

INDIANNES AND WOMANHOOD: TEXTUALIZING THE FEMALE  
AMERICAN SELF

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INDIANNES AND WOMANHOOD: TEXTUALIZING THE FEMALE  
AMERICAN SELF

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DISSERTATION ABSTRACT  
INDIANNES AND WOMANHOOD: TEXTUALIZING THE FEMALE  
AMERICAN SELF

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This dissertation focuses on the intricate relationship between Indianness and the formation of a uniquely new identity in the seventeenth, eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries—that of the American woman writer. Colonial and early national writers experienced an uneasy relationship with the “Indianness” they encountered in the New World. Numerous texts, images, and first person accounts in early America envision the Native other and the native landscape in a variety of incarnations, whether visual or textual, in order to create a more stable understanding of the colonial American and the new nation. By appropriating and revising Indianness, early American women writers (before 1830) capitalized on the instability and permeability of both Indian and Anglo-American identities as a ground from which they could contribute to the national struggle to organize a collective identity of what is “American.” That is, through their

use of Indian characters, narratives, and settings, these women write into being not only the American nation, but also themselves as specifically American women writers. By writing extensively about Native topics but also by aggressively insisting upon a more complex relationship between race and gender within the same texts, women writers like Mary Rowlandson, Ann Eliza Bleecker, Lydia Maria Child, and “Unca Eliza Winkfield” of *The Female American* were able to gain control over their own identities. My goal with this dissertation project is to bring often-neglected early American texts by women writers into focus as texts that actively participated in the production of racial, national, gendered, and historical discourses that ultimately provided the framework for American identity.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES .....	vii
INTRODUCTION	
Eve in the New World: Indianness and Anglo-European Womanhood.....	1
CHAPTER ONE	
Indians, Images, and Identity: The Massachusetts Bay Colony Seal, Mary Rowlandson, and James Printer .....	18
CHAPTER TWO	
Masculine Imagery and Feminine Voice in Revolutionary America: Paul Revere’s “Sword-in-Hand” seal and Ann Eliza Bleecker’s Domesticated Nationalism.....	82
CHAPTER THREE	
“Mixed-Blood” Masculinity: Thomas Rolfe and Charles Hobomok Conant.....	161
CHAPTER FOUR	
“Mixed-Blood” Womanhood: Pocahontas, <i>The Female American</i> , and Feminine Authorial Identity.....	221
EPILOGUE	
Curtains, Earrings, and Indians: Texts of Today.....	294
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	302

## LIST OF FIGURES

1. <i>Adam and Eve in America</i> . Engraving by Theodor de Bry in Thomas Harriot's <i>Briefe and True Report of the New Found Land Virginia</i> (1590) .....	4
2. The Massachusetts Bay Colony Seal (1629) .....	19
3. The Present Great Seal of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts (2008) .....	22
4. Wax Impression of the Original Seal of the Massachusetts Bay Colony (1629) .....	31
5. Impression of Governor Leverett's Massachusetts Bay Colony Seal in Paper (1672) .....	32
6. Governor Edmund Andros' Seal of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, side one (1686) .....	33
7. Governor Edmund Andros' Seal, side two (1686) .....	35
8. Samuel Green's Printer's Cut of the Massachusetts Bay Colony Seal (1672).....	36
9. John Foster's Printer's Cut of the Massachusetts Bay Colony Seal (1675).....	41
10. President Dudley's Seal of the Massachusetts Bay Colony (1686) .....	45
11. Paul Revere's "Sword-in-Hand" Seal of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts (1775) .....	85

12. Various Renditions of the Revised Indian Seal of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts (1780-1885) .....	104
13. <i>The Sedgford Hall Portrait.</i> Artist Unknown (19 <sup>th</sup> century) .....	167
14. Pocahontas' Earrings .....	173
15. <i>Matoaka als Rebecca.</i> Engraving by Simon Van de Passe (1616) .....	226
16. <i>Captain John Smith.</i> Engraving by Simon Van de Passe (1616) .....	231
17. <i>Matoaka als Rebecca.</i> Engraving by W. Richardson after Van de Passe (late 18 <sup>th</sup> c).....	232
18. <i>The Booton Hall Portrait.</i> Artist unknown (mid 18 <sup>th</sup> c) .....	233
19. <i>Pocahontas.</i> Painting by Mary Woodbury Jones (1738) .....	235
20. <i>Pocahontas.</i> Painting by Mary Ellen Howe (1994) .....	236
21. <i>Eiakintomino in St. James Park.</i> Engraving from Michael Van Meer's <i>Album Amicorum</i> (1614).....	250
22. Title Page of <i>The Female American</i> , London Edition (1767).....	260

## INTRODUCTION

### EVE IN THE NEW WORLD: INDIANNESS AND ANGLO-EUROPEAN WOMANHOOD

In 1590 Theodor de Bry's folio edition of Thomas Harriot's *A Briefe and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia*, complete with copperplate engravings based on water color drawings by John White, was first issued.<sup>1</sup> It was to be the first part of *America*, De Bry's sweeping series on the discovery and exploration of the New World. Although Harriot had published his *Briefe and True Report* two years earlier as an unassuming quarto volume without illustrations, it was not until the publication of De Bry's edition with the engravings, which was released separately in four different languages—Latin, English, German, and French—that Harriot's work assumed the form that is today celebrated as “one of the monuments of early modern printing” (B. Smith 500) and as one “The Adventurers, Favorers, and Well Willers of the Enterprise for the

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Harriot, while better known as a mathematician and scientist, made his ethnographical notes, the basis for his *Report*, during Sir Richard Grenville's expedition of 1585-6 to establish a colony on Roanoke Island off the coast of the Carolina Outer Banks, then called Virginia “in honor of Queen Elizabeth, who granted Raleigh a permit to settle there” (Hulton vii). Harriot's duties were, “to make astronomical observations, advise on navigation for the voyage, and, on land in close cooperation with John White, to study the native Indians and natural products of the country as well as to supervise the mapping of the new territories” (Hulton ix).

John White, after having been the recording artist on the previous expedition with Harriot, was the head of another expedition in 1587 appointed by Sir Walter Raleigh to establish a colony in the area of the Carolina Outer Banks. White's voyage was abandoned on his way to Roanoke Island due to a mutiny; he would not return to the island until 1590 when he found the colony deserted and the mysterious carving of “Croaton” on a tree.

Theodor de Bry was a Flemish engraver and publisher.

Inhabiting and Planting in Virginia” (Harriot 5), Harriot’s text provides an extraordinarily detailed list of the various “Commodities”—both mercantile commodities and those needed for “Victual and Sustenance” — that Virginia has to offer (7, 13). Harriot is clearly presenting information that, as Paul Hulton observes, “concerns the economic viability of the colony and its future prospects” (xiii).

It is in Harriot’s final portion of his *Report*, partially entitled “The True Pictures and Fashions of the People in that Parte of America” (Harriot 36), that the distinctly “visual cast” of Harriot’s ethnographical and scientific focus comes most clearly into view (B. Smith 502).<sup>2</sup> When combined with De Bry’s engravings, which were based upon John White’s original watercolors, the “inhabitants” that Harriot so carefully studies and describes for his readers are inscribed into the “visual regime” of European exploration and colonization (B. Smith 502). The Indians of Harriot’s narrative accounts are now precisely figured, embodied objects that become one-dimensional, knowable subjects who can be seen, understood, and absorbed by the European, non-native viewers as well as “read.” Even when translated into and published in various languages by de Bry, the engravings remain unchanged throughout all editions, rendering the Indians as simplistic, static, and “inferior” subjects who can be fully and permanently constructed through a few carefully drawn lines. Indianness, the engravings seem to imply, remains the same despite varying contexts. While the recycling of these images in the various editions of the *Report* may have simply been a

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<sup>2</sup> Bruce Hamlin notes that the visual cast De Bry’s edition of Harriot’s text is further “emphasized by the idiosyncratic spelling. De Bry’s typesetters in Frankfurt were German speakers who had no idea what English *sounded* like; they simply cast in type what the copy text *looked* like” (emphasis in original, 501).

time and money saving effort on the part of de Bry, it is a significant move nonetheless. It is an early attempt to stabilize unstable Indianness and hypothesize Americanness in the Anglo-European mind in both visual and narrative form.

However, mingled in with de Bry's engravings that illustrate the lifestyle of the native peoples in Virginia is one image of a distinctly Anglo-European and Christian cast: Adam and Eve with the serpent in the Garden of Eden. [Figure 1] The image appears after the bulk of Harriot's narrative account, separating the "report" portion of the text from the more purely "visual" portion. Following a table of contents page, entitled "Table of all the Pictures Contained in the Book of Virginia," this image of biblical derivation stands in stark contrast to the images that follow it: the maps of Virginia peopled with Indians, the descriptions of "Weroans" and chiefs, and the detailed images depicting native techniques for fishing and cooking meat (Harriot 37). The image also has no accompanying explanation of its purpose. There is no title or descriptive phrases beneath it. Whereas the other images of native life are followed by paragraphs of explanation and headed by bold titles that clarify and comment upon them, the engraving of Adam and Eve is unaccompanied by any such annotation. It is all on its own, an unadorned image of Anglo-European Christianity that covers nearly a full page of the volume.

In the center of the image is the large, forking trunk of the Tree of Knowledge; to the left of the tree is an Anglo Adam with pale skin, softly wavy hair, and a full beard. He is fully facing the viewer, his naked genitalia fortuitously covered by a low,



Fig. 1 Theodor de Bry. *Adam and Eve in America* (1590)

Engraving in Thomas Harriot's *Briefe and True Report...*

Image courtesy of the Library of Congress Rare Book and Special Collections

leafy branch of the tree. He has one hand braced against the trunk and the other, entangled in his hair in a show of distress or perhaps even horror. Adam's eyes are raised heavenward, toward the boughs of the tree, and his mouth is slightly open in an expression of anguish, almost as if a moan is involuntarily escaping him. Beneath Adam's feet at the base of the tree are numerous animals: a rat, a rabbit, and two absolutely evil looking lion-type creatures that leer threateningly out of the image. The gnarled roots of the tree and rocky appearance of the ground add to the harsh, inhospitable state of the earth the figure inhabits, indicative of what the (presumably) Christian viewer knows awaits Adam and Eve after their fall. From Adam's and the viewer's perspectives, this is the moment of his eternal divorcement from God; no longer will he walk and talk with God on an intimate level. His face and body language indicate his cognizance of this fact.

Eve, on the other hand, stands to the right of the tree with her back to the viewer; the front of her entirely nude body is shielded from view, but her naked backside is prominent. Eve's face, however, is visible as she looks back over her left shoulder past Adam and toward the viewer. In stark contrast to Adam's expression of pain, Eve's face appears relaxed, almost contented with what she is about to do. With one hand, Eve grasps a branch of the tree and with the other, she is pulling a pear-like fruit from a limb. It is clear in this image, as it is in Christian tradition, that Eve is the sinner, the one who chooses to eat of the forbidden fruit, much to Adam's dismay. Further, while Adam registers awareness of the gravity of Eve's act, Eve dares to look the viewer directly in the eye with not only an awareness of what she is about to do, but also with an unrepentant, unashamed gaze. The only other figures that look squarely

and directly into the eyes of the viewer are the two demonic looking lions at the base of the image.<sup>3</sup> This is hardly a coincidence.

Between the two figures is the serpent, Satan, who has twined itself among bifurcations of the trunk, the top half of its body twisted to face Eve. The top half of Satan's body is human; there is a face and torso with arms that encourage Eve with a single finger extending outward and pointing toward the fruit. The figure bears bat or dragon-like wings on its back and from the waist down the scaly and patterned body of a snake is evident. Also readily apparent are the breasts on Satan's chest. Satan has assumed the form of a female demon, an evil snake woman who goads the gullible, if not equally evil, Eve to eat of the fruit. Women, in this image, clearly and unabashedly bear the burden of the original sin of mankind. It is a woman (or semblance of a woman) who encourages or misleads with guile, and a woman who acts upon the hollow words instead of faith in God.

This image, aside from its reification of the ordinary narrative that undergirds the Anglo-European, Christian identity (and the subsequent missionary intentions of the colonial project), has relocated that identity across the Atlantic and placed it among the mysterious new peoples inhabiting the New World. In the Harriot/de Bry volume,

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<sup>3</sup> There is one other figure that appears to be looking directly at the viewer in this image. It is, coincidentally enough, another woman, seated behind and to the left of Adam, in the shade of a thatched hut. She is the future, fallen Eve, cradling a baby, and although her face is in shadow, she appears to be looking past Adam toward the viewer, just like the Eve of the foreground. There is another male figure in the image, the future Adam, behind and to the right of Eve; however, he is busily working the ground and looking down at his task. It is interesting how through the depiction of the fallen Adam and Eve in the background, de Bry rather heavy-handedly reinforces the Christian belief that Eve was the reason for original sin, as well as how he suggests she lacks any sense of shame for her actions after the fact. Eve, even after her fall from Eden can and does still look the viewer in the eye without remorse, just as the lions do.

Adam and Eve are now literally among the inhabitants of the New World. They are the sole Anglo-European residents in this textual and imagistic mapping of the “new found land of Virginia;” they simultaneously represent the common belief that the discovery of the New World was perhaps a rediscovery of Eden, and the new beginning Anglo-Europeans intended to make upon the North American continent, like so many postlapsarian Adams and Eves in the wilderness. However, along with this transplantation of Anglo-European people, religion, and mythology to the New World, comes the transference of the gendered, hegemonic structures that regulate the role of Anglo women. The very stereotypes Anglo-European women were saddled with as the “daughters of Eve” in the Christian traditions of Europe are transplanted to the New World and infused into the colonial enterprise through this image. These women, who have yet to set foot in the New World in any significant way by the time the Harriot/de Bry volume appears in print, are already visually placed there in a predetermined and gendered role—and even set up as the potential reason for any future failures of the colonial enterprise. Just as the original Eve caused the expulsion from the original Eden due to her disobedience and ignorance, so, too, might the “new Eves” cause the collapse of the colonial project because of their flawed natures. The patriarchal structures of Europe are being proactively replicated in the New World through this image.

