Loving Empire: Intimacy and Expansion in U.S. Women's Historical Writing, 1880-1900

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
(English and Women's Studies)
in the University of Michigan
2018

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Dedication

For my family, of origin and of choice

Acknowledgments

All academic work is contingent to varying extents; mine is above all the product of the love, labor, tenderness, and patience of too many people to name here. I've given it my best shot.

First and foremost I thank my incredible committee: June Howard has overseen my journey here from offer of admission to defense with generosity and patience, holding me to high standards and assuring me I was up to the task. Victor Mendoza was generous enough to take on the work of mentoring me while he was also newly arrived to the University of Michigan; as his research assistant I learned how to dig deep and think creatively, and also made my first foray into the archival work that would shape my dissertation so profoundly. Michelle McClellan served on my committee only briefly but had a deep impact, affirming my vision, of my project and my future, despite their unconventional natures. Finally, Sandra Gunning, advisor is far too small a word for the role she has played in my life over the past eight years. Sandra, you have been my champion – none of this is possible without you.

In addition to my academic advisors, I was fortunate enough to have a host of generous mentors who helped me weather the long years of graduate study. I have profound gratitude to Omise'eke Tinsley, who oversaw my first graduate course and inspired me to pursue this work. I am

indebted to Macalester College where I received the training and mentorship that inspired me to pursue an academic career - I thank Daylanne English, Michelle Wright, and Jen Caruso. Thank you to my teaching mentors, Lynn Verduzco-Baker, Jen Macfarlane Harris, and above all, Ruby Tapia. Aimee Germain, thank you for helping me navigate the red tape of graduate school and the even messier work of imagining a career. Hannah Rosen, thank you for being one of the first people to support my project. Louis Cicciarelli, whose writing help, energy, and patience were an invaluable catalyst. Danielle Lavaque-Manty – I have no idea how you put up with me, but I am very very grateful. Laura Schram – who believed in me when I didn't believe in myself, who made me believe I was not just good enough but pretty damn good, and who told me in no uncertain terms that I had this whole dissertation thing in the bag. Endless gratitude and joyful, riotous love to Alison Cuddy and the Humanities Without Walls cohort of 2016 – thank you for making me bold enough to dream big. To Liz Wingrove and Kate Sechler who offered life-saving levels of support in my final stretch, right up to the very last second. To Dan DeSena – it's been a long haul, man – thanks!

To everyone who wrote alongside me: Lisa Jong my fellow longterm writer and cheerleader in my final hours (also minutes), and the rest of the MANKL writing group, Marie Stango, Nev Koker, and Katie Lennard; Jenny Kwak, my fellow DWI-street-parker; Beatrix McBride, the best wakeup call; the Community of Scholars cohort of 2013, and my RIW, Susan Hwang, Mei-Chen Pan, Cassie Miura, and Kate Schnur.

To my housemates and neighbors past and present – especially my current roommates, Meredith and Ora, who have patiently endured my late night hours and endless stream of complaints, who

brought me coffee and candy and let me cry to them, and Shane and Amber Davis, for being my friends and for fixing my disposal a bunch of times.

To my landsmen: Emily Lloyd and Teresa Ballard who keep a lamp lit in my Minneapolis home; Liz Pattison who has been my constant couch companion, making me laugh in the darkest times; Mejdulene Shomali, whose banal minutiae I love terribly; Erin Ashmore who helped me make 1219 a home; Jessica Rosenberg who buoys me up and inspires me to be more radical even when we're out of touch; Jina Kim who has been my Women's Studies sister from day one; Angela who has a tender heart despite her cynicism; Jenny Kohn who found me again; Sharman Spieser for sharing her laughter and light; Michelle Winkfield who has held my very fractured heart with so much care and who is my very favorite person to spend Mother's Day with; Alexa Milton, my vine; and Iris Bromberg– with whom I am always a native speaker.

To Calvin the cat for his dignified oversight of the first half of my graduate career, and to Bravo the dog, for being my shadow as I stumbled to the finish line.

To my parents, Dwight and Jill Healy, who demonstrated incredible love (and self-restraint) by only asking when I thought I might finish this thing every once in a while. Thank you for schools and summer camps and vacations I didn't appreciate at the time, for supporting me and for helping to make me who I am. To my sister and brother and brother-in-law, Elizabeth and Tim and Joe for loving me and making me laugh and not giving up on me. Also for helping me move. To my nephews, who I will totally spend more time with once this is submitted.

And finally, deeply, to Jesse Carr, my love and my family.

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Abstract

"Loving Empire: Intimacy and Expansion in U.S. Women's Historical Fiction, 1880 - 1900," works to expand our understanding of nineteenth-century U.S. historiography by analyzing texts authored by women from and about sites of colonial violence. This project endeavors to repopulate the archive of U.S. historiography using a much less restrictive set of criteria to determine what constitutes "history." I draw from novels, memoirs, didactic literature, journalism, and second-hand accounts of performances and lecture tours to reveal crucial discourses and counter-discourses that sought to explain, criticize, and justify continental expansion during a period when the national memory of these events had not yet crystallized.

In each chapter, I aggregate literary texts about different sites of U.S. imperial conquest. I starting with the writing of Paiute advocate, Sarah Winnemucca, her autobiographical history *Life Among the Piutes: Their Wrongs and Claims* (1883) and the popular response to her advocacy. I then turn my focus to the ways in which manifest domesticity operated in conjunction with the material project of colonial violence, looking at the work of Elizabeth Custer, writings by other army wives, and adaptations of these works leading to broader pop cultural dissemination. Collectively, these texts produced, and failed to produce, historical truth effects (regimes of truth), whose existence, let alone lasting influence, has not yet been accounted for by either historical or literary studies. The function and impact of these texts can best be understood by approaching them not as single books but as constellations, dense collections of memoir, book reviews, interviews, and mass circulated excerpts that in turn fueled the production of popular representations of the west, like David Belasco and Franklin Fyles' *The Girl I Left Behind Me*, a frontier melodrama that toured internationally at the end of the century. Ultimately I argue that these narratives, and the popular response to them, constitute

multiple, fractious histories that competed for authority as the era of continental expansion drew to a close.

These texts offer critical insight into the means by which white Americans wrote themselves, and others out of, the emerging United States. Each of the works under study narrates differently the interweaving of "domestic" issues - love, marriage, family - with "world historical" markers of progress - advances in technology ranging from the telegraph to the train. These narratives tell contending "strictly true" stories about the process by which Native land was transformed into American soil, and relate the grandiose narratives of imperial expansion as well as the unspeakable violences upon which they rested. They describe the advance of armies not only by reference to battles but through the proliferation of "objective" units – dates, increasingly specific and uniform time measurement, and the mapping and measuring of space and land. By demonstrating the common historical impulse at the heart of generically and stylistically diverse texts, I aim to reveal a broader and more capacious archive of historical fiction in the nineteenth century, and examine the methodological principles that condition literary histories, and their place in a rapidly developing nineteenth-century historical imaginary.

Introduction

This dissertation expands the framework of manifest domesticity to look at women's representations of warfare and the violences of settler colonialism. These representations blur the line between history and literature, showing how both grapple with "contact zones." In these "spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism [and] slavery" (Pratt *Arts* 34), how do women's narratives constitute homes and families? I address these questions partly though Amy Kaplan's formulation of manifest domesticity, wherein antebellum discourses of domesticity that distinguished private from public were also delineating the boundary between domestic and foreign critical to the doctrine of manifest destiny. While Kaplan looks to antebellum novels by and about white women, and sees evidence of delineation between foreign and domestic, I build on Kaplan by asking how women's narratives of warfare serve to blur these lines. In other words, I am interested in direct interventions into discourses of settler colonialism by women in forms other than the domestic or sentimental novels upon which Kaplan's theory is built. Unlike those Kaplan focuses on, the women's texts I examine write about the *historical practice* of imperial incursion in a way that the early nineteenth-century female-authored domestic or sentimental novels do not. In turning to narratives of warfare I ask: how does the discourse of domesticity grapple with and manage its borders? How does it instantiate and enforce the division between the national and the foreign at the very site of its rupture?

Central to my research methods, then, is Emma Perez's notion of historical consciousness: "If history is the way in which people understand themselves through a collective, common past where events are chronicled and heroes are constructed, then historical consciousness is the system of thought that leads to a normative understanding of past events" (Perez 7). This formulation dovetails well with the historical reality that history and literature were not yet distinctive genres or disciplines at the time these drafts of history were produced. Examining accounts that are both historically accurate and fictionalized (or rather, accounts in which the distinction between accuracy and fiction does not help us get at "the truth" of history), and simultaneously examining how these accounts circulate and are received, speaks to the process by which certain constructions do or don't get incorporated into historical consciousness.

This introduction lays out the methodologies, key terms, and theoretical frameworks that inform my research. I first discuss my decision to broaden the scope of what is normally considered "historical/literature" by exploring the underappreciated links between "history" and "literature" that existed during the period under study. These linkages require a capacious integration of literary sources such as biography, autobiography and memoir, novels, short stories, and plays; historical sources such as newspaper accounts, military records, and secondary literature; and sources that could be described as both - as when newspapers rehashed the recently concluded Indian Wars via reviews of a newly opened play, which was actually an adaptation of carefully selected excerpts from Elizabeth Bacon Custer's memoirs. The goal of consulting these texts is not necessarily to arrive at a "more accurate" understanding of the past. Instead, it is to reach for a more complex understanding of how "the past" was itself produced out of competing and polysemic narratives, simultaneously literary and historical, and how some of these narratives became constituted as "history" while others were excluded from such

consideration. For example, as we shall see, the memoirs of Sarah Winnemucca and Elizabeth Bacon Custer were produced and circulated under similar circumstances: both were written by women whose status allowed them greater independence than might have been typical of their contemporaries; who produced books, published letters, and embarked on speaking tours; who authored historical accounts that emphasize family, army life, and incidents connected to the Indian Wars; and who featured a similar blend of historical narrative, storytelling, strategic self-censorship, and frontier drama. Both were taken up by others as sources of historical knowledge and as inspiration for further works of history, fiction, historical fiction, and fictionalized history. Yet only one (Custer's) became the source of tropes and truisms about Western history that achieved broad public purchase and are even still resonant today. Over the course of the dissertation, I track the uptake of this one historical narrative over the other. Ultimately, my intervention is about the public circulation of memories of Western expansion, settlement, and transformation at the moment when the U.S. was moving into a new era of expansionism.

Following from this discussion of my methods, I clarify my usage of several key terms and theoretical frameworks that will reappear throughout the text. Specifically I describe what I mean by "the West" and "Western history," and how and why I use terms like "colonialism" and "settler colonialism." Delving deeper into my conversation with Kaplan's notion of manifest domesticity, I then offer a preliminary synthesis of the term "intimacy" - a synthesis I hope will become richer as the chapters proceed. The introduction concludes with a brief chapter outline.

The History of Literature and the Literature of History

In his influential book, *Metahistory* (1973), Hayden White studies historical methodologies of the nineteenth-century and defines history as the *narration* of events in the

past. White argues that a historian doesn't just *find* history but also *makes* it by making choices about which events to narrate and in what order, which to emphasize or subordinate. White's contention that "the historian performs an essentially *poetic* act," (White x) has had wide-reaching effects, influencing scholars in disciplines other than history, more than in history itself, to query a variety of cultural texts as history. Effectively, White specifies the process that permits a group of people to imagine themselves as sharing past glories, and by extension, as a nation.

This description of the narration of history as subjective, contingent, and collective points to what anthropologist Johannes Fabian has termed "chronopolitics," or a politics of time. According to Fabian, "Time belongs to the political economy of relations between individuals, classes, and nations" (Fabian x) or, as Elizabeth Freeman explains in her recent work on queer historiography, the state produces biopolitical status relations through temporal mechanisms, as significantly as through borders (Freeman 57). The disciplinary imperatives of History (and here I refer to the academic field) - what subjects are considered worthy of narration, how information can be gathered, what counts as evidence, what writing style is appropriate; in short, the regulation by which some narrations of past events are legitimated - comprise a kind of chronopolitics, or more accurately, a variety of different chronopolitical modes.

The question of chronopolitics is particularly germane to the study of nineteenth-century U.S. historical writing, as History did not emerge as a discipline and profession until the end of the century, which resulted in a capacious outpouring of different kinds of historical writing, many of which would be unrecognizable as history to contemporary readers. Nineteenth century historiographies from the first half of the twentieth century have long focused on historians like

George Bancroft, Francis Parkman, and William Prescott – with little attention paid to less prominent but still widely read historical writing.

Over the past twenty to thirty years, research in nineteenth-century U.S. historiography has expanded substantially, not as the result of new discoveries, per se, but of the new understanding that our criteria for identifying "history" was incommensurate with the period under study. Prior to the consolidation of the academy at the beginning of the twentieth century, the difference between literature and history was one of degrees, not disciplines. There was no widely recognized arbiter of what constituted proper historical method or style, or who was authorized to produce it – a powerful reminder of the necessity of the kind interdisciplinary analysis my project hinges on. My work proceeds from an understanding that it is a dangerous anachronism to apply the contemporary distinction between literary and historical writing in any time period but in particular to texts from the end of the nineteenth century United States. Prior to the widespread professionalization of history at the start of the twentieth century, texts that are now classified as literary explicitly performed a historical function, interpreting and disseminating information about the events of the U.S. past.[1] Likewise, texts that get read as "real history," like the writing of nineteenth-century United States historians such as George Bancroft or Francis Parkman, had more literary elements than we would associate with the term

[1] Nineteenth-century U.S. intellectuals advocated for the creation of literature, particularly the newly popularized genre of the historical romance, to help generate an American historical memory. Scholarship on the *North American Review*'s doctrine for fiction in the first decades of the nineteenth century demonstrates that its authors and editors were troubled by the nation's youth, its perceived "lack of legend and tradition" which they believed inhibited the development of appropriately American cultural forms; "To be sure [the United States] had wonderful scenery, but its beauty lacked association with events and persons. And the citizens of the United States, however estimable and hard-working, seemed to offer little variety and interest for the writer" (Doubleday 21). Though some doubted that the U.S., as opposed to Scotland, was "ripe" for the historical romance, others vocally insisted "the Scottish novels of Sir Walter Scott which deal with a historical period comparable to the span of American experience were the example and guide. Scott's insights into the connections between past and present could show Americans how to realize a continuity in their own historical experience, so difficult of realization in the new republic" (22). Given both the stakes of establishing a "A heroic past, great men, glory" and the continuities between historical and literary writing in this period, the Review's despair over America's shortcomings and commensurate delight in the possibilities offered by Scott's novels are unsurprising.

"history" today. Indeed, much of nineteenth-century history would read like fiction to contemporary readers and much of the fiction of that period bore a burden of providing historical proof for its account of the American past. Part of the issue is that the disciplinary divide between literature and history that has characterized American academia throughout the twentieth century is not well equipped to address this fact that the difference between history and literature was one of degrees rather than disciplines.

My project endeavors to repopulate the archive of U.S. historiography using a much less restrictive set of criteria to determine what constitutes "history."[2] I draw from novels, memoirs, didactic literature, journalism, and second-hand accounts of performances and lecture tours to reveal crucial discourses and counter-discourses that sought to explain, criticize, and justify continental expansion during a period when the national memory of these events had not yet crystallized. By demonstrating the common historical impulse at the heart of generically and stylistically diverse texts, I aim to reveal a broader and more capacious archive of historical fiction in the nineteenth century, and examine the methodological principles that condition literary histories, and their place in a rapidly developing nineteenth-century historical imaginary.

A benefit of approaching historiography in this way is that it offers a necessary corrective to what Margaret Jacobs has called "the limitations of the multicultural approach" to history, which "assembles women of various cultural backgrounds in the West in an ahistoricized, depoliticized space, as if they are gathering for a friendly quilting bee or tea party" (34). In this 2010 reflection on the state of Western women's history, Jacobs urges historians to recognize the power dynamics structuring relationships between and among white women and women of color

[2] To a certain extent, this project extends scholarship on the U.S. historical romance. Scholarship on the national tale, Ferris, Trumpner, have identified important connections between it and the historical novel in ways that add detail and texture to its nationalistic function. For more on this see Maxwell, or more reccently Hamnett, who draws on works outside of the United Kingdom to complicate widely-held beliefs about the singularity of Scott's work and the origins of the historical romance.

and acknowledge the persistence of the triumphalist account of white women's role in the West despite the increasing availability of resources on and by women of color. Accordingly, my project brings to light not just conflicts between indigenous peoples and American settlers, but also between competing modes of Native and white domesticity, relationships among and between women, and multifaceted roles white women and women of color played in writing "the first rough draft of history." There remains an overall emphasis on white women still - and on incorporating recovered women's histories into existing historical narratives (rather than rewriting them). My project endeavors to relocate some of these diverse narratives so that their historical locations, and the political significance of those sites, is at the center of my analysis.

The Frontier, the West, the Settler Colonial Site

Key to my analysis is detailing the ways in which narratives of intimacy and domesticity masked (or served as rationales) for settler colonial violence in the West. In a review of a recent biography of Laura Ingalls Wilder--a key twentieth century popularizer of the frontier myth--Patricia Limerick queries the limits of our language for understand the west,

> Stretched past its capacity by the tumultuous migrations and movements of the 19th century, that orderly term "westward expansion" is ready for a break. Rather than proceeding in a systematic march across a continent, a wild cast of characters — miners, farmers, ranchers, loggers — raced into the West, locating natural resources, extracting them and refining them into commodities to place on the market. "Westward explosion" might be the better phrase. As these resource rushes multiplied, thousands of Americans plunged into a parallel — and, by many measures, more rewarding and more consequential — form of extractive industry.

> Harvesting from the West an inestimable treasure of experiences and observations, these adventurers then refined this raw material into reminiscences, novels, diaries, letters, reports and tales of adventure, both actual and imagined. Since westward expansion coincided with the expansion of the print media, and since readers in the eastern United States had good reason to seek escape from the disturbing changes wrought by industrialization and urbanization, these exported cultural commodities found a receptive marketplace. Endowed with an improbable durability, this infrastructure of printed words retains much of its power to define the region. (Limerick, "Little House"*)*

Referring here to the enduring allure of Laura Ingalls Wilder's *Little House* series, Patricia Limerick's comment on the inability of the framework of westward expansion to contain the wildly diverse collection of people and experiences it includes is equally applicable to the works under consideration in this dissertation. I am interested in the explosion of western narratives that Limerick points out. To the "improbable durability of [these books'] infrastructure of printed words" I would add the unpredictability of exactly which infrastructures of printed words achieve that status.

This iteration of the "New Western History" stands opposed to the traditional Western history, as represented by Frederick Jackson Turner's "The Significance of the Frontier in American History." Despite substantive and numerous critiques, Turner's thesis has retained an almost unprecedented influence in U.S. historiography and popular historical consciousness. Turner's status as a member of the American Historical Association legitimized his vision of the American west, and attached his name to it permanently, but, as historian Henry Nash Smith explains in his now-iconic study of the frontier myth in American culture, "Brilliant and

persuasive as Turner was, his contention that the frontier and the West had dominated American development could hardly have attained such universal acceptance if it had not found an echo in ideas and attitudes already current" (Nash 270). Turner himself cites public figures - historians but also politicians and civic leaders like Henry Clay and Lyman Beecher who share his conviction that it is "dominant individualism" and "buoyancy and exuberance" that are "traits of the frontier," or human characteristics summoned into being by the presence of the frontier (Turner 38). More interesting than Turner's thesis itself, are the various articulations and contestations of the ideas which gave Turner's thesis such lasting purchase. The framework for what would become known as the New Western History, Limerick advocated to replace the central image of the frontier with a geographically-based framework that would remove the teleological impulse of the frontier-centered approach.[3] Of equal or perhaps greater importance is the theoretical framework of settler colonialism that lies at the heart of this dissertation.

In *Unsettling settler societies articulations of gender, race, ethnicity and class* (2001), Daiva Stasiulis and Nira Yuval-Davis distinguish settler societies, places where "Europeans have settled, where their descendants have remained politically dominant over indigenous peoples, and where a heterogeneous society has developed in class, ethnic, and racial terms" (2) from colonies of exploitation which extract resources and labor with only a small number of primarily male Europeans on site (administrators, soldiers, merchants, and missionaries) (3). Australian scholar Patrick Wolfe's theoretical work on settler colonialism offers a powerful framework for studying the American West which is widely used by scholars of indigenous studies in the United States. Wolfe argues that settler colonialism relies on a logic of elimination, but insists on the analytical separation of settler colonialism from genocide, noting that "the primary motive

[3] I also bear in mind Cathryn Halverson's point that "one mark of a text's western identity as the expanse of distance - whether conceived in miles or hours - between where it was written or set, and where it was marketed, published, and primarily read and reviewed" (11).

for elimination is not race (or religion, ethnicity, grade of civilization, etc.) but access to territory. Territoriality is settler colonialism's specific, irreducible element" (Wolfe 338). As Lorenzo Verancini puts it, the demand of the colonial society can be summed up as "you, work for me," whereas the demand of the settler colonial state to the indigenous population is, "you, go away" (Verancini 1). This violent logic is masked, or revealed, by narratives like those I examine in this dissertation.

Ann Laura Stoler's work provided a theoretical scaffolding for addressing "how intimate domains—sex, sentiment, domestic arrangement, and child rearing— figure in the making of racial categories and in the management of imperial rule" (Stoler 23). Onto the framework Stoler draws out, I bring to bear Lisa Lowe's recent work in which she seeks to contextualize the idea of intimacy in the nineteenth century. For Lowe, intimacy is a "liberal abstraction for ordering relations in civil society," which is contradicted by laboring women, the social order of colonial/slave society, and the "public" nature of sexuality in colonial society (195). Her definition of intimacy holds multiple inflections, not just those acts and relations that Stoler refers to as the intimate domain, family and sexual relations of the middle class home, but also the "spatial proximities" that evoke the economic and political logics that produced slavery, genocide, as well as labor conditions (Lowe 195), and which inform and at times constitute the intimate that I explore in this project.

Chapter Outlines

In each chapter of this dissertation, I aggregate literary texts about different sites of U.S. imperial conquest, starting with the writing of Paiute advocate and author Sarah Winnemucca. I

then turn my focus to the ways in which manifest domesticity operated in conjunction with the material project of colonial violence.

In my first chapter, I combine analysis of Sarah Winnemucca's writing, both in her book and in the press, to argue that Winnemucca's historical writing disrupts the trope of the vanishing Indian through an aggressive presentness. She uses imperial technologies typically leveraged as markers of white superiority and progress to assert continued Paiute existence.

In chapter two, I analyze the way the (white, middle class) wives of army officers translated the violence of settler colonialism for western audiences. The primary reason Custer's texts have been excluded from historical study - that they focus on domestic or family stories - is precisely why I consider them to be of great value. Both authors use manifest domesticity to write about wartime, but to different effects. If a deeply colonial skepticism about the existence, the realness of such a thing as an Indian family renders Winnemucca's family-centered narrative a purely historical and political work, then, on the other hand, it is a naive faith in the authenticity of Elizabeth Custer's self-styled identity as devoted wife that obscures the highly politicized nature of her books.

In the final chapter I turn to a powerful example of the way Custer's translation of colonial violence was taken up and recirculated in the popular western melodrama, *The Girl I Left Behind Me* (1893). This chapter explores the insidious and profoundly damaging work Custer's memoirs performed in justifying U.S. empire, not just in their time, but *over* time. The efficacy of her narratives, especially those parts adapted for stage dramas like Belasco's, is in their self-effacement, the way they instantiate the white, middle class domesticity which both justifies and distracts from colonial violence, at the site of bloodshed itself. By studying the play's legacy, I demonstrate that long-standing pop cultural representations of the apparently

masculine enterprise of war are made history partly through women's narratives. In what follows, I trace these narratives of settler colonialism through their various literary and historical forms. I reveal a broader archive of historical fiction in the nineteenth century and examine the methodological principles that condition literary histories. I use this broader archive to challenge and expand historical frameworks of manifest domesticity. Finally, I challenge accounts of settler colonialism that include women's narratives to examine how such narratives are deemed historical and what this reveals about settler colonialism itself.

Chapter 1: "I have never forgotten their first coming": Sarah Winnemucca and the Second Draft of History

Introduction

On January 5, 1880, the *Silver State*, the daily newspaper for the bustling western city of Winnemucca, Nevada published a potentially apocryphal account of the initial meeting between Paiute "princess" Sarah Winnemucca and a group of white, middle class women reformers. This was hardly her first time in the spotlight. Winnemucca had, the year before, attracted national notice as an interpreter and scout for the U.S. military during the Bannock War, and would, within weeks, grace political reports and society pages of northeastern newspapers as a member of a diplomatic envoy to Washington, D.C. on behalf of the Northern Paiutes; she was already well on her way to becoming the public face of her tribe. The following passage purports to portray Winnemucca's first meeting with the eastern women who would go on to become her collaborators, and some of her staunchest EuroAmerican allies in the coming years:

> The San Francisco Stock Exchange says several dowagers from Boston met the Princess Sarah Winnemucca, daughter of King Winnemucca, at one of the railroad stations. The dowagers sympathized with the Princess heartily. They looked at the followers of the Princess, male and female, and declared that they should be better clothed. Sarah told
>
> them about her lecture in San Francisco and her endeavors to ameliorate the condition of her people. Said the dowagers: "You must go East; go to Boston; there you will meet a

> better class of people to aid you." At the dinner station the Boston dowagers illustrated that "better class of people" by bringing away from the table provender enough to give them a comfortable supper and breakfast. ("Local Intelligence")

This account, apocryphal or not, is nearly metonymic in its condensed representation of the nexus of empire, technology, and domesticity that characterize Winnemucca's circulation in U.S. popular consciousness, for whether or not the story was based in fact, its constitutive elements speak volumes about the social and material realities undergirding her ascendance as an advocate: the support of an old and distinctly American brand of respectable, white, womanhood – embodied almost hyperbolically in "the Boston dowagers" - and the repurposing of the tools and technologies of western expansion and settler colonialism for the benefit of Native peoples.[4]

The story of a Native woman using the transcontinental railway to move east unsettles the discourse of westward expansion which was envisioned as a one-way movement from east to west. Here, Winnemucca enters into U.S. white domestic space, a moment that is situated in the flux of imperial technology; the expansion and settlement that provided the logic for railways presupposed Indian disappearance, and certainly failed to account for eastward trajectories of humans, rather than natural resources. Similarly, the need to protect the white, feminine, domestic space embodied in these respectable Boston dowagers is the justificatory logic for extinguishing Indian life – that is, that Indians pose a threat to white domestic order. This accidental meeting in a train station disrupts the presumptive rationale of settler colonialism and conquest at multiple levels; it also vexes the division of private from public and domestic from

[4] The question of naming is particularly complex when it comes to writing about the history of indigenous populations. As Native Studies scholar Eric Cheyfitz notes "The term Native and Indian are not necessarily synonymous, though they can be depending on the context. All U.S. Indians are certainly Native, but all U.S. Natives are certainly not Indians" (6). In this chapter I use either a specific tribe name or default to Native. Use of the term "Indian" is restricted to moments when I am using the language of the day or referring to particular scripts of stereotypes.

foreign which Amy Kaplan has posited is crucial to understanding American exceptionalism. Perhaps most notable is the dowagers' instruction to "go East; go to Boston," a refrain that echoes one of the century's most well-remembered quotations, Horace Greeley's injunction to Civil War veterans struggling in Washington D.C. to quit the moldering city and "go west, young man, go west and grow up with the country."

In *The Lives of Infamous Men*, Foucault writes about the anecdotes that appear in government records as a way of accessing otherwise unremembered lives, noting though the steep price of gaining access to knowledge about these subjects, namely that such anecdotes in the archive capture the subaltern in the moment of their encounter with power, a moment which is, with very few exceptions, a moment of agony. This could certainly be said of anecdotes regarding Paiute contact with easterners, but I will argue in this chapter that Winnemucca's narrative is more complex, affording us a rare glimpse of that which may have preceded, or followed, those more common glimpses captured: the ferocious and unrelenting two-sided struggle which the records might have otherwise narrated as one-sided. Winnemucca may have been "infamous" in certain regards, but her circulation both in trains, meeting with dowagers, and in print, hailing a national audience, shows that the more broadly purchased "frontier thesis" did not circulate uncontested, that multiple histories battled fiercely. One of my goals here is to study those historical narratives that are not legible as such, and to give better insight into the reasons why one particular narrative achieved purchase.

The remainder of this chapter offers a biographical overview of Winnemucca's life aimed at situating her as someone who, despite being treated in newspapers as a representation of all Paiutes, in fact lived a rather unconventional life. I then discuss her turn to writing and advocacy, examining her books and lecture series, and coverage of both local and national newspapers.

Here I pause to elaborate on the "unexpected places" - or rather, unexpected times and technologies - that work to circulate Winnemucca's writing, and how these disrupt the binaries between Native and settler, primitive and modern, public and private, foreign and domestic. (Deloria, 2004) Relevant to both her biography and her journalistic circulation is her romantic life, which was the subject of much speculation and gossip, and not insignificantly considering how ideals of family, femininity, and "racial mixing" circulated alongside her writing and other writing about her. Yet Winnemucca's work reverses many of these narratives by centering Native domesticity, and presenting white encroachment as a threat to indigenous sexual and territorial integrity. The chapter concludes with a story that shows the transformation of Winnemucca's actions and words into a story used against her.

I am especially interested in the substance of Winnemucca's writing, both mass cultural and literary, but largely in relation to which elements of her narrative did and did not achieve mass circulation and/or pop cultural purchase. I seek to understand her radical critique of history and her production of a contested history that undermined and grappled with the white-authored narratives of westward expansion. As we shall see, Sarah Winnemucca's narratives - in book or newsprint - use the technologies of empire (standardized time-keeping, mail systems, the telegraph, and the train) to offer an alternative vision of the relations of the frontier - specifically disrupting discourses of manifest domesticity. Ultimately, I argue that Winnemucca's history of the Paiute nation, and her publicity through books, news articles, and lectures represents a complex grappling with the tools of empire - both the technologies that enabled conquest and the xenophobic logics of home and family under whose auspices it transpired.

