the heartless pomp of European courts, that they affirmed it was no wonder that 'America produced the greatest men, since she could boast of such mothers'" (*Letters to Young Ladies* 60). In this example, the importance of Sigourney's advice is given full effect through The American mother. Sigourney never names her, but rather refers to her only in relation to her illustrious son. Indeed, in Sigourney's narrative, Mary Ball Washington represents a distinct, and welcome, shift from Old World traditions that lack the "heart" of her affections so clearly visible through the sincerity of presence and the seriousness of her dress. The approval of European officers and their open acknowledgment of female labors imagines an empowering national climate for young women, a tradition that is inclusive of their gender.

So much of Sigourney's advice for young women enforces the direct correspondence between representation and identity. She reasons:

Still, I press the monition, avoid being superficial. It is the danger of females of the present age. Expected to master the whole circle of sciences, with a cluster of the fine arts in a few short years, and those years too often injudiciously curtailed by the vanities of dress and fashionable amusement, is it surprising that they should sometimes have the reputation of possessing, what they really do not understand? Thus they are led to deception, and even become willing to appear to others, what in reality they are not. (*Letters to Young Ladies* 69-70)

Again Sigourney outlines the dangers of misrepresentation through fashion, this time pointing out the vulnerabilities of young women as subjects with multiple and, sometimes conflicting, societal expectations. Continued innocence is illustrated here only to be made impossible by Sigourney's rigorous catalogue of acceptable performances of femininity. Most interesting in this passage is Sigourney's confident assertion that she knows the "reality" of fashionable young women, more so they than themselves. In this, there is an inherent assumption that American women *are* a certain identity, and any representations that deviate, only do so superficially.

The attention to fashion, representation, and appearances as indicators of a woman's worth and value to the Nation is irrevocably tied to racial identity. While Sigourney lists the ills of corsets that constrict the body into an exaggerated shape of sexual maturity and the threat of pomp recalling on the bodies of future American mothers, old shores, she implicitly reaffirms the essential innocence of these white, young, female bodies by telling her reader, you know not what you do. Indeed, Robin Bernstein has argued that "Innocent childhood resembled the cult of true womanhood in that each discourse attached sexual innocence to white children and women respectively. Antebellum black children, like black women, were assumed to be ineligible for sexual purity" (*Racial Innocence* 42). Walking a tenuous line, Sigourney then proposes advice to an audience that must be taught how to be what they always already are. And that identity, that authentic simplicity of a naturally free American citizen, is a careful aggregation of colonial representations of indigeneity in order to access rights to land, nation, and exceptionalism.

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At the beginning of this chapter I quoted Lauren Berlant's critical approach to an archive of everyday life. She questioned "what it might take to make linked kinds of knowledge, power, and experience no longer seem separate" (13). Reading these words, I was enticed by a methodology that seeks to make visible what is already at play – even as that play performs its own invisibility. Berlant's work has had a fundamental impact on the ways in which I engage these early epistolary texts, and my hope is that this chapter, and the larger dissertation, participate in the project she names: The project that takes up what the canon leaves behind; the ephemeral, ordinary, and banal. While this chapter is limited in scope, the close readings I have referenced above, excerpted from Lydia Sigourney's *Letters* of advice, draw together the closeness of advice to conventions of autobiography, national history, authenticity, and authority. Because of the exceptional popularity of conduct literature in the nineteenth century United States, it would be easy to think past these advice/conduct books, but I have found that by slowing down, and taking the time to noticing the work they do, produces a complicated and important understanding of women and Indianness useful when thinking through the echoes of this genre today.

In *Letters to Mothers*, Sigourney anxiously poses a series of rhetorical questions for mothers raising daughters, exposing the ways in which her attention to fashion is a material foci for a much more intangible and uncontainable issue: the movement of each new generation away from the colonial founders. She asks,

"Mothers, is there any thing we can do, to acquire for our daughters a good constitution? Is there truth in the sentiment sometimes repeated, that our sex is becoming more and more effeminate? Are we as capable of

enduring hardship as our grand-mothers were? Are we as well versed in the details of house-keeping, as able to bear them without fatigue, as our mothers? Have our daughters as much stamina of constitution, as must aptitude for domestic duty, as we ourselves possess? These questions are not interesting to us simply as individuals. They affect the welfare of the community" (72-3).

In summary, her unease opens up the possibility of American failure and where that fault would lay. The stress on constitution is both in reference to the daughter's composition of character within the body and that body's alignment with the foundational principles of the state. Her advice book, then, also opens up a space for women to feel validated in the difficulties of their roles as mothers and young women in a rapidly changing nation. At once an advice book and an epistolary autobiographical narrative, Lydia Howard Huntley Sigourney worked in a genre so powerful for both women writers and readers, still in production today. In these popular literatures, she writes her way into authority, and invites her reader to participate.

## CHAPTER V

### RECALLING THE INDIAN: ZITKALA-ŠA AND CHARLES EASTMAN ON THE PROMISE OF NATIVE CHILDHOODS

*A casual reader of the Court's opinion could be forgiven for thinking this an easy case, one in which the text of the applicable statute clearly points the way to the only sensible result. In truth, however, the path from the text of the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978 (ICWA) to the result the Court reaches is anything but clear, and its result anything but right.*

Justice Sandra Sotomayor  
*Adoptive Couple v. Baby Girl* (2013)

In sharp critique of the majority opinion, Justice Sotomayor begins her dissenting statement in the 2013 Supreme Court case involving the custody of “Baby Girl” Veronica with the quote above.<sup>27</sup> Popular knowledge of this “problem case” disseminated through social and mainstream medias creating divisive and highly charged conversations around Indian bodies, adoption, and child rights. In this rare moment of contemporary Native American visibility in popular culture, I am interested in calling attention to the critical terms that ultimately came to define the opinion of the Court. In short, Biological Father, Dustin Brown, was awarded with the custody of “Baby Girl” Veronica in the South Carolina Supreme Court after appealing the then already in process adoption proceedings of Matthew and Melanie Capobianco. Brown, a registered member of the Cherokee Nation, gained custody of Veronica in the State Supreme Court by invoking the Indian Child Welfare Act (1978); however, despite the Act’s explicit aim to maintain the “integrity of Indian tribes,” the Capobiancos were able to appeal to the Supreme Court of the United States and successfully regained their custody of “Baby Girl.” Brown’s custody was revoked in June of 2013. In reversing the South Carolina Supreme Court’s

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<sup>27</sup> Justice Sotomayor, Justice Ginsburg, Justice Kagan, and Justice Scalia dissented from the court’s majority opinion.

opinion, the Supreme Court of the United States invariably took up the ICWA, redefining the rights of Indian parents, and indeed, the legal definition of “Indian Parent,” while concomitantly challenging the validity, purpose, and usefulness of this legislation – an Act that is popularly understood to be the best example of federal Indian law in place today.

What this case reifies, for my project, is the always under construction conception and figuration of Indian childhood within a U.S. settler colonial context. To trace the historical weight of *Adoptive Couple v Baby Girl*, this chapter will bring autobiographical accounts of Indian childhood into this conversation of dependency, trusteeship, race, and nation, while calling forward the conspicuous lack of attention to gender in popular discussions circulating custody of Veronica. My project interrogates this renegotiation of Indian parenthood, questioning where and how Indian children are made vulnerable subjects of the federal courts. The invocation of an Indian girl in 2013 brings attention to the quotidian practices of settler colonialism in United States. Her representation is political precisely because these legal narratives seek to (re)create Indianness for a white American audience. Where my last chapter took up representations of Indianness as defined and used by white Americans, this chapter is concerned with teasing out the non-normative, anti-colonial dimensions of Indian childhood as defined and taken up by Native Americans that have lived under the legal structures of United States. I will return to *Adoptive Couple v. Baby Girl*, but will first interrogate two representations of Indian childhood from the subjective positionality of Native American autobiography at the end of the nineteenth century.