However, beyond merely bringing gender to the New World, the Adam and Eve engraving also aggressively racializes that gender. Anglo-European women are placed in direct contact with and in comparison to Indianness through the inclusion of this image in the Harriot/de Bry volume. Eve is placed on par with the “savage” and “strange” Indianness depicted in the surrounding pages, rendering her just as “foreign”

as the Natives around her. Eve's "savage" and barely comprehensible act of eating the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge is just as startling and "strange" as the illustrated customs and appearances of the Indians on surrounding pages. Simultaneously, however, because of Eve's status as an "inferior" being to Adam, the Indians on the surrounding pages become tied into Eve's feminine "inferiority." Eve is a gullible, disobedient woman who, due to her sin, is destined to be under the guardianship of "superior" man for eternity; this is an understood construct of Anglo-European religious and social discourses. Now, as the trope of Eve is transplanted to the New World, the naked "savages" who inhabit that world of the companion images also become subject to civilizing the forces and guardianship of Anglo-European masculinity.

The figure of Adam, however, is different from the Indian images and from Eve not only because of his recognition and regret of the sinful actions of his partner, but because of his "innate" male superiority as granted in the biblical story of Adam and Eve that informs the image; he is the blameless exemplar who understood and upheld the laws of God and is now given domain over the feminine sex and by proxy, the newly discovered "Eden" of the New World. Eve, though, is like the Indians around her who have no awareness of their "strange" and heathen manners and behaviors; she is as ignorantly untroubled by her downfall as the Indians on the surrounding pages are by their "uncivilized" ways. Her face and mannerisms are just as natural and unself-conscious as those of the natives depicted in the study. Already in 1590, white

womanhood is entangled with and connected to Indianness before the English colonization of North America has even begun in earnest.<sup>4</sup>

It is this entanglement of white womanhood and Indianness and the various ways Anglo-American women writers sought to disentangle the two that is the focus of this study. Women writers of the seventeenth, eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were keenly aware of the connectedness between their own identities as white female Americans and an autochthonous Native identity. They were also keenly aware of the potency and utility this connection of Indianness and womanhood could provide for them as writers. It could serve as a ground from which they could contribute to the national struggle to organize a collective idea of not only what the American nation is, but also who they themselves are as American women writers. At the same time, however, these writers understood the injury this association with the “inferior” Indian other caused their own identities as Anglo women and potentially significant members of the forming American nation; consequently, they focus in on the primacy of gender over race in their texts even as they bring Indianness to the forefront of them. The result is that these women writers were able to gain control over their own identities by exploring Indian topics in their writing. However, it was through the appropriation and the production of complex (mis)representations of that same Indianness they share a *de facto* connection with. Although sometimes ugly, sometimes problematic, and

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<sup>4</sup> I am not suggesting that de Bry was the first Anglo-European male to visually connect womanhood with Indianness. There are other earlier images, such as Theodor Galle’s engraving *America* (1580), based upon Jan van der Straet’s drawing, that famously depict America as a slumbering Indian woman awakening from her nap on a hammock at the beckoning of Amerigo Vespucci. However, I am suggesting that de Bry’s engravings are some of the earliest that places white womanhood in direct contact with Indianness, forging a connection that later Anglo women authors sought to disentangle.

oftentimes patently racist, the Indian writings of these women writers are often transgressive and disruptive of patriarchal and nationalistic discourses governing American identity, an identity that has always had Indianness at its core.

European explorers and colonists struggled to depict and define Indianness from the moments of initial contact with the indigenous peoples of the New World. However, because early Anglo-European conceptions of Indianness were only partially formed at these nascent attempts of colonization, much knowledge about the “Native other” and his/her relationship to the Anglo-American self had to be produced. Both visual and narrative representations of the Indians as “inferior” and “savage” beings bolstered the colonial epistemology that the Indians were in desperate need of European domination, thereby validating the colonial project. Additionally, the establishment of the Indians as the utter “other,” the absolute antithesis to the EuroAmerican understanding of itself and its society, worked to simultaneously define colonial identity. In other words, by picturing and writing “Indianness” into record, these early Americans could more fully and easily understand their own uniquely new identity as discoverers and inhabitants of the New World. As a consequence, the burgeoning sense of the American “self” in the seventeenth, eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was intricately connected to and dependent upon the indigenous identity and colonial-created image of the Indian.

Simultaneously, however, Anglo women were incorporated into this New World identity negotiation. Images and narratives of early America, like the Harriot/de Bry volume, often relied on the connection of white womanhood and Indianness to buttress a sense of (male) American exceptionalism and to reinscribe the raced and gendered

discourses of patriarchy. Exploratory and colonial tracts, captivity narratives and historical novels, images on map cartouches, in political cartoons and paintings, and even figures on colonial seals and paper currency all worked to inscribe Indians and women, or even Indian women<sup>5</sup>, as connected to one another through their inherent subordination to white patriarchy. By feminizing Indianness and/or Indianizing white womanhood, colonial patriarchy was assuring itself a position of dominance in the New World. As a result, Indianness and white womanhood came to be portrayed as interconnected universals, indistinct stereotypes that could by turns illustrate the patriotism, civic and moral virtue, and fecundity of America and American identity, as well as the threat of “sexual temptation, immorality, and willful or unruly conduct” depending on the degree of Indianness or whiteness bestowed upon the female image (Day par. 5). The two identities became intricately and complexly linked with each other in the various discourses of nationhood and identity in New World texts that were undeniably male-controlled. It was male explorers and leaders and scholars who were the authors of this fluctuating sense of Indianness and its connections to womanhood; however, it was Anglo women writers who exploited and utilized that connection in order to separate themselves from it and establish their own authorial identities.

In this project I examine how identity politics extend beyond imagistic portrayals of Indianness into the literature of women writers. With an approach that

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<sup>5</sup> The idea of the exotic Indian woman representing the New World and/or America is also seen in the depictions of the four “sister” continents, which symbolized Europe, Africa, and Asia, alongside America, as beautiful exotic women. See Clare Le Corbeiller’s “Miss America and Her Sisters: Personifications of the Four Parts of the World” and Hugh Honor’s *The New Golden Land* for further reading on the Four Sisters. See also Louis Montrose, Annette Kolodny, and Anne McClintock, among others, for a discussion of gender and New World discovery.

combines literature, history, cultural studies, and post-colonial theory, I focus on how women writers revise male dominated and controlled images. Specifically, I examine the ways in which iconic images of Native figures, such as the various versions of the Massachusetts Bay Colony seal and the numerous representations of Pocahontas, informed the identity of early women writers like Mary Rowlandson, Ann Eliza Bleecker, Lydia Maria Child, and the pseudonymous Unca Eliza Winkfield of *The Female American*, who appropriated and revised those images and ideas of Indianness in order to posit their own identities as American women writers.

The topic of Indianness and the construction of American identity has warranted much scholarship and study in seminal texts such as Richard Slotkin's *Regeneration Through Violence*, Robert Berkhofer's *The White Man's Indian*, Philip Deloria's *Playing Indian*, and in more recent studies, such as Rebecca Blevins Faery's *Cartographies of Desire*, Michelle Burnham's *Captivity and Sentiment*, and Jared Gardiner's *Master Plots*. However, despite this continued interest in Indianness, the connection of women, particularly women writers, to representations of Indianness has largely been neglected. In one of the more recent scholarly works which begins to address this pairing, 1997's *Captivity and Sentiment*, Michelle Burnham examines women's captivity narratives in order to interrogate the interconnected nature of both sentimental writing and the captivity genre in the creation of an American identity, and indeed nation, that was founded on the overlapping boundaries of race and gender. Similarly, Christopher Castiglia's study of the sentimentality of the captivity genre, 1996's *Bound and Determined*, argues that such overt sentimentality allowed for writers of captivities to create a feminist re-visioning of otherwise unimaginable possibilities.

Although persuasive and far-reaching, Burnham's and Castiglia's studies do not examine the authorial self-creation the adoption of such Indian topics as captivities permitted for women writers.

Critical texts that have attempted to examine authorial agency and issues of selfhood and nationhood, such as Cathy N. Davidson's *Revolution and the Word* (expanded edition, 2006), which examines the co-emergence of the new nation and new literary genre of the novel, and Tamara Thornton's *Handwriting in America* (1996), which investigates the shifting cultural assumptions in America about handwriting/textual production and selfhood, similarly neglect the underpinnings of Indianness in the construction of the authorial identities of many white women writers. Consequently, my study asserts that women writers of the New World in the seventeenth, eighteenth and even nineteenth centuries use the topic of Indianness as a ground from which they can contribute to the national struggle to organize a collective idea of what is the "American" identity. That is, through their use of Indian characters, narratives, and settings, these women writers write into being not only the American nation, but also themselves as American women writers, producing in the process complex misrepresentations of the Indianness they appropriate. By writing extensively about Native topics and also by aggressively insisting upon a more complex relationship between race and gender within the same texts, these women writers were able to gain control over their own identities, but it was through an intricate and complex link to Indianness. Through the analyses of images, captivities, and works of fiction in terms of the establishment of a female authorial persona—the woman writer—in the New

World, my study seeks to fill a void in Early American/Early National studies that straddles the nexus of feminism, Indianness and woman writers.

The first half of my study centers on the iconic image of the Massachusetts Bay Colony seal. Although the seal's core elements of a nearly nude Native figure holding a bow and arrow and the words, "Come over and help us," have remained all but unchanged in the history of Massachusetts seal iconography, there have been striking alterations to the aggregate image throughout the years. By examining the historical contexts of and alterations to the seal, I trace how at different points in the colony's history, the residents inscribed the Indian of the seal as the cultural, racial, sexual, gendered, intellectual, economic, and religious other in order to stabilize their own identity. Using these identity politics of the earliest incarnations of the seal as a touchstone, I examine the complex relationship between the Christian Indian and printer, James Printer, and the Indian captive and author, Mary Rowlandson. Although Printer served as translator and scribe during the negotiations for Rowlandson's return from captivity and as typesetter for the second edition of her 1682 narrative, *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God*, Rowlandson uses her newly granted agency to write Printer out of existence in her seminal work by flattening out and erasing his and other Christian Indians' roles in her salvation/authorial self-creation, reducing Printer rhetorically to the iconic Indian on the Massachusetts Bay seal. I conclude that Rowlandson's creation of an authorial identity could not have been realized without a James Printer figure; however, she negates his role in order to justify her exceptionality as a female author.

From there, I move into the pairing of a later image of the Massachusetts Bay Colony seal, the 1775 Paul Revere cut of the seal, and Ann Eliza Bleecker's 1793 captivity narrative, *The History of Maria Kittle*. While the Revere seal, which features an Anglo-American man clad in breeches and topcoat clutching a copy of the Magna Carta and a sword instead of an Indian figure, reinforces the patriarchal discourses dominating the national dialogue, Bleecker's text challenges and ruptures them. Through the conscientious deployment of the trappings of the feminine sphere, Bleecker essentially writes the feminine and domestic into national existence in a system dominated and controlled by white patriarchal images like Revere's seal. Further, by masculinizing Indianness, and then bringing white womanhood into contact with it in an assertive, productive way, Bleecker is able to inscribe the feminine and the domestic with a new agency and even begin the visualization of a differently gendered national identity.

The second half of my project analyzes eighteenth and nineteenth century female-authored texts that play off images of Pocahontas and her foundational yet complex relationship to colonial identity. In chapter three, I examine the *Sedgeford Hall Portrait*, an image that purportedly depicts Pocahontas and her son Thomas alongside Lydia Maria Childs' 1824 novel, *Hobomok*. I argue that, although the painting's origins are widely believed to be apocryphal, it is the ambivalent presence of the biracial, "mixed-blooded" Thomas in the painting rather than its unclear provenance that makes the portrait "unacceptable" to Anglo-American audiences of the early

Republic.<sup>6</sup> To the colonial imagination, the construct of a “mixed-blood” Indian represented the possibility of the loss of the binaries that inscribed the colonists as “civilized” and “superior” and the Indians as “inferior” others. As a consequence, biracial Indians, particularly males, were problematic for the master narratives of colonization because of their disruptive nature; they could be and were successfully deployed by female authors to rhetorically destabilize colonial hegemony. I argue that Child utilized the potency of her “mixed-blood” character, Charles Hobomok Conant, in her text to open a space within the white, masculine New World identity where white womanhood and female authorship could emerge. Child asserts that womanhood, when under girded by the authenticating yet disruptive power of Indianness, could be inscribed as a significant and constituent part of American identity. Ultimately, however, Child backs away from her associations with “mixed-blood” Indian masculinity because of its potential to reinscribe the patriarchal structures she has so aggressively worked to disrupt.

My final chapter examines the 1616 Simon Van de Passe engraving of Pocahontas against a text that posits the possibility of a feminine “mixed-blooded” character, the anonymous 1767 narrative, *The Female American*. This text is purportedly the autobiography of the Pocahontas-like Unca Eliza Winkfield, a biracial New World woman who is the granddaughter of both Edward Maria Winkfield, a founding father of the Virginia colony, and a powerful, Powhatan-like Indian chief of the region. While biracial males, like Thomas Rolfe and Charles Hobomok Conant, are

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<sup>6</sup> While I realize that “mixed blood” is a contentious and loaded term in the field of Native studies, my use of the term is intended to call attention to its constructedness within Anglo-European discourse. Please see the beginning of chapter three (p. 161) for further explanation of my choice to utilize this term.

erased from colonial consciousness, I argue that the tension of Unca Eliza's "mixed-blood" position and her womanhood allows her to navigate among these many discourses of colonial containment and subvert them. Her biracial identity and her gender create textual slippages and ruptures that breach Anglo-American authority, as well as the anonymous author's, in ways that male characters simply cannot. Similarly, my analysis of the Van de Passe engraving of Pocahontas, which depicts an "Indian princess" as an "English lady," demonstrates how this image disruptively suggests that an "English lady" can be Indian. I assert that the melding of identities in this image and this text fuse supposedly "diametrically opposed" cultures, races, and sensibilities through the filter of womanhood and endows both of these texts with a rhetorical power through which the Anglo-American female author emerges as a recognizable identity.