I. Life & Public Writing

Biography

Sarah Winnemucca (Thocmetony) dates her birth to 1844. She was the granddaughter of Chief Truckee, a Paiute leader who was the primary point of contact with white settlers, and the daughter of Winnemucca, a respected shaman and later head man for the Kuyuidika band of Paiutes, and Tuboitony. Shortly after her birth, Paiute territory would start experiencing the first sustained intrusions by whites. Though Winnemucca would come to be known as a "princess," because of the status of her father and grandfather, as was the case with many other Indian "princesses" of the eighteenth and nineteenth century, this title fails to adequately describe the complex reality of her community, and the correspondingly complex leadership role she came to occupy over the course of her life.[5] Sarah's title was assigned based on the mistaken belief that her father was sole chief of all the Paiute people. In reality, he was one of many Paiute leaders who presided over a collection of more than a dozen loosely affiliated bands. Her grandfather Truckee dedicated his life to promoting the integration of Paiute and white society, first working for white explorers and settlers as a guide and eventually mediating an increasing number of conflicts between Paiutes and white settlers.

Truckee worked tirelessly to educate Sarah and his other grandchildren in the ways of white settlers, which he saw presciently as the ways of the future. Around 1857, when Sarah was entering her teenage years, she and her younger sister Elma lived and worked in the home of Major William Ormsby in Nevada. Although events would soon trouble Ormsby's relationship with the Paiutes, while Sarah and Elma were in his home he was considered a friend, and in his

[5] For more on the origins and history of the "Indian Princess" trope see Rayna Green's foundational article, "The Pocahontas Perplex: the Image of Indian Women in American Culture." *Massachusetts Review* 16 (Autumn 1975): 698–714. As it pertains to Sarah Winnemucca, see Carolyn Sorisio, "Playing the Indian Princess?: Sarah Winnemucca's Newspaper Career and Performance of American Indian Identities." Studies in American Indian Literature 1, 23 (2011): 1-31.

household, the girls learned not only to speak English but, at least in Sarah's case, to read it as well.

Little is known about Sarah's life between 1861 and 1864, except that she and her father, sister, and brother performed in traveling shows in which they reenacted Paiute ceremonies and dances to raise funds for the tribe. In 1865, Sarah lost her mother and baby brother, and other relatives, in the Mud Lake Massacre.[6] In March of that year, roughly 50 members of the Nevada Volunteer Cavalry Battalion responded to white settlers' complaints of cattle theft in the Pyramid Lake area and attacked an unsuspecting band of Kuyuidika, killing all but one of the thirty elderly men, women, and children they found.[7] In 1866, Sarah joined her brother Natches at the Pyramid Lake Reservation, where she would remain for two years. In her later advocacy and lecturing, she would describe her experiences with the corruption and abuses of the Indian Agency there, not to mention the unchecked encroachments of white settlers into Pyramid Lake territory.

In 1867, Sarah began serving as a translator for her tribe's interactions with military and agency representatives, and in 1869, after her assistance helped defuse a conflict between Indian Agents and her tribe, she accepted a full-time job as interpreter at Fort McDermitt, a role she would remain in until 1871 (NW 50). This role formalized her status as a cultural mediator, making her legible to white audiences in a new way. Within a year, she wrote what would become her first nationally circulated piece of writing, a letter to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs with recommendations for how to handle the Indians in the area. This was picked up and reprinted in newspapers across the country, in major cities like Chicago, New York, and

[6] This event is still often referred to as the Battle of Mud Creek in non-native sources. I use the term "massacre" to describe the indiscriminate slaughter of a small group of Paiutes comprised of unarmed women and children (Zanjani 78-79).

[7] In her biography, Sally Zanjani sites similar instances, where vague accusation of cattle theft lodged by white settlers resulted in attacks of Paiutes (82).

Washington D.C., and finally in *Harper's Weekly*, whose circulation had a national reach.[8] The letter would later be reprinted in Helen Hunt Jackson's legal history of U.S.-Indian relations, *A Century of Dishonor* (1881).

The early acclaim Sarah received for this letter was far from unanimous. By voicing support for and seeking to help Camp McDermitt, Sarah had aligned herself with the army in its ongoing power struggle with the Department of the Interior, setting her at odds with the Office of Indian Affairs (Zanjani). Her fiery rhetoric was not the only part of her life that ignited public controversy. The Indian Princess moniker that allowed her to command an audience with her political views also subjected her to increased scrutiny. Newspapers responded to reports of her illicit marriage to a white officer with the same fervid interest with which they greeted her letter, resulting in sensational and largely damning commentary.

Sarah left Camp McDermitt after the dissolution of her marriage in 1872 and moved to the Malheur Reservation in 1874 to serve as the reservation's interpreter and later play a role in its school.[9] She left Malheur in 1876 and receded from public life until the start of the Bannock War in 1878, which brought her back into an active role as a leader/speaker for her people, and into collaboration with the U.S. army. Sarah acted as a translator and scout in the military campaign against a group of Bannocks, Umatillas, and Northern Paiutes, who rebelled against the brutal conditions on Malheur. As in much of her diplomatic work, Sarah's efforts ultimately garnered more criticism and mistrust from the tribe she hoped to advocate for, largely because of the government, or army's, failure to follow through on what they promised. Horrified by the intense suffering that resulted from the military-ordered relocation of Northern Paiutes to the Yakima Reservation in present-day Washington, she devoted herself fully to advocacy.

[8] For a history of Harper's Weekly, see Mott.

[9] Winnemucca was involved with a number of issues during this time, including the campaign to end her brother Natches' detainment.

From the end of the Bannock War until her death in 1891, Sarah would engage in the lecturing and speaking around which much of the rest of her life would be centered. In broad strokes, Winnemucca turned to lecturing after the forced relocation to Yakima in the hopes that she might end the Paiutes' stay there. Her efforts helped draw the attention of the Department of the Interior, which led to her first trip East to meet with President Rutherford B. Hayes and Secretary of the Interior, Carl Schurz. The trip would ultimately prove to be a failure: promises made by the Secretary were later withdrawn, which increased the tension between Winnemucca and the Paiute community. In 1883 she traveled East again, to lecture and enlist support for the Paiutes. Her arrival in Boston would usher in many years of collaboration with two educators and advocates, Elizabeth Palmer Peabody and Mary Peabody Mann.[10] In addition to lecturing, she wrote and published *Life Among the Piutes: Their Wrongs and Claims*, a venture she funded herself.

After leaving the East Coast in 1884, Sarah lectured with less frequency because she devoted much of her time to the Peabody Institute, the multilingual school her book had been designed to support. Despite the tireless efforts of Peabody and Mann, the Institute, dependent on private funding, would not last the decade. With the closing of the school, Winnemucca all but disappeared from public view, at least on a national scale, until her death in 1891.

Cultivating a Place in the News

Winnemucca's first and only book, *Life Among the Piutes: Their Wrongs and Claims* is a mix of history, ethnography, memoir, autobiography, and political tract that resists easy

[10] Later in this chapter I will discuss the only evidence of their contact prior to 1883, a brief mention in an 1880 article.

classification.[11] The book went through one printing in Winnemucca's lifetime. Given its limited printing of 250 copies, Sarah's book had a wide sphere of influence, particularly in the broader context of Native writing by women in this period. Notice of its publication appeared in papers ranging from the New York Post, published twice daily, to the St. Landry Democrat, the weekly paper of a small Louisiana farm town; though widespread most notices were short announcements rather than full book reviews - it was rare that even its full title was mentioned. It was presented largely as a fundraiser, an expansion of her lectures that, based on its sales, failed to rival the accolades awarded to the original source.

During Winnemucca's lifetime, the public's main engagement with her was through newspapers, public lectures, or selective excerpting of the book; indeed, though the book is a sturdier and more legible product, it was her public prominence that led to the publication of her book, not the other way around. Winnemucca's letter of 1870 gave way to an extensive lecture schedule up and down the east coast, and the success of her biting criticism of the corruption of the Agency system drew the full wrath of the Department of the Interior's Indian Agents, thus garnering even more coverage. It was only after she had held public attention for a number of years that Winnemucca wrote and published her book, whose sales generated profits for the school she had so long dreamed of. All the while, she continued to lecture and attract significant attention from the eastern press.

Sarah Winnemucca's transformation into a word warrior (Ruoff) or newspaper warrior (Carpenter & Sorisio) hinged in part on the convergence of technological innovations in printing, communication, and transportation that I discussed in the introduction, specifically the

[11] There are similarities between Winnemucca's narrative and other contemporary writing, the title's echo of captivity narratives being the most striking, but I agree with scholar David Brumble, who finds it unlikely that similarities between Winnemucca's account and other autobiographical narratives from the period (slave narratives, captivity narratives) are largely coincidental or a result of the editorial work of Mary Mann.

emergence of "penny papers," the expansion of the postal system, and invention of the telegraph Indeed these different monikers, particularly "newspaper warrior," gestures toward the ways in which she repurposed modern/American technologies for unintended purposes, thus challenging contemporaneous associations between indigeneity and primitivism. In the early-mid nineteenth century, newspapers across the country were able to reprint local news circulated through the mail in newspaper exchanges. Newspapers circulated "exchange papers" that editors in other cities would clip, and then include in their own papers, affording them the ability to print national news. The "penny press revolution" of the 1830s, which reduced the prices of papers, made them cheaper and more profitable to produce. This led to an explosion of new publications, which took place as advancements in transportation enabled a dramatic increase in readership, a trend that was further accelerated by the Civil War and the resulting uptick in demand for news. By the end of the century there would be 1600 daily newspapers and 9,000 weekly local papers, nearly one for each town (Slotkin, *Fatal Environment* 118-20*)*. The appearance of the telegraph would allow editors to receive news from distant locales with greater speed, but this speed was far more expensive than the mail and thus prohibitive. In New York City, however, newspapers responded to the high cost of the telegraph by forming an association that would become the Associated Press. Small papers that joined this new association of presses could receive news from across the continent relayed by telegraph from New York. It was not necessary to have telegraph lines between every locale in order for local news to spread. The prohibitive cost of the telegraph led to condensed, simplified coverage of events in the west, where lines were spaced far apart and only short stories were profitable to share. This emerging news media landscape made it possible for Winnemucca, who was initially covered only in Nevada and California newspapers, to achieve national notoriety (though as we shall see such visibility was at times a

double-edged sword).

II. Winnemucca's Critique: Temporal Regulation,

The Timing of History

While Winnemucca's relation to the telegraph was largely contingent, it is interesting to note in light of how her work troubled American modes of timekeeping, including the standardization of time that became necessary as railways were laid to increasingly far flung locales. *Life Among the Piutes: Their Wrongs and Claims* opens with it's author's birth: "I was born somewhere near 1844, but am not sure of the precise time." The straightforward syntax, plain diction, and brevity of the sentence all bely the complexity of her location between and among a constellation of temporal and spatial systems that were shaping the history, and future, of Native peoples in the moment of her writing. Dating her birth in the Gregorian calendar displays her understanding both of western temporal mechanisms and of the significance of birth years. She maps herself within a regimented system of time that was, in the moment of her writing, coming to structure and measure "civilized" life with increasing and unprecedented reach and uniformity. She juxtaposes the precise – the year of her birth – with an acknowledgment that this measure was, by western standards, imprecise. At the same time, the line indexes a refusal to or recognition of the impossibility of being contained by those stricter measurements, resorting to mapping it in space - "somewhere" near 1844. Her phrasing simultaneously demonstrates her knowledge of western timekeeping and its politics (the importance of a precise birth date) and acknowledges the degree to which she is outside of or incommensurate with these systems, without offering an explanation for either how she knew the year of her birth or why she didn't know more. This choice to integrate such specific, and

specifically western, markers of dates and times into her narratives of her own life, is notable. This precision and accuracy marks an interesting juxtaposition with western assumptions about Indians' location before or outside of regulated temporal mechanisms.

Starting with this same first chapter, her narrative upends the traditional chronology of western narratives of Indianness. She tells the story of the initial encounters between Paiutes and whites, positioning white arrival as a long awaited moment in Paiute history, rather than as a new chapter in white European expansion. To do so, she introduces her tribe's creation story, quoting her grandfather's telling. After a first encounter with the whites, Truckee, her grandfather, explains that he has been waiting for their arrival, that it was foretold in the Paiute story of the origin of the world. According to Truckee, at the beginning of the world there were only four people, a dark boy and girl and a light-skinned boy and girl, the children of the great father and mother. While they were initially happy together as a family, soon the children quarreled so bitterly that the great father separated them, "And by-and-by the dark children grew into a large nation; and we believe it is the one we belong to, and that the nation that sprung from the white children will some time send someone to meet us and heal all the old trouble" (7). By positing that white existence is a long predicted chapter in Piute history, Winnemucca puts Paiutes and whites are on equal footing, dismissing the idea that Europeans were first or farther ahead. Further, Paiutes had knowledge of them, in fact expected them – their meeting is foretold and anticipated, not a discovery made by Europeans. Winnemucca makes clear that Paiutes possess a knowledge of their own history in direct contradiction of nineteenth century beliefs, as well as anthropologists and ethnologists who alleged "primitive" tribes had no sense of time or history and that this was a marker of their barbarity.

In fracturing the dominant scripts about Europeans discovery of Native tribes (and Native

lands) - scripts that excluded Indians from the past, and future, of the United States - Winnemucca suggested Indians conceived of themselves as historical subjects. By organizing her story of her life and tribe through the technologies synonymous with progress and expansion she asserts that whites are a chapter in Paiute history rather than the other way around. Her narrative also offers settlers an opportunity to discover themselves as subjects of Paiute history; notably this would involve "heal[ing] all the old trouble" between dark and light-skinned peoples, rather than seeking to conquer or dominate. Further, she inverts the paternalistic parent-child configuration of white-Indian relations so that the family structure whites had long used to justify their discipline and control of native people is transformed into a claim by native people to their inheritance as coequal siblings and family members.

By the first decades of the nineteenth century, the trope of the vanishing Indian was deeply embedded in the United States' historical consciousness. The historical romances that were the first American novels to command widespread literary acclaim and popularity, popularized, if not invented the phenomenon. By using American markers of time and distance, Winnemucca disrupts the temporal and geographic displacement of the Indians, enshrining the life and work of the Paiutes into the American present. Her detailed reports of her time as a military scout also locate the Paiutes as part of, rather than the opposition to, American imperial expansion.

The height of Sarah Winnemucca's prominence in the media in the early 1880s coincides with the widespread implementation of standard time, a change largely due to the increasing centrality of rail travel in the United States. On at least half a dozen occasions I have found, articles and advertisements on Winnemucca's lectures were printed on the same page or even in the same column as stories on the implementation of standard time. While there is no direct

causal link, the increasing pervasiveness of temporal regulation makes her detailed use of time all the more interesting. The book's publication in 1883 coincides neatly with the North American railroad's implementation of a comprehensive system known collectively as Railroad Standard Time, often hailed as the inaugurating moment of the modern era of timekeeping (Bartky).

The institutionalization of standard time was underway at the moment of her writing, a process linked inextricably to the same process of industrialized expansion by which Winnemucca's life, and that of her tribe, became a part of a western narrative of history. Winnemucca includes no references to watches, clocks or any time-keeping device, but one comment early in the narrative suggests her engagement with time was two-sided. Describing her grandfather (Truckee's) death, she records the arrival of midnight, "which was told by the seven stars reaching the same place the sun reaches at midday" (68). This moment is striking, as the only one in the book where Winnemucca provides an explanation for her means of tracking time. This act of translation reminds the reader of the simultaneous existence of, and interrelation between Native life with western technologies. Truckee's death is not part of a natural progression wherein an "old world" disappears as a new one emerges; instead they are very much part of the same world. Time is the same whether told by a machine of western devising, or read by the emergence of certain stars. Winnemucca's engagement with time here can be read in multiple ways: Did she anticipate Western/American skepticism and questions about the accuracy of her times and dates? Was she revealing an act of translation between American and indigenous worlds that she constantly engaged in? Looking back and imposing the chronopolitics of the present moment, onto the past? Or do these times signify a changing model of work and labor, a shift from seasonal, communal practices to the patterns and rhythms of industrial life

into which immigrants coming from anywhere had to be integrated?[12] From a young age Sarah would have had life set to the time of non-Paiutes, in the Ornsby home; to the hourly bells that would govern life at the Catholic nunnery where she sought an education; then the bugle calls of Fort McDermitt.

Little research has been done to indicate the extent to which western chronometers – watches, clocks – were available to and adopted by western tribes, let alone the Paiute bands of which Winnemucca was a part. The material history of watches included in Hillary Wyss' study of late-18th and early 19th-century Indian boarding schools offers some insight. Wyss uncovered evidence that watches were frequently given as gifts to native children studying in American boarding schools, and goes to on to argue that in that context they constituted a colonizing mechanism. The novel devices "transformed the way individuals and communities related to each other and to the larger world by restructuring time from its fluid, seasonal passage to a rigid and unchanging process of mechanical motions regardless of individual circumstance" and "separated the notion of time from light, weather, and season; days and nights were divided into fractions through minutes and hours rather than through mornings, afternoons, and evenings" (Wyss 75).

In her writing Winnemucca countered what Anne McClintock has theorized as "anachronistic space" - a trope in which "colonized people do not inhabit history proper but exist in a permanently anterior time within the geographic space of the modern empire as anachronistic, atavistic, irrational, bereft of human agency – the living embodiment of the

[12] As scholars like Herbert Gutman and Mario Garcia have shown, new immigrants' traditional social habits and customs didn't fit the patterns and rhythms of industrial life; capitalism/industry had to discredit such customs which constituted a threat to the logics of production. This affected all immigrants from pre-industrial countries, from the eastern European countryside to the farms of Mexico, though it was often further racialized, for example, Mexicans were also considered to have no sense of time in the industrial sense - blamed on their "sense of living constantly in the present" (Garcia 270).

archaic “primitive”” (30). Winnemucca’s use of precise dates and times is not evenly distributed throughout the book. While she retroactively dates her birth on a western calendar (“somewhere near 1844, but am not sure of the precise time”), she makes no attempt to date older stories of her people and their conflicts with other tribes. Rather, her use of times and dates correlates largely with instances or periods of intimate proximity, of intervention, or interference, by Westerners, and especially insofar as the Indian Agency and the army are involved in her own life and the life of her tribe, and the creation of reservations.

This snapshot of the translation and adaptation of Western timekeeping methods and that of her people is likely a direct product of a very Piute kind of historiography. In the army wife memoirs I discuss elsewhere in this dissertation, the inclusion of specific dates and times is always the product of written records, either diaries kept by the women themselves, or the detailed reports kept by the army. Yet none of these other narratives make use of times and dates to the extent Winnemucca does, despite the fact that it is unlikely Winnemucca had as ready or as consistent access to timekeeping devices. Winnemucca’s narrative bears the imprint of chronopolitical struggle, coursed through as it is with different temporalities and temporal modes. In my next chapter, I discuss how the chronopolitics of white army wives’ use of the military timekeeping of bugle calls functions as an imperial technology, interpolating a "foreign" western landscape into the national home. Interestingly then, just as the military regulates or even produces time and its meaning in the narratives by white army officers’ wives, the *presence* of the military induces Natives such as Winnemucca into the tracking and measuring of time and space, and produces records which Winnemucca can use. But, Winnemucca also lets her reader know that these kinds of measurements were always within Paiute capacity, and indeed that Paiute capacity for historical memory might even exceed that of the encroaching settlers.

Winnemucca has a unique claim to the reliability of her memory. Anthropological research on the great basin tribes suggests that for tribes like Winnemucca's, oral tradition played an exceptionally important role. A key aspect of Paiute oral tradition involved extensive memorization, a process that transpired through repetition of greater and greater lengths of story. According to anthropological studies of great basin tribes, "Memory is the basis for transmitting knowledge, particularly in elite families that supply consistently provident leaders. Their children were specially trained to memorize family, community, and tribal traditions, best encapsulated in mythology and rituals," going on to note that although unrecognized by westerners, "Memory was aided by many mneumonics," (Miller 78). This suggests that due to Winnemucca's upbringing, particularly as the daughter of Paiute leaders Truckee and Winnemucca, she was trained to develop a capacity to capture and remember details that others writing from memory were not. The possibility that Winnemucca had accurate or at least highly specific memories is further supported by the general accuracy of the timeline laid out in her account. Biographers have pointed out some discrepancies, but the vast majority of her timeline is accurate. Of further interest is that, with the exception of her account of the Bannock War and two smaller altercations for which she referred to General O.O. Howard's publicly circulated records and reports, Winnemucca's account was written based entirely on her own memories. (Howard 1887)

It also reveals one way that colonial temporal management shot through the intimate domains of Paiute life. Colonial powers have long "[managed] their own denizens through an official time line, effectively shaping the contours of a meaningful life by registering some events like births, marriages, and deaths, and refusing to record others like initiations, friendships, and contact with the dead" (Freeman 58). The mechanisms of recording and

remembering history are inseparably linked to the family and tribal social structures that determined Paiute historians. In the following section I turn my attention to Winnemucca's representation of those intimate domains, and how she counters colonial discourses of white domesticity that undergird the logics of colonial temporal management.

Family, Intimacy, & the "Double Danger"

Winnemucca's portraits of family and intimacy were perhaps even more explicitly disruptive than her engagement with time. As I discuss more extensively in the following chapters, one of the most widespread and trenchant rationales for colonial violence was the urgent need to protect white women, emblems for American family and futurity. One of Winnemucca's most powerful interventions is her disparate accounts of war stories, which introduce them as the outcome of assaults on the intimate domains of Paiute family, rather than unprovoked Indian violence or theft. In this way, Winnemuca's writing is a powerful illustration of Beth Piatote's argument about Native literature and domesticity in the era of assimilation: "Indian wars are wars on Indian families" (145).

Sarah's earliest experience of the approach of white people was as a threat to her home and family - first, rumors from other tribes that "white brothers" brought violence led her family into an unplanned relocation into the mountains; then at the imminent appearance of whites her mother and aunt were forced to bury Sarah and her sister, leaving only their faces uncovered and camouflaged by sage plants, until they could return to find them (Winnemucca 11). This forcible division of families recurs even as "friendly" whites draw near, as they are indistinguishable from the rest at a distance (13). In Winnemucca's narrative we see how settler colonial incursion produced the domestic aberrations they used as an indictment of Native family and parenting practices, and upon which the logics of paternalism rested. Tuboitony's desperate attempts to

save her daughters by leaving them buried, could be transformed in the eyes of whites into a barbarous mother's failed infanticide and abandonment.

In her narrative, whites are dividing Paiute families, and violating Paiute social mores, rather than the reverse. She writes, "They came like a lion, yes like a roaring lion, and have continued so ever since and I have never forgotten their first coming." This description of the United States' arrival in Indian territory reanimates this historical moment as one of invasion rather than conquest. While white settlers often compared the western half of the United States to other colonial holdings throughout the world, tropical islands, impenetrable jungles, Winnemucca reanimates the colonial encounter so that white explorers, settlers, and soldiers are an exotic, and noisy, intrusion. It is not, she reminds us, the American west and its inhabitants who are hostile and unwelcoming, but white settlers, Westerners, who are an invasive species, dangerous animals, not only out of place but predatory.

Throughout the book, and in many lectures, Winnemucca integrates detailed narratives of domestic customs of the Paiutes. This is significant because discourses of Native savagery rested in part on ideas about domesticity, and here the content and structure of Winnemucca's narrative offers a critique. She interrupts the transition from the earliest white-Native encounter to the outbreak of hostilities, with a chapter on Paiute domestic practices. Winnemucca's choice to title it "Domestic and Social Moralities" rather than "manners" is notable, revealing an emphasis on Paiute integrity (Georgi-Findlay 233). The insertion of this chapter disrupts the process of manifest domesticity at a structural level, located as it is between the first chapter, on the initial meeting of Paiutes and Whites, and the third chapter, "Wars and their Causes." Essentially, Winnemucca rejects the notion that American expansion served to "settle" the West, by literally centering Native domesticity as an interlude between encounter and war. Thus the

reader (potentially) enters the chapter on military hostilities with greater awareness that Indian families, with their own "domestic and social moralities," are under threat - a pointed reversal of army wives' narratives, in which military excursions are justified by threats against settler domesticity. Rather than instating an artificial divide between Paiute domesticity and colonial violence, an inversion of the division inscribed by EuroAmerican domestic discourse, Winnemucca threads the foreign incursion through these practices. This move also disrupts the teleological progress narrative of contemporaneous white army wives' narratives, inserting Paiute moral and domestic order as a site of continuity from before the arrival of white settlers, which precedes Winnemucca's stay with the Ormsby's.

Winnemucca's reversal of colonial narratives regarding domesticity is particularly visible in relation to the threat of sexual violence, which appears in white army wives' narratives as a "double danger," that is, the danger that they will be raped by "savages" and/or the danger of their pact with white men who promise to kill them first if it comes to that. But Winnemucca reveals that for Native women, there was a different kind of "triple danger" - the very real threat of sexual predation or death at the hands of white settlers if one remained with one's tribe and family, a compounded vulnerability from pursuing the defense or reprisal that might limit the first danger by the knowledge that any such action would lead inevitably to the intervention on behalf of the U.S. military, and finally the unnamed but familiar to Winnemucca threat of sexual violence at the hands of white soldiers if one sought protection in reservations or camps located near American military bases.

The threat of sexual violence, which, in the case of Elizabeth Custer and the other authors under discussion in the next chapter, supplied the central dramatic tension that transformed women into heroes and captured popular attention, did not draw the same attention in

Winnemucca's narrative, though the risk was exponentially greater. In *Life Among the Piutes'* narrative of warfare, sexual violence perpetrated by white men against native women and children is as common a source of conflict as land disputes. Often the two are so deeply intertwined they are nearly inseparable. For example, Winnemucca's account of the start of the War of 1860 (referred to now as The Paiute War, the Pyramid Lake War, Washoe Indian War or the Pah Ute War), differs dramatically from those commonly in circulation today, which attribute it largely to food shortages that ultimately led to Paiutes violating a treaty.

In Winnemucca's account, the conflict begins with the disappearance of two twelve-year-old Paiute girls who had been digging roots in the forest. As the tribe searched for the missing girls they discovered trails leading to the nearby home of two white traders. The men initially denied any knowledge of the girls until subsequent encounters at the men's house revealed evidence of their presence.

> After weeks, the girl were found underneath the house in a space accessed via a trapdoor: When my people saw their condition they at once killed both brothers and set fire to the house. Three days after, the news was spread as usual. "The bloodthirsty savages had murdered two innocent hard-working, industrious, kind-hearted settlers;" and word was sent to California for some army soldiers to demand the murderers of the Williamses. (71-72)

Her references to the girls' "condition" combined with the few other details Winnemucca includes – their location in bed, their bondage – as well as the speed and severity of the Paiute response make clear that the girls treatment was extreme; it is likely they bore obvious evidence of sustained physical and likely sexual abuse, an interpretation supported by the absence of any other motive for the men's choice to capture them. Though this is not stated explicitly it would

have been anomalous had she done so.

Significantly, this explanation is provided immediately after another anecdote, in which Winnemucca and her sister are unable to fulfill their grandfather's dying wish that they should be educated by the Catholic nuns of southern California because parents of the white students objected so forcefully to their presence (Winnemucca 70), a subtle illustration of the double bind that made Native women so very vulnerable to the sexual predations of white men - their presence in lands claimed by white men, and their exclusion from the safety of traditional domestic and feminine spaces reserved for white women.

Winnemucca's story is punctuated by and often structured around, sexual violence and its threat. Yet, even the reality of sexual violence visited upon native women did not provoke the same sympathies or vows of protection as the mere threat of violence against white women. Indeed, as we shall see next, although Winnemucca had much the same claims to historical validity as did women like Elizabeth Custer, and their writings shared stylistic and topical features, Winnemucca's writing was subjected to, and discredited by, a persistent double-standard. Sarah Winnemucca's agential engagement of the technologies and terminologies of white/American "progress," were constrained by competing discourses that framed how readers interpreted her and how editors and writers described her for an ever-expanding public of mostly white (American as well as immigrant) readers. In his book-length study of newspaper portrayals of Native Americans in the nineteenth century, John M. Coward notes that while the telegraph brought news quickly, the information that arrived was often truncated. Through the earlier mail exchange system editors might receive multiple, detailed accounts of an event, permitting smaller reach, but greater accuracy and nuance. However, the wide geographical distribution of reporters in the west meant that AP reports had outsized influence and "could set the tone for

coverage of particular events, reinforcing stereotypes, repeating clichés, and generally offering the most popular interpretations of news events. By the same token, errors in AP reporting were of greater significance because they turned up in so many newspapers" (Coward 17). This had particularly detrimental repercussions for Native peoples, whose representations were already one dimensional and distorted by racism and xenophobia.

III. Constraints on Winnemucca's Effectiveness

Pocahontas Complex

Sarah Winnemucca's attempts to be an author of history competed - and often lost - to the framing image of what Rayna Green dubs "the Pocahontas Perplex," that to assume the symbolic powers of the Indian princess, she must sacrifice allegiance her family, tribe, and often her own life, and barring such sacrifice she becomes the coarse "Squaw," "a depersonalized object of scornful convenience, she is powerless" (704-705). "Pocahontas" stood in as a metalanguage for racializing native women, Winnemucca included, as always-already sexually compromised, of dubious loyalties, and as foils for native savagery. While Winnemucca made use of this trope to assert authority and work on behalf of Paiutes, likely gaining more than she lost in the exchange, it is a stubborn and damning trope. These tensions and distortions were present from some of Winnemucca's earliest appearances. For example, in her performance in tableaux vivants with her family, Winnemucca was represented as a potential sexual object, made more interesting by her impressive gift of translating her father's speeches (*Newspaper Warrior* 33-38). In her 1870 letter, she was an impassioned and eloquent truth teller, a rare informant who offered a window into political corruption and articulated an individualized and human impression of her tribe that differentiated them from the media's monolithic portrait of bellicose, thieving savages who

launched unprovoked attacks at innocent railroad workers, soldiers, and settlers. But throughout the early 1870s, her letter circulated alongside Nevada newspapers' sensational accounts of her rowdy exploits: allegedly stabbing a waiter (in reality a fist fight), taking a suite of rooms at a Unionville, Nevada hotel where "many ardent pale face admirers pay her homage," and marrying a U.S. soldier in defiance of Nevada's recently passed anti-miscegenation laws.[13]

Much has been written about Winnemucca's choice to censor her romantic history. While she was largely successful in keeping her unconventional personal life from undermining her political work in the late 1870s and early 1880s, this separation was far from perfect. When Winnemucca made her first trip to Washington in 1880, the men who greeted her had likely read the nine affidavits collected and submitted by Agent Rinehart attesting to Winnemucca's malevolent influence over local tribes, which, he alleged, "has always been to render them licentious, contumacious, and profligate" and informing him that she has been "several times married, but that by reason of her adulterous and drunken habits, neither squawmen nor Indians would long live with her; that in addition…" (ctd. in Canfield 172-173). In Western news accounts, information regarding the news of her marriages, separations, and divorces was treated as common knowledge.