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Editor of the *New York Tribune*, chair of the 1867 New York State constitutional convention's suffrage committee, and the 1872 presidential hopeful, Horace describes Native American culture with: "The Indians are children, their arts, wars, treaties, alliances, habitations, crafts, properties, commerce, comforts, all belong to the very lowest and rudest of human existence."<sup>28</sup> Greeley's career is firmly entrenched in the negotiation of government institutions and social politics and his sentiments above echo a pervasive settler colonial logic that, during the nineteenth century, made possible federal allotment policy. In 1887, The Dawes Act legally crafted Native American dependence on the federal government by creating the terms for land ownership, usage, and family structure. This narrative turn toward trusteeship based on protection and management affirmed the "minor" position of Native Americans under US law, drawing the overtly discriminatory discourses of people like Greeley into a structure of disempowerment and systemic oppression.

I begin with this quote from Horace Greeley, not because it or he is exceptional, but because I am interested in how childhood is meant to inform the characterization of all Indians, and the ways in which this discourse pervades the legal subjecthood of racialized identities. To say that all Indian "arts, wars, treaties, alliances, habitations, crafts, properties, commerce, [and] comforts" are products of childhood is to infantilize the subjects of these cultural, political, and economic activities, and to imply that these acts of cultural production, national narratives, and social structures are only legible through the frame of childhood. There is a way in which Greeley is pointing to an unease

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<sup>28</sup> Thomas King, *The Truth About Stories* (84). Original quote from Michael Paul Rogin, *Father's and Children: Andrew Jackson and the Subjugation of the American Indian* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1975), 216. The quote is in reference to a trip west in 1859.

at the inability to translate the mechanisms of Indigenous life, and is forced to categorize Indians as both children and engaged in the business of nation making. Indeed, it is not simply that Indians, and thus, children, lack culture, it is that they “belong to the very lowest and rudest of human existence.” This points to the ways in which both Indians and children have specific modes of cultural production, complex ways of understanding and living in the world, but these narratives and spaces are resistant to dominant American systems of power. Contrary to the simplistic and base implications of Greely’s metaphor, children and childhood in the nineteenth century were liminal and privileged categories constructed and constantly reaffirmed in the United States as spaces that must be protected, private, and, at the same time, constantly visible for public and state oversight. In drawing out the connection to children, Indians are also invited to access their marginalized subject position as both inside and outside the state apparatus.

In *The Truth About Stories* (2005), Thomas King wrote of “wishful fictions” where Indians vanished “simply [by] the workings of a natural law that decreed that superior cultures should displace inferior cultures” (84, 83). King goes on to argue that these fictions not only “convince Whites of the imminent demise of Native peoples, but they also persuaded many Native people that they had no future as Indians; Indians such as Charles Eastman” (84). In December, 1893, Eastman (Ohiyesa) published the first installment of his childhood memoir, “Recollections of the Wild Life,” in the extraordinarily popular children’s magazine, *St. Nicholas: An Illustrated Magazine for Young Folks*. Just a few years later, Zitkala-Ša, (Gertrude Bonnin), published three autobiographical essays in the January, February, March issues of *The Atlantic Monthly* (1900). They included “Impressions of an Indian Childhood,” “School Days of an Indian



Girl,” and “An Indian Teacher Among Indians.” Writing a similar narrative of Indian childhood, in a similarly popular and well-respected mainstream magazine, the connections between these two authors are well established. Both worked in assimilationist policy, contributed essays and creative pieces to *The American Indian Magazine*, and actively participated in leadership positions in Indian organizations such as the Society of American Indians. (Hafen 39). While their political careers run parallel and diverge in multiple places, this chapter will focus on the child-centered, autobiographical, serially published essays both authors published for white audiences. The serial form itself plays upon the naturalized notions of childhood as a “series” in progression toward development and adulthood. In a moment of federally sanctioned eradication and assimilation-based policies, Eastman’s and Zitkala-Ša’s Indian childhoods complicate structural understandings of childhood as a space that is at once outside of adulthood, a period of growth and development, and also a time of stasis removed from labor and capital.

Zitkala-Ša’s and Eastman’s autobiographical texts are not only personal accounts of settler colonialism, but sites through which Native American childhoods are constructed to appeal to white Americans through memories seemingly relegated and contained to history. It is through this appeal that the illegibility of Native American childhoods within the hegemonic structures of American white supremacy are directly challenged by these authors and their ability to vivify memories of self and self-making in writing and publishing for a white audience. This chapter will address the significance of destabilizing constructions of childhoods in texts that, I argue, work to dismantle American categories of dependency and invisibility for racialized and gendered identities

– work that is made accessible and desirable for white audiences through frameworks of memory and childhood. Indeed, these authors use the craft of memory and the space of childhood in an attempt to exist between the reality of marginalized and disenfranchised life experiences and imagined spaces of Native American sovereignty and power. The playfulness that Phil Deloria has theorized in white America's performance of Indianness is stacked with the play of childhood itself. The quotidian violence of settler colonial ideologies, as theorized by Mark Rifkin, is stacked with the creativity and imagination of childhood utopian fantasy. Where Eastman's text suggests that Indian boyhood is the most desirable embodiment of race and gender, I interrogate the possibilities, promises, and perils of Indian girlhood through the narrative voice of Zitkala-Ša. If Indian boyhood allows for a freedom inaccessible in the performance of white boyhood, Indian girlhood complicates this narrative by calling attention to the gender at the intersections of settler colonialism, histories of national identity, and the embodiment of play itself as an expression of fun, fantasy, and formative identity performances.

Writing for an audience of white children about his own remembered youth, Charles Alexander Eastman, Santee Sioux, notes, "The Indian boy enjoyed such a life as almost all boys dream of and would choose for themselves if they were permitted to do so. He had the fullest liberty, with the privilege of wandering where he pleased and of pursuing his own inclinations" ("Recollections" 228). Indianness, here, is characterized by freedom and autonomy. Eastman's explicit reference to "almost all boys" and an ability to "choose" this Indian life without restrictions makes reference to an already circulating desire to perform, or at least, appropriate stereotypical Indigenous traits, most famously reproduced in Mark Twain's seminal text of American youth culture,

*Huckleberry Finn* (1885), and the first chapter titled, “Civilizing Huck.” The ability to access this life through *choice* implies the racial privilege that makes this performance possible as white boys can choose to be Indian and they can also choose not to be Indian. And yet Eastman’s assertion also identifies the dependence of white American children on adults by the qualification: “if they were permitted to do so.” Indianness, then, when performed by white children, is always permitted or encouraged by adults crafting and producing youth culture.

In a similar narrative performance of essentialism, Zitkala-Ša characterizes her youth as outside the materiality of her body, subverting normative modes of Euramerican child development. She recalls a time when she was unrestrained and perhaps unintelligible within the discourse of American childhood when she states, “I was not wholly conscious of myself, but was more keenly alive to the fire within. It was as if I were the activity, and my hands and feet were only experiments for my spirit to work upon” (“Impressions” 37). Zitkala-Ša’s Indian girlhood is then a negotiation between the freedom “within” and the play of her “hands and feet” as they perform her will. Her claim to the “spirit” as a formative space reaffirms the settler colonial imaginary of Indianness, calling into play an essentialness that white Americans desire. Working within the colonizer’s language and form, Zitkala-Ša’s subjectivity resists the confines of this discourse to instead narrate a self-definition where “the fire within” vivifies the body as a tool rather than a script for behavior. Then, Indianness in these narratives is framed as a privilege. In this view, playing at being Indian or the desire to perform and embody Native America identity is drawn into an act encoded in essentialized stories of Americanness.

For children to desire the life of an Indian presumes the adult desire for Indianness. Taking on this identity, as argued by Eastman, provides access to naturalized narratives of “liberty,” “privilege,” and freedom. These keywords essentialized both Indian and American identities in Eastman’s narrative, provoking and inviting cross attachments. “Liberty” and the “privilege” of freedom from domination defines his Indian boyhood. This is then contrasted with white American boys who must ask and be granted permission to pursue “his own inclinations.” This line of hierarchical play places Indianness as a form within the rhetoric of American masculinity. White American boys are interpellated into these gendered constructions through images and narratives of Indianness, beginning but certainly not relegated to, the formative years. White American boys and men are able to move in and out of Indian identity as it serves the multitude of paradoxical desires in the settler colonial search for legitimacy, authenticity, and sovereignty. It is the predisposed, unconscious desire for Native American identity that Eastman provocatively assumes – through the space of the child – calling attention to the privileges of Indian identity through the recollection of his own boyhood. In this way, Eastman’s narrative invites youthful readers to enact adult behavior through playing Indian, concomitantly enacting a subjectivity not limited by Euro-American narratives of dependent childhood.