## CHAPTER ONE

### INDIANS, IMAGES, AND IDENTITY: THE MASSACHUSETTS BAY

#### COLONY SEAL, MARY ROWLANDSON, AND JAMES PRINTER

Although the seal of the Massachusetts Bay Colony<sup>1</sup> is a familiar sight to scholars of early American history and literature, this iconic image of imperialism and colonialism has served as little more than an interesting footnote in the annals of early American scholarship. As scholars, we are all familiar with the stark imagery of the seal: a nearly nude, Native figure holding a bow in one hand and a down-turned arrow in the other with the appeal “Come over and help us” issuing from the mouth [Figure 2]<sup>2</sup>, and we have seen it prominently displayed as a frontispiece or as a key illustration in various academic texts.<sup>3</sup> In such texts, the detailed image of the seal is often accompanied by rather basic annotation which notes the seal’s imperialistic overtones and perhaps its dates of use, but then the pace of the work surrounding the image

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<sup>1</sup> Images 2, 3, 6, and 7 of the seal appear courtesy of the Office of the Secretary, Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Images 5 and 8-10 appear courtesy of the Massachusetts Historical Society.

<sup>2</sup> As of yet, I have been unable to definitively identify the creator/owner and exact dates of usage of this seal [Figure 2], although preliminary research indicates it is also a printer’s cut commissioned by John Usher, a Boston bookseller and active businessman who had mercantile connections in London and on occasion, served as agent for the colony. Mr. Usher would have commissioned this cut of the seal at his own expense, most likely in London, around 1672, however, more research needs to be done on this image’s origins. In a further twist of ambivalence, I am unclear on whether this image depicts a feminized, adolescent male or a female figure.

<sup>3</sup> See for example the image as pictured in Francis Jennings’ *The Invasion of America*; Neal Salisbury’s excellent introduction to *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God by Mary Rowlandson*; in *The Literatures of Colonial America*, pictured alongside the John Winthrop segment, edited by Susan Castillo and Ivy Schweitzer; in Jill Lepore’s *The Name of War*; and in James Axtell’s *The Invasion Within*, among others. See also Kristina Bross’ “‘Come Over and Help Us’: Reading Mission Literature” in *Early American Literature* 38:3 (2003) which provides the written equivalent to such visual glosses of the seal.

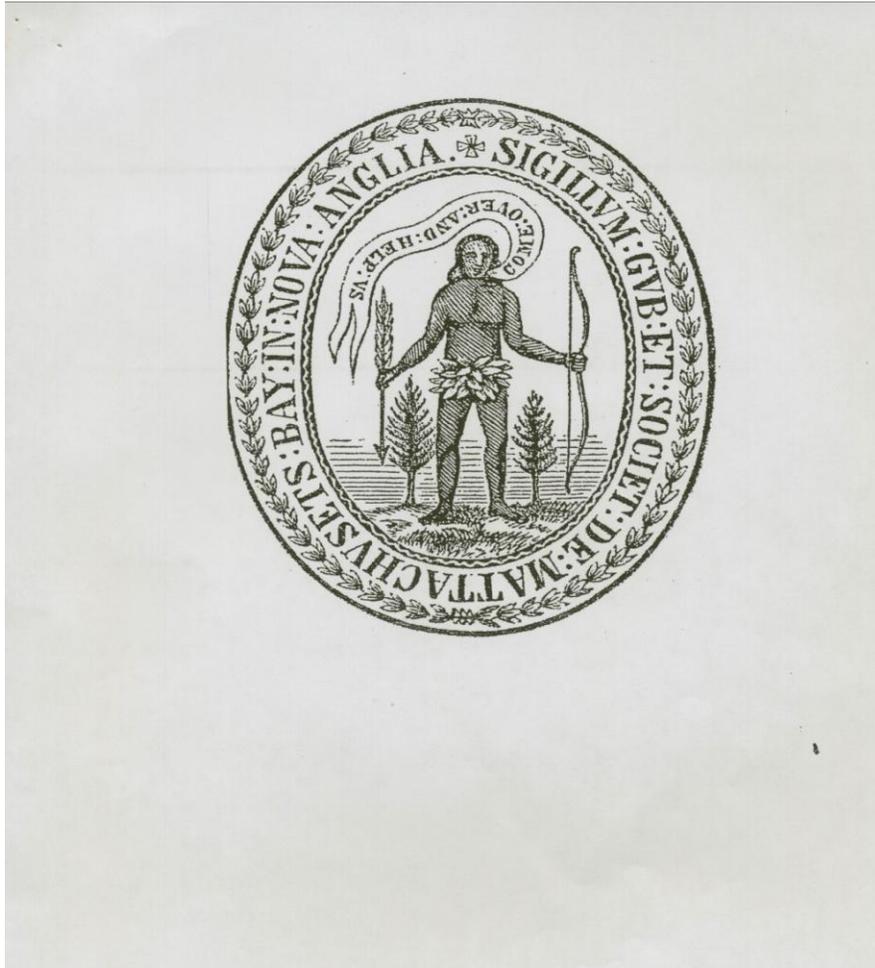


Fig. 2 The Massachusetts Bay Colony Seal

Image courtesy of the Office of the Secretary of the  
Commonwealth of Massachusetts

resumes, as if to move on to what “really needs to be said” about more pertinent topics, suggesting the seal itself is an interesting visual relic but an open book. It is a text about which all is transparent and readily evident to the viewer. Its motives and intent are obvious; and while arresting, there is nothing else to say or that can be said about it, really.

Yet, for all of this apparent lack of complexity and depth, this seal has been an enduring and near-constant element of the authorized and official identity of the Massachusetts Colony/Commonwealth. From King Charles’ charter of the Massachusetts Bay Plantation on March 4, 1629, until today, there has nearly always been an official seal in active usage that depicts some variation of a Native figure holding a bow in its left hand and a down-turned arrow in the right.<sup>1</sup> Granted, the seal of today features a Native figure now clothed in more accurate garb of shirt and moccasins and is no longer crying out for help, but the figure still stands alone on a field of blue, grasping a bow in one hand and arrow in the other [Figure 3]. It is practically the same image from nearly 400 years ago. Obviously then, this seal is more than simply a footnote of American history; it is a powerful testament to the identity, culture

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<sup>1</sup> Only between the years 1686 and 1689 when Governor Edmund Andros ruled the colony under a charter from King James II, and again between 1692 and 1775 when the Province of Massachusetts employed the royal coat of arms of England combined with a motto specific to the reigning monarch, did the seal of the Massachusetts Colony/Province deviate from the formula of depicting a single “native” figure wielding weaponry. Interestingly, after the break with England, the Massachusetts General Court adopted a new seal, which depicted once again a single figure facing outward grasping weaponry in either hand. However, this time the figure was that of an “English-American man holding the Magna Carta” in his left hand and an upraised sword in his right (Galvin 4). I discuss this image engraved by Paul Revere and known as the “Sword in Hand” seal at length in chapter two. This version of the seal endured until late 1780 when a new seal, once again commissioned to be engraved by Paul Revere, returned to the original design of the Native, but with only “a casual description of how the seal should look” provided by the Council (Galvin 4); subsequent engravers varied its appearance and it was not standardized until 1895.

and self-perception of the people who have lived and live now under its auspices. It is an official statement of the authority, unity, and individuality of the residents of the Commonwealth, and according to William Francis Galvin, the current Secretary of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, it also “is rich in Massachusetts culture[.] [T]he images are traceable from century to century, and the value has survived the test of time. Indeed, its authenticity and usefulness can be seen in the many documents that bear its certification” (Galvin 2).

While Secretary Galvin’s statements are certainly open for lively critical debate and interpretation, his final point about the “usefulness” of the seal, even from its origins in 1629, is accurate. It was a very useful tool for the colonial enterprise. Colonial epistemology began with Europeans’ production of cultural, historical, and political representations about the Indians of North America as “inferior,” ahistorical, and elemental beings who were deserving of, and in the case of the Bay Colony seal, even pleading for, the domination of Europe. This production of knowledge began not only with written accounts of New World exploration and settlement, all of which were contingent on a literate population with an access to texts in order to absorb the knowledge, but also on visual markers that legitimized these New World ventures and attempted to fix Native and colonial identity, such as the Bay Colony Seal. This symbol, which would have been in use not only on the official documents of the colony, but also on correspondence with other colonies and governments, public notices and even the individual governors’ personal messages within a month after the colony’s charter, would have been a highly visible, and visual, representation that did the work of



Fig. 3 The Present Great Seal of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Image courtesy of the Office of the Secretary of the  
Commonwealth of Massachusetts

imperialism in an effective yet simple manner on both sides of the Atlantic. It would have served to stabilize the identities of English colonists and Indians that were only partially formed in the colonizers' minds during these initial colonial encounters.<sup>2</sup> The colonists, already apprehensive about their great distance from England and the subsequent cultural alienation that that entailed, were anxious to maintain their English ways while appreciating the many freedoms that accompanied life in the colonies. The threat of becoming something else, something barbarous, was very real for the colonists, because in equal measure to their distance from England was their closeness to the Indians. As Jill Lepore has noted, this aroused serious doubts for the colonists about their own identity because

[e]ither the Indians were native to America [. . .], or else they were migrants from Europe or Asia [. . .]. If native, the Indians were one with the wilderness and had always been as savage as their surroundings [...]. But if the Indians were migrants from Europe or Asia, then they had changed since coming to America and had been contaminated by its savage environment. If this were the case, as many believed, then the English could expect to degenerate, too. (5-6)

The seal, therefore, even in its various permutations, presented a fixed Native identity

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<sup>2</sup> In his landmark text, *Orientalism*, Edward Said examines how the West constructs the "Orient" through various literary, cultural, and historical discourses, enabling the colonial conquest and subjugation of the East. Said argues that the resultant Western "Orientalist" fantasy reveals more about the West—its fears and ideals—than it does the East and serves to help define the colonial center of the West as "self" by virtue of the Orient's assigned position as "other." Early American constructions of the Native other, such as those displayed on the seal image and in written texts, while not strictly within Said's scope of Orientalism, operate in a similar fashion of creating the other in order to define the colonial American self.

that in turn was an attempt to fix the colonial identity, to repair the colonists' loss of mastery and privilege invoked by the cultural isolation in the New World, but yet solidify his/her rightful place in and his/her autochthonous relationship with that New World. These images produced the Natives as a visual, social reality, which was at once utterly "othered" and simultaneously knowable and visible in order to disavow the racial, cultural and intellectual differences the colonists saw of themselves in the colonized.

However, that superlative certainty of a fixed, knowable other quickly shifted into an alarming uncertainty for the colonists due to the inherent ambivalence of colonial discourse. As Homi Bhabha has observed, like Edward Said before him, the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized is a complex mix of attraction and repulsion, recognition and disavowal.<sup>3</sup> The colonizer seeks to create compliant subjects who willingly accept and reproduce—"mimic"—the cultural identity of the colonizing force, but who do so without exact replication; perfect copies of the colonizing culture in the darker, more "savage" bodies of the colonized would simply be too threatening to imperial hierarchy. Consequently, Bhabha argues, there has to remain a difference between the colonizer and the colonized's mimicked performance of him; the

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<sup>3</sup> Edward Said was the first to note the progress of Western domination through the marking of non-Western people as "Other." Bhabha extends Said's analysis, however, by deconstructing the dichotomies of empire (West and East, colonizer and colonized, self and other, etc.) that structured Said's analysis and arguing against their reductive implications. Instead, Bhabha proposes that nationalities and ethnicities are characterized by "hybridity," a more fluid, indeterminate sense of identity that emerges in and through engagement between colonizer and colonized rather than essence.

colonizer's desire, therefore, is "for a reformed, recognizable Other, *as a subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite*" (Bhabha, "Of Mimicry" 122, italics in original).

However, because mimicry must always produce and perform its own difference as a blurred copy of the colonial original, the discourse of mimicry is necessarily generated out of ambivalence. Bhabha notes, "in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference [. . .] [M]imicry is therefore stricken by an indeterminacy: mimicry emerges as the representation of a difference that is itself a process of disavowal" ("Of Mimicry" 122). Mimicry also is never very far from mockery, parodying what it imitates, and consequently, it is profoundly disturbing for colonial discourse because it continually suggests an identity that is not like that of the colonizer. It locates a rupture in the certainty of colonial domination, revealing its limitations; it pinpoints the uncertainty of colonization's control of the behavior of the colonized subjects because of their ambivalent fluctuation between resemblance and menace, and as a result is always potentially insurgent.

The initial dis-ease the colonists were grappling with in their New World negotiation to define not only themselves but also to fix the Indian other is evident on the early seals in their fluctuating imagery and intent. The various renderings of the Indians and New World landscapes on the seals were attempts to stabilize a representational reality, and attempt to define the colonizers and their mission. That representational reality, however, inscribed the Indian in definitive ways as the cultural, racial, intellectual, economic, and religious other, but always in ambivalent terms that inadvertently recognized the inherent power in mimicry.