Early biographies of Sarah Winnemucca rehearse many of the most widespread stereotypes about Native women in their accounts of Winnemucca's romantic life. Canfield's description of Winnemucca, as a woman "of two worlds," who struggled to find a partner, but eventually attracted a mate with her "flashing eyes and quick temper" is quite typical (Canfield 66-67). More recent accounts offer imperfect but more nuanced approaches to narrating this part

[13] These laws were put in place just as Winnemucca entered young adulthood. Peggy Pascoe finds laws prohibiting Indian-white marriages arrived on the books in western states much later than miscegenation laws targeting other types of unions, and the prohibitions themselves tended to be unevenly enforced, except when disputes over land, property and inheritance arose, with these cases usually being decided in favor of the white (male) partner.

of her life, noting upfront that to whatever extent Winnemucca courted male attention, it was never unaccompanied by a fear of rape. Although heterosexual union did not necessarily protect her from this threat, it certainly would have mediated it, even as it also stirred sexual allegations that left her further exposed.

In contrast with Elizabeth Custer, whose status as a grieving widow helped immunize her, and, by extension, her accounts of American history from criticism, in Winnemucca's case, intimacies with white soldiers had an inverse effect, limiting or occasionally undermining her claims to legitimacy. On the contrary, marriage was probably the *least* salient bond between Sarah Winnemucca and the U.S. army, notwithstanding her marriages to an active-duty soldier and later an army veteran. Indeed both of Winnemucca's marriages to white men threatened to derail or undermine her public voice and credibility, rather than conditioning its possibility.[14] I draw attention to this relationality because it reveals the intimate and primary nature of Winnemucca's relationship with/connection to the U.S. military, and more broadly, the intimacy of the connections between military men, and women, and native peoples on the western frontier. It is important to understand the way the military infused and structured Winnemucca's life. These ranged from a series of unhappy marriages, several of which violated Nevada's anti-miscegenation law, to alleged relations with white soldiers and camp followers, to a friendship with Elizabeth Peabody deemed "queer" in its intensity by society pages (*The Indianapolis journal*, 1889). Winnemucca's marriages to white military men did not instantiate the unity and intimacy or order of the army wives, though they were to white, military men. Yet responses to her

[14] Her rocky marriage to Edward Bartlett (1876) was fictionalized in a spurious story about Winnemucca which I discuss in the next section, while Louis Hopkins' gambling addiction, and resulting theft of Winnemucca's fundraising efforts were ruinous for her school and tarnished her reputation, hampering further fundraising efforts severely. Winnemucca's marriages to white men, Edward Barlett (1871) and Louis Hopkins (1881) were not her only serious relationships but they are the most well documented. Biographer Gae Whitney Canfield, Winnemucca ultimately left her first husband for another man, Joseph Statewaller (109). Sally Zanjani's more recent biography discussed another possible marriage between Winnemucca and a white frontiersman named Snyder who was a close ally to Truckee, though evidence for this is spotty (68-72).

relationship with Peabody suggest this was unrelated to the specifics of those relationships, and more to do with pre-existing scripts about indigenous people (*Boston Daily Advertiser* 1886).

"A Brave Act": Strictly True or Stranger than Fiction?

In this section I will explore a widely-circulated story in which Winnemucca appears. I argue that it encapsulates or indexes the limits of how her work was received or circulated. My point here is not to belabor one story's inaccuracies; rather my interest lies more in its use of accurate and well-known elements of Winnemucca's biography to lend credibility to a comically spurious account.

First published in a family magazine as a story for young readers, "A Brave Act" doesn't masquerade as fact-based journalism, but it does dally in the truth. It draws on elements of Winnemucca's biography, including real places, populations, and events but rescripts those constitutive elements in ways that reinstated the traditional logics of colonialism which were, in that moment, being vexed by Winnemucca's increasingly prominent place as a "truth-teller." Details of the story are not obviously false to those lacking an in-depth familiarity with Winnemucca's biography, in that they that might have been easily grafted onto, and into, the western landscape produced by the U.S. press, many if not all of which would have been familiar to regular newspaper readers.

In what the reader is assured is yet another "strictly true" story, Winnemucca takes advantage of her position as "interpretress" - a gendered version of her title unique to this piece - to coordinate an attack on Fort McDermitt and unseat the reigning chief of her tribe with the help of a young bachelor officer seduced by "the arts of [Sarah's] wily nature." Just when it seems all hope is lost for the residents of Fort McDermitt, and the future of the hapless bachelor officer, the day is saved by the attentive gaze of the wife of the sutler, a civilian camp follower who

follows and sells provisions to an army in camp or in the field, who, overhearing the details of the planned attack, reported them to the proper military authority. The officer manages to thwart the planned attack and arrests "King Winnemucca" and sends him to prison in San Francisco.

The story originally appeared in in the nationally circulated magazine *A Youth's Companion*; founded with the goal of promoting Christian virtue in children, the magazine published stories and poems that celebrated virtuous conduct, many by celebrated authors of the day including Harriet Beecher Stowe, Mark Twain and later, Booker T. Washington. In addition to the Companion, the story was also picked up and reprinted in newspapers, likely through a local exchange or small press association, as they were clustered in small-town, midwestern papers. In the context of the *Companion*, the story is framed as a didactic story for children, but in the smaller-scale local papers it was presented without commentary alongside a mixture of local news and events, national news items with local impacts, patent notices, stock market updates, as well as other poems, comic sketches, and stories, making it sometimes indistinguishable from factual reporting.

When the story appeared, just over a year had passed since Sarah Winnemucca's trip to Washington, D.C. as part of a Paiute delegation. With the exception of her 1870 letter in Harper's, before that 1880 trip Winnemucca's news appearance had largely been confined to papers in Nevada and California. Her presence in Washington inaugurated her as a national figure. Perceiving quickly the potential of her rhetorical skills to garner an audience and generate sympathy for her cause, government officials, fearful of Winnemucca's skillful use of the news media, kept Winnemucca's visit short to prevent her from lecturing or getting involved in extensive interviews (Canfield 171–74). Apparently, however, this first appearance was suggestive enough to generate suspicion.

The story opens by locating Fort McDermitt amidst markers of western settlement, "upon the stage-road from Winnemucca to Boise City, and distant some eighty miles from the line of the Central Pacific railroad," producing what I call a cartographic narrative. As I will discuss in greater detail in my next chapter, it is significant when stories translate the undifferentiated vistas of "the west" into neatly delineated territories and property using markers like cities and railroad lines, rather than geographical features or reference to tribal occupation. Only after the story is located on EuroAmerican maps does the narrator add other identifiers, stating it is near a ravine in the heart of "Winnemucca" hunting grounds. While the story correctly located Camp McDermitt's location on the Oregon-Nevada border, it was roughly 200 miles from the original Northern Paiute homeland.[15] In reality, the Paiute presence at Camp McDermitt was conditioned by white encroachment into their territory; driven from their hunting grounds by the settlers who stole their lands and confiscated the resources they depended on, they relocated near Camp McDermitt upon government request and sheer necessity. This strategic remapping uses the fictional territorial name, "Winnemucca," to invoke the real person even as it geographically distracts attention from the material conditions that brought Winnemucca to the reservation. This served to foreclose any acknowledgement of a bitter history of white violence and theft, and presented Paiute proximity as menacing to the military rather than being commanded by it.

In multiple ways, the story rewrites real events which disrupted, estranged, or intruded on Winnemucca's life and the lives of her family members so that she and her tribe are presented as

[15] The "Winnemucca tribe" could refer to either the band of Indians of which Sarah's father, Winnemucca, was a leader, or, to the Northern Paiute tribe to which the band belonged; given the widespread ignorance about the social structures and government of Indian tribes, it seems unlikely the author was aware of such distinctions, and either made a mistake or simply chose to name the tribe after its "king" and "Princess." While not wrong, precisely, the term hunting ground, singularly, is misleading, given the reality of the harsh desert climate the Paiute inhabited. The term is more likely to conjure the cartoonish renditions of buffalo-hunting Plains tribes that were familiar to Americans from wild west shows and other widely circulated images, than the small, migratory bands of Paiutes whose survival was largely dependent on the annual pine nut harvest along with seasonal influxes of fish, mud hens, antelope, and jackrabbits. For more see Knack.

a threat to moral and domestic order rather than the reverse. Biographer Sally Zanjani describes the whole story as a "strange reprise" of a conflict between her father's brother, Wahe, and Nevada Indian Agent that ended with Wahe's death.[16] For example, Winnemucca's presence inside the army base is figured as an intrusion of crafty sexuality that leads to the corruption and treason of a young white officer from an upstanding family. In reality, while working at Camp McDermitt Winnemucca stayed not at the fort, but with the Quinn River Indians, whose camp she insisted be made off limits to soldiers in order to secure her from the otherwise ubiquitous threat of sexual violence. And while she did marry a young bachelor officer, Edward Bartlett was not the innocent dupe presented in the story; the ne'er-do-well son of an otherwise successful military family, he was chiefly known for his drinking and gambling, interests he and Sarah shared though it brought them into conflict. In its presentation of the Princess Sarah's "wily" and strategic pursuit of the sole bachelor in camp, the story transforms Winnemucca and her relationship with Bartlett into a temptress seducing an innocent soldier; in fact, the two were married, though not for several years after the story is set (Zanjani 109-110).

The story also distorts and rewrites key elements of Winnemucca's biography - that, for example, her father Winnemucca had promoted her "civilization," when it was Truckee, that had insisted she be educated in San Francisco; that she had obtained a position as interpreter "through the assistance of many friends," implying her position was the result of nepotism, rather than her possession of rare and vitally important skills; and finally, the timing of her and Bartlett's marriage, which wouldn't take place until two years after the story was set. The story stops short of naming her marriage to a white officer illegal but its condemnation of such a relationship is

[16] As Zanjani explains, Winnemucca told her story in an interview following a fundraising speech given by her father; she claimed Wahe was "cut into pieces and burned" by Paiutes as punishment for advocating peace with white settlers. Historian and journalist Myron Angel shared a version of the story, which Zanjani finds highly unlikely, in which Wahe's conspiracy to kill Agent Wasson was undermined by the Agent's quick thinking, leading to Wahe's banishment (Zanjani 73-74).

equally clear in the softer but no less damning mésalliance. The story concludes with the arrest and imprisonment of Sarah's father, Winnemucca, an implicit assertion of his responsibility for his daughter's behavior or of his failure as a father. The imprisonment of one of Sarah's kinsmen in San Francisco was correct, but it was Sarah's brother, Natches rather than her father Winnemucca, the result of a spiteful Indian Agent's retribution against Naches agitation for Paiute rights, not an attack on an army base.[17]

In this story, we see not only a variation on fears about the west's potential to transform and corrupt, but also a deployment of the Indian princess trope that dates back to John Smith's accounts of his interactions with Pocahontas. As Winnemucca scholar Carolyn Sorisio writes in her study of Sarah's use of the Indian Princess role, it is a role that "carries with it rhetorical and political risks. It is a [construct inextricable] from colonial desires" (Sorisio *Playing* 10). Here, and as we shall see in the ensuing chapters, the trope of the Indian Princess is twisted, transforming the generally precocious Native girl/woman helpmate into an uncontainable threat to family order. In "A Brave Act," Sarah's marriage to the anonymous lieutenant is never made official. Sarah is cast as a threat to traditional native and civilized western ways at the same time, undermining both the established order of her tribe with her betrayal and also the sanctity of the white middle class home. The publication of the story reinscribed this threat into the historical record in 1880, retrospectively reanimating the peril of an all-but-exterminated enemy. This reinvigorates natives as a threat, positioning them as an aggressor, one whose relentless pursuit and annihilation was not merely justified, but inevitable. The military and intimate threats are, here, inseparable, or mutually constitutive; Indians' ability to penetrate the heart of the American home, to corrupt and undermine it, is what enables "primitive" savages to challenge the might of

[17] In 1874, Natches came into conflict with then-agent of the Pyramid Lake Reservation, Calvin Batement when he brought rumors of the planned relocation of his band of Paiutes to the Harney Reservation.

progress, embodied in the U.S. army, and thus the nation that exists in its service. Careful vigilance by all Americans - like the sutler's wife - not merely leaders, is required to defend against the intrusion and reversal of domestic order. Indeed, the part played by the sutler's wife points to the crucial role imagined for white women in the process of expansion, which will be examined more closely in the chapter on Custer. As the wife of a civilian merchant whose livelihood is bound to the army, the sutler's wife would play a critical role in provisioning the army. It is the wife's presence and her involvement in domestic intimacies that renders her uniquely capable of discovering and reporting the threat posed by Winnemucca/natives in general. She also stands in as an emblem of the white womanhood, whose defenseless provides the convenient rationale for colonial violence.

This story is a powerful example of the way inaccurate reports combined with existing stereotypes to limit Winnemucca's effectiveness as a producer of historical knowledge. The wider circulation of this story speaks to its explanatory power. In its amalgamation of cartographic narratives, geographical slippages, and factual inaccuracies as well as the distortions of racial caricature, this story is a kind of palimpsest in which the scripts of white-Indian conflict have been inscribed again and again.

The concluding lines of the story credit the commanding officer's prowess in quelling the insurgent uprising, but the sutler's wife is the real hero of the story - a common slippage, I will demonstrate in the following chapters. The unnamed presumably white woman is the antidote to the scheming treachery and corrupting influence of the Indian Princess - just as the desperado's unsanctioned liquor was a corrupting outside influence, so too is the Indian Princess a foreign and intoxicating danger, one who requires the correcting influence of the whole army family, from wives and camp followers to captains.

The story's presence alongside traditional news headlines blurs clear lines between reports and fiction, particularly given the timing of its publication with Winnemucca's simultaneous presence in real news stories related to her advocacy. Rather than considering the story in the context of her printed legacy, I view it as a rare written artefact of the generally ephemeral network of stereotypes, rumors, manipulations, inaccuracies to which her memoir, lectures, and journalism would have been subject. Unlike the white wives of army officers whose work I explore in my next chapter, who were automatically and seamlessly granted authority as not only honest but heroic truth tellers, Sarah Winnemucca was always fighting for the ability to speak, let alone to earn status as a credible authority.

There is also limited but compelling evidence that this story was far from ephemeral or impermanent. The years immediately after the publication of "A Brave Act," constitute the most fruitful period of Winnemucca's advocacy. She published her first ethnographic writing on Piute history and culture, won the admiration and friendship of Elizabeth Peabody, and continued a national tour of popular lectures. Against this outpouring of writing and speaking from Winnemucca, the 1500-word "Brave Act" nonetheless remained in circulation and was used as a reference in reports on her activity. In the start of 1885, for example, in the midst of her success, the San Francisco Call published a lengthy interview with Winnemucca. The article concludes with a section entitled "A Romance and its Explanation." This section includes a summary of "A Brave Act," which the reporter refers to as "a romantic story [that] was published about Sarah Winnemucca [a few years ago]" (*Morning Call*, San Francisco, CA, 1.1885). Even more interesting than the reappearance of the story despite the intervening years, which reveals the extent of its circulation beyond the audience of *A Youth's Companion*, is Winnemucca's response: "Oh, that's a dreadful story," laughed Sarah Winnemucca, as the reporter related the

outlines of it to her. “I’ll give you the true version of it.” Her response, rueful recognition, dismissive laughter rather than dismay, and a clear, concise correction presented without hesitation, is that of someone used to confronting and refuting its malicious rendition of her professional and personal past.

> The uprising at McDermitt soon became mere matter of army rumor; but had the officer in command proven less able to cope with the dangers of the hour, that rumor would have been history written in letters of blood, even as the history of the terrible Modoc War, or Custer's fateful campaign.

Unlike the other works under consideration in this dissertation, Sarah Winnemucca’s writing, and the military conflicts in which she was involved, did not achieve pop cultural traction. As the story unintentionally points out, Americans remember only the blood of white people, and what is memorable and significant is and will be those deaths alone.

Despite rumors warning that the book was, reputedly, so "extremely personal in its revelations that no publisher dares to take the risk of issuing it" (NW 183, Frank Leslie's illustrated), Winnemucca’s narrative, once published, caused no scandal. In some respects, a more dramatic entrance might have been better for the book, as its sale directly benefitted the Paiute school, then badly in need of support.[18] In general, respondents, be they close friends or members of the press, stressed the importance and singularity of her message rather than her writing itself, a distinct departure from lecture reviews which tended to focus more on the power of her delivery. Even one of Winnemucca’s greatest champions, Mary Mann, was far from fawning in praise; her letter to the Salem Gazette concedes literary quality upfront, acknowledging that the book lacks the "fervid eloquence" that characterizes Winnemucca’s lectures. Far from damning her with faint praise, this apparent slight is actually a clever

[18] Zanjani writes extensively on the hardships encountered by Winnemucca’s school.

endorsement, an affirmation of Winnemucca's truthfulness, and indeed, her ability to speak the truth. Many of the points Mann's letter touches on particularly crop up in the critical response to Elizabeth Custer's writing under discussion in the next chapter; the necessity of verifying her as a legitimate author takes on added necessity in the case of a Native woman.[19]

Across reviews, the book itself is rarely named; instead it is referred to sometimes as a "narrative" (10/24/83, 10/30/83, 11/1/83, 11/24/1883, 5/3/1884), "volume" (NW 186 10/30/1883), or most often, and simply, "book" (9/14/83, 9/20/83, 10/20/83, 10/30/83, 10/31/83, 11/1/83). In contrast to the lecture reviews, which described her accounts as recitations, the term "history" emerges in several accounts (10/31/1883). One early response said that those who had read it described it as "a convincing argument" (NW 187). Mrs. Mann's review of the book repeatedly refers to it as "little" despite the fact that in its original printing it ran some 300 pages. Other reviews echoed these sentiments: "Mrs. Hopkins' book is the story of her own life. … Her book is not well written, the style is confused and wholly lacking in the simple eloquence that belongs to the Indian" (NW 193); "Mrs. Hopkins's imperfect knowledge of English can hardly be said to impair at all the effect of her story. She speaks in a very simple fashion and sometimes the effect is heightened by the peculiarity of the phraseology" (NW 190); "Wholly lacking in the simple eloquence that belongs to the Indian. Mrs. Hopkins has lived so much among whites that she has lost the Indian directness and picturesqueness of speech, and her English has no literary graces" (NW 194).

As a group, the indictments in these reviews constitute a map through ideas about Indians. In the estimation of even her close allies, the literary training and fluency that make her,

[19] This commentary about the poor quality of Winnemucca's prose also performs an authenticating function to diffuse the skepticism of critics, both at the time of its publication and latter-day critics and historians who claimed Winnemucca's narrative was an "as-told-to" actually written by Mary Mann. (Presumably Mann's prose would not have been subject to her own criticism.) Additional confirmation can be found in a letter written by Mann in 1883 referring to Winnemucca's original manuscript referenced in Sally Zanjani's biography (240).

in other quarters, qualified are instead an impediment to her representation of her true nature, or to any aspiration toward art. Elizabeth Custer's self-consciously unschooled mode of delivery, both in her speech and writing, on the other hand, is lauded for not seeming studied or eloquent. In line with Matt Cohen's study of media and communication in the early colonial period, I am not re-instantiating any stark divide between speech as authentically Native and writing as a European imposition (Cohen 5). Indeed, our access to her lectures is itself mediated through the white, largely male, journalists who captured them in print. Instead I am attempting to draw attention to how Winnemuca used writing, lecturing, and publication to claim the Paiute family as the site of colonial violence, renarrated, and reimagined, as injury to white families in the works I explore in the next chapter.

Conclusion

I want to conclude this chapter by returning briefly to Winnemucca's encounter with the dowagers in a train station somewhere in the west. By opening this chapter with this encounter I run the risk of reifying the problematic tendency to centralize the importance of white women reformers. Mann and Peabody did support and elevate Winnemucca's voice, but their arrival in her life is not the origin of her work. It was Winnemucca's ongoing and deep-rooted practice of advocacy that launched her – rhetorically, textually, and physically – into the circuits that would introduce her to her collaborators.

Chapter 2: "Making history with our men": Elizabeth Custer and Martial Love

Introduction

In comparison to the singularity of Sarah Winnemucca's printed legacy, not only uniquely popular but one of the few texts authored by native women in this period, there is a veritable wealth of first-person narratives authored by white women about their experiences on the Western frontier. Women lived in the West throughout the nineteenth century, and many of them, especially white women, wrote extensively about their experiences in personal diaries, journals, letters to friends and family back east, as well as in more formal memoirs and accounts. Starting in the mid-twentieth century, Western and feminist historians began uncovering and publishing these long-neglected narratives, and there are now dozens if not hundreds available in print. Since their publication they have played a critical role in shaping our current understanding of Western history, but of these many texts, only a few were commercially published and circulated at or near the time of their writing. It is to these works that I turn in this chapter, specifically those written by the wives of army officers, about their experiences traveling with the frontier army.

Like the writing of pioneer women, these works contain valuable information about many aspects of Western history, but my interest in them is primarily historiographic rather than historical. These texts were among the first widely available narratives of the history of

American imperial expansion published around the "closing" of the American frontier 1890.[20] These authors were valued for their firsthand knowledge and for their presumed accuracy and reliability. If one of history's functions is to define the nation and its rightful heirs, these texts can help us better understand the means by which lands and people were written into, and out of, an expanding United States. Analyzing these narratives can help us see how Americans came to view geographically distant and socially disconnected lands as rightfully theirs. It's no secret that the singular, unified coherence suggested by the term "Western expansion" does not begin to describe the complex, multi-faceted process of transforming Indian land into American soil. These narratives unify the countless disparate labors involved in this conquest - not just the military campaigns against native peoples, but also the charting and mapping of unknown land, the planning and building of infrastructure from roads to railroad tracks, the extraction of natural resources, and the development of irrigation for agriculture. As stories in newspapers, these different elements remained abstract and disconnected; as intimate memories of family life, they assumed new meaning.

I argue that these works constitute a particular formation of manifest domesticity, Amy Kaplan's well-known explanation for the way antebellum discourses of separate male and female spheres abetted American imperial expansion while simultaneously reinscribing the difference of the foreign - a move that more deeply polarized and stratified racial and ethnic differences, within and beyond the nation. According to Kaplan, discourses of domesticity urge the outward domestication of the foreign while also evoking anxiety about the possibility of bringing foreignness into the home. My analysis suggests that depictions of domesticity at the site of

[20] In 1890 the superintendent of the U.S. Census announced that rapid Western settlement meant that "there can hardly be said to be a frontier line." The massacre at Wounded Knee occurred at the of that same year and was widely considered the final battle of the Western Indian Wars, the collection of sustained military campaigns that had cumulatively resulted in near total genocide of Native tribes in the West.

violence itself work to resolve this contradiction: put simply, the hierarchy and discipline of the military defuse the threat of foreign invasion, while the affective and moral components of the family curtail or mitigate the ugliness of imperial violence, and they do so just as the Indian reform movement is inspiring new and increasingly critical responses to U.S. Indian policy and raising uncomfortable truths about the realities of settler colonialism. In this drama, the bloodshed caused by U.S. violence is forgotten. This isn't to say that military wives wrote in response to the Indian reform movement, though it's unlikely that they were unaware of it; regardless of intent, these works directly and reliably undermined reformers whose messages I discussed in my first chapter.

In many respects, Elizabeth Custer's impressions of Western life coincided with those presented by other white middle class women: she considered the geography and climate of the West to be both beautiful and strange, and in dire need of cultivation; she saw Native Americans as primitive and dangerous; she expressed no regret or qualms about American expansion and settler colonialism into Western territory, save for imperial nostalgia for her experience of the land, and she presented all military action as necessary defense. However, Custer capitalized on the fact that she was well-positioned to share these interpretations on a wide scale. She enjoyed a unique status: due to public perceptions of her selfless devotion to her husband, manifest in a willingness to marry a humble army man and follow him wherever he travelled despite the risk to her personal safety, and by extension to the safety of America and its empire, she was treated as a sort of military hero in her own right. This powerful association privileged her voice, and immunized her from question by casting her as a devoted wife without political acumen, which has forestalled the possibility of sustained and critical study of her work.

Elizabeth Bacon Custer attracted popular attention as the wife and eventual widow of General George Armstrong Custer, one of the nineteenth century's most celebrated military figures. The General enjoyed a meteoric rise to fame during the Civil War, becoming known affectionately as "America's boy general" after he became the youngest U.S. soldier to achieve the rank. This early success was later almost entirely overshadowed by his infamous "last stand" at the Little Bighorn/Greasy Grass,[21] where the U.S. forces he commanded suffered a crushing defeat by the Sioux from which no U.S. soldier escaped. Custer was only 34 at the time of her husband's death but she never remarried, wearing mourning clothes until her death in 1933. Left nearly penniless by the speculation debts of her late husband, Custer moved to New York, where her social connections allowed her to obtain employment appropriate to a woman of her middle class standing. The modest income she garnered from her husband's small pension and from her work at charitable foundations increased dramatically when, around 1885, she began writing and lecturing about her experiences traveling with the cavalry during the 1860s and 70s.

Custer's 1885 memoir, *"Boots and Saddles" or Life in Dakota with General Custer* (1885), describing her experience in Dakota territory, was an instant bestseller, and she published two additional works in the following year: *Tenting on the Plains* (1887) depicts the General during the Union occupation of the South and his first frontier engagements, and *Following the Guidon* (1890) captures one summer from their time in Kansas.[22][23] Myriad reviewers lauded her prose; retired military officials and politicians commended her memoirs for their honest representations of military heroism; editors of ladies' magazines recommended them for young

[21] At the time of the battle, "Bighorn" was spelled as two rather than one word. I will use the contemporary spelling for simplicity. I have also chosen to combine the EuroAmerican name for the place with that used by the Lakota Sioux, Arapaho, and Cheyenne warriors, "Greasy Grass."

[22] Quotations from these books come, respectively from: Harper Brothers 1885, Harper Brothers 1893, Harper Brothers 1890.

[23] A partially written manuscript containing her recollections of the Civil War was published after her death, but the Civil War, and Reconstruction, appear in it only tangentially.

readers as well as old; Western newspapers affirmed the accuracy of her depictions; and Easterners delighted in a glimpse of Western life "as it really was."[24]

While she does not currently enjoy the popular attention still commanded by her husband, Custer has not languished in obscurity. Studies of the General, by scholars and enthusiasts, have made continuous use of her books and letters. New editions of her out-of-print memoirs were released in the 1980s and 90s, leading to a number of publications, including a book-length biography. It is widely acknowledged that her efforts at memorializing the General in interviews, lectures, and most importantly, in her writing, have profoundly shaped the General's legacy, and its endurance in national memory, which I take as a starting point for my own examination.[25] Virtually all contemporary examinations of Custer, popular and scholarly alike, frame her literary and political output as a product of her unselfconscious devotion to her husband, and by emphasizing this devotion, they foreclose any thoroughgoing analysis of the texts themselves, their effects in their moment, and the critical role they played in creating and sustaining the complex and conflicted mythology of American expansion.

In this chapter, I take for granted that Custer's writing was largely responsible for rehabilitating the General's image, and reconsider her texts to ask what else transpired under the auspices of her memorializing work.[26] Of central importance to this background is that, while most accounts focus on Custer's devotion to her fallen husband, my perspective centers the historiographical work performed by her accounts. Taking Custer seriously as a history-writer -

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[24] While they never achieved the widespread success of her memoirs, Custer did publish a few other books in her lifetime, most notably a biography geared at young readers entitled *The Boy General* (1901). In 1950, Marguerite Merington, a longtime friend of Elizabeth Custer, released an edited collection of Custer's and the General's correspondence entitled *The Custer Story: The Life and Intimate Letters of General George A. Custer and his Wife Elizabeth.* While they were not published until 1994, when a Custer enthusiast, Arlene Killian Reynolds, discovered them, Custer also worked on a collection of her Civil War memoirs.

[25] For strong examples see Russell, Miller, Janice Hume, and Karen Sichler and Mathias.

[26] Scholars have unearthed a great deal of information about Mrs. Custer's life. I depart from these studies by distinguishing her memoirs from her other public efforts to defend her husband's name and reputation. For more information on earlier work Leckie (1993) and Millbrook.

not just the devoted wife of a historical figure - and remembering that such an interpretation aligns with the less-regulated realm of history at the time, expands the possibilities for interpreting her writing and its reception.

In the first part of this chapter, focused entirely on Elizabeth Custer, I introduce the General, his legacy, and its relationship to her popular writing. I argue that the methods Custer used to humanize her husband, a nostalgic and highly selective presentation of frontier domesticity and military family, served to abstract not only the General but the military from the removal and genocide of Native tribes. As I will show, this vision of familial love, organized around what Custer called the "double danger" in which the frontier places white women's sexuality in peril, is actually about the subjugation of others to the needs of the U.S. army and Euro-American colonists such as the Custers. I argue that her portrayal of frontier domesticity (through depictions of the military family) functions not only to reassert the rightness of U.S. expansion and settler colonialism, but also offers a "solution" to the presence of otherwise "unruly" and "unmanageable" U.S. populations - free blacks, European immigrants, and former residents of Mexico.[27] Rather than focusing on the impact Custer had on her husband's legacy then, I ask how the potency of the General's legacy, which I discuss in detail in my first section, allowed Custer to wield influence over the meaning and value of the history of the West.