While largely overlooked in Eastman scholarship (usually referenced as a early draft of *Indian Boyhood* (1902)), “Recollections” held a powerful place in white America’s cultural imaginary and actively participated in questions surrounding what it means to be an Indian through the figuration of a child. This powerful cultural position was in part derived from Eastman’s choice to circulate these essays in a children’s

magazine, placing him within a tradition of authors calling upon children as their audience – and, in Eastman’s case, more specifically, white children. Indeed,

at the turn of the century *St. Nicholas*, along with its only considerable rival, *Youth’s Companion*, far exceeded in circulation figures the combined total for the illustrious *Atlantic*, *Harper’s*, *Century*, and *Scribner’s* magazines. During this ‘golden age’ of children’s literature, periodicals such as *St. Nicholas* exercised considerable cultural influence, reaching an enormous audience of American children as well as their parents and teachers (qtd. in Dykema-VanderArk 12).

With *St. Nicholas* as a vehicle, Eastman’s first biographical stories were granted access to a diverse and populous audience. *St. Nicholas*’s founding editor, Mary Mapes Dodge, crafted this publication with the explicit desire to challenge simple, dependent categorizations of childhood. The complexities of narrative that hold the attention and interest of adults are employed by both writers and editors for this magazine. *St. Nicholas* contributors included Louisa May Alcott, Longfellow, Kipling, Stevenson, Tennyson, Howells, and Twain, thus showing the seductive power of the wide readership of this children’s magazine, and the desire to hold a captive audience of children. Writing alongside authors now considered to occupy the privileged space of high literary art, Eastman was put into conversation with the narrative voices shaping the contours of American letters. *St. Nicholas* validated Eastman’s narratives for white American families, because, as the wide circulation suggests, parents and children already had trust in the kinds of stories published through this magazine. As an Indian man writing about his own Indian boyhood, Eastman and his stories first appeared in the very context where

they were just that: stories. This chapter will focus on the six installments of “Recollections of the Wild Life,” read within the context of white American popular children’s culture. The stories include “Hakada, ‘The Pitiful Last’,” “Early Hardships,” “Games and Sports,” “An Indian Boy’s Training,” “The Boy Hunter,” and “First Impressions of Civilization.” In this order these small essays, set apart by monthly release, comprise Eastman’s first autobiographical remembering of his early years, from infancy to fourteen.

My last chapter drew out the positionality of Indianness directly represented through the narrative of *Peter Parley*. I argued that Indianness as a process and a product is taken up in white American historical narratives as a mode of interpellation into American subjecthood. Not explicitly addressed in this discussion was the ways in which Indian childhood was taken up in *Indian Boyhood* as a mode of resistance to Euramerican imperial representations of Indian bodies as dependent objects existing within the settler nation. Indeed, the impossibility of Native American self-representation within the settler nation is the context that is constantly in conversation with this text and its audience: children. Scholarship and book reviews of Eastman’s work have historically dismissed this first autobiographical memoir as childish, in favor of his later writing that focuses on his adult years of advocacy.

In "'Playing Indian' in Print: Charles A. Eastman's Autobiographical Writing for Children," Tony Dykema-VanderArk notices that scholarly attention has largely focused on Eastman’s second memoir, *From the Deep Woods to Civilization: Chapters in the Autobiography of an Indian* (1916), overshadowing the perhaps more popular, *Indian Boyhood* (1902). Dykema-VanderArk points to Eastman’s audience to reconcile this lack

of attention, noting “that *Indian Boyhood* is, in the words of one reader, ‘expressly a children’s book’ (O’Brien 34), a book limited both in its subject matter and its intended audience” (9). This oversight makes visible a strong bias against juvenile and children’s literature, reaffirmed in academia. Tony Dykema-VanderArk’s article is important because he works to uncover the genre boundaries that have diminished the early writings of a now canonical nineteenth century Indian author. In noticing the ways “Recollections” and *Indian Boyhood* have been dismissed because of perceived narrative *and* audience simplicity, he draws attention to these neglected texts. However, Dykema-VanderArk does not challenge the space of childhood, in fact, he reproduces the naturalization of ‘growing up’ and never questions Indian access to childhood. And further still, I question where girls and women are in this discussion of imaginative play, identification, and education.

Writing to white American children, Eastman took up a familiar “boy book” narrative form. David J. Carlson pointed to the prominence of the “boy book” at the turn of the century, and the ways in which these narratives normalized a “primitivist nostalgia for a life before the restraints and responsibilities of modern (i.e., commercial and industrial) adult life” (608-9). Representations of childhood in these books mimicked G. Stanley Hall’s popular recapitulation theory where “the individual’s progression from childhood to maturity reenacts the historical progression of the human race from savagery to civilization” (608-9). Hall’s model of masculine development speaks to a popular anxiety around the effeminacy of “civilized” masculinities, and the late nineteenth century proclivity to identify and diagnose nonnormative gender performance as a neurosis or neurological disorder. Scripted in medical terms, modern masculinity could

be ideologically contained and American men were released from an essential lack in their capacity to uphold patriarchy. Instead, popular personas such as George M. Beard, author of *American Nervousness* (1881), pointed toward “civilization” as the catalyst for masculine impotence; what he termed “neurasthenia,” which essentially signified a nervous character. Gail Bederman characterizes this threat to American masculinity in her chapter, “Teaching Our Sons to Do What We Have Been Teaching the Savages to Avoid’: G. Stanley Hall, Racial Recapitulation, and the Neurasthenic Paradox”:

Beard believed that excessive schooling drained boys’ nervous energy and was one of the prime causes of neurasthenia in modern civilization. Hall agreed and beginning in the mid-1880s, peppered his pedagogical writings with warnings of the “real and grave danger” —the “national decay and calamity”— threatening American boys. Like Beard, Hall believed neurasthenia was caused by civilization and warned of “a more and more predominant influence in the production of disease as civilization advances.” (89)

This narrative poses a paradox since “Only white male bodies had the capacity to be truly civilized. Yet, at the same time, civilization destroyed white male bodies” (88). Thinly veiled under this micro concern for individual health lurked the macro threat of degeneracy and the decline of the American civilization, so newly established. Hall negotiated this concern by mapping “barbarism” and “civilization” onto a normative developmental process rather than Beard’s dualism: “They were not irreconcilable opposites, they were merely different stages of one developmental process. Through evolution, barbarism became civilization. Ignorance gave way to intellectual power. And



thus, by extension, primitive masculinity could evolve into civilized manliness” (91). In other words, by exercising boyhood barbarism, men become well-adjusted for civilization. Boys are allowed a “wild” childhood precisely because it is liminal, and ephemeral. The boy book genre crafted a space where a white American boy’s normalized growth toward citizenship mirrors an assimilation narrative where progression is defined as movement from indigeneity into the patriarchal, imperialist, white supremacist structures of state and nation.

This is all to say that Indian boyhood in “Recollections” and Indian girlhood in “Impressions of an Indian Childhood” can be read as a mode of resistance to Euramerican imperial representations of Indian bodies as dependent objects existing within the US. In complex ways, both Eastman and Zitkala-Ša subvert the normative models of development established through the pseudo-clinical writings of Hall and Beard. Indeed, the very existence of these narratives of Native American self-representation within the settler nation is the tension that is constantly in conversation with these texts and their audiences. Importantly, narratives like these unsettle the canonical authors that have come to define the boy book genre. As I noted above, Mark Twain’s *Huckleberry Finn* is an example of the ways in which “‘Indianness’ [is] part of a romanticized atmosphere of youthful adventure” (Carlson 608). Here, Carlson is calling into context the long history of white authors’ appropriation of Indianness as a necessary precursor to the “restraints and responsibilities of modern . . . adult life.” The boy book genre crafted a space where “biological” development toward civilization was contingent upon a shared assumption that naturalized Indigenous assimilation into patriarchal, imperialist, and white supremacist structures.