However, the seal also functioned on a broader level, beyond the colony, to validate the communal, political identity of Massachusetts Bay and make it “official” in the eyes of the world. Today, as in the seventeenth century, a seal is defined as “a device impressed upon wax or other plastic material [. . .] as evidence of authenticity or attestation” and as “a token or symbol of a covenant; something that authenticates or confirms; a final addition which completes and secures” (OED). As such an authenticating tool, a seal must be able to translate intangible principles and ideals into consistent, graphic symbols that are readily interpreted and understood by all who view it. For centuries, seals were used to indicate an individual’s acceptance of a document, as in the case of a signet ring or familial crest impressed into wax, or to verify the sovereign authority’s acceptance of official documents of state, such as proclamations or deeds, as with a royal coat of arms, an official presidential crest or other heraldic seal that would be embossed onto paper or sealed into wax. The image or emblem on the seal served as a fixed representation of the authority figure behind it; it was a visual symbol of the unalterable facticity, as well as the lineage, cultural heritage, title or rank, of the person or group of people authorized to use it. The Bay Colony’s seal and its variations were visible, sanctioned markers of assurance; they were confirmations of the legal and official authority of the newly formed colony and its government, markers that testified to the “truth” of the cultural and communal identities of the citizens under its jurisdiction.

The earliest seals of the Massachusetts Bay Colony were embossed onto paper or impressed into wax by method of some sort of mechanical screw press and they validated acts of the General Court and certified proclamations and commissions; they

would have served on both sides of the Atlantic as a tangible and acknowledged representation of the Governor of the colony and his authority (and the king's sanctification of that authority) *in absentia*. However, by the mid-seventeenth century, the use of the colony's seal became more diffuse with the advent of the use of "printer's cuts" of the official seal. These "semi-official" versions of the original, gubernatorial seal were designed for use in printing and were consequently engraved onto either wood or soft, brittle metal and commissioned by the owners of various printing houses for use on their presses' versions of official colony documents as well as on some of their own personal enterprises. Each printer would have designed his own unique version of the seal and that image would have been tied inextricably to his work and his individual press as well as the colony and its dominion. Not only were the impressions of these printer's cuts far more detailed and easier to read than the official governors' seals because they are carved into a solid surface rather than raised from that surface as if produced in a mold, their impressions were also left in ink on paper, a form that could be quickly and easily reproduced for dissemination to a larger audience. Only high-ranking officials and the governor's personal acquaintances would have ever viewed the impressions of the colony's official seals, while the printer's cuts would be seen by nearly the entire population of the colony. Consequently, the colonial presses, "took on some of the features of a mint, setting an official seal of authenticity on a text" through their specialized versions of the gubernatorial seal (Amory, "Printing and Bookselling" 84). Used to validate published broadsides, declarations and the "authentic" version of an event, the printer's cuts of the seal functioned *in absentia* of the legitimate colony seal, which functioned *in absentia* of the embodied authority of the governor himself.

On the surface, this relational continuum of seals seems to represent a direct and stable line of authority from its source—the individualized seal of each governor—to the masses—the publicly produced images of the seal that appeared on various publications from various printers.

But what does it mean if this “stable” succession of seals is constantly changing, fluctuating? What does it mean when this hallmark of colonial European identity variously depicts male and female Natives of differing ages, skin colors, and levels of aggression who are occupying a range of New World landscapes that fluctuate from threatening and disorganized to contained and Edenic? What becomes of the authority of the government and the identity of the people behind such an image that is continually being revised and recast to reflect differing interpretations of their own colonial power, the place of gender within that realm, the Nativeness around them, and the foreign-yet-aboriginal American landscape? Such an image, whether official or semi-official, becomes a barometer of sorts, reflecting the diffuse and fluid nature of colonial identity, and the conflicted repulsion from/desire for the Nativeness that not only underpins that identity, but gives it existence.<sup>4</sup> It becomes a representation of the

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<sup>4</sup> There is much scholarship on the textual representation of the Native/Indigene and the colonist/settler response to and articulation of it. Terry Goldie, for example, has argued in *Fear and Temptation* that the figure of the indigene as represented in “white texts” of the settler cultures of Australia, Canada, and New Zealand, “suggests the impossible necessity of becoming indigenious” for the white non-Native author/settler (13). Through a process he calls “indigenization,” Goldie notes that white authors write about—“assume the identity of”—indigenous populations in an attempt to erase their own “separation of belonging” and to provide an originary identity for themselves and a “natural” connection to the land (12-13). Penelope Ingram, however, has argued that white authors within settler cultures often employ the technique of “racialization” when writing about the indigenous other. Ingram notes that racialization is not a process of relinquishing whiteness as in indigenization, but is rather the process of marking whiteness, just as the native identity is marked and appropriating the claim the indigene has to origin. Racialization, then, constructs for the settler/author an identity that offers an alternative to “the invisible, alienated, white settler,” establishing whiteness as a more originary relation to the land, erasing the native

ambivalence, fragmentation and instability that necessarily accompanied the formation of a colonial New World identity.

### **Figuring Identity**

From its charter on March 4, 1629, the Massachusetts Bay Plantation was authorized by the New England Company to establish one common seal, and by April 30 of that same year, the warrant of Richard Trott for making two seals in silver was approved. The seals were most likely completed by April 17, 1629, because in the first General Letter to Governor John Endecott, who was still in England, it was noted by his council that two duplicate silver seals had been made [Figure 4].<sup>5</sup> These two identical seals were made for wax impressions and displayed “a human figure holding a straight back Indian bow in its left hand and an arrow in the right hand” (Jones 15); this image was the governor’s official signature for the colony and its inhabitants for some thirty-three years. In 1672, however, the original silver seals were replaced with a newer version, one that, according to the records of the Bay Colony, was “used with a skrw, much more convenient then [sic] the hand seal” (as qtd. in Jones 14) and coincided with the administration of Governor John Leverett (1672-1679) [Figure 5]. Although the Leverett seal was primarily created and instituted for its technological advancements

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altogether (“Racializing Babylon,” 159). See also Ingram’s “Can the Settler Speak?” for further discussion of racialization.

America is not typically considered to be a “settler nation” in the same way New Zealand, Australia, and Canada are (though Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin define it as such in *The Empire Writes Back*); however, for the purposes of my study, Goldie’s and Ingram’s notions of constructing an indigenous identity through the appropriation of the figure of the indigene are particularly useful, regardless of America’s status as a settler nation.

<sup>5</sup> John Endecott had previously helped lead the Dorchester Bay Company’s settlement on Cape Anne in the 1620s and served as the Bay Colony’s governor for only a year until he was replaced by John Winthrop in 1630. Having earned the colonist’s respect for his leadership during that first winter, however, he remained active in the Colony’s politics and was elected Governor again in 1644, a position in which he served almost continuously until his death in 1665.

and not documented as an intended revision of the original seal, it does manifest an interesting difference from Trott's silver seals.

Although it is nearly impossible to speak definitively of the differences between the original 1629 seals and the Leverett seals because the original seals are so badly broken, it appears the bow of the Native was depicted as a straight-back Indian-style bow, while in the Leverett seal, the bow is now presented in the curved English style. Such a revision to the Native figure on the seal, even at the risk of verisimilitude, indicate the complex colonial relationship to both England and the native life around them, as well as the accompanying ambivalent anxiety. Were the Natives becoming more English and adopting English tools and technology or were they inaccurately mimicking, corrupting, that English sensibility?

Both of these seals, however, still reflect nearly identical images of a stiff-legged, unyielding male Native figure, clutching his bow and down-turned arrow and crying out for assistance from within a neat circle of the colony's Latin motto: *Sigillum Gvb et Societatis de Massachusetts Bay in Nova Anglia*—Seal of the Governor and Society of Massachusetts Bay in New England. These images of the rigid Natives with unreadable faces, prominently yet peacefully displaying their weaponry, and willingly attempting to interact with the colonial viewer through pleas for aid, seem to have been satisfactory self-representations for the Bay Colony residents. In fact, one or both of these seals were used almost exclusively between the years 1629 and 1692 when William and Mary assumed the charter for the crown. Except for the three years between 1686 and 1689 when President Dudley and Governor Andros introduced new official seals to the



Fig. 4 Wax Impression of Original Massachusetts Bay Colony Seal

Image courtesy of Massachusetts Historical Society



Fig. 5 Impression of Governor Leverett Seal in paper  
Image courtesy of Massachusetts Historical Society

colony,<sup>6</sup> this was the unquestioned representation of the static, unchanging Native other who simultaneously posed the possibility of violence and resistance as well as an opportunity for colonial instruction and civilization. More significantly, however, is the fact that that unchanging Native was male; the authorized mark of the colony was from its inception inextricably tied to Indianness and maleness.

During the 1670s and 1680s, however, there were several semi-official printers' cuts sanctioned for use on the colony's official printed materials. The first of these cuts was commissioned in 1672 by the Cambridge Printer Samuel Green [Figure 8]. Green's cut of the seal conscientiously reproduces the key images of its gubernatorial forbears, with one not-so-minor exception; the Native figure in the center of the seal is now a woman. She is clothed in a pleated skirt of fabric or animal skin that barely skims the top of her ample thighs and is holding an English style, reverse-curve bow in her left hand and the downward pointed arrow in her right. Her hair is long and loose and her breasts are fully exposed to the viewer. She is standing with her legs apart, but with one foot positioned slightly in front of the other and has a slight bend in her right knee. Such a stance, while definitely giving her body some movement and life as opposed to the rather rigid figures depicted in the earlier seals, also gives her a relaxed, natural

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<sup>6</sup> Sir Edmund Andros, Governor of New England between 1686 and 1689, had a more elaborate seal than had previously been used in the colony. It had two sides, one picturing King James II's effigy in full panoply with an Englishman and Indian kneeling beneath him and a cherub floating above. The motto that encircles this side of the seal reads, "Iacobvs II D G Mag Brit Fran Et Hib Rex Fidei Defensor" ("James II By the Grace of God King of Great Britain, France and Ireland Defender of the Faith"). The other side of the seal features the King's arms with his garter, crown, supporters, and the motto, "Sigillum Novae Angliae in America" ("Seal of New England in America") [Figures 6 and 7]. Andros was overthrown by the Puritans in the "American version of the Glorious Revolution" in 1689 (Slotkin 10).



Fig. 6 One Side of Governor Edmund Andros' Two-sided Seal

Image courtesy of the Office of the Secretary of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts



GOVERNOR A

Fig. 7 Second Side of Governor Edmund Andros' seal

Image courtesy of the Office of the Secretary of the  
Commonwealth of Massachusetts



Fig. 8 Samuel Green's Printer's Cut of the Massachusetts Colony Seal  
(Cambridge Cut)

Image courtesy of the Massachusetts Historical Society

pose, revealing the contrapposto of the human form. Her hands are similarly relaxed around both the bow and arrow that she holds. Her forefinger and thumb on both hands are pointed outward from her body; they extend away from the rest of her hand instead of folding back towards it as when making a fist to grasp something tightly. This woman is clearly not holding her weapons firmly or standing rigidly in a show of anxiety or tension. She may even be simply holding these items, unsure of how to handle them or what to do with them, until someone else can relieve her of them.

She is also speaking. Just as the male Indians on the two earliest seals had banners reading, "Come over and help us" issuing from their mouths, so, too, does this woman. However, unlike her earlier male counterparts, the placement of the banner now extends from the left side of her mouth, around her head to end in a gentle curve beside her right cheek rather than trailing off to the side and down toward her weapon as in the Leverett seal. It encircles her head and very becoming face, which unabashedly looks directly out from the seal, a slight smile playing about the full and richly darkened lips. The banner is clearly calling attention to the face and features of the woman rather than weaponry she holds. Jill Lepore has noted, "The face, the English believed, 'is a special glass wherein the glory and Image of God doth shine forth and appeare,' and to obscure it in any way was of offense against God" (93). The Native woman in this seal obviously has this English sensibility as her hair, although long and unbound, smoothly flows down her back from a center part. Her face is not obscured and her eyes are clear and direct. This woman is a welcoming, non-threatening figure. She is alluring, even coy, as she stands waiting to receive the colonists and turn over her weapons, perhaps even her body, to them when they arrive

to render the help she has requested. She is an amalgamation of New England reality and English fantasy. Her English garb, features, and appropriately enlightened plea for aid all reflect the desires of the colonists to maintain their civility and ties to their European heritage as well as map a similarly “civilized,” non-threatening identity onto the Indians. However, the very prominent depiction of the weaponry and the very “Nativeness” of the woman’s body—its dark shading and nude state—speak to the fact of the colonial New England experience; the Indians were the darker, “savage” other.

Yet while this female figure is inscribed as definitively knowable and fixed like her earlier male counterparts, she is ultimately unknowable and infinitely transgressive. Her very presence on the seal underscores the absence of the male Native, and the erasure, or at least denial, of his gendered threat to imperial power and the missionary effort. And where did she even come from? For some forty-three years the iconic and authorized image of the colony and its inhabitants was visualized through the male Native. Why a woman? Why now? It is possible her presence on the seal is due to a mistranslation between Green and the artisan who created her because neither Green, nor his sometimes engraver and constant rival John Foster, would have had the skill required in 1672 to either carve on metal or produce such detailed features as the pleating of the Native’s skirt that the cut reveals. Consequently, the cut is undoubtedly of English origins.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, her presence could be explained by a miscommunication

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<sup>7</sup> This cut of the seal was most likely commissioned by Green from an engraver in England, because as Matt B. Jones has noted, there is a small break in the right-hand edge of the seal “as though a piece had been broken out and rather clumsily replaced” (21). Because this defect is irregular in form with two sharp angles, Jones asserts that this cut must have been produced on a metal surface, because a break in a wooden cut “would have followed the grain of the wood and would have been substantially a chord of the curve” (21) as it was the custom of engravers at that time to make the engraving upon the flat side of a board, “longitudinally with the grain” (21).

across the Atlantic between printer and artist, a too brief description of the central figure that neglected to specify gender, because masculinity was presupposed as the default—at least in the colonies.

The overt sexuality of this female Native also complicates the meaning of the seal. When a male Indian was the central figure, the intentions (conversion) and the problems (war, resistance) of the colony were satisfactorily evident. Now, however, with an overtly sexual woman at the center, pleading for domination, the added dimensions of reproduction, rape, seduction and miscegenation become evident. In this version of the seal, the conversion of the Indians just may come through sexual domination and the resultant hybridity of subsequent New World generations. This figure already evinces a more “English” appearance with her neatly parted hair, unobstructed face, and English weaponry. She embodies the possibility for a transcultural and successful colonial enterprise; yet those same English markers on a Native body are underpinned by anxiety. She has adopted English culture and language through association with the English, changing her unchangeable nature, so could the inverse be true? Could the English become Indian? Cultural and gender identities become fluid and transient in Green’s Cambridge cut of the seal, defusing the localized authority and signifying power promised by the earlier versions.