In the second half, I analyze the way Custer, and the army wives whose works her enormous success paved the way for, wrote about the enactment of expansion, ultimately generating a usable American past for a future American empire by suturing the intimacy of

[27] In her study of army wives, Sandra L. Myres notes that army wife memoirs' representations of Indians are characterized by common prejudices and stereotypes of the day, but "the women's preconceptions and prejudices vanished as they observed and studied the Indians firsthand" (413), and some even went so far as to express open sympathy or mild censure for the government's actions. This is especially true of earlier memoirs - see especially M. Carrington (1868) and those published well after the close of the Indian Wars, Summerhays. As this chapter will demonstrate, Custer's views on Indians adhered almost to the letter to the most negative nineteenth-century stereotypes.

home life into the military and industrial projects of expansion. The third and final part of the chapter examines the reception of Custer's texts, and to some extent those of other army wives like Charlotte Von Cleve, Lydia Spencer Lane, Frances Mullen Boyd, Ida Dyer, Mary English, Ellen Biddle, Martha Summerhayes, and Frances Carrington, to argue that critics and reviewers identified these works as historical sources and recommended them as such. Ultimately, I argue that it is love that serves as an authenticating device for these works, allowing Custer, and other army wives, to vivify and humanize the distant workings of the U.S. military - creating an American story that includes the West and naturalizes the violent process of its incorporation.

Part I. Making Empire at Home

Elizabeth Custer & the General's Legacy

Elizabeth Custer never wrote directly about the battle that claimed her husband's life. Still, the events that transpired on June 25, 1876, and the resulting transformation of the General from a Civil War hero into an American myth played a crucial role in her work. Today, the realm of General Custer-related cultural production is so longstanding and vibrant as to have lead to the coining of not one but two monikers – "Custeriana," a term of apocryphal origin dating back to at least the mid-twentieth century, which is used by enthusiasts, and "Custerology," a term introduced by historian Michael Elliott in his book of the same title.[28] The cultural legacy that memorializes the General has been the subject of ongoing academic and popular scrutiny, and an

[28] Elliott explains his choice to coin this new term as one that indexes "the continuing production of knowledge of the General and the nineteenth-century Indian Wars in which he fought" and "not only those who seek to honor the memory of Custer and his Seventh Cavalry but also those who celebrate the indigenous resistance that defeated him" (2). The General's ongoing relevance as a cultural referent is as much the result of his detractors as his supporters. Native authors including Vine Deloria Jr., James Welch, and Sherman Alexie have referenced Custer and the Little Bighorn in a host of works, and one of the most famous cinematic representations of Custer is the satirical and highly critical 1970's *Little Big Man*.
For more on George Armstrong Custer's lasting influence in American culture see: Elliot, Connell, Utley (1962), Daippie, and Barnett.

understanding of his role in U.S. and particularly Western history is necessary to understanding the unique status enjoyed by Elizabeth Custer and her writing. [29]

While today the General's name is most closely associated with the conflicts with plains Indians in which he died, he first gained national attention for his service in the Civil War. After graduating from West Point in 1861, he was immediately commissioned into the Union army as a second lieutenant in the 2nd U.S. Cavalry Regiment, as Custer put it in her writing, "just in time to take part in the Battle of Bull Run" (*Boots* 9). He advanced quickly, a result of his gift for strategy and his bold personality, and in the summer of 1863 he was appointed brigadier general of volunteers, commanding the Michigan Cavalry Brigade. As the youngest general in U.S. history, he became a sort of military rock star, known for his long golden hair and flamboyant self-presentation (notably, the array of unconventional costumes he wore into battle, including a uniform of black velveteen and a red matador's cape).

It was during this time that a then 19-year-old Elizabeth Bacon formally met the man who would soon become her husband.[30],[31] Custer's father, a prominent and wealthy citizen, initially discouraged the match, concerned about the unstable and financially insecure life of a soldier's wife, but capitulated after the the young soldier achieved distinction during his first year in combat. The two wed in a ceremony in Monroe, Michigan in 1864. Their honeymoon

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[29] Custer enthusiasts number in the thousands. The Little Bighorn Association, founded in 1967 the group has retained a membership of approximately 1,000 (representing all states but Rhode Island as well as six other countries). LBHA publishes a newsletter which reviews new books on Custer, short articles, and announcements of Custer-related events, as well as a semiannual Research Review. In addition to in-person meet-ups, the groups, of course, have a website, which is probably the most neutral of the countless Custer websites, blogs, youtubers, and more where the Custer conversation continues to this day (Elliott 133-136)

[30] Born in Monroe, Michigan in 1842, Elizabeth Bacon was the only child of Judge Daniel Bacon and Eleanor Sophia Page. The General was from nearby New Rumley, OH but spent some portion of his youth living with an elder sister in Monroe. See Leckie (1993), chapters 1 and 2.

[31] One persistent, but apocryphal story, dates their meeting to 1850, but most accounts, including Custer's, concur that the two met formally during one of his visits to his sister during his Civil War service, most likely in 1863. According to this story, eight-year-old Elizabeth Bacon called out to the passing George Armstrong "Hey you, Custer Boy!" before turning and running into her house.

was cut short when the General was called to return to battle. Custer insisted on joining her husband, and thereafter traveled with him whenever possible, joining him during the Union occupation of the south (1866), his years in Kansas (1866-1871), and to his final post in Dakota territory (1871-1876), though the couple was occasionally separated for periods of weeks or months.[32]

After the official close of the Civil War in April of 1865, the General accepted command of the Second Cavalry, Military Division of the Southwest, where he led a march from Louisiana to Texas as part of the Union Occupation. While Custer devoted little attention to the march in her memoirs, this period is significant in his career as the first of the General's many clashes with the enlisted men over whom he presided.[33] The Seventh Cavalry spent the next three years at forts in Kansas in pursuit of Indians throughout Kansas, Nebraska, and Oklahoma.[34] The General was court-martialed in the summer of 1867 for a number of different charges, including absence from his post and cruel treatment of deserters. This and other charges led to his being relieved from duty for one year. But before his year was up, he was called back by General Sheridan, to lead his regiment in a winter campaign against the Cheyennes. This would become his first major engagement against the Indians when he attacked Black Kettle's village along the Washita River in what is now Oklahoma. Though the battle was technically a victory for the General and the Seventh Cavalry, his tactics attracted scrutiny; the General captured and used

[32] Typically, either the result of insufficient housing (*Boots* 91), or a high likelihood of violent conflict.
[33] Many of the enlisted men believed they should have been decommissioned after the war; Custer was an authoritarian as well as a Northerner and was viewed as an outsider.
[34] His regiment accompanied General Hancock's unsuccessful "peace commission" to southern Kansas in the spring of 1867, which led to General Custer's first direct combat experience with Native tribes in Hancock's War.

Cheyenne women and children as hostages to prevent warriors from responding to the U.S. attacks.[35]

The General was a controversial and polarizing figure, courting accolades from the press but with no shortage of enemies among his fellow officers. In 1874 he published a memoir entitled *My Life on the Plains* (1874), an account of his experience with the Seventh Cavalry between 1867-69 that had originally been serialized in *The Galaxy* magazine, another symbol of his continued significance in U.S. popular culture.[36] The brash and daring conduct that drew attention and accolades in the Civil War also earned him a reputation as impulsive and unreliable; his time in the South left an impression of an uptight dandy yankee; his strategizing in the Washita raised questions about morality and warfare.

The General's death in combat, which occurred at a time of increased violence between American Indians and EuroAmericans in different locations throughout the American West, as well as his military success in the Civil War and record of active self-promotion, attracted breathless coverage in the national and international media. The timing of the defeat at the Little Bighorn/Greasy Grass amidst the commemoration of the U.S. centennial is as significant as the scale of the human cost: the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition celebrated the technological prowess of Western civilization, yet this technology was laid waste to by "primitive" forces. The fact that there were no American survivors, coupled with the unthinkability of this military

[35] This massacre was the second endured by Black Kettle's band of Cheyenne, the first the Sand Creek Massacre of which the General was indirectly a part. It is still largely referred to as the Battle of the Washita, despite the fact that this was an unannounced attack, with the intent to kill, on people who did not consider themselves to be at war. The goal of these campaigns was to remove the Indians in order to clear way for the railways, soemthing the U.S. forces had been able to effect through peaceful agreement or open battle on the plains. For more, see Hoig. For firsthand accounts of the battle from a Native perspective see Hardorff.

[36] Beginning in 1867, the General published a series of letters anonymously in the sportsman's journal, *Turf, Field, and Farm*, using only the pen name "Nomad." These missives are now available in an edited collection, see Custer and Dippie.

defeat, galvanized support of the Indian Wars, helping to usher in the final stages of the United States' genocidal campaigns.

Initially, the General's death was heralded with an outpouring of public mourning and nostalgic celebration. The first biography of the General hit the presses within the year and elegiac and memorial poems abounded, appearing in literary magazines and daily newspapers alike, which included writing by celebrated American authors including Walt Whitman (1876) and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1878). In the aftermath of the battle, while military officials and the popular press struggled to make sense of a seemingly impossible defeat, the General's behavior soon came under scrutiny.[37] Despite his popularity, the enemies he'd earned over the course of his career were numerous, and while contemporary accounts are quick to note that many critics held back for fear of offending his young widow, they were far from silent. His popularity and the drama surrounding his death made him a lightning rod for controversy, all of which would soon motivate Custer to take up her pen.[38]

Of course, Custer was not solely responsible for securing the General's place in American memory. Her efforts coincided with and may have helped to inspire a plethora of pop cultural iconography. The first artistic depiction of the battle appeared in 1881 and began touring nationally.[39] The painting, "Custer's Last Rally," toured nationally and was ultimately adapted in

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[37] For more on the General's biography see Stiles, Ambrose, Hatch, Barnett, and Dippie.

[38] His death attracted immediate and sensational coverage but it failed to maintain widespread attention for long - largely ignored today, the presidential election of 1876 was the most fiercely contested in U.S. history and from the fall of 1876 to the eventual resolution of the election in the spring, newspapers were consumed by in-depth coverage of the dirty fight between Rutherford B. Hayes and Samuel J. Tilden. While Tilden took both the popular and electoral votes in the initial count, a number of electoral votes (in Florida, Louisiana, South Carolina, and Oregon) were contested. Ultimately, the contest was resolved with the Compromise of 1877, which stipulated that in exchange for Hayes' victory, the Republicans allowed the withdrawal of federal troops from the south, thus effectively ending the Reconstruction Era. For more on news coverage of the General see Mueller. For more on the contested election see Morris.

[39] John Mulvaney, an Irish artist best known for his depictions of the American west, completed an 11 x 20 foot representation of the fateful day entitled "Custer's Last Rally" in 1881, which went on to tour the country for more than a decade.

a lithograph used in an Anheuser-Busch promotional poster, "Custer's Last Fight."[40] In 1886, the year after Custer published her first work, "Buffalo Bill's Wild West," a sort of Old West-themed traveling circus that began touring in 1883, began staging a reenactment of the infamous battle that served as the show's closing act off and on for over a decade.[41]

The General's legacy was rapidly and permanently linked to his death in his "last stand" against Sioux, and Arapahoe warriors. This linkage evidences a sort of amnesia about the Civil War and his role as young, dashing hero.[42] It also means that he always appears amidst violence, not the uniformed, stately representations of his earlier career but a gritty, bloody end. His memory was inseparable from that of the Indian Wars, and their changing meanings. In her memoirs, Custer would offer a stark contrast to these representations; without contradicting them directly, she presented the General at home on the frontier, offering up a version of the man that competed with and at times replaced the variously self-aggrandizing, bloodthirsty, and fool-hardy versions that circulated at the time. Elizabeth Custer's work would rehabilitate and reinstate the General as a military hero, but under the auspices of this recovery, she historicized her husband but also herself as an author and character.[43]

Published over the course of five years, Custer's memoirs move back and forth in time, offering uneven coverage of the years between 1864, when the Custers wed, and General

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[40] The wild popularity of Mulvaney's painting, which was reproduced in lithograph, was outstripped by a remarkably similar representation in a lithograph by Otto Beck, which was commissioned by Anheuser-Busch and provided free to distributers of its products starting in 1896.

[41] The popularity and influence of Cody's travelling show is well documented. The show toured nationally for over two decades and also ran several European tours before it was foreclosed upon in 1908. For more on William Cody and his legacy see Kasson (2015), Warren (2006), Hedren (2005), and Slotkin (1993).

[42] The centrality of violence to his memorial continued in 1912, when Custer made it to the silver screen; *Custer's Last Fight*, which was re-released in 1925 and 1933, was the first of countless representations in film and television, both laudatory and critical: *They Died With Their Boots On* (1941), *Sitting Bull* (1954), *Custer of the West* (1967), *Little Big Man* (1970), *Son of the Morning Star* (1991).

[43] In addition to formal associations of Custer enthusiasts and reenactors, the internet has provided rich soil for conspiracy theorists and amateur historians to discuss, debate, argue about and create new narratives about Custer. For more on this, see Custerology Michael Elliot.

Custer's death in 1876. Her first and most successful memoir, 1885's *Boots and Saddles*, *or Life in Dakota with General Custer*, covers the period the Custers spent in Dakota territory, in and around Fort Abraham Lincoln - starting with the arduous trek through a record-breaking April blizzard and going up to, without commentary on, the day of the Battle of the Little Bighorn/Greasy Grass. Her second memoir, *Tenting on the Plains Or, General Custer in Kansas and Texas* (1887) begins with the General's 1865 appointment to lead a division of the cavalry from Alexandria, LA, to Hempstead, TX, and ends with the first fight of the Seventh Cavalry in 1867. *Following the Guidon* (1890) picks up shortly thereafter and covers the shortest period of time, the summer of 1867, during which the Seventh Cavalry was encamped at Big Creek Kansas.[44] Each of the three books is dedicated to her husband.[45]

Generically these three best-selling books mingle the genres of memoir, travel narrative, and biography. The combination of biographical representations of Custer at home, informal anecdotes about the perils of housekeeping on the frontier, and ethnographic accounts of interactions with settlers, scouts, soldiers, and natives makes them resistant to easy classification.[46] In addition, Custer draws on the formal qualities of regional or local color fiction that was popular during this time, namely fiction with a narrator who speaks in standard English coupled with the incorporation of dialect, to depict scenes and scenarios left seemingly untouched by the rapid economic changes of the nineteenth century.[47], [48]

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[44] Quotations from these books come, respectively from: Harper Brothers 1885, Harper Brothers 1893, Harper Brothers 1890.

[45] "Dedicated to my husband, the echo of whose voice has been my inspiration" (Custer *Boots* iv); "To him / Whose brave and blithe endurance / made those who followed / him forget, / in his sunshiny presence / half the hardship and the danger (Custer *Tenting*); "To / One who was followed the guidon / into that realm where / "The war-drum throbs no longer / And the battle-flags are furled" (Custer *Guidon* iii).

[46] For more examples see Sherman, Sheridan, and Bourke.

[47] These reviews also provided a crucial reminder of Custer's military coming of age in the Civil War. Many reviewers went further back in time than Custer's infamous Last Stand, touching on his West Point pedigree - without mentioning, of course, that he graduated dead last - and the Civil War service that had made him the youngest brigadier-general in American military history - ignoring the more controversial aspects of the events that

Regardless of their genre or style, the publication of each memoir returned the General to the pages of newspapers as advertisements, book reviews, interviews, and even lengthy excerpts crowded newspaper columns across the country. As I will discuss in the final section of this chapter, book reviews played a critical role in dictating the use and function of Custer's texts, but they also offered additional or supplemental interpretations in and of themselves. Reviewers introduced Custer to the public by way of her famous husband, and it is the rare review that failed to attach an adoring epithet to his name - "gallant" (*Saint Paul Daily Globe* 1890), "heroic" (*Philadelphia Inquirer* 1890), and "courageous" (*Harper's Bazar* 1885) were among the most common. One characteristic review refers to her book as a tribute to "the brilliant soldier, the gallant general, the noble man, who fell at the head of the troops that gladly followed him to their death at the bloody massacre of the Little Big Horn" ("Army Life in Dakota" April 23, 1890).[49] As they generated positive interpretations of the General, both by reintroducing his successful and less controversial service in the Civil War, and by attaching to him the same epithets his adoring wife did, they lured readers to Custer's books with promises of new insight into a famous and mysterious figure.

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led to this honor. At one level, it is entirely expected that reviewers would bring up this information, but it's also significant given that the iconic status of the Little Bighorn/Greasy Grass had made Custer's name all but synonymous with the Indian Wars. For older generations, who had experienced the Civil War as adults, such reminders were scarcely necessary, but by the 1880s and 90s, a new generation had come of age, knowing Custer as only an Indian fighter. These newspaper biographies served to keep this older legacy fresh - continually linking Custer with a war whose ravages hit much closer to home than the geographically distant Indian Wars. In this way, the urgency of military victory and occupation that characterized the Union fight against the south could be transposed onto the Indian Wars, galvanizing the interest and enthusiasm of a public whose interest in chronic warfare inevitably flagged. These reviews, then, were yet another way in which Custer's autobiographical writing served to connect the military projects of the Civil War - emancipation and national unity - with the imperial expansion and settler colonial projects of the Indian Wars.

[48] Long considered a minor genre, regionalism is now recognized as speaking about difference, helping or shaping the way U.S. residents engaged with demographic shifts in the U.S..

[49] Custer never wrote directly about the events of the Little Bighorn/Greasy Grass, but reviews did, offering varying amounts of detail as they reminded readers of the General's "tragic" and "untimely" death at the Little Big Horn "massacre" (*New York Tribune* 1888). Even reviews of her second two memoirs, which were set far from the battlefield the General died on, never failed to rehash, nostalgically, the events of July 26, 1876. The frequency of the moniker "massacre" instead of "battle" to describe the events that transpired at the Little Bighorn/Greasy Grass offers a useful barometer of the coverage encapsulated in book reviews ("Gen. Custer's Wife," 1; "Literary," 10; "The Custer Massacre," 3).

Martial Love: A Military Solution to Unruly Intimacies

Prior to his death, the General had already earned a reputation for his harsh treatment of his men during his campaign through the South, which was not ameliorated by his time leading the Seventh. The frontier army was plagued by widespread desertion, and many of the troops who didn't desert were shockingly undertrained, a portion of whom spoke little English.[50] Food was in short supply and what little they had was nearly inedible; wormy bread and hogs jowls were the order of the day. Soldiers were sick from the food and from lack of clean water. Conditions worsened further during campaigns in the northern plains, where provisions were scarce and the weather severe, and many of the enlisted men were overwhelmed by both the bitter weather and the combination of monotony and danger that characterized their service there. The General's response included harsh punishment and withholding wages, and this tendency toward harsh discipline, exacerbated by the systemic issues facing the Cavalry in Western territories, drew criticism.

In order to rehabilitate her husband's image, Custer was obliged to create a context in which her version of him was possible. She had to provide a governing logic to the behavior of the frontier army that was distinct from the profit-driven destruction of Native tribes and the theft of their land. Custer's intimate and highly selective representations of the frontier army and its followers turned the violent upheavals of frontier contact zones into the squabbles of a family. Her stories imbue the figures with a warm glow that suffuses the lands and actions she describes. In humanizing her husband, she offered a humane vision of the process of U.S. settler colonial expansion.

Custer opens her memoir with a declaration of her intent to document the domestic life of an army family, and her works offer no shortage of just the "peculiarities" her comment seems to

[50] For in-depth histories of the condition of the frontier army see Utley (1967, 1973, and 1976) and Rickey.

refer to. She writes in excruciating detail about the material possessions that enabled her and the General to make a home wherever they were, from the sawhorses that supported her bed to the portable stove on which her servants prepared their lunches. Rebuilding the fort after a fire destroyed the officers' quarters, the General had the luxury of a library, the subject of an entire chapter. Decorated with his hunting trophies - from grizzlies to sandhill cranes - the library, she explained, was his true home, where he retreated to solitude and reflection (*Boots* 240-43). She describes the guests received, the parties hosted, the dances attended.

This carefully created portrayal of home life allows Custer to bind the behavior of the army during these campaigns to a trope long used to justify the suppression and dispossession of indigenous peoples in colonized sites around the world, the threat of "a fate worse than death" - the need to defend white women's virtue. Likely unfamiliar to present-day readers, this idea held that the threat of white women's violation by Native men was so unquestionably worse than death that murder could be considered an honorable and merciful act. As Custer says explicitly in her final memoir, "History traces many wars to women; and women certainly bore a large though unconscious part in inciting *our* people to take up arms in attempts to rescue *them*, and to inflict such punishments upon their savage captors as would teach the Indian a needed lesson" (*Following* 2) (emphasis mine). Custer claims for white women a causal role in imperial violence and simultaneously distances herself from responsibility first by insisting that this role is "unconscious," and in the same sentence moving from the first person plural to the third, thus excluding herself from responsibility. The very presence of the army family on the frontier, at the heart of which is the army wife, disrupts the violent imagery with which the General was connected in death by increasing the urgency of the threat to women and more generally, the gendered order of the American home.

In her memoirs, this threat is made more tangible and also more specific. As Custer explains, "[The] danger in connection with the Indians was twofold," as she was "in peril from death of capture by the savages" but also "liable to be killed by my own friends to prevent my capture" (73). She goes on to explain, without explicit mention of rape, that there existed "the universal understanding [that] any one having me in his charge in an emergency where there was imminent danger of my capture should shoot me instantly." Given this state of affairs, she admits in a confessional tone that despite being defended by "strong hands and brave hearts," her awareness of "the double danger" - white and native - "always flashed in my mind when we were in jeopardy" (74). In Custer's formulation, Indians are not only a direct threat to white women but also to the gendered social order, and if the presence of the Indian turns white men into savages, ready to enact violence on their own, a treble rather than a double danger. One of the most commented-upon scenes in all of her memoirs is her account of the hours when, spurred by the theft of cattle, the cavalry ran off in such hot pursuit of the enemy that they left the women at the fort almost entirely unprotected (*Boots* 159-66). This danger, be it double or triple, exists in a sort of vacuum around the white, middle class, officers' wives. In her sensationalized descriptions, Custer presents these women as alone at an all-but-abandoned fort, ignoring the other women on the premises, namely working class women, many of whom, like Custer's maids, were women of color.

As I discussed in my previous chapter, the idea of family, and the American family ideal in particular, functions as a mechanism to naturalize gender-based internal hierarchy and the distribution of resources, both within the family and also at its core, presenting them as natural or biological, and thus unquestionable. The idea of being "like" a family more often mobilized to create and strengthen barriers than to unite. As Patricia Hill Collins argued, U. S. national

identity formation has long relied on rhetoric of family to obscure and perpetuate hierarchical relations. The gendered rhetoric of the American family ideal naturalizes and normalizes social hierarchies and fosters racialized constructions of U. S. national identity as a large national family (Collins). Further, family is, as historian Stephanie Coontz argues, a place and an idea - an idea about why the social division of rights is natural or just and a place that assigns people connections to rights, resources and duties (Coontz 14).

The double danger also acts as an organizing principle for the army, and for camp followers. The cavalry is not merely protecting white women's virtue but also the American home women's presence produces around it, and in this way, the double danger underpins the social and economic structures at work. The presence of the cavalry is needed to defend against and extinguish the existence of threats to the family, and the family's presence, embodied in the white middle class wife and mother, transforms the rigid discipline and structure of the army. The military family is driven by one of the most widely used colonial scripts - about the threat posed by Native people to white women's sexual purity, and by extension, to the purity of the nation.

While at the start of her narrative, Custer uses the word "family" literally to refer to the "Custer clan" that often accompanied them - the General's brothers Thomas Ward and Boston, sister Maggie and brother-in-law James Calhoun, and finally his young nephew Harry Armstrong Reed - a record-breaking blizzard in 1873 that coincided with the Custers' move to Dakota territory leads to the expansion, and at times retraction, of the family's bounds. The blizzard's hardships transform Custer from a timid wife into a strong and loving mother. As the snow begins to fall in earnest, the General orders his soldiers to break camp and return to town; having secured a small cabin, which, despite having no foundation, plaster, or insulation, Custer

appraises as "equal to a palace to me," the couple, along with their two servants, Mary and Ham, both African American, remain at camp. The General, having dispensed with his orders, succumbs to a sickness he had been resisting, leaving Custer to manage the household, a task Custer is quick to assure her reader that he normally would have handled himself, an early reminder of his status as caregiver.

Custer's narrative abstracts the labor from the bodies that perform it. While it is ostensibly Custer left in charge, in the absence of the General's leadership, one of their servants, Mary is sent, on foot, into town for supplies and then returns to set ready their temporary shelter, working with Ham to stuff the cracks, hanging blankets to create the illusion of separate spaces. It is Mary and Ham who stuff the cracks in the cabin. It is Mary and Ham who are bound to stay with the Custers when the rest of camp has departed. Custer, here and elsewhere, presents her relationship to her domestic workers as familial. But the significance of Mary and Ham's near invisibility is critical. That is, to have made herself fully responsible for carrying out the labor might have blurred the lines that distinguished a civilized marriage from a savage one. The manual labor many Native women were responsible for was frequently used as evidence of the inhumanity of Native men and Native culture more generally, though in reality, most Western women were as deeply involved in manual labor. Mary and Ham's labor distinguishes Custer and her role, while her steadfast endurance of 36 snowbound hours validates her status as hearty, of Western stock, and importantly, a mother figure who tends to the general and the half-frozen troops who appear on the doorstep of her cabin. Nearly overshadowed by Custer's descriptions of her abject isolation during the blizzard are the (working class, poor, and nonwhite) others who endured the storm without the benefit of her cabin; mentioned in passing, a handful of

unmounted soldiers who traveled with the regiment (*Boots* 20) and laundresses, all of whom managed to not only survive the blizzard, but in one case, gave birth in the storm.

The camp life we can view only peripherally here will resurface throughout her memoirs, sometimes ignored as Custer dismisses the materials struggles of the happy military family she paints, or just as often, co-opted and used as fodder for the kind quaint scenes of rural life that would have been familiar to nineteenth-century readers. In her vision, frontier hardship united everyone in the cavalry's orbit not as soldiers or workers, but as members of a family. Custer wrote with fondness of the care lavished on an officer's wife who was grieving for a lost child, "We were all like one family - every one was so quick to sympathize, so ready to act if trouble came" (*Boots* 125). The comparative *like* is significant here - as it reveals the hierarchical relations and material inequalities which the framework of family relation tries to conceal (Collins 4-5). The hierarchical relations of the chain of command, too, are reinscribed as the stern but loving instructions of a proud father. No one the Custers encounter, no matter how distant their walks of life or positions of authority, is treated with anything but respectful care.

Even comic anecdotes reinforce this familial imagery - such as the noisy brawling of an enlisted man and his German laundress wife who, in Custer's words, "loved him more after each beating" (*Boots*). When the sutler's daughter falls ill with diphtheria, she is brought inside the traditional officers' quarters and Custer and the other wives take turns nursing her, with even enlisted men taking shifts to tend the child. These performances of care and tender heartedness seem but were of course not in a mutually exclusive relationship to the acts of genocide perpetrated, often against women and children, by these same men.

Over the course of Custer's writing the boundaries of this family expand, to incorporate the forced intimacies of army life, and contract, to exclude who the family cannot or does not

want to incorporate into its hierarchy. These intimacies between officers, enlisted men, and camp followers like laundresses are critical to Custer's mission to salvage her husband's reputation. Her insistence on the image of a communal military family, sharing and sharing alike, elides the acrimonious relationships between Custer and his men. The books perform a double move, both revealing forms of intimacy that cross race and class lines, and attempting to contain or resolve the dangers posed by the same proximities by the constant presence of an appropriate military authority.

The General was, in Custer's account, so tender-hearted that even his hunting dogs were treated as family members (*Boots* 17, 110). She describes the lower-ranked members of the regiment who "would run to [the general] like a lot of school-boys, with every trifling complaint" (*Guidon* 153) and loved their horses so well they would, when food ran short, steal food for them "like a mother for her child" - though in reality, soldiers in the frontier army were obliged to steal some of the horses' feed (Stiles 222). By positioning the general, and his men, as doting parents, Custer transforms a threatening army of outsiders - wanted men, the impoverished, and the foreign - into a collection of charming eccentrics. By transforming the loose assembly of enlisted men, officers, and camp followers, military family is a powerful, almost hyperbolic example of the disciplinary function of intimacy, theorized by Richard Brodhead as "disciplinary intimacy" (Brodhead).

Familial relations offer a resolution to social problems beyond the purview of military rule, too. Custer relates an incident where after an industrious white working class enlisted man received a commission as a first lieutenant, he was excluded from the social world of the other officers. The General, "much disturbed by this discourteous conduct," still refused to exert his authority over the world of the officers' social affairs. Instead, he sought permission from Custer

to “have him in our family temporarily" (*Tenting* 418) by having him eat meals at their table. Custer’s inclusion of this scene, which demonstrates the meritocracy of the military without military authority, continues rather than disrupts existing class hierarchies. The General uses his power judiciously and responsibly, by solving the problem without intervening in the decisions of other (white, middle class, educated) officers.

Reading against the grain of Custer’s idyllic portrayal of her African American maid’s experiences reveals how isolating and threatening conditions were for former slaves, and it is a fair assumption that the Custers’ status afforded their servants a more privileged position than most (*Guidon* 238). For example, traveling through southern Ohio just after the end of the Civil War, the proprietor of a train station restaurant denied service to Eliza, the Custers’ maid, as there were no servants’ facilities, but General Custer stood firm in his insistence “upon Eliza's going right with us” (*Tenting* 24). When the proprietor threatened him,

> My husband quietly replied that he had been obliged to give the woman that place, as the house had provided no other. The determined man still stood threateningly over us, demanding her removal, and Eliza uneasily and nervously tried to go. I trembled, and the fork failed to carry the food, owing to a very wobbly arm. The General firmly refused, the staff rose about us, and all along the table up sprang men we had supposed to be citizens as they were in the dress of civilians. "General stand your ground: we'll back you; the woman shell have good." How little we realize in these piping times of peace, how great a flame a little fire kindled in those agitating days. The proprietor slunk back to his desk: the General and his hundred staff went on eating as calmly as ever; Eliza hung her embarrassed head, and her mistress idly twirled her useless fork. (*Tenting* 24)

The unruliness of a post-war and as-yet not entirely civilized nation manifests in a disruption of propriety, indeed. Custer misreads Eliza's well-justified fear of physical retaliation as ladylike discomfort at having been the source of social tension, a telling indictment of her inability to take seriously the difference between her social position and Eliza's. Mrs. Custer's caveat, "I wonder if any one is waiting for me to say that this incident happened south of the Mason Dixon line. It did not. It was in Ohio - I don't remember the place" (*Tenting* 25), underscores this point. This scene performs the double move, revealing the dangers that still lurked, and demonstrating the necessity of force to defusing the threat of violence presented by, in this case stubborn Confederate sympathizers, but elsewhere Natives and immigrants, to loving union of the United States.