Cathy Davidson and Ada Norris point to the double-ness of Zitkala-Ša's identity through genre, and the ways in which this tension is visible in her early writing. They note,

This double edge comes from her manipulation of one of the most important forms of nineteenth-century European and American literature, the bildungsroman. A bildungsroman charts the 'building' or education of a main character counseled by others into more understanding and sophistication in the ways of the world. What is rarely questioned in the bildungsroman is the validity of that world. (xxxix)

Like the boy book, the bildungsroman genre has firm conventions within a western tradition. Both authors negotiate settler colonial space and indigenous stories through close readings of their intersectional subject positions. I quote Davidson and Norris here at length because their description of the genre rightly critiques the ways in which it is the individual's negotiation of life's obstacles that is constantly the subject, rather than the circumstances for that individual's life. The "world" of the boy book and the bildungsroman function through a color-blind notion of objectivity. Therefore, by occupying this literary form through serial publications, both Eastman and Zitkala-Ša disrupt the dominant narratives of Indian neoteny and Indianness as a liminal state on the way to well-adjusted whiteness.

Along side Eastman, Zitkala-Ša, Yankton Sioux, wrote her childhood memoir for a largely white audience. In the first installment of her series, she describes her Indian girlhood with these lines: "I was as free as the wind that blew my hair, and no less spirited than a bounding deer. These were my mother's pride, –my wild freedom and

overflowing spirits” (37). While these first moments of Indian girlhood played upon the exceptionalist desires of American imperialism (freedom, spirit, and pride) similarly framed in Eastman’s boyhood memoir, this serial memoir does not invite white readers to try on her freedom, like Eastman so provocatively does. Her Indianness remains separate from her white reader, mainly through the prominence of her mother’s gaze and the reader’s distance from the child protagonist by age. Her Indian girlhood is represented through the comparison of a “bounding deer,” a wild animal in motion, which, perhaps purposefully, positions the reader’s gaze in the place of the hunter. The figuration of the moving deer and her blowing hair suggest a movement intrinsic to her “mother’s pride.” And it is her mother, then, in this early moment that shapes the self-reflection of the child protagonist. While participating in many of the conventions of the boy book by structuring her narrative with a progression from youth to adulthood, and wild to colonial subjecthood, her story does not naturalize this movement. Indeed, Zitkala-Ša’s youth is not a static identity, but rather a convention called upon to translate her youth for *The Atlantic* readers.

While her political career is remembered in scholarship today in firm support of assimilation and an advocate of pan-Indian coalition, Zitkala-Ša’s early memoirs complicate these characterizations of her political position, by extending her own personal understanding of Indian survival in a settler colonial context. Dorothea Susag argues that “Zitkala-Ša’s three autobiographical essays communicate neither the complexity nor the tension she must have experienced living between two cultures. Instead they reveal a binary opposition between Indian and white, an opposition that further substantiates my claim that she stands in exile from both cultures” (7). But I

would rather argue that these essays see her living/surviving in the tension between two places, and thriving in this tension at times as well. Jane Hafen in her article, "Zitkala Sa: Sentimentality and Sovereignty," addresses the central complexities of this Indian woman's position, noting that: "Bonnin acknowledges that she and others must make compromises in order for Native Americans to survive in her modern world. Indians must learn English and adapt and modify genres of Euramerica to express Native ideas. Her white man's education, while alienating her from her mother and Yankton origins, also provided her with a voice with which to address injustices" (40). What Hafen acknowledges in her article are the sometimes contradictory ways in which indigenous survival manifests. Language and cultural acquisition became Bonnin's methodology for visibility and active participation in a settler colonial state that denies her subjectivity. Indeed, Zitkala Ša's use of the Dakota language in her memoir disrupt the systems of power imbued in the colonizers form of discourse, suggesting through difference and perhaps the audience's inability to access these words, other ways of being and knowing.

An intersectional analysis of her memoir recognizes the long historical violence against Indian women represented in popular culture. Her narrative is always already implicitly stacked against the female binary: Indian princess or savage squaw. With Pocahontas as the most pervasive female type, Rayna Green, among many scholars in other words, points to the ways in which the "good" Indian women in dominant American culture are defined by their relationships with white men. Indeed, "But the Indian woman is even more burdened by this narrow definition of a 'good Indian,' for it is she, not the males, whom white men desire sexually. Because her image is so tied up with abstract virtue – indeed, with America – she must remain the Mother Goddess-

Queen” (Green 703). And, perhaps most significantly, “To be ‘good,’ she must defy her own people, exile herself from them, become white, and perhaps suffer death” (Green 704). Thus, it is Zitkala-Ša’s gendered childhood that signifies the most vulnerable space, as she negotiates Indianness, childhood, and girlhood in a culture of patriarchy, white supremacy, and settler colonialism.

*Many children are very inquisitive, and forget the object of their apparent interest as soon as they receive the information they seek; but there are a few who have the gift of memory, and store up truths pure and simple. One would naturally think that this could be true only among the children of the more advanced races. But we can say for the children of uncivilized nations that they hear very little from their parents that can be called instruction, what they receive coming direct from Nature — the greatest schoolmistress of all. The Indian children were keen to follow her instructions, and derived from her the principles of a true and noble life according to the understanding of our people.<sup>29</sup>*

“Recollections of the Wild Life” begins with a discussion of racial memory. Re-staging his earliest moments for a young white audience, Eastman first makes an argument for his own capacity to remember and learn. His language calls upon the rhetoric of white supremacy as he invokes what “one would naturally think” in recognition of the ways in which his narrative voice challenges assumptions of race and age. Drawing on nineteenth century American investments in children as idealized symbols of “wholeness and intuitive thinking,” Eastman strategically employs keywords such as truth, purity, and simplicity. (*Huck’s Raft* 76). Historian Steven Mintz describes the predominant images of children with similar language of “purity, spontaneity, and emotional expressiveness,” characterized by their “free[dom] from adult inhibitions . . .

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<sup>29</sup> Eastman, Charles. 1893. “Recollections of the Wild Life.” *St. Nicholas* 21 December, 129.

At a moment when the preindustrial social order was breaking down, Romantics idealized children as emblems of wholeness and intuitive thinking" (*Huck's Raft* 76). And, as sociologist Viviana Zelizer has argued, "The emergence of this economically 'worthless' but emotionally 'priceless' child has created an essential condition of contemporary childhood" (3).

Eastman extends these naturalized "gifts," and thus these notions of protection and value, into the "uncivilized" bodies of Indian children by erasing the Indian parent in favor of "Nature" as the "wild" child's greatest teacher. This first paragraph comes to define Indian children within the rhetoric of white American childhood, calling attention to the misrepresentation and false dichotomy of "uncivilized nations" and "advanced races." What comes to characterize children broadly is curiosity, an "inquisitive" nature and the ability to retain what information they find. While Eastman remarks on a "natural" assumption that only white children possess the faculties of memory necessary to hold onto the curiosities of childhood, he quickly deconstructs this position by pointing to "Nature" herself. Playing on the wildness of the Indian character held as an ideological truth in white American popular culture, Eastman mobilizes this racial stereotype to naturalize the proclivities of inquisitiveness, memory, and thus, the intellectual capacity of young Indians.