In use alongside Green’s Cambridge cut, however, was another printer’s cut featuring a youthful-looking male figure. John Foster’s Boston Press cut seems to have been created in 1675 by Foster himself [Figure 9] and is reminiscent of the colony’s original silver seal and the Leverett seal because it depicts a long-haired male figure

with the same bow and arrow.<sup>8</sup> Although both Green's Cambridge cut and Foster's Boston cut were used with comparative frequency between 1675 and 1678,<sup>9</sup> and did appear on printing specimens until the Andros government of 1686, after 1678, Foster's Boston Press cut "appears on a very considerable number of documents [...indicating] that nearly all official printing went to him after that date" (Jones 30).<sup>10</sup> These two printer's cuts, although essentially interchangeable in the eyes of the colony leaders for authenticating colonial documents are vastly different and present competing, if not contradictory, versions of colonial identity.

By 1675, New England was about to enter into King Philip's War.<sup>11</sup> Tensions had been building for some time between the colonists, who were "pressuring natives to give up yet more land as well as control over their own communities" (Salisbury 2), and the Indians who "equate[d] English encroachment on their land with the death of their

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<sup>8</sup> Jones notes that "this image is clearly a woodcut engraved on the flat side of a board, as Foster is known to have done, and as was the general custom of wood engravers at that time. It was undoubtedly cut by [Foster...] for his own use in connection with the press which he had started in Boston" (22). Additionally, Foster must have cut several versions of the seal because slight variations appear in the seal's image on different editions of Foster's documents, such as the Colonial Laws. See Littlefield, p. 6, vol. 2.

<sup>9</sup> Green's Cambridge cut of the seal first appeared on "The General Laws and Liberties of the Massachusetts Colony" in 1672, while Foster's Boston cut was first put to use on "Severall Lawes and Ordinances of War past and made the 26<sup>th</sup> October 1675." See Jones for a listing of the many various documents on which these two versions of the seal appeared.

<sup>10</sup> William Reese notes that government printing contracts were of crucial importance to Massachusetts printers. Before about 1720, "Boston was unable to support printers did not have some kind of subsidy from either governor or legislature to do the official printing, and for the entire period [first 100 years] it was the most lucrative single contract a printer could hope to have" (Reese 5).

<sup>11</sup> King Philip's War, also known as Metacom's War, lasted from June of 1675 to August of 1676 and was "the bloodiest and most destructive war in American history. . .Metacom's War took the lives of about five thousand of the Indians and about two thousand five hundred of the English, roughly 40 and 5 percent, respectively, of the two peoples' populations" (Salisbury 1). See Neal Salisbury's excellent introduction to Mary Rolwandson's narrative and Jill Lepore for further details of the war.



Image from the collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society

Fig. 9 John Foster's Printer's Cut of the Massachusetts Colony Seal  
(Boston Cut)

Image courtesy of the Massachusetts Historical Society

cultures” (Salisbury 2). The peaceful coexistence that had been maintained on unwritten terms for years in the past was now breaking down, leaving people on each side feeling “that the other had betrayed them [...] Such feelings undoubtedly heightened the animosity and cruelty that they visited on one another” (Salisbury 5). Consequently, there are some significant changes to Foster’s Boston cut of the seal from Green’s previous version. For example, the central figure of the image is now an adolescent-looking male, clothed in an apron of leaves. His hair is long and shaggy, hanging over his shoulders to the front, lying alongside his cheeks and trailing down along his right arm. Jill Lepore writes,

Long hair in men, or wayward hair in women, was considered excessive, ‘when it is so long, that it covers the eyes, the cheeks, the countenance, &c God hath ordeined those parts to be visible.’ Long hair was considered a ‘badge of cruelty and effeminacy’ and was even vaguely associated with cannibalism. (93)

Clearly, this young man is meant to portray the “savage” nature of the Natives in its most significant, recognizable forms to the colonists. His wild hair and Edenic loincloth of leaves would undoubtedly speak to the colonial perceptions of the Indians as being one with the wilderness, allowing them to disavow any bond with these others. However, the clean-shaven status of the Native man on this cut would deliver a divergent yet equally potent message to the colonists. Kathleen M. Brown points out that

The native male fashion of being clean-shaven [...] clashed with English associations of beards with male political and sexual maturity, perhaps

diminishing further Indian men's claims to manliness in the eyes of the English. It probably did not enhance English respect for Indian manhood that female barbers sheared men's facial hair. (58)

This figure, through the presence and/or absence of body hair, is depicted simultaneously as wildly chaotic and threatening, yet physically immature and even effeminate. His gender would have signified even further disarray for the colonists because "Male Indian bodies were seen as disorderly, savage, and lazy because they 'ranged the forests' for fish and game, while women performed the horticultural labors" (Finch 53).

Additionally, the bow the man is clutching in the Boston cut has also been altered; it is once again depicted as the straight-back style of the Native Americans which appeared in the original silver seal of the colony, and he is grasping it firmly in his left fist. In his right hand, the figure holds an arrow in a peculiar fashion, with his forefinger and thumb extended, almost as if he is preparing to load it into the bow and draw it back for a shot. The banner, which still extols the "Come over and help us" plea, also has been altered. Although still extending from the left side of the Native's face and encircling his head to the left, the tail end of the banner now swirls around the feathered end of the arrow, calling attention to its very large presence. In all, this figure is far more aggressive and barbarous than his female counterpart in the Cambridge cut.

The Native figure on this Boston cut of the seal depicts the confusion and loathing with which the colonists viewed their Indian neighbors as well as their own desperate attempts to master their own identities by denying any affinity with these others. It also places into stark relief the desire and imperial, omniscient confidence

with which the female figure of the Cambridge cut is depicted. Clearly, colonial interpretations of Indianness varied depending upon the gender of the Native other; perhaps not as obviously, however, were the fluctuating definitions of the colonial self that accompanied the changes in the Native other's gender. While femaleness imparted a colonial identity filled with yearning for a carnal and masterful relationship with the autochthonous land and other, it also revealed the accompanying anxiety to such a union: the fear of reciprocity, that just as the English could adopt and adapt Indianness, so, too, could the Indian usurp Englishness. Correspondingly, maleness of the Indian figure imparted fears of dominance and erasure by the "inferior" other; however, it also communicated the political, economic, and religious authority of the colony in tacit terms, even if inextricably connected to an Indian body.

The printer's cuts, with their semi-official status and affiliation with private individuals and presses instead of a particular ruling party, were more fluid in their depiction of the gender of the Native figure. Most official versions of the Bay Colony seal, however, adhere closely to the formula established by the preceding seals, except for one notable deviation: President Joseph Dudley's seal. This seal, in use between 1686 and 1689 during Dudley's short-lived tenure as President, is the first official seal to depict the figure of a female Native, a sharp deviation from the colony's earliest gubernatorial seals [Figure 10].<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Joseph Dudley received a temporary commission in May of 1686 that instated him as President of the Council for Massachusetts Bay, New Hampshire, Maine and the King's Colony; he also acted as judge of the superior court and censor of the presses. When Andros was deposed in 1689, Dudley was imprisoned and sent back to England with Andros.



Fig. 10 The President Dudley Seal

Image Courtesy of the Massachusetts Historical Society

In the impressions of the Dudley seal, which was embossed onto paper with no wax used, there is a female figure holding a bow in her left hand and an arrow in her right, much like the earlier male figures of the original and Leverett seals and even Green's female figure in his Cambridge cut. She stands alone on a plain, field encircled by a Latin motto and although depicted in a pleated and obviously fabric skirt, suggesting civilization or at least the technical skill of weaving fabric, she is nude from the waist up. Her full breasts and rounded belly—perhaps pregnant?—appear to be bulging over the waistband of the skirt, and her short, stolid legs stand stiffly planted, a shoulder's width apart in a very "unladylike" pose. Just as her forbears on the earlier gubernatorial seals and printer's cuts, she is facing fully forward from the middle of the seal holding her arms, bent at the elbow. Also, as in the Leverett seal, this woman grasps an English style, curved bow and a downward pointed arrow. She is an amalgamation of images from the seals that came before her, but with one unsettling difference: there is no plea for assistance issuing from her mouth. Instead, her long, loose hair hangs down over her shoulders as, voiceless, she stares out from the confines of her classical, leafy and Latinate frame. She is an ominously silent figure.

The missionary intent seems to be entirely absent from this seal with the removal of the banner-like plea, "Come over and help us."<sup>13</sup> In the earlier versions of

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<sup>13</sup> This quote is from Acts 16:9; the entire verse in the authorized King James Version reads, "And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: there stood a man of Macedonia, beseeching him, and saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us." It occurs during Paul's second missionary journey and the first-ever Christian mission into Europe. Paul was himself, of course, converted through the medium of a vision, so the visionary power of this verse is especially important to note. Also interesting is the fact that Paul and his epistle's first convert to Christianity in all of Europe after their arrival in Macedonia is a woman, Lydia, the seller of purple, which perhaps accounts for President Dudley's and subsequent seals' use of a female Native figure, although the removal of this verbal plea in the case of Dudley's seal is perplexing to say the least.

the seal, this plea alone was perplexing enough. Who is calling to whom for assistance? Are the colonists of Massachusetts Bay calling for other colonists from Europe to come and aid the missionary efforts in the New World? Or are the unschooled “savages” calling for something they are generally as of yet unaware of? Ostensibly, it is the Indian beseeching good European Christians, as the Macedonian man did the apostle Paul in his vision, to travel to the New World and convert the “savages” to Christianity, as the direct quote from Acts 16:9 would indicate. However, Paul’s caller was a figment of a dream, a vision received in the night. While this visionary element does not make Paul’s calling to venture into Europe any less inspired, the fact remains that actual Macedonian citizens did not request Paul’s missionary efforts into Europe; a specter (divinely inspired or otherwise) did. If the Native in the seal, when the banner and plea are present, is analogously recognized as a fantastical vision like Paul’s, the stability and facticity of the seal become even more confused and threatening. The official identity of the colony, the seal, is not based on the fact of “real” Indians that desire European Christianity and welcome missionaries and colonists with down-turned weapons, but a spectral fantasy. The “truth” and authenticity depicted in the seal, while biblically and doctrinally accurate, is based upon a dream. The removal of the banner-like plea from the Dudley seal is perhaps an attempt to reconcile the “visionary” Indian perpetuated by previous seals, the Indian who supposedly asked for help and domination, with the New World reality of Indians who fought against that help and domination once they arrived. The mute figure of the Dudley seal, while more conflicted in her meaning, is certainly more reflective of the often unreadable and tangled relationship the colonists had with their Indian neighbors.

Additionally, with the absence of the plea in the Dudley seal, how is one now supposed to interpret the motives and meaning of this woman and her weapons? Is she offering the weapons to the viewer in a gesture of peace, as indicated by the still down-turned arrow, or is she firmly grasping them, fully prepared to use them on the colonists, as her solidly planted feet and defiant stance seem to indicate? Without the textual appeal, it is very hard to determine. The earlier seals at least offered a written context with which to interpret the meaning behind the armed, male Native. The Dudley seal only offers a feminized silence on the missionary focus of the colony, perhaps providing more insight into the position of English women in colonial religious endeavors than that of Native women.

The figure's appearance also complicates the interpretation of President Dudley's seal. Clad in what appears to be a pleated and sewn skirt of fabric, she seems to evince at least some level of civilization and cultivated skill, but her stout figure, nudity, unkempt hair and uncouth stance reveal her "savagery." Is this woman asking for help or denying it? Is she accepting the civilizing efforts of the colonists or refusing them? And what does her full, almost corpulent figure mean? Is this bare-breasted, fleshy Native woman supposed to be representative of the abundance of the Massachusetts landscape? Or perhaps her full figure depicts pregnancy, and the possibility of a new, hybrid generation of "civilized savages" in need of more colonial efforts, more capital? And finally, the sexual overtones of this figure cannot be denied. The open-armed stance of this figure, while reminiscent of the earlier male images, now has an added dimension to it. Do those open arms imply a peaceful overture, or a sexual one? Is this naked, hyper-sexualized woman inviting sexual encounters from the

English men who view her or does her unabashed nudity invoke Edenic images of the prelapsarian Eve or the innocent noble “savage”? Kathleen M. Brown has noted in her book *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches and Anxious Patriarchs*, which examines race and gender relations in colonial Virginia that very often in accounts of the New World there are embedded

clearly cautionary [messages...]. Indians are represented literally as feminine seducers capable of trapping English men in the web of their own sexual desires [...] Exploiting English men’s hopes for colonial pleasures, Indian women dangled before them the opportunity for sexual intimacy, turning a female tradition of sexual hospitality into a weapon of war. (67)

So what exactly were the colonists encountering in Native women in America? The figure of the Dudley seal offers simultaneous readings of beguiling war-like women who used sex as a weapon and a peaceful yet sexually uninhibited race of people. This conflicted image of the other was for three years the defining and authentic representation of the people and government of the Bay Colony, leaving the colonists themselves to be variously identified as both the antithesis to this “savage” and silent femininity—cultured, masculine and voiced—and its equivalent—voiceless and feminized “natives,” the new indigenes who were stripped and silenced in the harsh wilderness of the New World.