The suggestion here and elsewhere, throughout *Tenting on the Plains* and also in artifacts like family portraits of the Custers that also include Eliza, is that she was consistently a recipient of such familial benefits is belied by glimpses of Eliza's frustration and isolation that are visible even through the rosy glow of Custer's memories. The role of Eliza, and her replacement Mary, speaks to their suspension in a family-like relation to Custer and the General and marks a continuation of the "kinlessness" Saidiya Hartman and Hortense Spillers identify as a defining condition of slavery. Military family extends or replaces the servants' family even after emancipation.[51]

Ungovernable Intimacies

While the double danger I discussed in this chapter is raised by Custer as a frequent refrain, there is surprisingly little description of the Native populations ostensibly behind this ubiquitous threat. There are passing mentions of indigenous people in all of her books, all of

[51] See Spillers, and more recently Hartman, *Lose.*

which are stereotypical, racist caricatures that appeared in most white women's descriptions of indigenous people. My goal in reviewing these tired representations is not to rehash the all-too-familiar distortions of EuroAmerican anti-Native tropes but to examine the one individual Custer represents in detail, a young woman and daughter of Black Kettle, Monahsetah or Meotzi.

Custer's first and only sustained depiction of Native women, or Native people at all appears in *Following the Guidon* (1890). She offers the first and only sustained depiction of when she accompanies the general to "visit" Cheyenne prisoners captured during the Washita massacre. Approximately sixty women and children, plus three "chiefs," were corralled in a stockade roughly fifteen feet high with a sentinel's walk near the top to allow constant surveillance. Before descending to meet the prisoners, the general walks her along the stockade, viewing them, zoo-like, from above.

Having heard of the "desperate work the squaws and children had done in the battle" - presumably diligent efforts to defend themselves from the unprovoked attacks and slaughter visited upon them by the General's men - Custer is terrified despite the fact that they are imprisoned and heavily guarded. She characterizes the "squaws" with common stereotypes, "withered and wizened," caressing her with their "horny old hands," pressing the "leathery" skin of their cheeks against hers in a display of affection, which they did perhaps to curry the favor of her husband, who had the authority to end of extend their imprisonment. She experiences a tinge of sympathy for the women - not for their imprisonment, which she deems an improvement in their condition - but because she sees their calloused hands as symbols of the drudgery inflicted by Native men. After the General brings her into their enclosure, and women and children approach curiously, she claims she "almost felt knives penetrating [her] dress for a deadly stab,"

and feels repulsed by the attention of the women, and the play-fighting of the children, "embryo warriors" as she calls them.

Among these women was Meotzi - or Mo-na-se-tah as she is called by both Custers, the real focus of Custer's writing. Meotzi was the daughter of Little Rock, one of the chiefs in Black Kettle's band, and was one of many Cheyenne captured during the Washita massacre.[52] Meotzi makes her first appearance in print in the General's memoir, *My Life on the Plains, or, Personal Experiences with Indians* (1870), where he recounts an apocryphal story about her first marriage. According to the General, Meotzi was displeased by the man to whom her father had arranged her marriage. While he initially treated her well, her resistance to his overtures led to violence, at which point the young woman shot him in the leg, disabling him for life. Presumably it is to this writing that Custer refers in *Following the Guidon*; however, she compresses the anecdote told by the General, recounting only that Meotzi shot and maimed her husband.

Compared to her descriptions of the older Native women, "squaws" in her parlance, who remain nameless but threatening, her description of Meotzi is more sympathetic. Custer claims that Meotzi requested that Custer assume responsibility for her baby, born while she was imprisoned. Though Custer's account is the only evidence of such a conversation, the conditions under which cavalry kept prisoners make it possible if not likely that a mother would seek an alternative for her infant child. Though she said she was disarmed by Meotzi's baby, Custer rejects the request immediately, horrified by the suggestion, though it is unclear whether she is repulsed by the potential proximity of the child or of the transgression of normative motherhood

[52] I have chosen to use Meotzi, as evidence suggests this was the name used by her tribe, although Monahsetah (or a variant thereof) is the more commonly used.

perpetrated in Meotzi's effort to "give" the baby to her.[53] In Custer's indictment of Meotzi's motherhood she abets the destructive agenda of assimilation, by presenting her as an unfit mother.[54]

She also implies a mutual flirtation between unmarried soldiers and the teenaged Meotzi. It seems more likely that young, socially isolated soldiers pursued their vulnerable captive than, as Custer suggests, a prisoner of war, first heavily pregnant and later the parent of a newborn, was largely preoccupied in flirting with her white captors. Indeed, neither her pregnancy nor the circumstances of her son's birth are mentioned directly - presumably because the image of a pregnant captive in chains seemed less than sympathetic.

In the previous chapter, I argued that one of the critical elements of Sarah Winnemucca's history of Paiute-white relations is her presentation of the sexual menace presented by white men, a formation that disrupts monolithic representations of Native violence presented by the white press as the result of either Native greed or sheer bloodthirstiness. Winnemucca presents multiple dangers posed by white men's sexual violence against Native women, which included the violence itself and the virtual impossibility of seeking redress from the communities that caused the harm; moreover, any effort to prevent or respond to sexual predation brought almost inevitably the wrath not only of hostile white settlers, but also the U.S. military, which threatened to disrupt not only individual Paiutes' lives, but the very future of their tribe.

Meotzi is a ready foil for Sarah Winnemucca - as the daugher of Cheyenne chief Little Rock she was an "Indian princess" and like Winnemucca, Custer reports that she was "most useful in examining a trail" and that her "intelligence and judgment had been of service in the

[53] In the General's anecdote, after Meotzi was captured at the Washita Massacre, the General alleges that he selected her, along with two other "squaws" among the prisoners, to accompany the Cavalry in the hopes that they might aid in efforts to communicate with hostile villages. There is no evidence that she spoke any English.
[54] For more on the pathologization of Native families by colonial incursion see Piatote.

attempts that had been made to bring the tribes to surrender"; Meotzi is even anointed with one of the nicknames given to Winnemucca, "Sallie." Unlike Winnemucca, though, Meotzi is not a willing helpmate but a prisoner of war, taken with others of her tribe during the Washita Massacre. Nor is she given an opportunity to speak for herself. Custer's anecdotes about Meotzi and the other "squaws" imprisoned recall the inversion of the Indian Princess trope I identified as a key element in "A Brave Act," the story about a Sarah Winnemucca-led rebellion, not presenting her as the princess's opposite, the "squaw," but twisting the meaning of the Indian Princess's devotion to and support of white men into a savvy political move.

Custer describes the uprising in which Meotzi was captured as an "unfortunate affair" (109), reserving her horror not for the unnecessary deaths of the chiefs, but because "[the women's] hands that had smoothed our faces and stoked our hair had too skillfully wielded the knives that we had all the time suspected them of carrying under their garments" (109). They were, of course, always already what they had been suspected of being. These bellicose "squaws," well-equipped to not only defend themselves but to attack are presented in contrast to the officers' wives who, even under threat of imminent attack, were unsure of their ability to even load a gun (*Boots* 163).[55]

Custer had good reason to write about Meotzi in her memoirs, namely the persistent rumors that she had been kept by the General as a secret wife, or at least a concubine, and that she had given birth to his child after her captivity and time spent performing forced labor as a scout. Meotzi presented a very real threat to Custers' own domestic life, making the Native

[55] In addition to rumors about the General's relationship with Meotzi, Native accounts of the battle, particularly that of Kate Bighead, a Cheyenne woman who had been at the river near the battlefield, say that Native women, relatives of Meotzi, defaced the General's body, piercing his eardrums with sewing awls. Her statement was recorded by Thomas Marquis and can be found in Hutton 363.

woman, however helpful, incompatible with the military family.[56] Yet even more damning than this is Custer's rewriting of Native women's labor and political ally-ship. To protect and insulate her home, Custer simultaneously mobilizes bias against Natives by criticizing Native men's treatment of Native women.

* * * * *

Since the turn of the twentieth century, histories and literatures of the West have been plagued by the capaciously persistent "frontier thesis" proposed by Frederick Jackson Turner at the 1893 meeting of the newly created American Historical Association.[57] While only Turner's name is attached to this formulation, his thesis did not present a novel idea but an articulation of widespread beliefs about the significance of expansion to American identity.[58] Even before Turner produced and circulated an official historical narrative that would name the West a new Eden for white men and women, Custer was doing something similar in a format much more accessible to U.S. citizens, through imperializing gestures of "manifest domesticity" - the ways in which so-called sentimental literature by white middle class women define the home against outside incursions against the national home. These memoirs were published in the decade leading up to the expansion of U.S. empire beyond the North American continent, and, along with a collection of other literatures, modeled the transformation of foreign spaces - and bodies -

[56] There is little documentation about the lives and experiences of camp followers but there are a handful of articles on the topic. See Miller (1986), Stewart, Stallard, and Sibbald.

[57] In 1893, the AHA was the product of an academic and intellectual, rather than an industrial or colonial self-fashioning process, one of the most concrete effects of a new effort by history-writers to professionalize and carve out a privileged space for themselves as arbiters of the truth of the American past. The meeting's keynote address, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," was presented by Frederick Jackson Turner, a young historian who would go on to become one of the most influential figures in twentieth century U.S. History, then a newly-minted professor at the University of Wisconsin. In this speech, which would be published and circulated subsequently in the annual report of the AHA, Turner argues for the centrality of the Western frontier and the frontier experience to the United States' national identity, a move that elided the violence and subordination of slavery and settler colonialism. Despite substantive and numerous critiques, Turner's thesis has retained an almost unprecedented influence in U.S. historiography and popular historical consciousness.

[58] Turner himself cites public figures - historians, but also politicians and civic leaders like Henry Clay and Lyman Beecher who share his conviction that it is "dominant individualism" and "buoyancy and exuberance" that are "traits of the frontier," or human characteristics summoned into being by the presence of the frontier (Turner 38).

into a promised land. Reading these texts in the contexts in which they were produced offers us a way of seeing how a destiny was historicized retrospectively as "manifest." While Kaplan has analyzed the connections between the rise of domestic discourse and U.S. manifest destiny, my project follows this trajectory to the end of the century, right up to U.S. expansion onto other continents. Kaplan argues that gendered metaphors of domesticity could be used as a "civilizing" force to justify imperial relationships between the conqueror and the conquered. By turning the General into a compassionate reformer, taming the West rather than savaging men and animals, Custer rendered criticism of U.S. treatment of Native people impossible, unthinkable.

Part II.The Expansion of Frontier Intimacies: Elizabeth Custer's Literary Ripples

My argument that Custer's writing constitutes a significant element of Western history and influenced its representation in popular culture is contingent upon an understanding that her writing is one particularly influential example of a larger body of work - that its popularity actually enabled the creation of other works - so while the bulk of my analysis focuses on Custer, this chapter also tracks the themes and patterns that characterize her work through twelve different memoirs.[59] Not only is her writing the most popular example of the genre, the dramatically increased output of similar texts in the years after she was published suggests that she was at least partially responsible for the emergence and popularization of the genre. In this section I chart the way many military wives wove together the masculine enterprises of war and development with the interior of the American home.[60]

[59] The first army wife memoir on record is Teresa Viele's account published in 1858, *Following the Drum: A Glimpse of Frontier Life*, but between the publication of Viele's and Custer's, only one other, Margaret Carrington's *Absaraka, Life Among the Crow*s (which I will discuss in more detail later in this chapter) was published.

[60] Cathryn Halverson offers a compelling alternative to Kaplan's theory of manifest domesticity, tracing a history of unorthodox, resistant, and playful homemaking in writing by western women of different racial backgrounds and social standing that actually disrupts or undermines the standard tropes of domesticity upon which Kaplan rests her

Prior to the very end of the century, published accounts authored by army wives were few and far between. The first of such narratives was written by Teresa Griffin Vielé, *Following the Drum: A Glimpse of Frontier Life* (1858), followed ten years later by Margaret Carrington's *Absaraka: Home of the Crows* (1868).[61] Custer's success seems to have opened the floodgates, as the ensuing years saw a much denser concentration of similar memoirs, including Charlotte Ouisconsin Clark Van Cleve's *"Three Score Years and Ten,": Life-long Memories of Fort Snelling, Minnesota, and Other Parts of the West* (1888); Lydia Spencer Lane's *I married a soldier; or, Old days in the old army* (1893), set in Missouri and Texas; Frances Mullen Boyd's *Cavalry life in tent and field* (1894) in Arizona and California; Ida Dyer's *Fort Reno, Or, Picturesque Cheyenne and Arrapahoe Army Life, Before the Opening of Oklahoma* (1896), penned by the wife of an Indian Agent; Mary Katherine English's *Prairie Sketches: Or, Fugitive Recollections of an Army Girl Of 1899* (1899); Ellen McGowan Biddle's R*eminiscences of a soldier's wife* (1907); Martha Summerhayes' *Vanished Arizona: Recollections of the Army Life*

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theory. Military wives partake to an extent in this tradition, as they reminisce about their make-shift homes - beds resting upon saw horses and grain sacks repurposed as rugs.

[61] Carrington's memoir, which doubled as a defense of her husband's controversial military career, achieved substantially more public attention than Vielé's and would be the last of its kind until Custer began publishing in 1885. *Absaraka* is one of two memoirs written about the events of the 1866 "Fetterman Fight," a mismatched battle between U.S. troops and Lakota, Cheyenne, and Arapaho warriors that resulted in the death of 81 U.S. soldiers outside Fort Phil Kearny, and which held the reputation as the worst and most controversial military defeat of the Plains wars until it was eclipsed in 1876 by the Battle of the Greasy Grass/Little Bighorn, written by the first and second wives of Colonel Harry B. Carrington. Today, most accounts hold Captain Fetterman responsible for the large loss of life but at the time, there were several accounts in circulation, and the commanding officer, Colonel Harry B. Carrington, was assigned blame in most. It was only through the diligent efforts of the Colonel and both his first and second wives that he was able to clear his name. Two years after the Fetterman Fight, Margaret Carrington published *Absaraka, Home of the Crows: Being the Experience of an Officer's Wife on the Plains* (1868), both a memoir of her experiences and an impassioned and well-supported defense of her husband's actions on December 21, 1866. More than forty years later, Frances Carrington, the widow of one of the lieutenants killed in the battle and the second wife of Colonel Carrington, published *My Army Life and the Fort Phil Kearney Massacre: With an Account of the Celebration of "Wyoming Opened"* (1910). The frontier narratives of Frances and Margaret Carrington offer an informative contrast to Custer's recollections.

by a New England Woman (1908); and Frances Carrington's *My army life and the Fort Phil Kearney massacre: with an account of the celebration of "Wyoming opened"* (1910).[62]

The existing scholarship on army wife memoirs has been written predominantly by historians rather than literary or cultural studies scholars.[63] Cavalry wives (such as Custer) retained their privileged economic and social status, which both mediated their experience of the frontier - most had servants, typically a cook and a maid, and they ran little risk of direct encounter with Native peoples, hostile or otherwise - and enabled them to share their experience of events on a broader scale than letters and diaries, as most army wives had more education and greater social capital than women who relocated permanently to the Western United States. They are distinct from women who permanently settled in the West; as sojourners, they had seen and experienced life in the West more and more intimately than any traveler, but retained their cultural identity as Easterners, which made their accounts more reliable as they could never have been said to have "gone native."

The creation of the family home in the West marks this land as belonging to a particular racialized (white, American) family configuration even in lands that aren't yet controlled by the United States. As Krista Comer has argued, open landscape is the key emblem of the West, which vexes the very presence of houses, let alone the culture of families they contain.[64] The army presence performs a make-shift version of this, the layout of army forts distinct to the western United States - as open collections of buildings in informal patterns around a central parade or square - mimicked the layout of New England villages, literally transforming Native American lands into American homes. Not only are army wives making a family home in the

[62] I have excluded Frances Roe's *Army letters from an officer's wife, 1871-1888* (1909) - as a collection of letters that depicts events as they were unfolding, it differs significantly from the other memoirs.
[63] Cathryn Halverson notes the asymmetry between the abundance of historical work on western domesticity versus the general paucity of literary investigations in the introduction to *Playing House in the American West*
[64] For more see Comer.

west, they continuously make new homes, or bring the home/family with them everywhere they go. If, as Hill Collins argues, family-making is inseparable from place-claiming, by making a family home in the West, they assert ownership over the land they occupy.

Attending to the disjuncture between Custer's oft-repeated invocation of "military family" to describe the relations among the Seventh Cavalry and its entourage, and the economic, racial, and ethnic composition the enlisted men and camp followers who made up the bulk of the traveling cavalry reveals the he frontier acted as a space that contained difference, smoothing over material and economic conflicts that divided groups along class and racial lines when they resided in the same space. Writing the military as a family transforms any geographical space occupied by the U.S. Military - forts, campsites - into an American home, a domestic space against which outsider-ness coheres.

Army Wife Memoirs as a Popular Genre

It is not just the content and authorship of army wives' memoirs that marks them as a genre. They also share numerous formal and stylistic qualities. Virtually all of these books open with a preface that explains the author's motivations or in some cases verify her right to speak. They also deploy the same types of sketches or anecdotes that characterize Custer's writing. Rather than autobiography, which charts birth to death, these narratives offer autobiographical stories, memoirs which offer brief glimpses.

Margaret Carrington, for example, famously opened her book with a dedication to Lieutenant-General Sherman, "whose suggestions at Fort Kearney, in the spring of 1866, were adopted, in preserving a daily record of the events" (dedication). In a prologue, she describes the "importunity of friends" which occasioned her publication of the observations recorded in her diary. Lydia Spencer Lane's (1893) introduction takes an even more personal approach: "In

sending forth this account of incidents in my army life, I claim for it no literary merit; I have simply given facts without any attempts to elaborate them. First intended for my children and grandchildren, I afterwards thought this narrative might be acceptable to army friends, and to many of a younger generation who are interested in the old army" (2-3). Frances Ellen Boyd cites not friends in the preface, but instead, a lengthy biography of her husband's military career, implying that such heroic service merits commemoration. Ida B. Dyer's book, published two years later, substitutes references from a Senator and a prominent community leader, the Honorable George R. Davis (incidentally, the chief organizer of the Chicago World's Fair). In all cases, the women emphasize the truth of their statements and the absence of literary (creative) pretension - and many center their husband's and their military service in their introductions.

Their protestations against literary pretensions may be genuine, but they serve to emphasize the reliability of these works. As Frances Roe writes in her 1909 preface,

> Perhaps it is not necessary to say that the events mentioned in the letters are not imaginary - perhaps the letters themselves tell that! They are true accounts of experiences that came into my own life with the Army in the far West, whether they be about Indians, desperadoes, or hunting - *not one little thing has been stolen*. They are of a life that has passed as has passed the buffalo and the antelope - yes, and the log and adobe quarters for the Army. All the flowery descriptions have been omitted, as it seemed that a simple, concise, narration of events as they actually occurred was more in keeping with the life, and that which came into it. (viii) (emphasis mine)

This emphasis on omitting flowery descriptions is not a marker of genuine apology but a way of affirming the truth of her writing; it both distinguishes these narratives from the most popular and common forms of women's writing - sentimental or domestic novels that focused on

emotions and relied heavily on imagery - and emphasizes the truthfulness of their statements. The emphasis on truth reflects a shared understanding of their subject matter - that they have rare and unique insight into a critical, but decidedly *past* moment in United States history that requires documenting and remembering. It is also a means of expressing ownership - ironically, Roe insists upon the events in her writing as belonging to her, an imperializing gesture.

Intimate Geographies of Empire: Army Wives' Cartographic Narratives

Previous studies of army wives' writing are primarily historical studies of women's roles and experiences with the army. These works tend to focus on women's reactions to living conditions, the land, and indigenous peoples (Miller, Leckie, Stallard, Sibbald). What I have looked for in my reading are narratives that produce a geographical and social imaginary of the American West, and by extension, lands and people previously outside of and beyond the control of EuroAmerican "civilization." It may go without saying that I do not look to these narratives for objective documentation of history (despite the authors' insistence, and the critical response, which I discuss in the next section), as they share a Western colonial gaze that has little to do with the complex and multiple realities of subjects of Western history. I am more interested in what authors like Custer chose to represent, and omit, how their representations relate to, or diverge from other contemporaneous representations of westward expansion, and how they were received by the public.

Another generic feature of army wives' memoirs is the sense of isolation they convey and how they link that isolation to other colonial projects, especially in Asia, Africa, and the Pacific islands. Custer's characterization of life on the plains as "as separate from the rest of the world as if we had been living on an island in the ocean" (*Boots* 5) is one that profoundly shapes her descriptions. The sense of isolation she conveys through geographic metaphor is noteworthy in

itself; her choice to describe the landlocked Dakota territories here as an island in the ocean is not incidental, as such language appears elsewhere: her tent was "as isolated from the town, and even the camp, not a mile distant, as if we had been an island in the river" (21). These references grow more suggestive with additional specificity, as in another memoir, “Denver lay out there at the foot of the mountains, as isolated as if it had been a lone island in the Pacific Ocean” (*Tenting* 227), and elsewhere she describes her surroundings as being as strange and isolated as if they were on the Sandwich Islands (*Guidon* 103). Similar language is common throughout memoirs written by other army wives who use not only island metaphors but specific foreign, predominantly colonized, lands. Frances Boyd notes in *Cavalry Life in Tent and Field* (1894), “It seemed to me as if San Francisco was as far away as China,” (29), a sentiment echoed by Ida Dyer in her 1896 memoir. She writes, “I would have followed my "Hero" into the jungles of Africa, and when I reached "Kansas City" I began to think that country was not far removed” (Dyer 9). Von Cleve also turns to the African continent when describing the isolation and strangeness of her new home: "It required no very vivid imagination to fancy ourselves in the happy valley of "Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia,” set in modern-day Ethiopia (134). The comparison to islands or to specific countries invokes not mere isolation but social and cultural otherness.

A great deal of attention has been paid to the relationship between geographic fantasy and Western imperial expansion, but the specificity of these geographical references - whether to islands in the Pacific or the jungles of Africa - shifts the analytical relevance and historical purview of these texts beyond their ostensible particularity to the American West. They are an index of the anachronistic entanglement of colonial conquest between the time being depicted - the 1860s and 70s - and the moment of their writing in the 1880s and 90s. It is highly unlikely

that either the Sandwich Islands or the jungles of Africa would have served as a ready metaphor at the time the events being depicted transpired - before, for instance, the 1874 deployment of U.S. troops to dispatch Hawaiian uprisings, or before the spotlight shone on the African continent by the European scramble for Africa underway in the 1880s.

The distance between the events depicted and the moment of narration introduces temporal complexity into the memoirs. The anachronistic inclusion of later imperial projects is disruptive. They mark the difference, an important one, between these and the letters and diaries of pioneer women, written in real time, upon which many studies of and theories about women in the West are based, demonstrating decisively the incommensurability of these theories to army wife memoirs. They serve also to disrupt the treatment of memoir or autobiography as mimetic or documentary, forcing a recognition of the way memoir's depictions of the past are always already refracted through the moment of their writing.[65] They disrupt finally and most importantly academic conventions that divide the literary and historical by revealing the way these memoirs produce a history of the time between the occurrence of the events they depict and the moment of their writing, and further, of geographic and temporal periodization that falsely sever or compartmentalize Western history from imperial history.

It is with this in mind that I turn my attention to army wives' representations of Western geography. Taken as whole, Custer and other memoirists produce a geographic and imperial imaginary of most of the Western territories that shaped how Americans came to understand the history of Westward expansion. This understanding is distinct from the academic discipline of

[65] The tendency to focus on Western literature as a historical source, and to evaluate it based on its fidelity to existing representations of "the real West" is as old as Western literature itself - Hawthorne narratives are not alone in this respect, for as Cathryn Halverson notes, Western Studies has long been dominated by historical rather than literary scholarship and there remains a strong tendency to treat literary writing first and foremost as historical sources (*Playing House* 7). This investment in authenticity and accuracy is striking given the potential for great inaccuracy in these narratives - only about half of these authors kept diaries, and thus based their accounts on memories of events that had transpired some 20 years earlier.

history, which was at that same moment beginning to emerge, but analytically inseparable from it. I argue that these texts constitute something more than echoes that buttressed a Turnerian vision of history. They writings, and their descendents, which I turn to in the next chapter, were themselves popular histories, and were taken up as such in their time.

All army wife memoirs are shot through with geographic description, and naturally so, given the synonymity of "the West" and the outdoors (Comer 27). Army wives' representations of Western geography range from detailed descriptions of the landscape, climate, and wildlife to atlases and maps from different points in time. I argue that these different descriptions work together to constitute cartographic narratives, stories that transform uncharted land into neatly delineated properties.

My choice to use the term "cartographic" rather than "geographic" is informed by scholarship begun by map historians and cartographers in the 1970s and 80s. Scholars of European empire have long noted the critical function of mapping; maps were "both instruments and representations of" expanding colonial influence that aided in "promoting, assisting, and legitimating the projection of European power" (Bassett 316). By "indicating the nature and location of natural resources and indigenous economic activities, maps highlighted the potential benefits to be gained from trade and ultimately colonization" (321). In the United States, map-making was understood as a critical part of nation-building. Maps were used to explain environmental and socioeconomic problems, swaying policymakers and voters, revealing the demographic compositions of the populace, etc.[66] In the U.S. context, historian Susan Schulten argues that "maps were powerful social and political images that helped cement the nation

[66] For a discussion of the function of maps in regulating biopolitical status during the Civil War era see Schulten (2012).

together as it expanded across a continent" (Schulten *Mapping*). I choose the word "cartographic" to emphasize the deeply political function of geographical representation.

The cartographic imaginary I describe is not synonymous with the creation of the modern rail system, but it is inseparable from it. Discussions of the settlement of the American West by EuroAmericans necessarily include the building of the transcontinental railroad. The complex economic, social, and technological dimensions of this venture have been discussed extensively by scholars working in a number of disciplines.[67] This entanglement is as much literal as it is figurative: the frontier army's presence was simultaneously the effect of rail expansion and the precondition for it. Engineers needed army protection in order to build track, which enabled further settlement that in turn provoked confrontation with native groups, demanding more protection, and setting the stage for further expansion. Commercial railroad travel also transformed the character of settlement in the American West, from the property of a few rugged individuals to the haven of an expanding middle class.

The centrality of the railroad is common to all of the memoirs authored by army wives. The railroad is a central fact of life - a practical reference to how these women traveled to the army posts in which they resided, and the means by which they received almost everything in their lives: supplies, food, mail. But it also serves as an index of civilization's progress across the continent - whether by its presence, its limitations, or its absence. Army wives mark and describe their location by reference to the nearest railways, often by name. They also use the development and completion of various railroad lines as a way to demonstrate the changes that have occurred in Western territory.

[67] For more on the development of the transcontinential railroads see White, Bain, Ambrose (2000), and Angevine. For studies focusing on labor and the racialized dimensions of railroad building see Arnesen, Chew, and Huang.

Custer in particular mentions frequently and explicitly the army's role in protecting the engineers who built the railroads. The General's first assignment in the frontier army was to defend the expanding railways from Indian attacks. Custer's account about her time in Kansas, from receiving the assignment to her return years after her husband's death, provides insight into the longer arc of these changes. Unlike the fort Custer was originally assigned to, Fort Garland, "a small, obscure post, then several hundred miles from any railroad" (208), the Custers "had no trouble finding [Fort Riley] on the map, as it was a comparatively old post, and the Kansas Pacific Railroad was within ten miles of the Government reservation" (*Tenting* 208).

Among all the narratives I will discuss, Custer's cartographic narratives are the most common and the most prominent. Custer, unlike other women, writes specifically about maps, both figuratively and literally. Over the course of her memoirs, she represents the process of mapping, first by establishing its necessity in her preface when she describes her location as an "island on the ocean." Indeed, as I explained earlier, that isolation is her justification for writing, and a powerful isolation it must be that ten years later, it is still a tangible presence in her work, a condition that dictates its necessity despite the fact that the West had by then been officially "won."

The most obvious cartographic narratives are maps themselves, which are included in each of her books. Each of her memoirs includes at least one illustration of a map. Less obvious is her frequent recourse to maps to "find herself," or her husband. After receiving news that they were to be relocated to Dakota territory, for example, she noted that she had to excuse herself from the celebration temporarily "to retire to a corner with an atlas, and surreptitiously look up the territory to which we were going" (11). Custer's letters to the General during separations include similar references to "look on my map and you will find our present location" (312). This

constant sense of geographic instability underscores the necessity of her presence there. It also overwrites the process of expansion by which Americans come to "find themselves" in new places.

Taken in isolation, these descriptions are practical occurrences, a way of breaking down the abstract idea of the army's movement to an audience the vast majority of whom would not have considered let alone experienced a move of such a great distance. But elsewhere in her narratives her references to maps are more complex. She describes, for instance, the daily pen-and-ink drawings of the day's march that would eventually be compiled into maps (*Guidon* 2). This inclusion serves multiple purposes - that they had to be made at all is a reminder of the newness of the territory. It is one of many ways her memoirs interpret the work of the military; it is not just that the army's presence is necessary to protect American settlers. Their presence enables the existence of settlers in the first place by creating the cartographic and infrastructural necessities of expansion.

Custer's inclusion of several side-by-side illustrations underscores and testifies to the changes she references. *Tenting on the Plains*, for example, contains a side-by-side illustration of Texas in 1866 and "Today" (1887), revealing the vast changes that had transpired. Without explicit mention in the text, the maps themselves testify to the importance of the railroad, a theme she will discuss in detail. Even in cases where maps are not included, authors reference them as illustrations of change. This time-lapse mapping is especially evident in a narrative by Martha Summerhayes, *Vanished Arizona*, where her recollections are also presented as part of another time; describing a trip between makeshift camps that occupied long-deserted sheep ranches: "[O]n the old maps of Arizona [the names given to those camps] are still to be found. Of course on the new railroad maps, they are absent" (Summerhayes 119). Notably,

Summerhayes does not discuss who these ranches originally belonged to; presumably Mexicans were the owners.