As the series continues Eastman's boyhood evolves into the embodiment of idealized American freedom, extending the category of childhood to include young Indian boys. The third installment entitled, "Games and Sports," characterizes "The Indian boy" as "a prince of the wilderness. He had but very little work to do during the period of his boyhood. His principal occupation was the practising [sp] of a few simple

but rigid rules in the arts of warfare and the chase. Aside from this, he was master of his time” (306). Choosing to identify the Indian with royalty rather than an elected ascendancy to power assumes an Indian legacy irrevocably tied to a biological lineage of rulers over the “wilderness.” Here, Eastman transposes the use of the wild to evoke a claimed territory rather than a racial adjective. This aligns Indian boys with white American civil and legal notions of property, constructed to frame the North American territories as a national inheritance. To claim a boyhood for Indians, Eastman makes an argument for the space of leisure these racialized youths occupy by distancing the Indian boy from “work.” Work is then defined against the “the arts of warfare and the chase,” occupations framed as play and character development rather than the taxing and exploitative labor practices of white American adult men in a rapidly industrializing marketplace. Indeed, war and hunting are quintessential practices of boyhood play in a white American imaginary. Russell Gilmore characterizes the rise in popularity of rifle games as “a cultish adulation” in the late nineteenth century United States (93). He notes the rise of rifle clubs usually formed in “target companies” were voluminous enough to provoke talk “of disarming the lower orders, or at least of subjecting those who toyed with rifles to soldierly discipline” (94).

This concern for containment and control surrounding armed “lower orders” is in opposition with Eastman’s characterization of Indian war play. While Indian play has “rigid rules,” the threat of subversion that Gilmore represents is not present in “Recollections.” In other words, a lack of self-control, or the absence of the belief in self-control, is made visible through an armed and potentially untrained American populace. Eastman’s narrative extends an impression written into the American cultural imaginary

much earlier. David Zeisberger, a missionary from the 1740s to the early nineteenth century "was surprised by the amount of freedom given to Indian children. Unlike European children, Indian boys were not obligated to perform farm chores, nor were girls expected to spin, sew, or knit. To foster independence and initiative, Native American parents rarely restrained their children. 'They follow their own inclinations,' he wrote, and 'do what they like and no one prevents them'" (*Huck's Raft* 35). Indianness, described through this colonial gaze, and in Eastman's "Recollections" is the embodiment of an idealized American character without the formalized citizenship training typical of white American households. Constantly in contrast with white Euroamerican conceptions of children and childhood, Indian boys were imagined to be unrestricted by constructs of Americanness, following their own inclinations into the virtues of "independence and initiative." What Zeisberger defines as a nonnormative upbringing, implicitly erases the very idea of Native American childhood precisely because these youths were not seen as bound by the authority of adults.

In claiming a childhood, Eastman relies heavily on the maternal figures that surrounded him as boy. Referring to his mother, he describes "This beautiful woman, who had every feature of a Caucasian descent, with the exception of her luxuriant black hair and deep black eyes" (129). And similarly his grandmother, the woman that raised him, is characterized as "rather more enterprising and intelligent-looking than are most of the women of her race" (129). Through these women, Eastman stakes his own claim to the privileges of white American childhood, implying racial ambiguities around his own genetic lineage. His mother was not only beautiful to him, but within western standards of beauty with features described through anthropological language to align her with



settler colonial desire. Hers is a beauty the white American reader can understand precisely because she bridges the gap, phenotypically, between the white reader and popularized colonial representation of “Amazon-like” Indian women circulating since the 16<sup>th</sup> century (Rex 72). Concomitantly, the retention of her dark hair and dark eyes alludes to white ideologies predicated on visible racial difference. Describing her dark hair and dark eyes set in a Caucasian frame, Eastman’s mother becomes the object through which he can access privilege.

Reading his grandmother through the same settler colonial paradigm, Eastman sets her apart from the long legacy of Native American women stereotyped as either the princess (sexually desirable and useful Indian woman, think Pocahontas and Sacagawea) or the squaw (not sexually desirable Indian woman), but concomitantly reaffirms the legitimacy of these conventions by pointing to her unique deviance from “most women of her race.” The matriarch in his racial lineage subverts this good woman/bad woman binary with an “enterprising” character and more “intelligent” appearance, both of which conform to virtues of idealized Americanness, manifesting popularly in models of Republican Womanhood. Just as Linda Kerber describes the Republican Mother as “a device which attempted to integrate domesticity and politics,” so too did Eastman take up this identity in order to position himself within the U.S. imperial project (203). Describing traits significant to American identity, he is modeling a successful assimilation, and his own propensity for US. culture.

In this way, Eastman’s own claim to childhood is reliant on an appeal to the familiar bonds of (grand)mother and child. In this representation of family, the intimacies of his home are constructed to mirror the white American child audience’s, making

possible recognition and legibility. The mother figure, here, is taken up as an access point into childhood and as an access point to a narrative of political self-definition. This appeal challenges the ways in which Indian bodies have been unable to access a period of safety, innocence, and inherent worth typical and normal for white children.

Female role models loom large in Zitkala-Ša's first installment, "Impressions of An Indian Childhood." The child speaker positions herself in relation to her mother, her aunt, and her cousin, Warca-Ziwin. These women become the measure of her maturity as she learns what her role is in this intimate public by acquiring skills and knowledge by observing their behavior. And she was not alone; she describes the performance of motherhood as fun and play: "We delighted in impersonating our own mothers" (41). But while mothering was differently embodied enough to allow for playful mimicry, Zitkala-Ša does not describe these identities on a hierarchy. Reflecting on her mother she describes: "The quietness of her oversight made me feel strongly responsible and dependent upon my own judgment. She treated me as a dignified little individual as long as I was on my good behavior; and how humiliated I was when some boldness of mine drew forth a rebuke from her!" (40). Her youth, then, was not spent in a rigid and structured space of child protection precisely because her mother did not assume her inability to use her "own judgment." This belief in her abilities rather than an essential lack because of her age, reframes childhood as a space integrated into communal practices, rather than separate. She remembers herself not as a child, but instead a dignified, self regulated agent responsible for her own actions.

This actualized sense of self can be seen in the way Zitkala-Ša's performance of motherhood extends beyond impersonations with her peers. When a grandfather

unexpectedly arrives while her mother is out, she remembers her willingness to enter into her mother's role: "At once I began to play the part of the generous hostess" (42). Her unfortunate performance culminated in a rather rough reception, which was only recognized after her mother returned, "But neither she nor the warrior, whom the law of our custom had compelled to partake of my insipid hospitality, said anything to embarrass me. They treated my best judgment, poor as it was, with the utmost respect. It was not till long years afterward that I learned how ridiculous a thing I had done" (43). This emphasis of her mother's parenting functions as a repudiation of "poor Indian mothering" in legal narratives that allowed –indeed encouraged—the displacement of Indian children to boarding schools and white families. Part of a larger dialogue emphasizing the worth of children Viviana Zelizer points to the ways in which,

Proper mothering was considered a key element in the conservation of child life and health. While lower-class mothers were being instructed in proper childcare, middle-class mothers joined organizations devoted to the health and welfare of all children. The National Congress of Mothers, a network of Mothers Clubs, organized in 1897 by 2,000 delegates, assumed the task of educating the nation, and women in particular, 'to recognize the supreme importance of the child.' In its goal of educating women for motherhood, the association advocated courses in domestic science and sought to establish university chairs in the field of child study. (28)

Indeed, her memoir of childhood does more than make an argument for the arbitrary conventions of childhood as a constructed age-based developmental stage, but also advocates for the mothers of Indian children and their ability to provide "good enough"

mothering. Institutionalizing practices to educate and reprimand mothers on the quality of their parenting had a devastating effect on Native American women with children as the dominant U.S. narrative for proper caretaker-child relationships, home spaces, and health care was narrowly defined through a white, middle class, nuclear family model. What was at stake for the nation state was nothing less than the foreclosure of an American future. Zelizer points to this investment in the child figure when she states, “The nineteenth-century campaign revolution inched mourning as well as the twentieth-century campaign for child life are less significant as measures of changes in private sentiment, that is, an improvement in mother-love, than as dramatic indicators of a broader cultural transformation in children’s value. As children, regardless of their social class, were defined as emotionally priceless assets, their death became not only a painful domestic misfortune but a sign of collective failure” (32). In this way, Zelizer identifies the energy around child protection and new legislative efforts to manage domestic spaces as less a shift in the intimate relationships between parents and children and more so a national investment in American children as the product and future agents of the U.S. empire.