These ambiguities, these fluctuations between desire for and repulsion from Indianness, and indeed, femaleness, as depicted within the Dudley seal are telling markers of the diffuse nature of colonial identity. This inherent ambivalence toward the

Native Other, compounded when that Other is imagined as feminine, imminently knowable yet calculatedly silent, is wrought with tension and anxiety. The anxious return to and repetition of this image, through broadsides, official paperwork and even the early paper money,<sup>14</sup> as an attempt to master and permanently fix it in otherness and stabilize one's own identity ultimately undermines itself because of its own fluidity and lack of a fixed central core of meaning. Bhabha identifies this tension as the

*productive* ambivalence of the object of colonial discourse—that ‘otherness’ which is at once an object of desire and derision, an articulation of difference contained within the fantasy of origin and identity. What such a reading reveals are the boundaries of colonial discourse and it enables a transgression of these limits from the space of that otherness. (“The Other Question” 67, italics in original).

The Native image and form became a slippery, even dangerous prospect for colonists to imagine and depict because it was so uncontrollable and could transgress the limits set upon it by colonial discourse. In attempting to revision and re-fix the colonial identity through female Indianness, the Dudley seal ultimately produces an even more conflicted sense of the colonial self and its complex relationship to Indianness and gender.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Many variations of the colony's seal were featured on paper currency. Eric Newman notes that in December of 1690 Massachusetts authorized “\$7,000 in indented Colony or Old Charter Bills, [which was] the first authorized public paper currency issued in the Western World” (158). The faces of the bills were “printed from an engraved copper plate containing four denominations. The Indians on the Colony seal is saying “Come Over and Help us” (E. Newman 158).

<sup>15</sup> After the Andros/Dudley regime was ended by the rebellion of 1689, Governor Bradstreet and other officers of his former council were restored to power through a loose interpretation of a letter from William III which granted authority “To Such as for the time being take Care of Preserving the Peace and Administering the Laws in our Colony to continue the administration of the Government” until his further pleasure should be known (as qtd. in Jones 18). Interpreting this as the authority to maintain the old charter, Bradstreet resumed control and annual elections were once again held until the new charter and the establishment of the Province of Massachusetts in 1692, when William and Mary assumed the charter

Instead of reflecting the identities of the colonists under its auspices, the Massachusetts Bay Colony's various seals represent the counter-image of the colonists, their "other," darker antithesis; they depict the "uncivilized" and "unholy" Indian, scantily and crudely dressed and clutching rudimentary weapons. The seals are defining the colony and its inhabitants by who and what they are not—autochthons of the New World with ancestral and natural ties to the land. Although this is a complex and contradictory statement of self-representation through the antipodal other, it does seem to grant some stability to the communal identity of the colony, as the Native is a constant, repeated image in the seal's iconography. The specter of the Native is almost always there. However, the stability of this core image becomes muddled and diffuse as the cultural and gendered markers of the figure fluctuate from seal to seal. This interplay of civilization and gender at the core of the seal embodies the anxieties about identity and the colonists' ambivalent position in the New World. These images are fascinating and troubling on so many levels because of the mixed and even contradictory messages they seem to send about the identity of the Native inhabitants of the New World as well as the people who designed and used the seal, the colonists themselves. The fears and prejudices of the Bay Colony settlers are evident as they are projected onto the body of the Native figures of these seal; however, the colonists' unclear and fluctuating sense of themselves, as well as their identity and role in the New

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for the crown. During this period of approximately three years, "every effort was made to continue government affairs of the old charter. Obviously the Dudley and Andros seals would not be used under such conditions [...so] political expedience would dictate the use of the old seal authorized by the old charter" (Jones 18-19). The original silver seal of the Massachusetts Bay Colony was once again in use in an official capacity.

World also becomes painfully clear through the various representations of the primary image of Indianness.

### **Containing the Uncontainable**

Perhaps even more revealing than the central, Native figures are the ways in which the borders and backgrounds of these various seals attempt to contain and ground the uncontainable Indian of the image. From the original silver seals created in 1629 until 1692, there has always been a Latin motto containing a prominent Maltese cross and ornate garlands encircling the motto and image at the center of the seal; even the double-sided Andros seal, which departs greatly from the lone-Indian motif of the other seals, contains a Latin motto on both of its sides. Additionally, each of the Native-figure seals portrays some sort of natural, physical background, a New World landscape that provides further insight into the conflicted nature of colonial identity, and the efforts to enclose and validate a very slippery sense of the colonists' place in the wilderness of America.

The images of the original silver seal are really too badly broken to reveal much more than the central Native figure clutching a bow and arrow and the presence of the motto, but the Leverett seal, a direct descendant of the original seal, more clearly reveals the image of two pine trees, one on either side of the Native's legs, but within the umbrella of the extended weaponry in the figure's hands [Figure 5]. Placed in perspective to the viewer, the trees appear small beside the figure, as if at a distance, and there does appear to be some sort of ground or horizon beneath the figure's feet. In all, this is a very basic representation of the flora and the fauna one could expect to encounter in the colonies of the New World: virgin native pine trees for lumber as well

as tar and resin for ship building, and uncorrupted, peaceful Natives, ripe for missionary efforts and conversion. The motto is very basically surrounded in concentric, raised lines that frame it and differentiate it from the interior image of the seal.

The Dudley seal, however, deviates from this prescriptive formula [Figure 10]. Much in the way his seal obfuscates the “intended” meaning of the seal with his mute, female Native, so, too, do his revisions to the framing and background. In Dudley’s 1686 seal, the pine trees from the Leverett seal have been removed from the background on this seal, yet two garlands of leaves have been added to the inner and outer edges of the motto encircling the seal. Such decoration, while certainly maintaining a sense of the natural world in conjunction with the Native figure, is highly stylized and formal. The garlands are intricately designed with evenly spaced leaves on each side of the stem of the garland, and the garlands themselves are positioned perfectly between the concentric rings that define the outer edge of the seal and encircle the motto. This very refined and traditional decoration evinces a very dignified and very English aura, at least in the framing of the image, perhaps reflecting his more direct ties to the English government, which placed both Dudley and Andros in power.

Additionally, the female figure is all alone on the Dudley seal. Almost floating in space, her silent figure looms larger than life; the top of her head and the bottom of her feet nearly touch the outline of the inner-most ring of garland and her weapons reach to both sides of the frame, leaving very little open or blank space surrounding her. She fills the entire center space of the seal, appearing gigantic and just a little off-center, as her image seems to tilt slightly to the left hand side of the of the seal. With no apparent ground or trees with which to put this woman into perspective, she becomes an

Amazonian presence that dominates the image of an New World with no natural resources or fecund landscape to speak of—only the silent, overbearing presence of the Native woman.

The 1672 Cambridge cut of Samuel Green also bears the ornate and traditional double circle of leafy garlands on either side of the Latin motto [Figure 8]. The garlands of Green's cut are more detailed than in the original Dudley seal, depicting three-leafed clusters, almost wheat-like in appearance, that encircle the figure in an orderly clock-wise fashion on the innermost circle, and proceed counter-clockwise on the left side of the outermost circle and clockwise on the right. Where the two garlands meet at the very top and bottom of the oval on the outermost circle, a small sheaf of some sort of grain, perhaps wheat, joins the two opposing garlands into a unified and stately frame for the entirety of the image. The Latin motto also reflects some artistic adaptation. Although it still reads "Seal of the Governor and Society of Massachusetts Bay in New England," a small Maltese cross has been added to the top center ring of the motto. This cross clearly indicates not only where the motto begins and ends, as it appears directly between the words "Anglia" at the end of the motto and "Sigillum" at the beginning; it also appears directly beneath the topmost sheaf of wheat on the outermost ring and above the head of the Native figure in the center of the image. The cross is significant for its reinforcement of the missionary designs of the colony, and its conspicuous position at the very center and top of the seal and directly over the head of the figure gives it a prominence in the image that cannot be overlooked. Although previous seal images do appear to have some sort of cross-like symbol at the top of the image, separating the beginning and ending of the motto (the original silver seal and the

Leverett seal), none are as eye-catching as the boldly outlined Maltese cross in the Cambridge cut.<sup>16</sup>

These changes to the framing of the Cambridge image, while relatively minor, do suggest significant motives. The much more ornate and traditional garlands that proceed orderly around the outer edges of the seal appear in sharp contrast to the “savage” figure in the center and the three deciduous trees that surround her legs in the background. The three trees, which are notably changed from the very American pines in previous images, now appear to be English Oaks with full, puffy canopies.<sup>17</sup> Also, a third tree has been added directly between the legs of the woman whereas previous images only displayed two trees on either side of the figure’s legs. The ground beneath the trees is also evident now in the Cambridge image, where in other seals it was not. The ground beneath the Native woman’s feet is rich and dark, curvaceous and hilly. It appears to be unplanted and unleveled for agricultural purposes. The contrast between the “untamed” vision of nature within the central area of the seal and the very “civilized” garlands and Latinate motto on the perimeters reflect the polarized metaphors for “wilderness” and “garden” that were so central to the Puritan beliefs

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<sup>16</sup> The Maltese cross is identified as the symbol of the Knights of Malta, also known as the Knights Hospitaller, which was an order of Christian warriors founded in 1080 in Jerusalem to provide aid to poor and sick pilgrims to the Holy Land. The eight-pointed star is formed of four v-shaped arms joined at their tips with each of the eight points symbolizing one of the chivalric virtues.

<sup>17</sup> Traditionally, oaks are symbols of strength and endurance as well as being the national tree of England. Oaks were also used in the construction of ships and timber framed buildings in Europe until the nineteenth century. Oaks are also tied to two famous Anglo-European landmarks: the “Royal Oak” of Boscobel Wood in England where King Charles II hid to escape the Roundheads following the Battle of Worcester in 1651 and the “Charter Oak” in what is now Hartford, Connecticut, where colonists supposedly hid the charter of the Connecticut colony from Governor Andros when he arrived in October of 1687 to confiscate the document.

about their mission in the New World and their ties to civilization in the old. Martha L. Finch notes that the rhetorical interpretations of the landscape by the Puritans can be transposed into other familiar dichotomies: nature and culture, wild and civilized, space and place. Collapsing these dichotomies involves focusing on lived experience, investigating how human beings go about organizing the world, turning unstructured, frightening space into familiar, meaningful place. (45)

Kathleen M. Brown also observes that land use was one of the important ways in which the colonists distinguished themselves from the Indians. She writes, “Herding and hunting economies, with their transient settlements and low population densities, contrasted sharply with the English visions of shining cities, well-cultivated countrysides, and burgeoning populations” (K. Brown 55). This is exactly what is occurring in the Cambridge cut of the seal. By juxtaposing a wild image of the uncultivated wilderness with the tradition and order of a garland/garden and the erudite Latin motto, the visceral landscape of the New World has been effectively enveloped and contained by English tradition and sensibility. The transformation of the “untamed, chaotic, raw environment” into the “civilized, ordered, productive farms and villages” (Finch 45) has been effectively envisioned and expressed in this image and further establishes the world of difference between the colonists and their barbaric neighbors.

Although the Cambridge cut attempts to reconcile these two divergent identities/realities within its parameters, the marriage is not fully and confidently realized within the cut. There is still confusion and dis-ease in the message of the seal. Were the colonists the tamers, the guardians, of this promising “errand into the

wilderness,” or were they subject to it, victims of war and Native threat? They almost seem consumed and dwarfed by New World realities, as the overbearing woman of the Dudley seal seems to intimate. And beyond the corporate, colony-wide identity manifested by the seal is Samuel Green’s own, individual identity. Green chose these images to identify his press and its singular imprint among the other colonial presses of the period. Its female and sexual nature certainly sets Green’s version of the seal apart from the legion of male warriors featured on other seals and also provides a connection between Green and the crown-appointed Dudley, who later co-opts a very similar form for his official seal. Green’s rendition of the seal presents a more feminized, more sexual, more wild vision of the New World than the classical, Latinate containment and English sensibility that the frame and background attempt to provide. However, the cogency of those English fortifications to the seal was questionable. The struggle to define and control just what was going on in the New World is readily evident in the Cambridge cut of the Bay Colony seal.

Whereas in the Cambridge cut, the landscape was fecund and slightly British, the Boston cut of John Foster portrays a much wilder, thoroughly American vista [Figure 9]. Three trees are again depicted on either side of and in between the figure’s legs, but this time they appear to be elms, an indigenous New England tree.<sup>18</sup> The land

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<sup>18</sup> The elm tree is the traditional symbol for wisdom and respect. Throughout the middle ages, elm wood would be utilized for chair seats, wheels, coffins and water pipes due to its interlocking grain, resistance to splitting and decay when permanently wet. It was also a widely planted ornamental tree in both America and Europe until Dutch Elm disease devastated the elm populations in the twentieth century. In Boston at the time of the American Revolution, the Liberty Tree was a famous elm in the commons from which the Sons of Liberty hung two tax collectors in effigy in demonstration against the Stamp Act. The tree then became a rallying point for assemblies and the venting of emotions in pre-revolutionary America; it also became a meeting place for the Sons of Liberty where they could maintain the appearance of “chatting” casually beneath its bows instead of holding an illegal unauthorized assembly.

beneath the Native's feet is again hilly and rolling as in the Cambridge cut, perhaps indicating the lack of agricultural development, but this time it is scattered over with sprouts of grasses and small, bushy plants that do not appear to be of any uniform arrangement or type. They are clustered all about the Native's feet and are of such a jumbled layout that it is really hard to even identify where one plant begins and another ends. Some, to the lower left of the image, might even pass for small animals because they are so ill-formed. Such "messy" renditions of the American landscape may simply reflect the inability of John Foster to create a sophisticated and clean cut of the seal, or, as I would argue instead, they reflect the disarray of the current colonial state in 1675. With King Philip's war looming on the horizon and Native populations becoming more and more belligerent toward colonial intervention, the once promising landscape of New England probably seemed much more wild and ungovernable to the colonists. Why would these images of disorder and confusion be the ones John Foster chose to identify his press and the works published by it?