The use of maps, either as illustrations or description, has the potential to produce a highly selective narrative of U.S. expansion. Custer's side-by-side maps, designed to showcase the development of the region, tell a supplemental story of development and expansion; for on neither an 1866 nor an 1886 map is the contentious military and imperial history of Texas visible. The maps of army wife memoirs also insert similar narratives in their texts by including maps that don't register the history of native land ownership, or even previous eras of colonial possession. "It was a decade since, when Indians roamed at will where now a web of five Pacific Railroads, with their collateral branches, spreads over the rapidly filling plains" (*Guidon* 281).

Custer also narrates the creation of the Western United States by explaining how and why the places on the map came to be there, mentioning locations named after people and incidents she had been witness to (33). Sometimes these separate narratives converge - she describes the inhabitants of a town so small it was not on any map when she first arrived there, then how much larger the town or city was when she returned several years later, and includes a map upon which this once non-existent place appears as a major city.

> I lately rode through [Kansas], which seemed when I first saw it a hopeless, barren waste, and found the land under fine cultivation, the houses, barns and fences excellently built, cattle in the meadows, and, sometimes, several teams ploughing in one field. I could not help wondering what the rich owners of these estates would say, if I should step down from the car and give them a little picture of Kansas, with the hot, blistered earth, dry beds of streams, and soil apparently so barren that not even the wildflowers would bloom, save for a brief period during the spring rains. Then add pestilence, Indians, and an

> undisciplined, mutinous soldiery who composed our first recruits, and it seems strange that our officers persevered at all. I hope the prosperous ranchman will give them one word of thanks as he advances to greater wealth, since but for our brave fellows the Kansas Pacific Railroad could not have been built; nor could the early settlers, daring as they were, have sowed the seed that now yields them such rich harvests. (*Tenting* 382)

This passage is emblematic of the thrust of her vision of the frontier - American industry can transform this territory, but only because of the unique and irreplaceable work done by the army, labor that is not, thanks to her presence, beyond the pale of civilized behavior.

It also marks the actual transformation of the land - not just the mapping that first made it accessible, but by agricultural technologies like irrigation systems which reveal potential untapped by the original indigenous inhabitants. Custer's narratives of settlement draw inevitably on the creation of railroad lines. Obviously, she frames this as a positive development, but it inadvertently renders the violence of colonial conquest more visible than accounts that emphasize industry alone as the truly revolutionizing force because these are linked directly to the work and the sacrifice of the army.

Transforming the physical landscape required the removal of a Native presence. At different times in her first memoir, Custer presents Indians as coexisting so intimately with the land that they are easily mistaken for it. She describes her trip to a Hunkpapa settlement for a formal meeting with Chief Two Bear in ominous terms, explaining how "The bluff was crowned with little irregularities, so still they seemed like tufts of grass or stones. They represented many pairs of bead-like eyes, that peered over the country" (*Boots* 77). This melding of Native with land reappears during the day she and the other officers' wives are left nearly unattended at the fort; viewing the areas surrounding Fort Abraham Lincoln through her binoculars, she looks for

evidence of Indian presence: "We knew the Indian mode of taking observation. They pile a few stones on the brow of the hill after dark; before dawn they creep up stealthily from the farther side, and hiding behind the slight protection, watch all day long with unwearying patience. These little picket posts of theirs were scattered all along the bluffs" (*Boots* 162). These "picket posts" which disguise or potentially disguise an enemy, surround them, yet she offers no explanation of how to differentiate them from natural rock formations.

In the previous chapter, I argued for an understanding of these similar constructions as palimpsests inscribed with layers of meaning by different populations at different times - a tool for navigation, recording history, a sort of warrior-scarecrow to divert hostile parties. Here, the Euro-American gaze presents the landscape and the Native as nearly synonymous. Native bodies are transformed into landscape features eliding entirely the violent removal of those bodies from the land they seemed to be so intimately wed to as these markers and the many meanings that were embedded within and inscribed upon them are presumably cleared away for the railroad and the city street.

Another dimension of Custer's cartographic narratives emerge in her discussions of the climatic shifts that scramble her perception of time. Custer and many other army wives write about the long days and lingering sunsets of summer, as well as the sudden darkness in the winter. For example, she notes in *Boots and Saddles* that as the army moved farther north she was "greatly deceived by having so much daylight" as the days and twilights lengthened (*Boots* 36). As I discussed in the previous chapter, time, as well as land, constitutes the otherness of the West, and like the geographic features that signify differently to Native and EuroAmerican populations, the same seasonal, solar, and celestial signals that can be transparently mapped onto

Gregorian calendars and twenty-four hours clocks by Winnemucca are mystifying and deceptive to Custer.

In much the same way that cartography acts as a politics, disciplining and civilizing land, the structuring and regulation of time are a political mechanism. Railroads transformed American life by giving system and order to space and time, essentially rearranging the mental geography of the American West. And in the same way the expansion of the railroad led to the geographical transformation of the West, turning classless settlements into bustling cities, its arrival simultaneously transformed the temporal world of the West. But before the railway brought the nation onto to one standardized clock, Custer, and other army wives brought order to their days through the regulated temporalities of military life. *Following the Guidon* (1890) uniquely demonstrates a predecessor of standardized Western chronopolitics by naming each chapter after an army bugle call. An understanding of the way Western structures of regulated time marks difference between civilized and not adds significance to the temporal structure that shapes Custer's third memoir.

In the preface to *Following the Guidon* (1890) she justifies her choice to organize each chapter around a particular army bugle call by explaining its centrality to her life with the army, where it served as "the hourly-monitor of the cavalry corps," telling everyone in camp "when to eat, to sleep, to march, and to go to church" (v). In short, the bugle's organizational power enables Western expansion - ensuring that the soldiers prepare for service by eating, sleeping, and exercising, that the cavalry comes together when and where needed, and finally that all of its members adhere to Western moral imperatives by attending church. Her description of this reveals its pervasiveness and importance:

> [The bugle call] was the enemy of ease and cut short many a blissful hour. The very night was invaded by its clarion notes if there chanced to be fire, or should Indians steal a march on us, or deserters be discovered decamping. We needed timepieces only when absent from garrison or camp. The never tardy sound calling to duty was better than any clock, and brought us up standing. (*Guidon* v)

Each chapter in her book begins with the bugle music for a particular time of day, regimenting the text by the same means the military imposed order on the frontier.

Other army wives echo her sentiment, like Lydia Spencer Lane, who writes that her servant, though not fluent in English, learned to tell the time by the bugle calls; transcending linguistic, and temperamental, differences, this "hourly-monitor"disciplines even her unruly French maid. The most telling example of the convergence of military/national and domestic order appears in the conclusion to Charlotte Von Cleve's memoir, when she describes the sensation of hearing the bugle call at the end of life, likening it to hearing her mother's voice calling her home (59).

The changing climate did more than trouble the army wives' sense of time - it changed their means of communication: "[A]t that distance north news could come to us through Indian runners in advance of that we received by the telegraph" and such couriers were faster even than the cavalry (Custer *Boots* 36). Her descriptions of the delay in news are not only about their distance from civilization (far enough that they didn't make their own news), but also about the way this distance and isolation leaves them behind or outside of the progression of the civilized world, dependant upon and thus coeval with the primitive and the savage.

The effect of memoir's time lag is critical as well. At the time the army wives were living on the frontier, the railroad was not yet synonymous with regulated time and the reach of the telegraph, but by the time they were written, it had become so.

Transforming Imperial Labors

The railroad is about far more than access to distant lands. The memoirs never fail to mention the early pioneer towns that predate the railroad but their descriptions underscore, rather than undermine, their limitations. This difference is perhaps most obvious in a description by Frances Boyd (1894) who expressed her surprise upon returning to towns she had first visited before the railroad was built: "All those strange, crude, and uncivilized Western villages have since become thriving railroad towns" (Boyd 183). Certainly those places existed but without the railroad they were "strange, crude, and uncivilized."

The change is marked in more positive though no less dramatic terms by Ida Dyer (1896) when she writes

> In the short space of six years, that region has become a land of permanent cities, prosperous farms and enlightened people. The cow-boys, a class of hardy, unconquerable developers of Western resources, cannot be duplicated in the future, for the conditions under which they lived can never again reappear. The Railroads, the boom-town, and the barbed-wire fence have done their work for him. He and other characteristic figures are passing away or "going over the range" as he would express it in his own vernacular. (Dyer 215)

Dyer's writing manifests a sort of longing that Renato Rosaldo has theorized as imperialist nostalgia, "where people mourn the passing of what they themselves have transformed" and

"[use] a pose of innocent yearning' both to capture people's imaginations and to conceal its complicity with often brutal domination" (108). Iterations of this imperialist nostalgia grow stronger as the uncivilized past grows more distant.

It appears in a description so significant that it would serve as the title of Martha Summerhayes' book:

> I had been at Tucson nine years before, for a few hours, but the place seemed unfamiliar. I looked for the old tavern; I saw only the railroad restaurant. ... Everything seemed changed. Iced cantaloupe was served by a spick-span alert waiter; then quail on toast. "Ice in Arizona?" It was like a dream, and I remarked to [my husband], "This isn't the same Arizona we knew in '74," and then, "I don't believe I like it as well either; all this luxury doesn't seem to belong to the place." (250-51)

This imperialist nostalgia is in no way unique to the genre. Indeed, it has played a central role in U.S. literature since its inception in the first decades of the nineteenth century. The first, and enduringly popular, American novels were historical romances. Originated by Walter Scott, historical romances dramatized the process of historical change; while they celebrate the achievements of progress, presented as natural, necessary, and inevitable, they mourn the passage of the "primitive" customs and cultures it eradicates.[68]

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[68] There is a lengthy and well-established body of scholarship on the nineteenth-century U.S. historical romance, specific genre of historical fiction modeled on Walter Scott's Waverley novels. In this context, the term romance denotes not a love story – though romantic entanglements frequently played a key role in romances – but a novel whose plot centers on a quest (for freedom, land, marriage) and rejects verisimilitude or realist representation in favor of high-stakes drama that offers insight into the human psyche. Scott's novels, originally written to preserve and celebrate the oral traditions of the Scottish Borders, proceed from a stadial understanding of history, which holds that every society progresses through four distinct phases. This understanding of history permitted the staging of a pathos-laden encounter between supposedly pre-modern populations – in the case of Scott, Scottish highland peoples – and the inexorable forces of progress. The historical romance simultaneously laments the virtues of the primitive, premodern - characterized both by the absence of historical consciousness and the possession of a childlike, highly emotional nature - while affirming the necessity and benefits of progress.
The recognizability of this paradigm is due in large part to Georg Lukacs' influential study of the historical novel, in which he argues that the Waverley paradigm constituted the first and only properly historical novels. For Lukacs, not all novels set in the past are authentically historical; rather, to be truly historical, the plot of the novel must hinge

A comparison to early frontier romances brings a temporal inconsistency governing army wife narratives into relief. Like early frontier romances, army wives eulogize the losses that they see as the inevitable cost of progress - the untamed wilderness, the rugged frontiersman. They describe the transformation of small settlements and intimate, classless communities into bustling cities, but bloodthirsty savages are only ever enemy combatants.

The double move of revelation and containment enacted by the presence of the military family does not extend to Native populations. The "vanished" frontier and subsequent disappearance of the rugged pioneer is eulogized, while the eradication of Native life upon which this loss hinges is never registered. And while it's not surprising that the wives of soldiers would be unlikely to mourn the military defeat of Native populations, it is surprising that they fail to note it at all. These narratives don't celebrate the elimination and containment of Native population - they simply do not mention it.[69]

In addition to dominant historical narratives that position U.S. military violence as a necessary response to unsolicited Indian violence, by the time of Custer's writing the Indian boarding schools Wexler has theorized as a site of tender violence were proliferating. In 1879, Captain Richard Henry Pratt opened the Carlisle Indian Industrial School in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, the first off-reservation boarding school for Native Americans. Modeling it on

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on the irreconcilable alterity of the historical subjects. The prominence of this theory of the historical romance may have served to curtail a broader and more nuanced exploration of nineteenth century historical fiction as the persistence of his criteria forecloses the possibility of a more encompassing rubric. Not all authors who fictionalized the past relied on Scott's formula and even those who did cannot be explained entirely within its terms. Without disputing the validity of Lukacs' insight into the significance of Scott's model, I believe that looking at studies of the historical novel outside of the U.S. context and at novels that have not been identified as historical romances can complicate and enrich the picture substantially.

[69] There are occasional exceptions to this; elsewhere in her memoir Cleve offers the most sympathy: "But civilization and never-tiring enterprise have waved over it their magic wand, and the whole scene is changed. Beautiful towns have sprung up about the clear, blue lake, and the place that knew the Indian and his people shall know him no more forever. In a distant camping-place nearer the setting sun the remnant of a once powerful tribe is dragging out its existence, waiting and expecting to be moved still farther west when the white man wants the land they occupy, reserved to them only till that want becomes imperative and the United States says: "Go farther!"" (100).

schools like the Hampton Institute, which were designed to provide educational opportunities for former slaves, Pratt espoused a theory of "assimilation through total immersion." Within twenty years, there would be nearly as many similar institutions throughout the United States, all influenced by Pratt's philosophy, "Kill the Indian and save the man."

Custer does not engage with the ongoing struggle over Indian-American relations; writing performs an act of closure that renders the outcome of the debate inconsequential. Unsurprisingly, the representations of Native people in army wife narratives reproduced familiar EuroAmerican stereotypes, though the amount of time devoted to discussions of Native people varied greatly from author to author, as did the degree of enmity expressed. However, it is Custer alone who fails to acknowledge the resolution of the Native threat. For example, Lydia Spencer Lane's account opens with a graphically detailed account of the horrors visited upon a white family taken hostage by Indians. Army wives' representations of Native people are unsurprisingly consistent and characteristic of the time, typically rehearsing stories of "unprovoked" violence perpetrated by Natives against white settlers.

Part III: From Family Stories to American history: The Popular Reception of Army Wife Narratives

> The life of our cavalry on the frontier is a genuine romance, full of heroism, picturesque hardship and rude poetry. It is rapidly becoming a thing of the past, because the frontier is rapidly ceasing to be the frontier and this graphic record of it possesses a value and interest which must increase as the years go on. Here, as everywhere, it is the human interest that most attracts and absorbs attention, and so far as the hardships, dangers and trials of such existence are concerned, *the record of a woman's life in the cavalry*

regiment affords the best and completest possible presentation" ("Boots and Saddles," Commercial Advertiser). (emphasis mine)

The significance of Custer's memoirs, and the means by which they created such lasting impact, is due largely to the incredible fanfare with which their publication was heralded. Given white Americans' perception of the General's death as tragic and mysterious, it was perhaps inevitable that Custer's writing would attract some attention. She offered a perspective and knowledge of the General that no one else could - a fact that was emphasized by reviewers - but if we look beyond the headlines and marketing, reviewers found in her writing truths of even greater significance than her depictions of the General's character. My research into the reception of Custer's books demonstrates that interest in her books stemmed from a desire to know the real West that was as strong or stronger than the desire to know the real General. Reviewers automatically classified her memoirs as honest, accurate, mimetic representations of the true or real West. And while other army wives received a far less dramatic response, their reviews mimicked quite closely the commentary of the Custer reviews.

But what of the rapidly vanished frontier is so uniquely captured by Custer and her followers? Why are her representations privileged as sources, as opposed to the accounts of settlers, captives, or even veterans themselves? What makes "the record of a woman's life in the cavalry regiment ... the best and completest possible presentation?"

Thus far I have argued that Elizabeth Custer's memoirs constitute a distinct formation of manifest destiny that undermines growing criticism of U.S. violence and removal of Native people by naturalizing white possession of the land and by extension exonerating the mechanism of that violence - the U.S. frontier army - by reimagining it as a family. In this section, I extend

this argument, demonstrating the ways army wives humanized not only the army itself but the broader industrial expansion of empire, not merely in retrospect, but in anticipating an expanded U.S. empire overseas.

Ultimately though, the significance of these memoirs is not in the specificity of their representations, which are minor if not insignificant variations on widespread and well-studied narratives about the American West and the complicity of white women in settler colonialism, but in the critical reception that rendered them singularly authoritative accounts of Western history. Custer's work set a powerful precedent, establishing army wives as privileged sources of information.

In this final section, I track critical responses to Elizabeth Custer's memoirs through close to two hundred reviews published in newspapers across the United States. My research shows that far from undermining her interpretations, Custer's love for her husband, and its presumptively biological or natural origins of their family, privileged her perspective. Partly this is due to nineteenth-century conventions of biography, which preferred authors to be intimates of the subject, rather than strangers commenting at a remove, as it was believed they were better equipped to expose the truth of a person's character due to their access (Fitzgerald). It also seems to rely to a certain extent on beliefs about women's creative capacities, or lack thereof - rendering their accounts more reliable since they were deemed incapable of artistic artifice. In my estimation, however, reviewers and critics found her devotion to her husband convincing. They communicate their faith in the reliability of Custer's intrepretations in several ways, and make recommendations as a result.

Reviewers consistently laud her books for the significance of the events Custer witnessed, the paucity of firsthand accounts, and most consistently, the "simple," (*The Critic*,

S*pringfield Republican*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Cincinnati Commercial Gazette*, *Wilmington News*, *Boston Courie*r), "natural," (*New York Observer*, *New York Independent*, *Boston Evening Transcript*), "unaffected" (*Missouri Republican*, *Albany Times*, *Pittsburgh Daily Post*, *Arizona Silverbelt*, *Chicago Inter Ocean*), and "artless" (*Greensburg Saturday Review*, *Harper's Bazar*, *Boston Evening Transcript*) style in which she wrote. This is reflected in the generic labels most commonly use by reviewers, which connote factual or document-based historical writing; most use words like "account" ("Current Literature," April 11, 1885), "narrative" (Brown 342), "recital" ("Recent Publications" May 2, 1885) and "report" (Rea) when describing her writing; one even goes so far as to refer to Custer as an "annalist" ("New Publications Curious Facts," September 15, 1890), while numerous others refer to her books as biographies of the General.

The significance of this frequently recurring accolade, that Custer's writing style was unaffected, may not be immediately apparent. This is particularly so because reviewers virtually never support their descriptions of her prose with quotations from the text that might illustrate precisely what they mean, nor do they offer an explanation of what "natural" writing looks like. Reviewers in places ranging from New York to Nebraska, California to Connecticut commented with consistency on her self-consciously cultivated "natural" way of writing and speaking, and a structure of individual, non-sequential sketches, that led her texts to be treated as mimetic rather than mediated representations, as historical rather than creative interpretations.

For one *Arizona Silver Belt* reviewer, her flattering representations of Custer are written with "the prettiest, unaffected admiration," while a review in the *Morning Oregonian* characterizes *Boots and Saddles* as "a marvel of directness and simplicity" that is ultimately captivating because "[i]t is pure and natural" and "a fresh illustration of the truth that facts when rightly told are far more charming than fiction."

This same reviewer goes on to urge aspiring novelists to study her prose “in order to learn how to write clearly and concisely, and the mere sentimental weavers of devotions that do not exist should read this book to find out how things are said when facts and feelings, too, are in possession of the writer” ("Boots and Saddles," 4). This recommendation is suggestive, indicating that simplicity, free of creative interpretation or artistic artifice, is more honest. This laudation manifests an implicit contrast to other writers, those unspecified “sentimental weavers of devotions that do not exist” - presumably female authors who had been popular since the middle of the nineteenth century.

Undergirding these characterizations were widely held beliefs about the purview of women’s writing. Custer began publishing her memoirs in a transitional moment in American literary history, one of particular significance for women writers. Commercial success for so-called domestic or sentimental novels was on the wane by the end of the century. These novels tended to focus on the love, marriage, motherhood, and family in the white middle class home, foregrounding the importance of interpersonal relationships and the necessity of protecting and preserving them from the influence of the ostensibly separate public world of commerce. Formally, they typically incorporated ornate prose, extensive imagery, and above all exceptionally detailed descriptions of feelings or sentiment. Putting aside the question of literary merit that has characterized the longstanding debates around literary sentimentality, I emphasize instead June Howard’s point that most critiques of literary sentimentality hinge on the question of authenticity, that "the spontaneity, sincerity, and the legitimacy of an emotion are understood to be the same" (218), so “sentimental” novels were considered inauthentic because they aggrandized the inconsequential - the minutiae of (white, middle class) women’s daily life.

Elizabeth Custer's writing about her "private" marriage and home life, however, are inseparable from the "public" events of expansion with which they are so closely interwoven in her narratives. Reviewers' commentary reveals that this association renders her accounts always already legitimate and significant. Her story is accurate and trustworthy because her interpretation of her husband and his significance as part of westward expansion syncs with a pre-existing vision of empire. Their assumption was that her laudatory representations of the General were appropriate and thus authentic, and not merely appropriate to her, as his widow, but for Americans writ large. By authenticating her emotional response to both the loss of her husband and, more broadly, the American West, the indigenous other, and the war as "natural," they dictated an emotional response for the reading public.

Custer's memoirs differ stylistically from traditional sentimental or domestic novels they are still shaped by emotion, but the more important difference is that the emotion is validated as authentic. I don't dispute the fact that there is a marked stylistic difference between Custer's writing and the most popular sentimental novels, but I do want to resist the public characterization of simple prose style as antithetical to those same "sentimental weavers of devotion" derided by the review. The interplay between and amongst reviews, concurrent trends in women's literature, and Custer's actual writing produces a house of mirrors, endlessly displacing an accounting of the emotionally saturated character of her text. That is, the contrast between her writing style and that of popular fiction renders her an honest reporter; at the same time, it is her devotion to her husband that renders her an insightful and valuable witness, without being held accountable to the standards of journalism or non-fiction, and at the same time, infusing her story with feeling. The absence of ornate prose and elaborate metaphor render

much of her creative work less visible, and because of its low visibility, ultimately more effective.

The centrality of her devotion to her husband did not escape the notice of reviewers in the moment of the memoirs' publication. They commented on the her "devotion" (*Boston Commercial Bulletin*), "almost pathetic hero-worship of her knight peerless" (*The Morning Oregonian*), her books were "one long and loving reflection" (*Christian Union*), "while you feel in every page how she adores her heroic husband, not a syllable is set down which violates good taste or savours of mere sentiment" (*The Spectator*). The fact of their marriage becomes a strength rather than a liability; as a reviewer for San Francisco's *Daily Evening Bulletin* explained:[70]

> She writes somewhat as a hero worshipper; but then she had a hero for a husband. And who so likely to give a generous and glowing account of him as a devoted wife? And yet the story is told with a degree of candor which makes it a trustworthy biography. She has woven in the salient facts in the life of her distinguished husband so that the book is really a biography of Gen. Custer. .... Very few distinguished military men have had wives who from personal knowledge in hard campaigns could write the biographies of their husbands. ... The heroic soldier was worthy of this record at the hands of a brave and loving wife ("Current Literature," April 11, 1885)

Implicit in the phrase "hero worshipper" is an admission of selectivity; yet for this reviewer, the fact of her relationship with the General isn't a weakness because of the "degree of candor" that makes it trustworthy, presumably another reference to "simple" or "natural" writing style for which she is lauded. Furthermore, the newspaper positions her as singular even among devoted

[70] In the nineteenth century, it was commonly believed that only people with an intimate relationship and thus personal insight into the subject's character were qualified to write a biography, see Casper.

wives because of rare "personal knowledge in hard campaigns." For this reviewer, then, her qualification is the result of her experience, accompanied by a refusal of the notion that this undercuts her testimony.

There is a contradictory logic evident in this quotation that characterizes many of the accolades awarded Custer: she is valuable as a rare source of information of military life, but her singularity makes her information impossible to evaluate; we can trust all of her representations because they are the truth, which is obvious because her account is unaffected, direct, and simple; she is a devoted wife and as such has unique insight that makes her an ideal source of information. The incoherence of nineteenth century beliefs about personal truth becomes even more readily apparent as it is repeated in review after review.

The same "simple" "natural" prose that made her books reliable made them ideal for young readers. An 1892 article in *Ladies Home Journal* recommends *Boots and Saddles*, along with the novels of James Fenimore Cooper, Francis Parkman's histories, and Helen Hunt Jackson's *A Century of Dishonor*, a legal history of U.S.-Native relations aimed at inciting popular sympathy for the plight of the remaining Native population, as alternatives to dime novels ("The Best Books for Children"). The pairing of these works is particularly fascinating; Jackson's explicit aim was to record the injustices perpetrated by the United States against the Indian, while Custer demonizes them as violent savages. Custer's books are included as well in a list of "Books for My Daughter to Read," "fiction, biography (that most valuable of all literature), history and travels, which may assist the perplexed ones who would fain exercise a wholesome supervision over her daughter's reading as she does over her diet or her wardrobe: one, too, which may be safely put into the hands of girls from the age of 10-16" (11/10/1897 *Wichita Daily Eagle*)). Custer's memoir is also included in a list of fiction by Louisa May Alcott,

Jane Austen, Maria Edgeworth, and historical novels by William Makepiece Thackeray and Edward Bulwer-Lytton.

These recommendations offer a telling snapshot of the way competing visions of U.S. expansion jockeyed for popular attention; despite the impassioned and heartfelt recommendations given to Sarah Winnemucca's lectures and book, they fail to register in the same didactic category. These young readers were in Custer's mind when writing; her preface to *Following the Guidon* notes that "Some children having asked questions to which I could not reply, I was obliged, not long since, to visit the Astor Library to look up answers" (Custer, *Guidon* ix). Rather than undermining her credibility, her transparent presentation of her "research" contributes to her reputation for reliability.

Conclusion

In a *New York Times* review of *The Custer Story: The Life and Intimate Letters of General George A. Custer and his Wife, Elizabeth* (1950), reviewer Hoffman Birney declared that "On one point ...Custerphile and Custerphobe agree. That is the passionate and enduring love between Custer and his wife," going on to coo that to "Libbie," Custer was "Bayard, Roland, and Galahad, all in one." In the sixty-odd years since the publication of this review, academic and popular perception of the Custer marriage has changed remarkably little, including an apparently universal agreement to refer to her by the nickname Libbie, used, during her lifetime, exclusively by family and friends. Long before Custer began narrating herself as a romantic heroine, a journalist who met the couple while Custer was serving on the Northern Plains cast them as a model of family life and culture on the frontier (Leckie 165), a characterization later supported by Custer's extensive literary and journalistic writing.

The cult of "Libbie" is as devoted and idiosyncratic as her husband's, if much smaller in size. For example, the woman responsible for compiling and publishing Custer's Civil War memoirs, Arlene Killian-Reynolds, became interested in her papers after playing her in the short-lived 1990s television series *The Real West*. After publishing the memoirs, she wrote and self-published another edited collection entitled "The Custer Family So United," as well as two one-woman shows based on Custer's life and writings, both of which she performed herself. In 1995, prolific romance author Judy Alter penned a fictionalized version of her life entitled, simply, "Libbie": in the words of one reviewer, "*Libbie* is probably the book Mrs. Custer would have written had she not been determined to protect her husband's name" (Figure 4, attached document). The most recent biography of her life was co-authored by Hollywood film producer Howard Kazanjian and screenwriter/amateur historian Chris Enss. Kazanjian and Enss gained exclusive access to a privately-owned collection of Elizabeth Custer's papers, yet their book is less a tell-all than a sepia-tinted tribute, as openly adoring as it is vague; they make no new claims and ignore all of the more unflattering details uncovered by Custer's most thorough and even-handed biographer, Shirley Leckie.

Leckie may ultimately be the most peculiar member of Custer's fan club, and the most telling, for she doesn't shy away from discussing evidence that complicates an overly romanticized or sanitized representation of her subject, detailing the catty hijinks of the Custers' courtship, the erotic letters penned in the early years of their marriage, both Elizabeth and Armstrong's tendency to flirt, if not actually cheat, in order to ignite jealousy, the tension that emerged over Custer's gambling and speculation debts, and the dramatic cooling of their ardor in later years. Early on in her book, she asserts that, "Libbie's statements [in her letters] reflect her carefully created mythology. Beneath the surface, as events would soon prove, her husband was

a troubled young man, and with good reason" (89). Yet by the end of the book, Leckie reverts entirely to a reliance on an oversimplified version of the cult of true womanhood and separate spheres:

> But while her life was interesting, rich, and rewarding, it was also based on the perpetuation of an idealized version of the past. If one values the ability of individuals to live honestly and confront the truth, then one finds little to celebrate in the widow Custer's achievements. We know enough about Elizabeth, however, to realize she would not have evaluated herself in these terms. Like many nineteenth century women she never saw herself primarily as an individual. Instead she viewed herself first and foremost as a member of a family. Her responsibility to that family – in this case her husband – took precedence over her responsibility to herself. (311)

Leckie is right that Custer viewed herself as a central part of a family, but this is not to say that she had no understanding of herself as playing a public role.

Advising a young friend who was considering a marriage proposal from an officer, Custer explained that despite hardship, "we army women feel that we are especially privileged, because we are making history, with our men, by keeping the home fires burning while the soldiers are guarding the railroad engineers and surveyors against the Indians, as mile by mile, in the face of almost insurmountable obstacles, they are building railroads straight across the continent, which will open up the country to civilization" (qtd. in Fougera 137). Leckie's ultimate capitulation to Custer's version of herself, despite having written nearly 300 pages to the contrary, reveals the extent of Custer's success in casting herself as an ahistorical phenomenon - a loving wife.

This gap between academic analysis and creative conclusion is suggestive of the recourse to the Custer marriage as an explanatory device, or a device that yields an endless deferral of explanation, for her and for her writing, that continues the depoliticization of these texts that accompanied their publication. The use in so many academic articles on Custer of her first name or her family nickname, Libbie, is evidence of an insidious familiarity that conveys an image of her as apolitical in both her life and writings. Her writings were received and validated for their historical function, and authorized, indirectly, a genre of historical narratives, exempted and hidden from historiographical scrutiny by the very same mechanism that authorized their production: love.