While Zelizer’s study does not specifically address Native children, I draw her analysis in as an indicator of the cultural climate, and indeed, national ideology, that made possible mass Indian child removal to non-Indian institutions and homes. In *Somebody’s Children* (2012), Laura Briggs argues that “Symbolically and actually, the politics of adoption and what happens to the children of vulnerable populations, usually single mothers, have been critical to Native peoples’ sovereignty struggles” (5). Briggs reads the intimacies of removal and adoption through the legal and extralegal practices that encouraged the placement of young Native bodies into spaces designed for

assimilation. I read these two accounts of Indian childhood and both authors' reliance on Indian women as responses to settler colonial narratives of "bad Indian mothers" and the ideologies which make available young Native Americans for assimilationist projects rooted in the desire for cultural genocide. However, it is important to acknowledge that even as Indian child removal is a displacement, eastern boarding schools are not alien lands. It is land that has been colonized, but Indian children are not aliens on this land. It is the act of settler colonialism that brings about the violence and alienation.

*"I acknowledge that the spaces 'won' for differences are few and far between, that they are very carefully policed and regulated. I believe they are limited. I know, to my cost, that they are grossly underfunded, that there is always a price of incorporation to be paid when the cutting edge of difference and transgression is blunted into spectacularization. I know that what replaces invisibility is a kind of carefully regulated, segregated visibility."*

Stuart Hall, "What is this 'Black' in Black Popular Culture?"

The ICWA was written in response to the high removal rates of Indian children from tribal communities in the 1960s and 1970s. Speaking in the Indian Affairs Subcommittee that would eventually produce and pass the ICWA, James Abourezk, a senator from South Dakota stated:

It appears that for decades Indian parents and their children have been at the mercy of arbitrary or abusive action of local, State, Federal, and private agency officials. Unwarranted removal of children from their homes is common in Indian communities. Recent statistics show, for example, that *a minimum of 25 percent* of all Indian children are either in

foster homes, adoptive homes, and/or boarding schools, against the best interest of families, tribes, and Indian communities.<sup>30</sup>

The long imperial legacy of the United States is exposed through the statistical analysis of removed Indian children and the sustaining ideologies that privilege white American homes over Indian homes. Primarily due to systemic discrimination expressed through social workers' narrow definitions of family and normalized characteristics of a healthy home, Abourezk adds that "Up to now, . . . public and private welfare agencies seem to have operated on the premise that most Indian children would really be better off growing up non-Indian."<sup>31</sup> For example Laura Briggs documents the ways in which Aid to Dependent Children (ADC), part of the New Deal, extended onto reservation land as both "a logical extension of bargains made in treaties, which ceded land in exchange for resources and support for Indian people in perpetuity. Yet ADC also brought state welfare workers onto the reservations, and they saw their responsibility as including the supervision of children, unwed mothers, and foster mothers" (Briggs 70-1). Thereby recognizing the reproduction of pro-assimilationist narratives operating through the guise of health and safety standards.

The Indian Child Welfare Act, when passed, publicly acknowledged the ways child removal has and does disrupt and threaten the "continued existence" of tribal communities by way of systemic and naturalized ethnocentrism. In doing so, the Act attempts to recognize families constructed outside of the U.S. nuclear model so deeply engrained in American structures of reproduction, family, and citizenship. As an Act that

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<sup>30</sup> *Problems that American Indian Families Face in Raising Their Children and How These Problems are Affected by Federal Action or Inaction*, 1 (emphasis added).

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*, 1-2.

sought to not only recognize, and thereby institutionalize, Native American family structures, but also to repair the ways in which Indian families were targeted with discriminatory practices, the legislation's major power relies on an established system of priority for Indian child placement. If the Indian child's parents are unable to maintain custody, the first placement preference is extended family, then the child's tribe, than any other federally recognized Native American. If all of these options have been exhausted, the child can then be considered for placement outside of a Native family.

In the two sections that follow, the ICWA identifies how multiple threats to Indian children and the larger Native American communities materialize through white supremacist imperialist policy:

(4) that an alarmingly high percentage of Indian families are broken up by the removal, often unwarranted, of their children from them by *nontribal public and private agencies* and that an alarmingly high percentage of such children are placed in *non-Indian foster and adoptive homes and institutions*; and

(5) that the states, exercising their recognized jurisdiction over Indian child custody proceedings through administrative and judicial bodies, have often failed to recognize the essential tribal relations of Indian people and the cultural and social standards prevailing in Indian communities and families.<sup>32</sup>

Through the articles of this document, the non-Indian macro and micro U.S. subject actively displaces Indian children through both public and private pathways. Through the

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<sup>32</sup> Indian Child Welfare Act, 1901(4, emphasis added)(5).

lens of custody legislation, Indian children are re-interpellated into the always already wards of the U.S. empire. The right of the State to exercise jurisdiction is never questioned since the role of trusteeship is well established. The explicit position of the U.S. legal system in the intimacies of Indian families is neither deflected nor reduced, but rather stated in an articulation of the ways in which an ethnocentric legal system holds power over a diverse body. The work this document does do begins with an attempt to hold accountable non-Indian citizens and institutions responsible for the physical removal of Indian children. This recognition is threefold: The Act acknowledges that Indian child removal has taken place on a large scale, it acknowledges that the removal of children disrupts Indian families, and that state sanctioned, non-Indian subjects are the prevalent actors in this violence against “essential tribal relations.”

Left unremarked upon is the imperialist, white supremacist, capitalist, patriarchal structures that facilitate the systemic disenfranchisement of Indian families through quotidian controls and abuses, such as the mitigation of the U.S. legal system in Indian custody cases. Most notably absent here is the historicization of state and federal violence that invites and makes available Indian bodies and land for imperialist projects. Indeed, while the document acknowledges a “high percentage” of Indian child displacement, the conspicuous lack of a stated time frame assumes an ambiguous, and extensive, history. As if the curtain had been pulled back and the physical and ideological effects of centuries of European and American imperialism on the North American continent was made visible through the bodies of Indian children, this federal document is an attempt to rectify widespread fracturing of Indian families and tribes by legally documenting and redefining the intimacies of home and family.



While the positionality of Indians within the U.S. empire remains a constant in the ICWA, the terms of this Act provide essential legal representation for those subjects essentially outside of the U.S. legal system. The continued legacy of this act was the core contemporary concern voiced in the context of Veronica’s Supreme Court proceedings. Justice Sotomayor argued “that the majority begins its analysis by plucking out of context a single phrase from the last clause of the last subsection of the relevant provision, and then builds its entire argument upon it. That is not how we ordinarily read statutes.”<sup>33</sup> It is Sotomayor’s concern that the methodology used to take up the phrase, “continued custody,” redefines the terms of the ICWA – specifically, how the Court recognizes Indian parents. The Court invalidated Brown’s custody rights to Veronica by pointing to Sections 1912(d) and (f):

(d) Any part seeking to effect a foster care placement of, or termination of parental rights to, an Indian child under State law shall satisfy the court that active efforts have been made to provide remedial services and rehabilitative programs designed to prevent the breakup of the Indian family and that these efforts have proved unsuccessful.

(f) No termination of parental rights may be ordered in such proceeding in the absence of a determination, supported by evidence beyond a reasonable doubt, including testimony of qualified expert witnesses, that the *continued custody* of the child by the parent of Indian custodian is likely to result in serious emotional or physical damage to the child.

§1912(d)(f) (emphasis added)

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<sup>33</sup> Sotomayor, J. dissenting, 1.

The court argued, “The phrase ‘continued custody’ thus refers to custody that a parent already has (or at least had at some point in the past). As a result, §1912(f) does not apply where the Indian parent *never* had custody of the Indian child.”<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, “when an Indian parent abandons an Indian child prior to birth and that child has never been in the Indian parent’s legal or physical custody, there is no ‘relationship’ to be ‘discontinu[ed]’ and no ‘effective entity’ to be ‘end[ed]’ by terminating the Indian parent’s rights. In such a situation, the ‘breakup of the Indian family’ has long since occurred, and §1912(d) is inapplicable.”<sup>35</sup> Thus, while the Court maintained that Dustin Brown is indeed, the biological father of the Indian child, the critical usage of “father” and “parent” are taken up through the terms of ICWA’s language of “continued custody.” “Continued custody” was read as an already established platform stipulating recognizable Indian parent-child relationships. Through the language established in this case, legal precedent is created to narrow the recognition of “Indian parent” to his or her legal and/or physical custody of the child subject prior to birth. Therefore, while §1602(9) of the Act defines the legal meaning of “parent” as “any biological parent or parents of an Indian child or any Indian person who has lawfully adopted an Indian child, including adoptions under tribal law or custom,” this does not guarantee ICWA’s applicability or protection.