The framing of the Boston cut, however, still depicts the orderly garlands and Latin quote of the Cambridge cut and earlier seals, suggesting the colonial attempts to maintain their Englishness and contain the "savagery" of the New World within a classical frame. However, the "savagery" and "wildness" of the central image seem to overwhelm and nullify this attempt. It is the disorder and "Indianness" that dominates this and other images of the seal, leaving the viewer with a sense of the consuming nature of the Native cultures and native landscape. The very fact that a single Native

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Once word of Boston's Liberty Tree spread, most other American cities designated a Liberty Tree of their own, as well.

figure, whether male or female, verbal or mute, appearing as “civilized” or “savage,” occupies the central position of nearly all of the seals of the early years of the colony (and is still present even on the seals that do not centralize it, such as the Andros seal) makes a very important statement about what it meant to be a colonial citizen in Massachusetts.

Although these iconic seals of the colony self-consciously proclaim the inhabitants to be not “Indian” and not “savage,” they also just as loudly proclaim them to be not “English.” And it is only through a careful balancing act of maintaining classical, “civilized,” English markers, which enabled the colonists to effectively distinguish themselves from the barbarism of the New World, and appropriating images of “Indianness,” which enabled to colonists to distinguish themselves from all that was English, that a somewhat stable and unique identity can begin to be formed. Or could it? Scholars have often claimed that without its Indian heritage, “America was only a more vulgar England, but with it, America was its own nation, with a unique culture and its own ancestral past” (Lepore 200). However, with its Indian heritage, American identity becomes a problematic *mélange* of anxious repetitions of stereotypes and fetishized representations that

giv[e] access to an ‘identity’ which is predicated as much on mastery and pleasure as it is on anxiety and defence, for it is a form of multiple and contradictory belief in its recognition of difference and disavowal of it [. . .] For the scene of fetishism is also the scene of the reactivation and repetition of primal fantasy—the subject’s desire for a pure origin that is

always threatened by its division, for the subject must be gendered to be engendered, to be spoken. (Bhabha, “The Other Question” 107)

In short, it is an identity that contains the seeds of its own undoing because beyond the fixed image of the Indians of the seal were the realities of the Indians in the New World, those “reformed, recognizable Other[s], [functioning] *as [. . .] subject[s] of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite*” (Bhabha, “Of Mimicry” 86, italics in original).

### **James Printer: Praying Indian, Printing Indian**

While the imaginary Indian of the Bay Colony seal was disconcerting enough for the colonists—its simultaneous threat and submission stoked the identity crisis and anxieties already at play—a “real live English-Indian” who embodied all of the possibilities and uncertainties hinted at by those seals, must have been almost paralyzing. An Indian who had adopted all of the cultural trappings, beliefs and abilities that were the hallmarks of English superiority, yet was still so obviously not-English, would have been a constant, living, breathing enactment of the identity issues plaguing these no-longer-English but not-yet-American pilgrims in the wilderness. He or she would have been Bhabha’s “almost but not quite,” that colonized object who simultaneously attracted the colonizer’s attention because of his/her successful assimilation and conversion, but also repelled them because of the inherent ambivalence in his/her position. James Printer, a Nipmuck Indian, Christian convert, and accomplished typesetter/printer would have been one of those imagined Indians come to

life during the mid-seventeenth century and King Philip's War.<sup>19</sup> He was the "perfect" result of the rigorous process of colonial indoctrination, living and working among the English for nearly his entire life. He was literate in their language, worshipped their God, wore their clothes, and participated in their economy; he was, for the most part, the "model" seventeenth-century Indian. However, beneath that veneer of assimilation was still the fact of his Indianness; no matter how unambiguously "English" Printer became and appeared, he was never able to pass as English. No matter how well he absorbed and reflected Englishness, he would always produce an imperfect, anxiety-ridden reflection for the colonists. He was an ambivalent figure, at once signifying the mastery and control of the English over the other, but also signifying the limits of that control as he adopted and adapted their "inherent" culture to an Indian body. "Mimicry is [. . .] a sign of the inappropriate [. . .] a difference or recalcitrance which coheres the dominant strategic function of colonial power, intensifies surveillance, and poses an immanent threat to both 'normalized' knowledges and disciplinary powers" (Bhabha, "Of Mimicry" 122-3). In short, Printer embodied both resemblance and menace in a single colonized body, much as the Native figures of the seal did; only now, Printer was real. He was not the flattened and revisable Indian of the seals but an actual actor in the colony's identity struggle.

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<sup>19</sup> Both Jill Lepore, *The Name of War*, and Hilary Wyss, *Writing Indians*, devote extended, insightful analysis to Printer's unique position in colonial Massachusetts' society and his bifurcated role in King Philip's War. Others who have examined the life and contributions of James Printer include Neal Salisbury in his excellent introduction and the appended material of *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God*, as well as in "Red Puritans" and "Embracing Ambiguity." See also Walter Meserve's "English Works of Seventeenth-Century Indians" and Andrew Newman's "Captive on the Literacy Frontier."

Born in the praying Indian town of Hassanamesit (now near Grafton, Massachusetts), James Printer was the son of Naoas, one of John Eliot's converts and a leading member of the Christian Indian church in the settlement. Printer's indoctrination into English Christian culture was, consequently, immediate. How could it not be? Born into a Praying Indian town that was inundated with English influences, yet was still defined as Indian, Printer was bicultural from birth. It is unclear, however, when Printer's process of "civilization" moved from the liminal grounds of the praying town of Hassanamesit to the official world and historical records of the colony proper. It is possible he was bound out as a young boy to an English family where he was taught to read and write, even enrolling later in a Cambridge grammar school between 1645 and 1646<sup>20</sup>; however, it may be more likely that his formal process of indoctrination began when he was apprenticed to Samuel Green of the Cambridge Press as a printer's devil/typesetter in 1659 to aid with the production of John Eliot's great Indian Bible. Because of the massive and atypical nature of this job—it was the first entire Bible printed in North America in any language—it was nearly published in England, especially since it was entirely subsidized, even down to additional printing equipment and funds to repair damaged equipment already in place, by the English-based Corporation for Propagation of the Gospel among the Indians in New England of

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<sup>20</sup> See Margaret Szasz's *Indian Education* p. 115-120, George Winship's *The Cambridge Press* p. 69, and George Littlefield's *The Early Massachusetts Press*, vol. 2, p. 77. Hugh Amory, however, submits that Printer's formal association with the English could not have begun before 1649, because until that point, "the Nipmucks did not 'submit' to English jurisdiction [. . .] and would hardly have entrusted their children to an open enemy" (*First Impressions* 41). Others, such as Hilary Wyss and Jill Lepore similarly indicate Printer's first, formal, extended cultural exchanges with the English began with his conversion to Christianity and association with John Eliot. I would add that because of his upbringing in Hassanamesit and early exposure to the Christian religion, English culture, and legal codes endemic to the praying towns that the "informal" process indoctrination would have begun with his birth. Colonization was the "always already" in Printer's case.

the New England Company. Ultimately, though, the project was granted to Green's Cambridge Press, located in a building at Harvard Indian College, because, as Isaiah Thomas has noted in his *The History of Printing in America* the Indian youth of that area "had been taught to read &c., at the school at Cambridge, established for the purpose, and Mr. Eliot and Mr. Pierson had translated Primers and Catechisms into the Indian language for the common use of the Indians [. . . therefore] it became necessary that these works should be printed in America, under the inspection of the translators" (59). Additionally, the experienced English master-printer, Marmaduke Johnson, was imported to the colonies, along with a new press and other printing materials, at the behest of John Eliot to lend his expertise in the Cambridge Press' production of the Bible. This transatlantic move of Johnson and the press is especially interesting because it is essentially the center moving toward the periphery. A "civilized" printer of England is being relocated to the New World wilderness in order to have access to Indian expertise and produce an inaugural Indian language text.

By the completion of Eliot's first Indian Bible in 1663, Printer had had a hand in producing two editions of an Indian primer and two books of psalms, as well as the bible itself. He was arguably Eliot's most accomplished interpreter and did more than any other translator to help Eliot in the production of his bible.<sup>21</sup> Printer is also recognized as being indispensable to Eliot in the publication of his second Indian Bible

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<sup>21</sup> See Walter Meserve, "English Works of Seventeenth -century Indians," p. 267, and Littlefield, p. 77. Printer most likely functioned in the capacity of master typesetter/editor in the production of these texts. Job Nesutan and John Sassamon, both former students of Eliot's and schoolmasters, functioned as translators, although Printer probably helped to smooth out and regulate their translations. Not surprisingly, credit for this period of unparalleled production of Indian texts by the Cambridge Press has generally been given only to John Eliot, not his Indian aids.

between 1680-1685; Eliot himself noted in a letter to Robert Boyle in London in 1683, that he had “but one man, viz. the Indian Printer, that is able to compose the sheets, and correct the press with understanding” (as qtd. in Littlefield 77). Printer was not only the ideal colonial subject himself, mimicking Englishness and Christian-ness with success, but he was also a useful tool in the continuing expansion of colonialist efforts in the New World.

In 1675 prior to the publication of the second Eliot bible, however, James Printer revised his role as the “mimic man.” With the onset of King Philip’s War and the increased tensions and violence between English and Indian communities, Printer left behind his English identity to join with King Philip and his allies in the fight against the colonists. His once ambivalent position as the ideal imagined Indian now became an overtly aggressive one toward the colonists; Printer became the stark realization of just how loosely the ties of colonization bound those under its thrall. Printer, indeed, embodied the unreadable and contradictory Indian from the seal.

While it is unclear exactly why Printer’s “defection” to Philip’s army occurred—whether it was out of familial loyalty and responsibility, or due to coercion by an attacking band of Nipmucks who raided Hassanamessit in 1675—the fact that Printer’s identity as a colonial subject could become so drastically altered and effectively insurgent is important.<sup>22</sup> Printer went from being a colonial success story to a reviled turncoat, a threatening and ominous figure of what the Indian could become post-assimilation. He is described in *A True Account* as “a Revolter [. . .] and a fellow

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<sup>22</sup> See Lepore, p. 136, Wyss, p. 42, Amory (*First Impressions*), p. 41, and Drake, p. 114 for further scholarship on the possible reasons for Printer’s support of Philip.

that had done mischief, and staid out as long as he could” (5) and by Increase Mather in his *Brief History* as having committed “Aspostasie” (39). Printer was clearly a known and despised man.

Even though hundreds of other Praying Indians were participating in raids against English villages, attacking colonists, and waging war between 1675 and 1676, Printer’s reversal of roles was extremely threatening to the English, more so than the other mutineers, because he wrote back to the empire from his position of rebellion. Bhabha notes, “What emerges between mimesis and mimicry is a *writing*, a mode of representation, that marginalizes the monumentality of history, quite simply mocks its power to be a model, that power which supposedly makes it imitable” (“Of Mimicry” 125).

Printer’s written responses to the colonial powers from his self-revised position as a “Savage Indian” are two letters, both written on behalf of the Native combatants and both written to engage the English in a cultural exchange with the Indians. The first letter, or note really, was found tacked to a bridge post outside the town of Medfield, Massachusetts in 1675 after a raiding party of Algonquians had attacked and burned the settlement.<sup>23</sup> The note, written in English reads, “Know by this paper, that the Indians that thou hast provoked to wrath and anger, will war this twenty one years if you will; there are many Indians yet, we come three hundred at this time. You must consider the

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<sup>23</sup> Although the author of the Medfield note is not definitively known and the original note has been lost, many scholars attribute its creation to James Printer because he was one of the few highly literate Indians who would have taken part in the attack against Medfield. See Wyss, p. 43-44, Lepore, p. 94-95, and Salisbury, p. 98.

Indians lost nothing but their life; you must lose your fair houses and cattle”  
(Salisbury132).

The sharp hostility and mocking tone of the note cannot be overlooked. While it certainly suggests “the pride and insolence of these barbarians” as Daniel Gookin noted after having read the note, it also suggests the keen cultural literacy of the attacking Indians who realized the close ties between English identity and property (Gookin 494-495). The devastating loss of “fair houses and cattle” would leave the English deprived of their most affluent and stable markers of Englishness, leaving them confronted by Indians who, like Printer, could conceivably usurp their English identities through more variable markers, like clothing and literacy, both of which held ranges of acceptable possibilities. The note is intended to strike at the most inherent of weaknesses in the colonial position, the ambivalence of colonial identity. The Native author of this note was no longer the apparently peaceful, needy Indian of the seal image, but rather a culturally sophisticated and educated Indian who could write as well as read English and knew how to manipulate the weaknesses in the colonial system. The message of the note strikes directly at the core fears of the English colonists: vast multitudes of an Indian other who are not only able to adopt Englishness, but able to corrupt it and undermine its foundational beliefs about identity, leaving the English denuded of their Englishness.

However, the note also evokes a sense of the hostility many Indians would have felt after having been subjected to missionary efforts of the Christian English for years. The note indicates that if Indian lives were truly valueless without the sanctification of English culture, religion, and lifestyle as they had been taught, then the losses of the war

parties were truly insignificant while the English losses of property would be enormous.<sup>24</sup> The writer is turning the very sentiments and beliefs of the English about value against the colonists; if Indian lives are truly worthless in this world as the English claimed, why should the Indians care if they die? This note, while operating within the expectations of colonial discourse, disrupts its authority by undermining and manipulating the terms of that discourse. It no longer simply “mimes” English expectations, but twists them to such a degree that their inherent flaws are painfully evident. The mockery of this note occurs on more than just a single level of “tone”

The second letter attributed to James Printer is one written during the ransom process of Mary Rowlandson and other captives held by the Algonquians. This would have been the second letter in the negotiation process between the English and the Indians for Rowlandson and her fellow captives; the first exchange of letters, initiated by the English, contained the establishment of the “ground rules” and expectations for both sides.<sup>25</sup> This second letter reads:

For the Governor and the Council at Boston

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<sup>24</sup> See Lepore, p. 94-96 and Wyss, p. 43-44, for extended readings of the Medfield Note.