In this chapter I have argued for an understanding of how Elizabeth Custer's memoirs functioned as influential popular histories of American expansion. Custer's memoirs undermined well-documented criticisms of the actions of the U.S. military that were gaining traction during the 1880s with her representations of a robust military domesticity which both mobilized and contained the threat of indigeneity. Her representation of colonial logics about the threat of the indigenous to white women's virtue contained the white American home wars facing public scrutiny at the end of the century. My research demonstrates that these texts enjoyed a unique status as some of the only firsthand accounts of Western life available to the public; they were valued as not only interesting but informative regarding what happened during westward expansion.

In the next chapter, I will take up an overlooked example of army wives' influence, the popular 1893 melodrama co-written by *Chicago Sun* critic Franklin Fyles and famed playwright David Belasco, *The Girl I Left Behind Me.* Their representations of the vulnerability of white womanhood and the resulting entanglement of warfare with familial love exerted a largely

unrecognized influence on theatrical and cinematic narratives that glorify colonial violence as uniquely and essentially American.

Chapter 3: Union Forever?: The Western Army on the National Stage

Introduction

David Belasco and Franklin Fyles' *The Girl I Left Behind Me* was one of dozens of Western melodramas written and produced during the final years of the United States' campaign to eliminate or contain the remaining indigenous populations in the western half of the country.[71] The initial production opened to positive reviews during a weeklong run in Washington D.C., prior to its official opening at the Empire Theatre in New York City, where it ran for 208 consecutive nights. The play was such a success that it was revived later that same year in New York, and again in 1894, 1896, 1897, and twice in 1899 and also traveled to Philadelphia, Indianapolis, Chicago, Lincoln, Tacoma, San Francisco, and Los Angeles for sustained engagements, and was mounted at the Adelphi Theatre in London in 1895 (Holsinger 163).

[71] Dramatizations of conflicts between white colonists and indigenous peoples were not novel to Belasco and Fyles, or even to the late nineteenth century. One of the first American-authored plays performed in the U.S. was James Nelson Barker's *The Indian Princess; or, La Belle Sauvage*, based on John Smith's writing about his interactions with Pocahontas. John Augustus Stone's *Metamora; or, The Last of the Wampanoags* (1829) ran continuously for forty years, and is widely recognized by literary and cultural critics to have played a critical role in representing and shaping EuroAmerican sentiment on the "Indian Question." Due at least partially to intensifying conflict in the Western territories, the latter years of Reconstruction saw a steady uptick in the number and popularity of Western melodramas. The most popular of these was Frank Murdock's *Davy Crockett* (1872), which remained in production continuously until 1896 (Murdock's *Davy Crockett* had much in common with early-nineteenth-century historical romances by Cooper, but others, like Bret Harte's *Two Men of Sandy Bar* (1876), Joaquin Miller's *The Danites in the Sierras* (1877), *Ah Sin* (1877) by Harte and Mark Twain, and Bartley Campbell's *My Partner* (1879), bear traces of the regionalism or local color fiction of their day.

The play was a collaboration between well-known playwright David Belasco and *The Sun* (Chicago) drama critic Franklin Fyles, written on commission for the reopening of New York's Empire Theatre.[72] Set on a fictional post in central Montana in 1890, three years before the date of its production, opens with General Kennion's declaration forbidding Chief Ladru-Scar Brow of the Blackfoot people to hold an upcoming "Sun Dance" on a nearby reservation.[73] The rest of the play unfolds as a consequence of this refusal - an Indian ambush and ensuing attack on the post. However, most of the onstage action revolves around a love triangle involving the General's daughter, Kate, and two officers: her fiancée Morton Parlow, who the audience quickly learns is a dishonorable and dishonest cad, and the true object of her affection, Edgar Hawkesworth, which is somewhat surprising given that the play was billed as a military drama with, as one critic put it, "dead loads o' shootin.'"[74]

Close attention to the play's title, the name of a popular military marching tune, evokes both the military and the familial realms so frequently posited as separate. Originally an Irish folk ballad, the song from which the play takes its title was first played on American shores by British soldiers when they were preparing to sail back to England; for them it was a song of departure (McWhirter 165-66). It's unclear when it was picked up by the U.S. military, but

[72] While the play was co-authored, Franklin Fyles has largely disappeared from popular notice. Virtually all the information I could find about the play was housed in studies of Belasco's career or quoted him directly.

[73] The names Ladru, the character's real name, and Scar Brow, a nickname he acquired many years before the play takes place after a face off with General Kennion left him with a large scar on his brow, are used interchangeably throughout the play. Rather than choose one name, I have chosen to hyphenate, as both names are, I argue, significant. Scar Brow's name is more than just a tool for introducing a potential vendetta on his part; it invokes a long and highly charged history of scars and scarification, a practice that was widely misunderstood by white colonizers in locations around the world and often used as evidence of people of color's "savage" nature. It's also possible that "Scar Brow" is a reference to Scarface Charlie, Chief of the Modoc Tribe during the Modoc War (1872-3) - which, in 1893, would still have been relatively fresh in public memory. Whether or not this reference is intentional, the image of a scar-faced Indian chief would have been evocative for audiences of the time.

[74] A few scattered reviews note that the moniker of "military drama" was a bit of a misnomer for a play that focused more on the elements typical of society plays, but none belabored the point.

during the Civil War, when field musicians first became commonplace, it was adopted and widely popularized in both the Union and the Confederacy.[75] After the war, it was played alongside "The Star Spangled Banner" and "Yankee Doodle" at ceremonial events, like the unveiling of memorials (*The Sedalia Weekly Bazoo*, June 09, 1891). The song acquired additional meaning during the Indian Wars. "The Girl I Left Behind Me" was the marching song General Custer ordered the military band to play for the women left behind at various forts and base camps across Texas, Kansas, and Dakota territory when he and his men left on campaigns, including on May 17, 1876, as he left Fort Abraham Lincoln on the campaign that would end for him in death just over a month later at the Battle of Little Bighorn/Greasy Grass. By 1893, the song's association with the General and his doomed departure was well-publicized, reported by journalists at the time of the battle and again in Elizabeth Custer's memoirs. The song is mentioned first in the conclusion to Custer's *Boots and Saddles* (1885) as she describes the events of her last day with her husband, and again in both of her subsequent memoirs. In each case, it is used to evoke the sacrifices of both frontier soldiers and the women they were ostensibly fighting for.[76]

These sacrifices are indexed by *The Girl I Left Behind Me's* cumbersome title that encapsulates the historical nexus of colonialism and threats to domesticity. The song also brought together the supposedly 'private' sphere of the home - the presumptive location of the girl who has been left "behind" - with the openness and wildness of the frontier. Its legacy was enduring too, following the U.S. military's movements from the landscape of the American

[75] For a more detailed genealogy of this song in the antebellum and Civil War-era United States, particularly its circulation in the Confederacy see 94, 154, 166.

[76] Elsewhere, Belasco also credits Mrs. Crook, the wife of celebrated army officer George Crook, for sharing a similar story of her own "double danger," suggesting the extent to which this scenario was widely circulated by army wives themselves. The dramatic appeal of this scenario hardly requires explanation, evidenced by the frequency with which reviews of Custer's memoirs commented upon this phenomenon, citing it as yet another demonstration of her stoic bravery and steadfast devotion to her husband.

West, so central to the United States' vision of itself, to the transoceanic imperial expansion in the Caribbean and Pacific. In its non-partisan appeal, this song bridged political/social chasms between north and south, and also between east and west, as its circulation tied together veterans of both sides of the Civil War with those who endured the Indian wars. As both a military marching tune and a succinct encapsulation of the rationale used to justify ongoing colonial violence, this song connects the discourse of white domesticity and the genocidal project of westward expansion that are the focus of this dissertation.

Reviews of the play celebrated its "truly American character." But what did this mean? Yes, the authors are American, as are the characters and the setting. Yet this was true of many popular plays. When reviewers refer to this play in particular as "truly American, " when they gesture to the play and say *this*, *this here is America*, they are referring to the rationale for violence that constructs settler colonial empire as good and valiant. It is a tacit recognition that what is really American - both territorially and culturally - is genocide. But this recognition of genocide and colonialism as being at the very heart of Americanness is redirected through a focus on "family," a formulation that simultaneously justifies and covers up the genocidal military policies that create these families in the first place. Thus, I argue that when critics hail the play as "distinctly American," "an American drama through and through," and "a wholly native product," they are actually correctly identifying the logics that justify colonialism, and helping to translate them in such a way as to make them accessible and available to popular audiences.

This chapter explores the insidious and profoundly damaging work Custer's memoirs performed in justifying U.S. empire, not just in their time, but *over* time. My point in noting Custer's influence is not a celebratory reclamation or recovery of white women's literary

contributions to the work of figures like Belasco. Rather, I seek to shed light on the largely under analyzed effects achieved by wives' narratives in turning widespread tropes and patterns into popular cultural productions. The efficacy of Custers' narratives, especially those parts adapted for stage dramas like Belasco's, is in their self-effacement. They instantiate the white, middle class domesticity which both justifies and distracts from colonial violence, at the site of bloodshed itself. Gendered intimacy and affect distract from what are profoundly violent stories, so that love naturalizes militarism and violence. The previous chapter dwelled on manifest domesticity, the process by which white women's "domestic" stories, narratives about home, family, and love, are implicated in the production and dissemination of imperial scripts that justify the violence that attends national expansion and settler-colonialism. In the case of army wives, these scripts were produced at and through the site of colonial violence. In turning my attention to this play and the circumstances of its production, I isolate a specific moment in which historical narratives of manifest domesticity achieve broader purchase and are transposed onto sites and products with a broader, more diverse audience and even more long-lasting cultural influence than the original texts themselves. The stage productions also erase the producer of the histories that had been visible in the narratives and memoirs, making them into timeless, seemingly omnisciently narrated historical truths.

The Girl I Left Behind Me, though strongly influenced by memoirs like Custer's, differs from them in an important respect. Army wives' memoirs, which typically ran to at least 100 pages, dwelled on the minute details of their daily lives through which it is possible to see a more complex world. For example, army wives necessarily interacted with enlisted men, army laundresses, and domestic servants, and included at least passing reference to camp followers: working class men and women of different races and nationalities who followed camps as a

source of menial but secure work. Despite the memoirs' primary focus on the activities of officers and their families, army wife memoirs capture, if only in the periphery, incredibly broad and diverse social worlds: native men, women, and children of different tribes and affiliations with U.S. forces; African American camp followers and soldiers; Chinese migrants who worked on railroads and as domestics; *Californios* and Mexicans - residents of what had until recently been Mexico - who traveled as far north as Dakota territory for work. Even the white settlers depicted in wives' memoirs are far from the generic "Americans" of the Western melodrama, encompassing fugitives from the law; working class women, including prostitutes; European immigrants from many different countries; speculators and more. In contrast, the frontier of *The Girl I Left Behind Me* includes one white pioneer woman, white soldiers and officers, officers' white middle class wives, and "savage" Indians played, of course, by white actors.

I argue that by translating memoir to melodrama, Belasco and Fyles were able to create an oversimplified, highly polarized vision of western conflict in which they banish the issue of race altogether – rather than grappling with it. While army wife narratives cannot help but reveal some the connections and fissures that comprise the social world of the west, melodrama's binary, good or bad, black or white structure has limited capacity for such nuance. Indeed, the genre is defined by simple binaries, transforming westward expansion into a binary white-indigenous conflict, erasing differences that would be more present, and more actively persistent and pesky, for an Eastern audience.

Ultimately, this chapter is organized around two tensions: the first between the ostensible subject matter of the play, military combat, and the onstage action, focused on romantic and familial struggles; the second between the comic, exaggerated character of melodrama and the insistence, on the part of theatrical reviewers, army wives, and veterans alike that *The Girl I Left*

Behind Me captures, singularly, the West "as it really was" with absolute correctness. In the first part of this chapter, I analyze the intimacies around which the play is organized, and then the different kinds of intimacies it erased. I argue that the what critics and audiences identified as authentically "American" about the play was not military sacrifice or the pioneer spirit, but the performance of colonial scripts about white women's sexual vulnerability at the site of colonial violence itself. In the second, I focus on what made the play feel to critics and viewers "just how it really was." I start with Belasco and Fyles' manipulation of real historical places and events, revealing the consequences of their mixture of places real and imagined. Then I turn my attention to the qualities of production, namely the meticulously detailed stage and lighting design that helped to produce the "reality effect" Roland Barthes identified as a defining feature of historical narrative, and which produces realistic fiction. Throughout, I put *The Girl I Left Behind Me* into conversation with the army wife narratives that inspired them, and ultimately conclude with the pop cultural legacy of the play.

Part I: Intimacy on the Frontier

Figure 1 ***The Girl I Left Behind Me,*** **advertisement,** ***Los Angeles Herald, September 10, 1893***

Interestingly, while the plot of *The Girl I Left Behind Me* hinges on the military conflicts of the Indian Wars, the performance did not include any sustained representations of settlers or Natives, and it focused on just a few officers. Unlike other Western-focused shows circulating at the time, for example, the legendary *Buffalo Bill's Wild West* (1883-1913), which memorializes, however creatively, the violence of battle itself, *The Girl I Left Behind Me* is by no means action-packed. Like most melodramas, it has less stage combat than a Broadway production of *Les Miserables.* The major battles that unfold on stage are between romantic rivals and, with just four Indian characters, two of whom say no more than "Ugh," the threat of native violence mostly provides a backdrop that heightens the stakes of the romantic entanglements rather than being the central action of the play.

The difference between the ostensible military focus and the play's actual emphasis on romantic issues is encapsulated nicely in an advertisement for the play, which shows soldiers and Indians gathered in conversation, with nary a woman in sight. The soldiers and "Indians" are in

stereotypic garb, while their placement, around a campfire, brings to mind the outdoorsy rough and tumble lifestyle ascribed to cowboys, desperados, and stalwart pioneers.

Melodrama's defining characteristic often appears to be its sensationalism – the use of exaggerated characters and exciting events intended to appeal to the emotions – but historically, its primary feature was musical accompaniment. Not musicals in the modern-day sense, but these performances were accompanied by orchestral music that complemented or enhanced the dramatic action. This musical influence is particularly obvious in *The Girl I Left Behind Me*, named, as it is, for a military marching song that is played by the orchestra several times throughout the play.

The song itself, which supplies the title of the play, must also be understood not only in the context of its lyrics but also its tempo. As one of the few "sweetheart" or romantic songs suitable for marching, the song can be viewed as a temporal mechanism that managed the military's movements. In a very material sense, it reveals the way the colonial logics of manifest domesticity actually instantiates the genocidal project of westward expansion and settler colonialism. The lyrics evoke romance and domesticity, while the beat propels the soldiers forward into new territories and battles.

Romantic Entanglements

The primary intrigue of the play, romantic or otherwise, lies in the love triangle involving Kate Kennion, her fiance Morton Parlow, and the true object of her affection, Edgar Hawkesworth. Shortly after Kate and her entourage of female friends arrive at Post Kennion at the start of the play, Kate discloses her misgivings about her affianced to Lucy Hawkesworth, her closest confidante and the younger sister of Edgar, though neither Lucy nor the audience will learn until later that her heart belongs to Edgar. This central conflict is supplemented by

secondary romantic hijinks – Kate's confidante, Lucy Hawkesworth's, dogged pursuit of Private Jones, whose low-ranking status makes him an unsuitable match, and Canadian doctor Arthur Penwick's struggle to resist his blossoming ardor for a local farmer's daughter named Wilber's Ann so that he can remain a neutral observer of U.S.-Native relations. These romantic entanglements are not distinct from the war – rather, by linking war to these relations, the play depoliticizes the work of the U.S. army, and transforms the everyday realities of white family life into a national conflict.

In the play's first act, Kate screws up her courage to break her engagement, but Morton refuses, afraid he'll be the laughingstock of the regiment. His anger and determination to cling to Kate only becomes more stubborn and vindictive when he overhears her conversation with his fellow officer and best friend, Edgar Hawkesworth. Kate apologizes for having concealed her engagement from Edgar and for encouraging him to court her, explaining that her connection to Morton is one of obligation, rather than love. Despite his refusal to dissolve their engagement, Morton's devotion to Kate is short-lived – by the end of the next act, the he has offered her to Edgar in exchange for Edgar's silence about Morton's cowardice in a battle, which has resulted in the death of dozens of U.S. soldiers. Edgar agrees, against his better judgment and out of love for Kate, but once Morton secures Edgar's silence, he goes to General Kennion and blames Edgar for the death, ascribing his own actions to his fellow officers. Too noble to defend himself, Edgar is condemned to hang. But Morton's cowardice has created a desperate situation at the post. Staffed by only seventy-six men, many of them older officers, isolated from reinforcements, "against those thousands of bloodthirsty wretches [they couldn't] hold out an hour longer" (149) – so Edgar is given one potential reprieve – a chance to prove his heroism by serving as courier with an emergency call for reinforcements.

The fourth and final act of the *The Girl*, "Fair Women and Brave Men," barely even references the soldiers' recent battle. A mail delivery arrives, revealing evidence of Morton's past discretions which calls into question the truth of his accusations against Hawkesworth; confronted with the evidence, he caves, admits his cowardice, and before he can be taken into custody for a trial, flees the Fort, vindicating Edgar, and freeing him to marry Kate. We also learn how Edgar survived the mission, believed by all to be a death sentence. He had been accompanied on his ride to Fort Assinaboine by Fawn Afraid, the daughter of the enemy chief; a bullet meant for Edgar hit her instead. Fawn Afraid, his devoted "captive," took the fatal shot meant for him. The final act also resolves the secondary love stories whose ups and downs have provided the majority of the comic relief throughout the play and whose fates had also hung precariously in the balance of Edgar's mission.

Double Danger: Reprise

> "The authors studied their subject with a view to realism as well as fancy, and to expert a judge of such things as Mrs. Elizabeth Custer, wife of the famous Indian fighting general says that the representation of army experience with Indians in the North west is almost faultless in its fidelity. Messieurs. Belasco and Fyles confess that in numerous points they relied on Mrs. Custer's books, "Following the Guidon" and "Boots and Saddles" as an authority." -Tacoma Daily News, 10/13/93

The critical insistence on the play's success in capturing "the West" and "American character," over and above Western plays that were not organized around society/romance, is ultimately an endorsement of the constructions of home and marriage that Belasco and Fyles drew from Custer. At the time of the play's production, Belasco and Fyles drew their inspiration from the accounts of women who traveled with the cavalry, nineteenth-century army wives,

particularly those of Elizabeth Bacon Custer.[77] The similarities between Custer's army fort and General Kennion's are evident throughout the play - from the dances hosted for officers and their wives to the dramatic scene where the visiting women (and one officer's wife, though she is not named as such) find themselves alone at the fort with only a handful of older officers to safeguard them from the ravages of encroaching Indians. Belasco and Fyles portray what Custer refers to as the "double danger" facing white women on the frontier: their vulnerability to being captured by Indians *or* being shot by white officers to "save" them from that fate. I would add to this an unspoken "treble danger" centering on the threat to social order constituted by the possibility that white men, often husbands and fathers, will be forced to annihilate white women rather than protect them (or that protecting them will mean annihilating them).[78]

Reviewers were quick to light on the play's climactic scene, where Kate Kennion stands stoically reciting "An Order for the Burial of the Dead" from the Book of Common Prayer as her father, General Kennion, loads his gun and prepares to shoot her. From New York to Los Angeles, reviewers dubbed the scene of "the general's daughter pleading with her father to shoot her, not to let her fall into the hands of the Indians" one of the most intense and exciting scenes. They link directly the ability of "the hero and the girl of his heart [to] have their loves knit firmly and forever" to the "grand rescue scene in which the Twelfth United States cavalry arrive at a doomed military post just in time to save ... women from a fate which would have been more fearful than death" (*The Herald* 9/5/1893). Others note that this scene constitutes "the most intense and realistic situations that has yet assumed stage shape" (*The Herald* 9/5/1893).

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[77] In addition to interviews he gave in later years, reviews of the play at the time of its opening state that "in numerous points, [Belasco and Fyles] relied on Mrs. Custer's books, 'Following the Guidon' and 'Boots and Saddles', as an authority" ("The Girl I Left Behind Me").

[78] This was not only mentioned multiple times in her memoirs, but was a detail frequently rehearsed in book reviews ("With Gen. Custer," "Gen. Custer in person," "Boots and Saddles" 4/11/1885).

These responses are particularly fascinating when they are considered in conversation with Custer's memoirs. When Kate is staged on the stockade, it is an inadequate barrier protecting her against alleged Indian violence, but in Custer's books, the stockade is the site of indigenous women's captivity, the barrier which *contains* unarmed Native women and children captured after the Washita Massacre. This speaks to the inversion I described in the previous chapter, where the artifacts of colonial violence are central to the text, yet their relationship to colonialism and genocide is rewritten to center the vulnerability and bodily and familiar integrity of white women.

As the scene unfolds, Kate waits anxiously for news of her daring lover, but as light dawns on the morning of July 4, 1890, she remains alone at Post Kennion with a handful of other women and only aged officers too old for active duty as protection, a scene that recalls, with little deviation, one of Custer's most famous scenes from *Boots and Saddles*. There are only seventy-six men at the post - a number that conjures most obviously the nation's independence day in 1776, but also Custer's death in 1876. The contradictory memories contained in this date - the courage of the founding fathers and the danger of going it alone against the Indians - cause General Kennion to try to reason with Ladru-Scar Brow - the Indian leader he had battled with many year before. To a couple of soldiers who are both horrified at his choice to beg, rather than fight to the death, Kennion explains he is motivated not by fear for himself but for what "these savages" might do to the white women at the post. Notably, the only principal character to remain free of romantic entanglement is General Kennion, whom Belasco and Fyles present as a calm, objective authority whose devotion is only to his daughter and his duty.

Kennion is portrayed as sympathetic, unswervingly "fair" in his treatment of the Indians. In the first act, for example, when a delegation of Indian chiefs arrive at the post, the Major

encourages the General not to see them, dismissing their grievances outright by referencing recent thefts of livestock perpetrated by the tribes, but the General is insistent that they have a right to be heard (118). He greets the Indians and participates in "their rituals" before listening to their grievances. Even after he has rejected the Indian request to hold a religious ritual uninterrupted by the army, he insists to the Major that there should be no more severity than is "absolutely necessary," a phrase he repeats twice (121-122). Kennion stands in for the U.S. government, as neutral and value-free (just orders ma'am), relieving him of any responsibility for past or future violence perpetrated against the remaining Indian residents of the Plains.

In talks with Ladru-Scar Brow, Kennion repeatedly asks what will become of the women. At first Ladru-Scar Face insists he will not harm them, but when pressed for a specific promise, he announces, "I promise - that the general's daughter shall live. My - braves - will - not - kill - her" (154); the meaning of these words is underscored by the stage directions "*The Men are horrified, showing in their faces the full significance of Ladru's words*" (154). Ladru-Scar Face's vow not to kill Kate Kennion is, of course, a barely veiled promise that they she will be raped. Effectively, by vowing *not* to kill Kate, Ladru-Scar Face is vowing that she *will* be held captive and thus subject to physical and sexual violence.

The meaning of this is exchange is not immediately clear to Kate Kennion, but once she does understand what is to happen to her she begs her father to spare her. Usually the phrase would be to spare someone's life, but in this context, to spare her means to prevent her from falling into "savage" hands, that is, to kill her:

> Kate: And what - after - when I am alone - I shall be left a captive to the Indians? No - no - no - no - never - never Father -father - father - save me - some way.
>
> Kennion: Kate.

Kate: When the time comes - when all hope is gone - when it is the end - before death comes to you - father - kill me!

Kennion: Kate!

Kate: Oh, it won't be so hard. it will be over quickly. Take me away from them, - with you. My own hand might fail. Oh, think of the fate of that woman at Pine Ridge - and save me!

Kennion: No!

Kate: Think of Ladru-Scar Face's fearful hatred of you. Think of his rage when he finds his daughter. He will believe you have killed her - and - speak, father - so you want me to live?

Kennion submits at last and leaves to get his pistol; while he is gone Kate begins reciting a passage from the service for the dead and continues to do so, unfazed, as Kennion loads and lifts the pistol.

Kate: Man that is born of woman hath but a short time to live. He cometh up and is cut down like a flower.

Kennion: It is the end.

Kate: In the midst of life we are in death. Of whom may we seek for succor but of Thee.

But just before Kennion can pull the trigger, the sound of the army bugle is heard from off-stage. Kennion lowers the pistol and Kate and her father embrace. In the next instant, Edgar ("with mud and dust on his uniform") dashes on stage - very much alive and with hundreds of U.S. troops in tow. Edgar stands in as a savior for the virtue of all white women at the post – and perhaps the whole country.

The Girl They Left Behind Them

In stark contrast to the attention lavished on the climactic scene in which Kate's life hangs in the balance, the only woman to actually fall victim to violence in the play, Fawn Afraid, the daughter of Chief Scar Brow, is rarely even mentioned by critics. The only Native woman in the play, and the only Native character with a speaking part besides her father, Ladru-Scar Face, Fawn Afraid is yet another manifestation of the Indian princess trope that both Sarah Winnemucca and Elizabeth Custer manipulated, to very different ends, in their writing and public life.

Like most Pocahontas doppelgangers, Fawn has a particular attachment to one of the white soldiers; so devoted she is known also as "Hawkesworth's Captive," a moniker we are told she assigned herself after the righteous and handsome Edgar rescued her from, in Orderly McGlynn's words "some drunken blaggards, man enough to plush the feathers from an angel's wings" (115). While Fawn Afraid, as a fifteen-year-old girl, may not have been able to save herself from a posse of drunk white settlers, Fawn Afraid's name assumes her reserved manner stems from a fearful or shrinking nature, and seems at odds with her character on stage.

According to McGlynn's description of her fight with the "drunken blaggards," Fawn Afraid was apparently courageous enough to toss a handful of dust in the air even as they surrounded her, a gesture, we are told, her people use to express defiance, though as I will explain in the next section, it is also a gesture linked to the Ghost Dance and its practice at Wounded Knee. She is also brave enough to move freely in and out of Post Kennion, no small feat, though she registers clear apprehension about sustained engagement with soldiers other than Hawkesworth. Painted as timidity, a Native women's reticence to remain in close proximity to groups of white soldiers - given not only the army's overarching goal of eradicating indigenous

tribes, but also the frequency of sexual violence perpetrated against Native women, is merely a rational precaution.

Described as "an Indian girl, not over fifteen years old" who "wears the costume of her tribe," our introduction to Fawn Afraid emphasizes her youth. Her relationship to Hawkesworth is portrayed as a school-girl crush, and when she first appears on stage, Kate and Lucy greet her with delight, as if she were part of the local scenery, diminutive, exotic, vaguely suspicious. Upon meeting her, Kate and Lucy gush over her, "cute enough to be Pocahontas," even going so far as to call her "[their] pretty red princess." Despite the spirit she has shown, the audience gains no insight into Fawn's motivations beyond devotion to Hawkesworth. And while her connection to Pocahontas is made explicit, it is an incomplete reference, for the play fails to register the fuller meaning of such a reference. Like the real Pocahontas, and like Sarah Winnemucca, Fawn is a diplomat, but to see that we must read against the grain of the play's condescending and dismissive interpretation of her actions. Fawn works to persuade her father, Chief Ladru-Scar Face, not to attack the post, and when he refuses, she sneaks inside to warn her friends, and then accompanies Edgar as he makes his last ditch effort to save the post. Attributing her actions to misguided romantic attachment depoliticizes her actions; imagining the structural realities that would have been shaping her experience reveals many other possibilities for her actions, most obvious of which would be to prevent the escalation of a conflict that could have disastrous effects for her people.

While Fawn Afraid is a "good" Indian for saving Edgar, her goodness in the eyes of white Americans hinges upon her own death as well as the death of Native men. The same actions that make her a "good Indian" put her at odds with the normative social order, making her suspect; that is, by defying her father, she refuses both the presumptively natural order of

family as well as tribal order, betraying both in support of the U.S. in an action that is ultimately suicidal. Her act of loyalty is swiftly and permanently punished when she takes a bullet for Hawkesworth. Ultimately, this suggests that even the most loyal Natives can only hope to earn temporary respite. More telling than her death itself is the final act's erasure of her sacrifice. Halfway through the final act, Parlow breathes a sigh of relief that Fawn is dead and cannot reveal his cowardice in battle, and then she is never referred to again. Fawn is left behind by the play's actors, a move that mirrors the way Native women, and their labor, will be left behind by hegemonic narratives of Western history.

In the play's final scene General Kennion regards the three couples contentedly commenting to himself that "This looks like – union forever" 168), as the tune of "The Girl I Left Behind Me*"* swells in the background. Kennion's commentary is an apt pun to describe the way these three happy couples serve to resolve looming issues that threaten to disrupt American Union in the post Reconstruction era. Lucy and Private Jones demonstrate a harmonious and appropriate cross-class marriage, Wilber's Ann and Canadian doctor Arthur Penwick's union disciplines the unladylike frontierswoman by a white professional and undermines international criticism of U.S. military actions against natives, and finally, Kate Kennion and Edgar Hawkesworth embody the expansion of the normative white middle class American home to the frontier. Unlike Kaplan's theory of manifest domesticity, which relates the discourse of domesticity in eastern novels to the discourse of manifest destiny in the west, I argue that the unions that resolve the central conflicts of *The Girl I Left Behind Me* are white-washed projections of racialized conflicts plaguing the nation. The union's future is secured and the ties that enabled that continuity are forgotten.

Thus far I have argued that attending to the divergence between the ostensible subject of the play - white versus Native, civilized versus savage - and the hailing of the play as "truly American" helps us better understand that what white residents of the United States recognized as American was the romantic and familial success at the heart of the play. The play's presentation of a direct, causal relationship between Indian death and white futurity - embodied in white women's sexual vulnerability and its securitization - is what underpins American expansion. In the next section, I turn to the maipulations, reimaginings, gaps, and absences in Belasco and Fyles' depiction of the American West, exploring both what has been retained and omitted in the process of turning newspaper headlines and firsthand accounts into a highly saturated representation of these widely circulated tropes, and also identifying the effects of these omissions.[79]

Part II. Reenacting Western History with "Absolute Correctness"

> This frontier play of fine society, soldiers, Indians, and other elements belonging to the military post in the North-west has not only gained extremely fashionable favor, but is visited by many military men, who are interested in its *absolutely correct representation* of the affairs at an army outpost on an Indian reservation. A whole company of the Seventy-first Regiment went to the Empire last Wednesday night, following a recent Seventh Regiment example." (*The Sun*, 1893) (emphasis mine)

[79] Part of this simplification is generic - melodramas were far shorter than lengthy memoirs, and as a form they are organized around polarized binaries, in this case, white versus native. But Belasco and Fyles' choices are more restrictive than even the generic constraints of melodrama. Whatever their intention, their selective cast of characters offered a substantively and significantly different portrait of the American frontier.