By creating ambiguities around the critical terms of ICWA, the Supreme Court contributed to a legacy of Indian law that works to reshape and redefine Indian families, forcefully exemplified in the Dawes Act (1887). Under the narrative of child welfare, the majority opinion of *Adoptive Couple v Baby Girl* establishes that Indian parent–Indian

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<sup>34</sup> *Adoptive Couple v Baby Girl*, 12-399 U.S. 2 (2013).

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.* 2-3.

child relationships recognized by the United States exist only where there is legal and/or physical custody. If child custody cannot be defined in these terms, the validity of the Indian family is itself already ‘broken’ or nonexistent or of questionable merit and value. Thus, the sanctions in place to sustain tribal communities, such as the ICWA, are qualified by the legal judgments of the settler state that only recognizes family units within a Euramerican tradition. This positioning effectively exemplifies what Gloria Anzaldúa described as the work of Western culture whereby objectivity: “made ‘objects’ of things and people when it distanced itself from them, thereby losing ‘touch’ with them. This dichotomy is the root of all violence” (*Borderlands* 36-7). And it is within this context where the Court works to create the nuances of “parent” as situated in the ICWA that my focus turns to “child” as a critical category and term for this case.

In 1978, Indian children are framed as a resource the United States has taken up in order to advocate for continued tribal existence. Under the Act, an “‘Indian Child’ means any unmarried person who is under age eighteen and is either (a) a member of an Indian tribe or (b) is eligible for membership in an Indian tribe and is the biological child of a member of an Indian tribe.”<sup>36</sup> While this definition suggests a clear understanding of legally recognized Indian childhood (age, citizenship, lineage) the figuration of “Baby Girl” Veronica at the center of a widely publicized battle for Native American sovereignty, and, as argued through the ICWA, the very existence of Indian tribes, troubles the naturalized assumptions that define childhood generally in the U.S.

Legally, children in the United States are dependent subjects within the fold of private families. Defined by age as a biological indicator of minor citizenship, American

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<sup>36</sup> Indian Child Welfare Act, 1606(4).

children are constructed through this historical category, that, as Annette Ruth Appell argues, “obscures both the contingency of childhood and the law’s role in creating and maintaining childhood. By defining childhood as vulnerable and situating them in the private realm, the law defines and regulates childhood as if it were natural and universal rather than political and diverse” (19). Indeed, Steven Mintz troubles the use of this category by comparing age groups to gender, arguing that both socially constructed identities are systems of power relationships. Mintz acknowledges that both categories are discursively “rooted in biology,” however, “there are profound differences in the way gender and age function culturally, socially, and psychologically. Unlike gender, age is a more fluid category; variation is wider, and age categories and age consciousness have changed more over time. Furthermore, gender totally shapes the life course even in a culture that emphasizes gender equality; in contrast, age is always modified by class, ethnicity, gender, nationality, and religion” (“Reflections” 93). Mintz, here, begins a critical conversation in age studies that points toward the necessity of an intersectional approach when studying the child subject. The fluidity of age comes up against cultural forms of identity: “class, ethnicity, gender, nationality, and religion.” Therefore, age is always understood within an intersectional context that considers whether or not childhood is an accessible space for the subject.

In the ICWA and in the figuration of “Baby Girl” Veronica, Mintz’s approach is exemplified by the three critical categories legally defining Indian childhood: age, citizenship, and lineage. While Veronica meets the criteria of Indian childhood, her racialized identity does not provide a subject position protected within the private space of family and community. The vulnerability of her childhood is exploited by the

discursive usage of her body as an object to be negotiated through legal and popular media. This public position is held by all Indian children under the ICWA as child removal is combated precisely because it is harmful for the larger Native American communities. Furthermore, the custody of Veronica within the legal proceedings of this case, is perhaps the smallest issue at play. Instead, she acted as a contemporary fulcrum to a national history of settler colonial initiatives for imperial dominance and Indian tribal negotiations for autonomy. Indeed, the physical placement of her body, the body of a child – a subject position defined by dependency – was instead transformed into a coveted object standing in for the multitude of colonial injustices the U.S. has inflicted upon tribal communities since the founding.

The tension placed on Veronica in this Supreme Court case is a struggle childhood studies readily recognizes: “the question of how to bridge the relationship between the rhetorical child (the cultural construct of ‘childhood’) and the historical child (actual young people making their way in the world” (*The Children's Table*, 15). And, as stated in Sotomayor’s dissent, this court case moves quickly from the placement of a singular child to the welfare of all Native American tribal nations. Justice Sotomayor’s final dissenting argument gestures to the wide impact of this Supreme Court majority opinion as she notes, “I see no ground for this Court to second guess the membership requirements of federally recognized Indian tribes, which are independent political entities.”<sup>37</sup> In this final moment, Sotomayor challenges the implications of a quantification of Veronica’s Cherokee ancestry as 3/256. In the oral argument of Charles Rothfeld (on behalf of respondents birth father), Chief Justice Roberts questioned, “I’m

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<sup>37</sup> Sotomayor, J., dissenting, 24.

just wondering is 3/256ths close — close to zero? I mean, that's — that's the question in terms to me, that if you have a definition, is it one drop of blood that triggers all these extraordinary rights?" Rothfeld responded with: "But it has always been the Cherokee membership criterion that if someone who can trace their lineal ancestry to some — to a person who is on the Dawes Rolls is a member. No one has ever questioned that that is a legitimate basis for establishing tribal citizenship. And so —." <sup>38</sup> This characterization puts into question the applicability of ICWA, and, more broadly, the qualifications of recognized Indian subjects under U.S. law. The U.S. legal system at once naturalizes racial identity in order to publicly construct Native American childhoods to enforce 'private sphere' structural change while also questioning the validity of Indian subjects by blood quantum.

*"there is no resource that is more vital to the continued existence and integrity of Indian tribes than their children and that the United States has a direct interest, as trustee, in protecting Indian children who are members of or are eligible for membership in an Indian tribe."* <sup>39</sup>  
Indian Child Welfare Act (1978)

For both Eastman and Zitkala Ša, claiming a childhood is both an indicator of assimilation through an imperial notion of growth and development, and a subversion of a staged notion of identity by changing the space of childhood privilege through the inclusion of their Othered bodies. If Indians can be children, they too must grow through the conceptualized arch of progression – which means they must become autonomous,

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<sup>38</sup> Chief Justice Roberts; Mr Rothfeld, Oral Argument of Charles Rothfeld, Transcript, 42-43.

<sup>39</sup> Indian Child Welfare Act, 95-608 U.S.C. 1901(3) (1978).

self-regulated liberal subjects of democracy. This places Indian people within a legible system of recognition in the U.S., but also erases intersectional identities that exist outside of the national paradigm.

At the end of “Impressions of an Indian Child,” Zitkala Ša’s mother voices the decision that changes the course of her young daughter’s life. In consultation with her sister, she sends word to the missionaries through her son, Dawée, approving their request for her eight-year-old daughter’s removal to boarding school:

She will need an education when she is grown, for then there will be fewer real Dakotas, and many more palefaces. This tearing her away, so young, from her mother is necessary, if I would have her an educated woman. The palefaces, who owe us a large debt for stolen lands, have begun to pay a tardy justice in offering some education to our children. But I know my daughter must suffer keenly in this experiment. For her sake, I dread to tell you my reply to the missionaries. Go, tell them that they may take my little daughter, and that the Great Spirit shall not fail to reward them according to their hearts. (47).