The accolade of "absolute correctness" that so often characterized reviews is surprising in part because the play is a melodrama – a genre characterized by simplistic and highly sensationalized action. What about the play was so historically evocative? And how did its "correctness" translate into national, and international, popularity? What did Belasco and Fyles capture in their representation that other Western melodramas, whose writers include figures as successful as Bret Harte and Mark Twain, did not?

In this section I examine *The Girl*'s strategic combination of real places and peoples with imagined ones in a way that imbues authority to the production as a whole. Given the widespread belief in the play's historical accuracy, the result of Custer's verification as well as reporters' insistence that "the incidents upon which it is based really happened in the Indian country in Montana" created by an authorial authenticity produced by the of the play as a historical reality. I then reveal the way Belasco's innovative production techniques - lifelike lighting, costuming, and set design - helped to produce what Roland Barthes has called the "reality effect."

Staging Geography: Performing History On Location

From its opening lines, the play is cluttered with geographical references, some coded, others more forthright. In this section, I work to map/ground/define the places and conflicts referenced or evoked by the play as well as the play's absences, elisions, obfuscations in order to draw out the way the play emplots its own history. My goal here is a narrative mapping of the lands and conflicts referred to in the play that reveals both the gaps, elisions, misrepresentations, and ambiguities in its representations, and the effects of them, with attention to the map's location in time as well as in space. In the same way that "A Brave Act," the 1881 short story featuring Sarah Winnemucca, replicated enough accurate and widely circulated information to make its spurious claims effective, Belasco and Fyles' replicate some historical information with

careful attention to detail. The correspondence between real events that had been documented in the press and the play imbues the production with a aura of authenticity.

As newspaper reports attest, "The play deals with military life at Post Kennion in the Blackfoot country, Montana, during the Indian uprisings of 1890" - sort of (*The Scranton Tribune* 1895). Northern Montana, where the play is said to take place, is indeed the home of the Blackfeet Indian Reservation, and is historically where the tribes of the Blackfoot confederacy lived in the nineteenth century.[80] Yet there were no Blackfoot uprisings in 1890, or even major conflicts with any tribes in this area that year. While the play states that its adversaries are the Blackfoot, it is more likely that the Sioux are the real inspiration. This point is supported by the recurring references to Pine Ridge, the name of a Sioux reservation in southwestern South Dakota. Originally part of the Great Sioux Reservation, Pine Ridge was located more than 2,500 miles from the Blackfeet Reservation in Montana, and in 1890 it became forever linked to the Wounded Knee massacre.

The fall of 1890 saw the ascendance of a new religion among the Sioux living in and around Pine Ridge Reservation: the Ghost Dance religion, which originally emerged from Paiute communities in Nevada before spreading to the Plains, and mingled Christian and native spiritual beliefs. Though pacifist in doctrine, the large-scale gatherings associated with the Ghost Dance alarmed U.S. officials, especially the inexperienced Pine Ridge agent, Daniel Royer (a recent appointee of the spoils system), who panicked and called for military reinforcements. In an effort to control and disperse the gathered tribes, acting commander General Nelson Miles ordered the

[80] The Blackfoot Confederacy refers to four bands that together make up the Blackfoot or Blackfeet people, three of whom, Siksika, Kanai, and Northern Piegan reside in Canada, and the fourth, presumably the band Belasco and Fyles are referring to, are the Southern Piegan or Piegan Blackfeet in Montana. While the term "Blackfeet" has come into wide use to describe those members of the Blackfoot Confederacy residing in the U.S., it was originally a mistranslation. In this chapter, I use Blackfoot, rather than Blackfeet, unless I am referring to the name of the reservation in Montana, or using the actual language of the play.

arrest of potentially inflammatory figures. There are conflicting accounts of the events that led to the unprovoked slaughter of first Sitting Bull and seven of his followers, and then, two weeks later, of over 150 members of a peaceful party lead by Big Foot/Spotted Elk.

In late December, the army began developing plans to disrupt the rapidly expanding Ghost Dance movement by taking several chiefs into custody. Created by a Paiute Shaman, though the Ghost Dance movement was peaceful, both the Indian Agency and the military suspected the Ghost Dance was a cover for or prelude to an attack and hoped these arrests would defuse what they perceived to be increasing hostility. The military's plans to approach Sitting Bull through his friend and ally Buffalo Bill Cody were stymied when Standing Rock Indian Agent sent the Indian police to arrest Sitting Bull. When Sitting Bull tried to pull away from the policemen arresting him, a shot was fired, killing the officer rather than its intended target, and was followed by a volley of shots that killed Sitting Bull, seven followers, and six Indian police officers. A band of 200 Hunkpapa Sioux fled to Standing Rock to join Chief Spotted Elk and his band of Miniconjou Sioux at the Cheyenne River Reservation. Accompanied by about 40 of the newly arrived Hunkpapa, Spotted Elk and his followers headed to Pine Ridge Reservation to seek help from Red Cloud. Five days later the party, roughly 350 in all, were met by a detachment of the Seventh Cavalry sent to disarm them. To avoid stoking tensions, the officers began by escorting the party to nearby Wounded Knee Creek, where they were told to make camp, as the soldiers waited for the rest of the Cavalry, five-hundred soldiers in total. Upon their arrival, they surrounded the encampment (comprised of 230 men and 120 women and children) and set up heavy artillery. A scuffle broke out as the soldiers began disarming the encampment, and while there is no clear consensus about the details, most accounts suggest that it stemmed from a combination of factors - one warrior, Yellow Bird, performing the Ghost Dance, another,

Black Coyote, refusing to turn over his gun without payment - which resulted in a full on attack by the U.S. army that, in under an hour, killed more than 150 Lakota.

Press response to the events at Wounded Knee was immediate and strong, the topic highly polarizing, so that "One segment of the press portrayed the battle as a triumph of valorous soldiers over treacherous Indians plotting another Custer affair. The other vented outrage on a regiment that, thirsting for revenge since the Little Bighorn, had wantonly slaughtered gentle Indians and had found particular glee in butchering helpless women and the children" (Utley, *Last Days* 230). Yet *The Girl* does not quite take a side in this debate - for example, choosing one interpretation and then dramatizing an oversimplified version of the events of Wounded Knee. Rather, the authors take the constitutive elements leading up to the situation - escalating tensions resulting from the U.S. government's failure to adhere to the terms of their treaties, a large gathering of Natives brought together to perform a ritual, government and military anxieties about the dangers of that situation - and the names of both real places like Pine Ridge and Assinaboine and imagined or fictional sites that reference or evoke existing locales and events - and relocates them, geographically and temporally, a move which depoliticizes the actions of Native tribes. Belasco and Fyles were said to have relied on real military reports, and whether or not this is true, their script presented the appearance of historical accuracy.

Custer and other army wives produce cartographic narratives, where they draw into proximity the army's labor, the production of new American lands, and the urgent threat to white womanhood and thus the American home. In *The Girl*, there is an amplifications and exaggeration of those same proximities; by anchoring that simplistic story to the real site of 1890's conflict - the Massacre at Wounded Knee - the play is able to rescript/reanimate/re-stage the unambiguously criminal actions of the U.S. army against the Sioux, to present the U.S.

soldiers as innocent victims; and by associating those actions to the Blackfoot, it also transfers or expands responsibility for these events to uninvolved tribes, making multiple tribes accountable for the actions of the U.S..

We learn at the start of the play, that Scarbrow or Ladru-Scar Face, the Blackfoot chief, has a long history with General Kennion, dating back to the "Blue Lake Expedition;" initially this is only mentioned as a previous military encounter between Kennion and Ladru-Scar Face, one in which the general marked Ladru-Scar Face with the scar that has since become his namesake. Toward the end of the play, General Kennion and Major Burleigh ascribe Ladru-Scar Face's threats against Kate Kennion to his long-frustrated desire for revenge rather than Kennion's refusal to allow the Sun Dance (the name the play gives the Ghost Dance). While it is possible that this incident is entirely Belasco and Fyles' creation, there are a few events to which Belasco and Fyles may have been referring. Given the writers' interest in the legacy of General Custer, the most likely explanation is that it serves as a coded reference to the Black Hills Expedition. Led by Custer, the expedition to chart the previously unexplored Black Hills in search of a location for a military fort, and to investigate the possibility of gold took place in the summer of 1874, two years before his death.[81]

Designating this a Blackfoot hostility and linking it to an imagined history of conflict erases a more complicated history of the real contentions between the Blackfoot and the U.S. In 1870, the U.S. army mistakenly attacked a friendly band of Southern Piegan, killing almost all of the band, an event known as the Marias Massacre, the result of conflict between a Blackfoot of another band and a wealthy and influential American that evidence suggests began with the rape

[81] Another possibility is that Belasco, having grown up in northern California, was referring to the experiences of the current-day Blue Lake Rancheria tribe, specifically the massacre of the majority of the Wiyot population on an island near the Humboldt Bay. For more on this massacre, see Rodhe and Norton.

of the warrior's wife.[82] It also conflates this band with the Sioux and Arapaho, tying them to contentious events that the the U.S. Blackfoot had chosen to actively distance themselves from. The Blackfoot have consistently refused to ally with the Sioux in battle, and when the Ghost Dance religion began spreading throughout the West, the Blackfoot elected not to participate.

This explains the otherwise puzzling choice to set something only three years before the play's production, even while representing events that took place one or two decades before. Belasco and Fyles *had* to set their drama in the past, because in the present the Western Indian Wars were, in the eyes of the U.S. government, over – the native population had been decimated, with the remaining tribes relocated to reservations and boarding schools. By staging the more distant Indian Wars in the recent past (1890 rather than, say, 1876), conflicts that were much more active and present – the resistance to the influx of Chinese migrant labor that led to the first immigration restrictions, the failure of Reconstruction, and new waves of European immigration – were collapsed and erased into a narrative that linked past and present triumphs of American national power. By locating these problems outside American home life - literally offstage - the play provides an enemy.

As opposed to the real events of the Wounded Knee Massacre, in *The Girl I Left Behind Me,* Indians were the sole provocateurs of the conflict. The ambiguity, temporal and geographic, of Belasco and Fyles' Post Kennion, renders the scenario easily generalizable, or exchangeable, for the actual tragedy of Wounded Knee, a source of shame for the U.S. military. While unarmed Native families were the victims of violence at Wounded Knee, in the play's reversal, it is white women and children who are imperiled. The military action of the play is both a revisionist

[82] January 1870 U.S. soldiers ambushed a camp of Piegan Indians mistakenly identified as a hostile band harboring a fugitive. This raid resulted in the death of between 170 and 225 Blackfoot, and the capture of 140 women and children. While the captives were eventually released, their homes and belongings had been destroyed, and they suffered terribly from exposure. For more see Tovías.

history of the Wounded Knee Massacre, and, paradoxically, a response to it. For the play to attend to the specificity of the Ghost Dance and its origins, while misnaming the people and places involved and erasing the conflict's culmination in massacre, the play performs a notable elision and revision of history.

With one closer look it is possible to trace different histories that reveal themselves in the play despite the authors' ignorance or willful refusal to address them. For example, what they refer to as a Sun Dance was most likely a reference to the Ghost Dance, a religious practice often confused with the other , but was a ritual performed by adherents to the Ghost Dance religion.[83] This reconstructed history then circulated popularly alongside reviews that lauded its "absolute correctness" and "historical accuracy."[84] Wovoka's doctrine itself, was not a Sun Dance, which evokes traditional Western ideas about Indians having a pagan, nature-bound religion but a very Christian, capitalist doctrine that stressed hard work.[85]

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[83] This religion and movement, which peaked in 1890, the year in which the play is set, originated in the visions of Wovoka, a shaman and member of the Paiute tribe to which Sarah Winnemucca, discussed in my first chapter, also belonged. While Winnemucca did not participate in the Ghost Dance and denounced it as nonsense, this moment offers a telling glimpse of the selective focus of white audiences' interest in and knowledge of Native cultural and spiritual practices. Any serious engagement with the Ghost Dance and its history would perhaps inevitably have To engage the ghost dance seriously Sarah Winnemucca, who was in the years the Ghost Dance originated and began to spread, was publicly dismissive of his predictions (Zanjani 284).

[84] The action of *The Girl I Left Behind Me* also takes place several hundred miles east of the site of Wounded Knee at Fort Assinaboine, located in present-day Montana. Unlike the fictional Post Kennion, Fort Assinaboine is a real had been built in 1879, largely as a response to the heavy U.S. casualties sustained in the Great Sioux War (1876-77). General Sheridan recommended a base at that location to enable a strong defense should Sitting Bull and his followers attack from the north. By the time the fort became fully operational in 1880, the threat it had been designed to protect against had been suppressed. Of further interest, it was staffed and operated primarily by the 10th Cavalry Buffalo Soldiers who would go on to serve in the Spanish American War in 1898. The bulk of the fort's business involved disciplining deserters, and watching out for any potential invasions from Canada, which of course never transpired.

[85] Of further interest is Belasco's personal biography - born and raised in San Francisco, his parents had moved from London during the California Gold Rush. He started working in theater at an early age, and in his mid-twenties relocated to Virginia City, Nevada where he worked at Piper's Opera House, the same theater in which Sarah Winnemucca would lecture on her experiences in the east ten years later. In a 1914 article about his recollections of his time in Virginia City, Belasco wrote that "He said that while there, seeing "people die under such peculiar circumstances" made him "all the more particular in regard to the psychology of dying on the stage. I think I was one of the first to bring naturalness to bear in death scenes, and my varied Virginia City experiences did much to help me toward this" (Belasco "Gala Days of Piper's and the California Theater Hearsts).

Originally a small settlement of tents on the Comstock Lode, Virginia City had nearly been called "Wunnemucca," as tribute to Winnemucca, Sarah's father, and it would be the site of Winnemucca's first public appearances in 1864, which soon landed them a more formal performance opportunity, where they presented Tableaux Vivants to a live audience at Sutliff's Music Hall. Yet Belasco does not draw on these experiences to represent a "truly" American way of life.

Social Geographies and Global Circulations

In the previous chapter, I discussed the way army wife narratives foreground white-Native conflict, generally at the expense of reflecting fully the complex social realities of the west. Despite this focus on the ostensible reason for the army's presence - the provocations of bloodthirsty savages against innocent white settlers - in depicting their own experiences, army wives' memoirs contain glimpses, if only peripherally, of the different proximities and contacts of their western lives. In *The Girl I Left Behind Me*, Belasco and Fyles eliminate even those traces that made it to the pages of these narratives - the free black population alluded to by the presence of black domestic workers, particularly noteworthy since the fort in question was the base for the Buffalo Soldiers, Chinese servants, former migrant laborers who had built the transcontinental railroad, *Californios* and Mexicans whose land had been conquered by the U.S. who served as guides and hired help.

I argue that bending the complexity of those intimacies to fit the duality of melodrama's structure forcibly removes the complex histories of global circulation, extracted labor, and dispossession of which there are at least traces in the other texts I explore in this dissertation. Instead, the play offers an artificial solution to the division coursing through the United States in

the creation of an American family that disowns, ignores the family-like relations upon which its existence rests.

As Belasco and Fyles wrote the play, new immigrant populations arriving in the U.S. – Jews fleeing religious persecution, South Asian settlers from the regions of Punjab, Bengal, primarily Muslim and Sikh men, seeking work – are all collapsed, and erased, into a triumph of American national power, presented as settled history.[86] Tracing the circulation of and response to both the play and the titular song can help reconstruct the range of contacts that comprise the real mechanisms of empire. Looking beyond the column and texts of theatrical reviews to the news of the times presents a fuller picture of the social relations upon which the play's actions rest.

Reading above and below, to the left and to the right of the advertisements and reviews of *The Girl I Left Behind Me*, allows us a peripheral glimpse of the social issues, besides the so-called Indian question, occupying the public. For example, articles about the newly passed Geary Act, an extension of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, the first piece of legislation to restrict immigration on the grounds that immigrants disrupted domestic order, is a reminder of the influx of immigrants who made homes in America.[87] The news of the overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy, a coup d'etat instigated by U.S. businessmen and plantation owners and accomplished with the aid of U.S. marines, first appeared in mainland papers at almost the exact moment *The Girl I Left Behind Me* opened at the Empire.[88] The extension of U.S. empire beyond the west

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[86] While not among the largest populations immigrating to the United States in these years, south Asian immigration was not insignificant.

[87] *The Los Angeles Herald*, 9/5/1893; *The Salt Lake Herald*, 5/27/1893; *The Topeka State Journal*, 1/22/1895. For more on the history of the Geary Act, see Lee, Erika. "The Chinese Exclusion Example: Race, Immigration, and American Gatekeeping, 1882-1924." *Journal of American Ethnic History* 21, no. 3 (2002): 36–62.

[88] These appeared in *Evening Star* (Washington DC), 2.26.1894; "The Hawaiian Case"; *Indianapolis Journal*, 12.19.1893; "Off His Hands" *The Record-Union* (Sacramento), 12.19.1893; "The Hawaiian Question" *The Sun* (NYC), 11.17.1893; "Unconstitutional Protection" *St. Paul Daily Globe*, 2.24.1894; "A Divided Indorsement [sic]" *The Globe-Republican* (Dodge City, KS), 12.22.1893; "Hawaii Again" *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, 12.6.1893.

coast of the continent was printed alongside reviews and advertisements for this show which locate the truth of the American character in the western half of the United States, in the bravery of soldiers who carried out the genocidal actions taken by the federal government. Even more common were news stories reporting preparations for the 1893 World's Fair in Chicago, news that reveals the circulation of people and artifacts, an ongoing reminder of the global networks and unexpected proximities of empire and colonialism in which the United States was deeply implicated.

By tracing the song referenced by the play's title we can see the way the rationale for military and colonial violence circulated beyond the borders of the United States itself. A song book of "truly American" songs was released the same year as the play, and no review or advertisement failed to include "The Girl I Left Behind Me.". The song title appears often in papers beyond the play title itself:

"A regular Belasco": Set Design and the Reality Effect

> [The authors] resolutely set themselves to reveal a phase of American life which has hitherto been caricatured at the popular theaters, and the result has been a remarkable accession to the bulk of the native drama." (*The Anaconda Standard* 1893)

The play was the result of a collaboration between well-known playwright David Belasco and *The Sun* (Chicago) drama critic Franklin Fyles written on commission for the reopening of New York's Empire Theatre.[89] *The Girl I Left Behind Me* was written in the years before Belasco's meteoric rise to fame as "the bishop of Broadway," one of the most influential figures in New York's theater scene from the late nineteenth century until his death in 1931. In

[89] While the play was co-authored, Franklin Fyles has largely disappeared from popular notice. Virtually all the information I could find about the play was housed in studies of Belasco's career or quoted him directly.

addition to pioneering modern set design and inspiring Puccini's renowned opera with his adaptation of Madame Butterfly (1900), Belasco is best remembered today for writing and producing *The Girl of the Golden West* (1905).

One aspect of Belasco's legacy involves his bringing of the principles/ideals of realism influencing theatrical writing at this time into theatrical design. He produced lifelike sets - filling library shelves with individual books rather than painted facsimiles, for example - and innovative lighting technology to produce the effect of natural lighting. *The Girl I Left Behind Me* was one of the first productions where he began implementing his lighting techniques.

The Girl I Left Behind Me benefitted from this graphic realism - the costumes were carefully coated with dust and grit, the well onstage was filled with water which was used throughout the play, and the rifles and bayonets on display were real (Hall 171). "Dust and grime clung to the costumes. Real water at a well accommodated drinking and hand washing. The production is said to be far more brilliant than when it was last seen here, the company being stronger and the stage effects more extensive and elaborate. "The Girl I Left Behind Me" is now more elaborately presented than ever before" (*San Francisco Call* 1895).

Starting in the second act, the telegraph machine is literally center stage. Detailed set instructions call for "an automatic telegraph instrument, including apparatus for both sending and receiving messages" as well as specifications for telegraph tape and a receptacle to collect incoming messages. The technology is also instrumental in orchestrating the driving action behind the play: Post Kennion is left undefended when Indians cut the wires making communication by telegraph impossible, the damning evidence that reveals the malignant character of the play's villain, Morton Parlow, arrives when the telegraph is restored in the final

act. In the world of the play, threats to national and private domestic harmony, be they "red-skinned devils" or ungentlemanly soldiers, are quickly and effortlessly disarmed by technology.

This strategic re-mapping of white-indigenous conflict in the final phase of westward expansion are an interesting extension of the cartographic narratives deployed in army wife narratives. While mapping and railroads were most central to army wives' memoirs, in *The Girl I Left Behind Me* these technologies are replaced by the telegraph, a technology more adaptable to the melodramatic stage. By 1890 when the play is set, mail runs that took months in army wife narratives now take days and the machine that had at one time been regularly outmatched by Indian runners, had become the fastest and most reliable form of communication on the vast western plains, and one that was a critical resource in pursuing and capturing Native populations resistant to removal to reservations. This obsessive attention to detail helps to produce what Rolande Barthes has theorized as the "reality effect" - the inclusion of details unrelated to the plot but a necessary element of securing any claim to realness, verisimilitude.

Conclusion

In an interview much later in his career, Belasco reflected on his motivations for writing *The Girl I Left Behind Me,* noting that he had been influenced by public preoccupation with western "Indian troubles" when he "made up [his] mind to bring on the American stage a phase of American life, on our Western frontiers, involving the American Indian, in a new way" (Qtd. in Hughes and Savage 103-104). Despite his professed interest in representing a "new" phase of American life, Belasco turned not to American settlers but to "The fierce insurrection of 1876, under the leadership of Sitting Bull, Crazy Horse, and Spotted Tail, and others, and the lamentable slaughter of the gallant Custer and his intrepid followers in the terrible battle of the Little Bighorn" (Qtd. in Hughes and Savage 103-104). Belasco's choice of words is notable here,

manifesting multiple kinds of periodization - the celebration of the new American way of life (now slipping away because the frontier was closing) - as well as the losses suffered by U.S. forces in earlier stages of the Indian Wars (losses that pale in comparison to those experienced by indigenous groups). What is the phase of American life Belasco hopes to bring on stage, and what is "new" about his take on American Indians?

Over the course of the interview, Belasco goes from citing a desire to depict a new American way of life as his motivation, a description that summoned contemporary promises of American expansion, virgin land awaiting cultivation by bold pioneers, new cities springing up as transcontinental railways traversed the wilderness. But he then changes course, turning to the western *past*, rather than its future, by invoking the general and the Little Bighorn.

In addition to this temporal misdirection, Belasco's characterization of past events is inverted, most notably in his reference to the Battle of the Little Bighorn/Greasy Grass as an insurrection. It was not unusual in the late nineteenth century for EuroAmerican sources to refer to the events of July 26, 1876 as a massacre - an indiscriminate and brutal slaughter of people – or even a slaughter - indiscriminate killing, mass murder, extermination - rather than a battle – a sustained fight between large, organized armed forces. But Belasco's use of "insurrection" is, if not unprecedented, then rare; the term insurrection, as opposed to battle or even massacre, elided the reality of native sovereignty by constructing Indians as subjects rising up against the U.S. government. That is, rather than independent nations fighting to preserve their political boundaries, in Belasco's recollection the Lakota, Sioux, and Arapahoe warriors who fought at the Little Bighorn/Greasy Grass are merely rebellious, portrayed as refusing governance, rather than trying to exercise it.

Instead, he turns to representations about the west by and for easterners. At the time Belasco was writing, of course, the communities of Lakota, Sioux, and Arapahoe warriors who fought in 1876 had been all but annihilated; both Crazy Horse and Spotted Tail had been dead for over a decade. And while Belasco's indebtedness to General Custer's influence on the play is unquestionable - he is cited by name midway through the play - it would be a mistake to classify *The Girl I Left Behind Me* with other more well-known Custer tributes of the day. The final line of *The Girl I Left Behind Me* is delivered by General Kennion: as he looks out at the three happy couples, he remarks that "This looks like - union forever" (168). In the previous section, I explored the way heterosexual romance resolves a number of national conflicts and divisions, but Kennion's closing line points to another means by which the play spoke to conflicts other than those on the surface of the play, by the music that accompanied it.

I began this chapter exploring the adaptations made by Belasco and Fyles and the play's relationship to other frontier melodramas. In the next section, I turn to the central action of the play - not, as reviews attest, a dramatic showdown with hostile Indians, but the rocky road to romance on the western frontier. As studies of this period have demonstrated, the changing racial composition of the U.S. in this period raised questions, and fears, about white racial superiority. In *The Girl I Left Behind Me*, the complex and constantly reconfiguring dynamics among the disparate racial and ethnic populations of the U.S. - free blacks, newer European immigrants, Chinese migrants, Mexican-Americans - are collapsed and polarized into a white/native conflict, in which a U.S. victory had already been achieved.

The least historically correct artifact gets the most traction with Americans' sense of history. This is the story that gets taken up, hinged upon white women's sexual vulnerability, a script that gets mobilized time and time again. In attending to a seemingly minor cultural product

like this play I am able to track the moment in which one history of Western Expansion achieves purchase and is amplified in broader commercial culture. It also allows me to track the unanticipated and unpredictable course such "minor" works of literature yield. This is the form that has the capacity to influence Americans' understanding of history. This is how memoir moves from "the real" to the cultural imaginary. But at the time of its production, *The Girl I Left Behind Me,* was notable, even among the many Western-themed plays written and produced in the last decades of the century, for both its popularity and its characterization as historically accurate.

Conclusion

In my application to graduate school, I opened my statement of purpose with an only slightly exaggerated anecdote about the persistent hold of my childhood reading of Margaret Mitchell's 1936 "plantation" novel *Gone With the Wind* on my own understanding of the violence of the American past. The racist logics that underwrote the love story that so captivated me embedded themselves into my historical consciousness, and managed to coexist, rather than being dispelled or uprooted by the rigorous training of the well-funded public schools I was educated in.

Despite the disparity between that which occurred and that which was documented, the fictions of historical memory that reproduce and disperse themselves through the literary has haunted me ever since. It was comparatively late in the process that I came to understand the fuller context of this transmission, that the power of *Gone with the Wind* resided not in the text itself, but was more so the product of my understanding of its significance. The lessons I learned were in excess of the literal - that is, what I absorbed while dwelling in the world evoked by the small, black type crowded onto the translucent, tissue-paper thin pages were as much about the physical book itself, a copy my mother had purchased used in her twenties, then passed onto my sister, and then again onto me. This legacy helped secure its iconic status as a cultural product, weighting it with a significance as a reference point whose meaning and weight were produced by and embedded within not only the culture at large but also replicated, refracted, and passed on through family relations.

In many ways, this dissertation has been my effort to take seriously and make sense of my own experience, of the persistence and stubborness of the history lessons we do not learn in school, to capture a process of coming to feel and know history outside the classroom, a process that is more complicated and whose results are potentially more persistent at shaping every day Americans' historical consciousness. When scholars refuse to take seriously the very real ways non-traditional histories function, and the different factors that gives these versions power and reach, sidelining them for texts more easily legible as history, we fail to account for the formation of historical consciousness that is arguably more significant than knowledge of specific dates and events.

Throughout this dissertation, I have endeavored to complicate approaches of nineteenth-century U.S. historiography by analyzing texts authored by women from and about sites of colonial violence. By investigating historical narratives organized in and through the intimate domains of reproduction, romance, and family, I drew out different chronopolitical claims about the meaning and value of life for different populations in the United States, that grappled with each other. These different historical claims are all sidelined by the professionalization of history at the beginning of the twentieth century. The professional historiography that is typically the purview of contemporary historical study was only one of many temporal mechanisms grappling to regulate and manage life. This project repopulates the archive of U.S. historiography using a much less restrictive set of criteria to determine what constitutes "history." The cultural constellations I analyze are drawn from novels, memoirs, didactic literature, journalism, and second-hand accounts of performances and lecture tours, which reveal crucial discourses and

counter-discourses that sought to explain, criticize, and justify continental expansion during a period when the national memory of these events had not yet crystallized. Foregrounding common modes of historical consciousness used to narrate events that transpired in geo-social contact zones, read together, these widely circulated texts offer insight into how inhabitants of and witnesses to the developing U.S. imperial nation-state understood the past and its relation to the present, prior to the emergence of a singular hegemonic historicism.

Like many dissertations, mine has evolved considerably since I originally proposed it over five years ago. In the prospectus I originally submitted my proposed four-chapter project focused on historical fiction and autobiographies about U.S. expansion written by white women. Whatever structural changes the project underwent, the real, material shift was my somewhat belated realization that critiquing the problematic character of white authors' narratives - the unstated goal of my proposed project - was simply not enough. If what I wanted was not only to account for the way white women's literature was complicit in the production of colonial national historical projects that compounded and reproduced the violence of conquest, but also themselves constituted new kinds of violence, I had to do more than revisit sites of narrative and representational violence - like Elizabeth Custer's narratives - I had to engage directly and in a sustained way with the different narratives I was claiming had been dominated and marginalized by the ones I was originally focusing on.

As I moved between my research on Elizabeth Custer and Sarah Winnemucca, I thought frequently of Elizabeth Freeman's description of the unevenness of temporal legitimacy. Freeman writes poignantly of the way

> Some groups have their needs and freedoms deferred or snatched away, and some don't. Some cultural practices are given the means to continue; others are squelched or allowed

> to die on the vine. Some events count as historically significant, some don't; some are choreographed as such from the first instance and thereby overtake others. Most intimately, some human experiences officially count as a life or one of its parts, and some don't. Those forced to wait or startled by violence, whose activities do not show up on the official time line, whose own time lines do not synchronize with it. (Freeman 57)

Winnemucca is a forceful reminder that "those forced to wait or startled by violence" did not do so in silence.

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