This moment at the end of Zitkala Ša’s first installment closely parallels her real life. She left the reservation at eight years old, traveling to Indiana to attend a Quaker missionary school where she became indoctrinated into colonial customs (Susag 4). The distinction between “real” Dakotas and the “palefaces” speaks to the ways in which playing Indian in order to perform a right to Native lands was a role encouraged, even produced, through U.S. ideologies of empire. Where Eastman suggests Indianness as an ideal form and Zitkala Ša reproduces an essentialized notion of Native spirituality, both authors

construct these identities in comparison to their white readers, setting up a binary rather than a fluid continuum of identity performance. This separateness is extended through this moment, in the violence of the missionaries' "tearing" such a young girl from her mother. The tear suggests the jagged edges of an unexpected separation, a rip of a piece from a whole. This sacrifice is framed through the language of debt, broken treaties, and justice, speaking to the ways in which the everyday realities of the Dakota people are structures by their role as "children" in the trust of the U.S. Within this power dynamic, Zitkala Ša's mother recognizes her daughter's future as one spent in constant negotiation with the terms set by the U.S. legal system, therefore a colonial education offers the only "experiment" with the potential for survival from within.

Both Zitkala Ša and Charles Eastman negotiate the terms of their "experimental" liaison positions in part through these serialized installments. The reproduction their childhoods in popular literary magazines, creates a way to access dominant narratives of childhood privilege, indicating, importantly, a normative progression toward intellectual maturity, self-sufficiency, and adulthood – The very space denied to Native Americans through U.S. narratives of trusteeship which place Native Nations as dependent entities within a dominant national culture. This narrative form is only one way in which these writers translate their political self-representations for white audiences. Martha J. Cutter points the ways in which their use of English must be understood in terms of settler colonial discursive violence:

For these writers, English was certainly the language of literacy; if they wished to be read at all, they had to write in English. Yet treaties and other texts written in English had been consistently used against Native



Americans, as Eastman notes in his second autobiography, *From the Deep Woods to Civilization* . . . As Eastman recognizes, discursive texts - paper, treaties, and government documents - have been part and parcel of the disenfranchisement of the Native American people. (37)

In this context, the potential for self-representation is always restricted by a historicized legal subjectivity. In this way, I read these autobiographical accounts in conversation with legislative Acts, specifically the ICWA instituted much later, in the twentieth century. Read as arguments for legal recognition, these works of memory and childhood speak to the legibility of Indian boys, Indian girls, and Indian mothers, and challenges their “minor” status by suggesting through form and language that Native Americans occupy a space a knowledge and power.

Indeed, these literary narratives form the necessary history to a racial realist legal perspective. Described by critical race scholar, Derrick Bell through an anecdotal conversation with a woman named Mrs. MacDonald, racial realism is a legal philosophy that seeks to acknowledge the sometimes invisible ways in which legal subjugation manifests. Bell records Mrs. MacDonald as a way to image the application of this mindset: “Her fight, in itself, gave her strength and empowerment in a society that relentlessly attempted to wear her down. Mrs. MacDonald did not even hint that her harassment would topple whites’ well-entrenched power. Rather, her goal was defiance and gained force precisely because she placed herself in confrontation with her oppressors with full knowledge of their power and willingness to use it” (308).

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION

Early in my research for this project, I took a road trip with a friend and colleague to Baltimore, Maryland to attend the American Studies Association annual conference, a pilgrimage that would become our yearly ritual, as it is for so many scholars. We made the trip at the recommendation of Ron Welburn; he was teaching the American Studies methodology course and encouraged us to attend and report back on major themes and trends in the field. I remember the end of our first day at the conference, we both marveled at our luck and privilege to be affiliated with a field so dynamic, so exciting, and so self-aware. ASA is a space where in 2011 I heard Priscilla Wald historicize and identify race-based systems of scientific exploitation in cancer research, and where in 2002 Phil Deloria exposed a deep contention between the ASA and Native American scholars, drawing on legal narratives that form long histories of subjugation, isolation, and exploitation. This experience of reading through past ASA presidential addresses and attending the conferences cultivated in me a lasting attachment to this community. In no small part, the attraction is based on a willingness to admit what is unknown, to share work-in-progress, and to invest in projects that feel like imperatives.

When I started thinking about my dissertation project, I was curious about why Nathaniel Hawthorne turned to children's culture not only out of necessity early in his career, but as a sustained presence even after his literary success. Publishing six books and many short stories for a young audience, Hawthorne's investment in children's culture manifested in the language and stories he produced. Since his entry into children's culture was with Samuel Goodrich and the *Peter Parley* series, I began by reading around

this series and similarly popular histories for children in the antebellum nineteenth century children's book market as a way to negotiate the cultural climate that compelled Hawthorne to write these books.

What ended up happening was I became interested in the Goodrich histories themselves, and their cultural presence in the nineteenth century. The Peter Parley storyteller was a household name to an entire generation of Americans. From selling millions of copies to a reference in Emily Dickinson's poetry ("Hurrah for Peter Parley"<sup>40</sup>), these narratives occupied considerable space in American nurseries. Drawn into the popularity of this youth series, my close readings were an attempt to negotiate a child's minor status in terms of structural power and recognition, and their concomitantly immense ideological power as the nation's future. For example, it wasn't until the 1910s that "compulsory birth registration systems in some cities and states began routinely to provide the youngest Americans with documentary proof of their ages—that is, birth certificates. In these places, birth certificates became the documentary cornerstones of young people's social and political rights" (Landrum 125). Without the legal coding of age in the antebellum period, then, childhood as a discrete space relied heavily on cultural production and ideological commitment to the privileges of youth.

What I found looking through these archives were narratives grappling with an origins story with uncontainable characters: Indians. Together, the "Minor subjects" of my title is both in reference to the minor legal status of the white American children consuming these histories, and the Indian characters that serve both a minor presence and minor, if not invisible, legal subjectivity, remnant in the very legal coding of Native

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<sup>40</sup> "SIC TRANSIT GLORIA MUNDI," by Emily Dickinson (1852).

nations as domestic dependents. This entanglement of race, nation, and age led me on a path through histories, autobiographies, and advice literatures, each writer and story participating consciously and unconsciously in practices of nation building through the medium of popular children's culture.

Inspired by Jodi Byrd who describes *The Transit of Empire* (2011) as “a journey of sorts, its method mnemonic as it places seemingly desperate histories, temporalities, and geographies into conversation in the hopes that, through enjambment, it might be possible to perceive how Indianness functions as a transit within empire,” this project has been a journey to read widely, aggregating disparate genres to tell a story about age and Indianness in the long nineteenth century (xii). Byrd's mnemonic method reads the violence of colonization through cultural production, “in order to disrupt the elisions of multicultural liberal democracy that seek to rationalize the originary historical traumas that birthed settler colonialism through inclusion” (xii). This decolonial framework seeks to make visible the ways in which settler colonial violences are obscured by discourses of democracy. Byrd's assertion that enjambment produces meaning has challenged me to write and research in interdisciplinary ways, thinking critically about what it means to bring diverse texts into conversation. Above all, *The Transit of Empire* modeled a methodology of disruption that seeks to expose the ways in which historical traumas are embedded in cultural production and offered up for consumption.

Working in nineteenth century American children's culture, the discourses of power through race, age, and gender resonate loudly in the contemporary moment. Making connections across large expanses of time has been critical to my own understanding of this project's significance to the field and in my own estimation of its

value. There are many important and relevant contemporary documents that this manuscript does not bring into conversation, but remain on the horizon for future research. Looking forward, my book manuscript will continue to investigate where and how representations of children and childhood are political spaces where critical engagement in the family, women's citizenship, and Indian law all resonate powerfully. Expanding a thread in my dissertation, the Indian Child Welfare Act (1978) and the recent Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act (2013) call attention to the significant alignment of child welfare and domestic abuse. This legal context will situate the complexities of settler colonial family structures, recognizing how normative forms of intimacy and attachment are constructed by legal narratives and policed by the State. The book project like this dissertation will seek to pull to the surface the powerful ways in which people survive by way of recreating and reimagining the potentiality of childhood.

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