<sup>25</sup> The first letter from the English indicated the desire to ransom “some English, especially women and children in Captivity” for “payment in goods or wampum or by exchange of prisoners” (Salisbury 133). It also established the need for any response to be made in writing with the “paper pen and incke” provided and that any messengers come bearing “a white flag upon a staffe, visible to be seen [. . .] as a flag of truce, [. . .] used by civilized nations in time of warre” (Salisbury 133). Interestingly, this note bore the official seal and signature of Governor Leverett, which would have depicted the pleading and “uncivilized” figure of the Native. The Native response to this opening volley, transcribed by Peter Jethro, indicates their unwillingness to make concessions to the English. They insist upon two messengers instead of one and call attention to the heavy English losses: “we know your heart grew sorrowful with crying for your lost many many hundred men and all your house and all your land, and woman, child, and cattle, as all your thing that you have lost and on your backside stand” (Salisbury 134). Printer’s letter was written in response to the English reply to Jethro, which has been lost.

The Indians, Tom Nepennomp and Peter Tatatiquena hath brought us letter from you about the English Captives, especially for Mrs. Rolanson; the answer is I am sorrow that I have don much to wrong you and yet I say the falte is lay upon you, for when we began quarrel at first with Plimouth men I did not think that you should have so much truble as now is: therefore I am willing to hear your desire about the Captives. Therefore we desire you to send Mr. Rolanson and Goodman Kettel: (for their wives) and these Indians Tom and Peter to redeem their wives, they shall come and goe very safely: Whereupon we ask Mrs Rolanson, how much your husband willing to give for you she gave an answer 20 pounds in goodes but John Kittels wife could not tell. And the rest captives may be spoken of hereafter. (Salisbury 136)

This letter speaks to Printer's, as well as the other Indians', complex relationship with the English. Placed in a provisional position of power—at least in the captive negotiations—the Indians are able to negotiate the terms of ransom for their captives, especially the valuable Mary Rowlandson, because they held all the chips. They wield that power rhetorically in the letter, as they indicate a willingness to “hear your desire about the Captives” and insist upon the terms of release for and value of the captives. However, at the same time, the first person conciliatory apology and attempt to deflect the blame for the outrages of the war indicate a growing sense of urgency, at least with Printer, the letter's author, to begin mending fences with the English. The Indians were faced with the reality of defeat and retribution after the war. Their food was dwindling, their people were starving, and the English, while suffering humbling losses, were not

going to back down. Speaking boldly in the first person, James Printer extends an olive branch to the men he once knew and the society he once called his own—men and a society that could ultimately reabsorb and forgive him or criminalize and execute him.

Printer's shrewd move toward positioning himself as truly sorrowful and yet respectful of the Algonquian position was undoubtedly a successful technique. Mary Rowlandson was released and reunited with her husband, her twenty pound ransom paid, and the other captives were returned to their families a few weeks later. Printer himself was ultimately granted amnesty for his role during the war, along with other Christian Indians who were deemed "innocent" by the English, provided they were willing to demonstrate loyalty to the colonists. This was sometimes accomplished through service in the English Army or by fighting and killing anti-English Indians and presenting their scalps to the Council.<sup>26</sup> Whatever was required of Printer, however, must have been accomplished by him because for nearly all the rest of his life, Printer continued to work for the Cambridge press and the Green family, aiding in the publication of all their Indian texts and proving himself to be a literate and highly skilled typesetter. He eventually followed Bartholomew Green to Boston in the 1690s to continue as a printer and entered into a cooperative project with the younger Green, an Indian Psalter, on which he shares joint imprint credit with Green. This 1709 text, printed in both Indian and English that bears the imprint, "Boston, N.E. Printed by B. Green and J. Printer, for the Honourable Company for the Propagation of the Gospel in

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<sup>26</sup> Jill Lepore notes there was a council issued order that demanded Printer prove his loyalty through producing enemy scalps; consequently, she posits that Printer must have done so in order to gain forgiveness. It is unclear, however, what Printer actually did to demonstrate his fidelity. See Lepore, 147-148.

New England, &c.” (Thomas 93).<sup>27</sup> It is the only known text to contain Printer’s name and is also the last recorded note of his whereabouts.<sup>28</sup> It seems after 1709, Printer and his family subsided into a quiet, unassuming rural life.

Although his most prolific work as a printer/translator was accomplished with the Indian tracts of Eliot and the New England Company, it was his ransom letter to the Boston Council that was Printer’s most important work as a printer/translator. It was his first step toward successful reintegration to English society and the resumption of his role as the “good Indian”—the non-threatening and needy Indian from the seal image. It was also his first textual encounter with Mary Rowlandson.

In the letter Printer, speaking in the communal “we” instead of the earlier “I,” notes: “Whereupon we ask Mrs Rolanson how much your husband willing to give for you she gave an answer twenty pounds in goodes” (Salisbury 136). This is an interesting moment because essentially, Printer is writing Rowlandson into existence as a textual subject. By revealing her behind the scenes agency in determining her own value, and perhaps even her desire to give the Indians a fair ransom price, Printer is giving Rowlandson an authority, an identity that has heretofore not existed.<sup>29</sup> While

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<sup>27</sup> Thomas notes that one of the reasons for prominently featuring Printer’s name is that, aside from his knowledge of the languages and skill as an experienced printer, he was well known among the neighboring tribes. Attaching his name to any such work might “excite the greater attention among the Indians, and give it a wider circulation” (93). It is also likely that Printer’s entrepreneurial skills and ambitions as an independent printer were motivational factors behind the joint imprint.

<sup>28</sup> Printer also served as the schoolmaster at Hasenamesitt for a time around 1698. See Szasz, 179.

<sup>29</sup> In the previous round of ransom letter negotiations transcribed by Peter Jethro, there is a supposed “request” from Rowlandson for “thre pound of tobacco “ (Salisbury 135). However, due to the absence of Rowlandson’s signature and her own attempts to cease the use of tobacco pipes as revealed in her narrative, it seems unlikely that Rowlandson was aware of this request or even shown the letter before it was sent. Additionally, Rowlandson angrily denies she made any request for tobacco, and insists it would be a “great mistake” for anyone to think otherwise. See Salisbury, 102. Clearly, this is not a reflection of Rowlandson’s agency and textual emergence.

allowing Rowlandson to determine her own ransom may have been reflective of the conciliatory efforts on the Indians' part, it is still a moment of agency on Rowlandson's. And because Printer transcribed it, made it official, he wrote that moment, and consequently her, into textual existence. Rowlandson has emerged in this text as a subjective, rather than objective figure, the author of her own value and redemption.

However, this would not be the last time Printer aided in Rowlandson's textual self-creation. Perhaps most notably and ironically, he even worked as the typesetter for Mary Rowlandson's narrative of her captivity during King Philip's War, *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God* in 1682. Printer worked for Samuel Green during the time the Cambridge Press produced the second and third editions and, as Neal Salisbury has noted, "Printer's edition is the closest one to Rowlandson's own writing" (49).

Rowlandson was dependent upon Printer for not only her ransom and return to her former life, but also for her transcendence from that life in the form of her narrative. Printer provided for Rowlandson an opening through which she could emerge as a self-created entity, someone who determines her own worth through her own voice in his ransom letter and then later, tells her own story. This was the moment where Rowlandson received sanctification from Puritan and Indian authority; she was recognized, heeded and forever written into the history of King Philip's War. And James Printer was her author.

In a further ironic twist, however, while it was Printer who gave Rowlandson a textual identity and wrote her INTO textual existence, she used her newly granted agency to write him OUT OF existence in her seminal work by flattening out and erasing his and other Christian Indians' roles in her salvation/re-creation. Rowlandson

creates the narrative equivalent of the flattened and two-dimensional Indian from the seal in her *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God*; however, just as the stereotypical and complex images of the seals contain ruptures that hint at the physical reality of the Natives in the New World as well as the accompanying anxieties that held for the colonists, so, too, does Rowlandson's erasure of the Christian Indians hint at the complex ties her own authorial identity had to Indianness.

### **Mary Rowlandson's Paper Indians**

It wasn't until six years after her return from captivity that Mary Rowlandson published her narrative. Although it is unclear as to when exactly Rowlandson began composing, there is evidence to suggest that she began recording her experiences from the captivity soon after her release in 1676, when events and remembrances would have been vivid in her mind.<sup>30</sup> This also would have been when Rowlandson most closely viewed herself in terms of Indianness. As a recent captive who had spent eleven weeks with the Nipmucks, Narragansetts, and Wampanoags who kidnapped her but also showed her kindness and consideration, Rowlandson would have held complicated views about her captors and her own connections to them. Many of these complexities are revealed in Rowlandson's narrative, as she wavers between revulsion for the "merciless Heathen" (Rowlandson 69) who held no respect for English life, property, and beliefs, and moments of compassion, or at least understanding, for certain Indians who share their food or offer her refuge.<sup>31</sup> Rowlandson vacillates between "they" and

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<sup>30</sup> See Salisbury, p. 40-41, Derounian-Stodola & Levernier, p. 98, Breitwieser, p. 189-194, for analysis of Rowlandson's authorial timeline.

<sup>31</sup> See, for example, the third remove where an Indian gives Rowlandson a Bible (76), the eighth remove where two Indians comfort and feed a crying Rowlandson (82), and the ninth remove where a squaw

“we” mentalities in the narrative, indicating her fluctuation between defining herself through contrast—against the Indians—and through comparison—as a temporary member of the Indian group. Either way, Indianness is the pivotal factor in the narrative that allows her to assert her own subjectivity. Indianness, whether she sides with it or against it, is what gives Rowlandson the credibility to say the things that she does, in the manner that she does—in print. The fact of her captivity and survival makes her one of God’s own saints, singled out from the sea of Puritan believers as one who is marked by God for salvation; she is sanctified by the religious and social elite of the time and given their blessing to publish her narrative.<sup>32</sup> However, it is the fact of her textualization of that Indian experience that creates Rowlandson as female authorial subject—something that has never existed before (Rowlandson as author, that is). Without Indianness and her complex relationship to it, Rowlandson’s text could never have been written. Yet, ironically, it was the imagined version of Indianness, not the very real Indians she traveled with and depended upon, that gives rise to her independence. Just as the colonists of Massachusetts Bay relied upon the image of the Native to validate and define their ties to and place within the New World, so, too, did Rowlandson appropriate Indianness to authenticate her own identity.

Rowlandson needed “real” Indians and her captivity among them in order to gain sanctification, an independent authorial identity, and leave to pursue that identity textually; however, what she necessarily had to produce or perpetuate in her text is the

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allows Rowlandson to use her cooking utensils and offers her some ground nuts to go with her bear meat (84-5).

<sup>32</sup> Rowlandson’s narrative was published in between the texts of two male authority figures: a preface to the reader from Ter Amicam, thought to be Increase Mather, and the final sermon preached by her husband, Joseph Rowlandson. Both texts would have lent Rowlandson’s narrative an authority and approval that allowed it to be published.

imaginary Indian, the flattened out, threatening-yet-needy, “uncivilized-yet-capable-of-civilization” version of Indianness depicted visually in the seal. The use of the imagined Indian from the seal would lend yet another layer of sanctification to her text as she played off known and “official” stereotypes that were recognizable even across the Atlantic and would authenticate in narrative form all of the fears, anxieties and identity struggles inherent in the visual seal. She could not reproduce without consequences, and perhaps not even understand herself, the “real” Indians that she encountered, Indians who varied in personality, vanity, kindness, wealth and vices just as the colonists did. Instead, she has to reproduce in her prose the Native on the seal, the one who ambiguously signals the “American” identity through negation of Indian reality and tries so desperately to contain, define, and authenticate that which the colonists themselves had yet to understand and work out. Rowlandson, throughout her narrative, but particularly in her treatment of the Praying Indians, effectively erases and rewrites Indian reality in order to establish her own authorial reality. She must negate the connective elements that bridge, or begin to bridge, Englishness and Indianness—the transculturated Christian Indians—in order to keep the Indians as the utter other. Rowlandson must have a complete opposite against which to define herself and assert her own identity, and the praying Indians like James Printer, although absolutely pivotal to her release, her narrative, and ultimately, her publication, must be erased from the equation. She must write them out of existence in order to write herself in.

Rowlandson reserves her most vitriolic passages in *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God* for the Christian Indians. While Rowlandson certainly reveals anger and displeasure with various non-Christian Indians during her captivity, she also

mentions moments of kindness and compassion from some of her captors, presenting, if not an unbiased view of the range of “humanity” within the tribe, at least a more balanced one; there were “bad” Indians and some “not-so-bad.” However, her portrayal of the Christian Indians is negative and derogatory across the board. In her mind, Christian Indians are the absolute incarnation of duplicity and evil.

In the third remove, Rowlandson relates what has become of all of her children post-capture. Her youngest daughter, Sarah, has just died from the wound she received during the initial attack and been buried by the Indians without Rowlandson’s knowledge or permission. Her son, Joseph Jr. has been taken by another group of the raiding party, presumably to another Indian town, and his whereabouts are unknown. However, her daughter, Mary, is at the same Indian town with Rowlandson in a nearby wigwam. The mother and daughter are not given much opportunity to spend time together, though, because as Rowlandson notes, “When I came in sight, she [Mary] would fall a weeping; at which they were provoked, and would not let me come near her, but bade me be gone; which was a heart-cutting word to me” (75). This emotionally wrenching situation for mother and daughter, Rowlandson is clear to reveal, had its origins in the first moment of capture: “[Mary] was about ten years old, & taken from the door at first by a Praying Indian & afterward sold for a gun” (75). While not an overt indictment of the behavior of Praying Indians at this point, it is clear Rowlandson equates her separation from Mary with the greed and violence of Mary’s Christian Indian captor, a man who was willing to take children away from their mothers as prisoners only to callously trade them for more implements for war.

In a later instance in the sixteenth remove, the ransom process has begun and the Indians inform Rowlandson that a letter had come to the Indian Sagamores about redemption and she must return to the town by the time the next letter arrives. During the group's return trek, Rowlandson writes that

a company of *Indians* came near to us, near thirty, all on horse-back. My heart skipt within me, thinking they had been *English men* at the first sight of them, for they were dressed in *English* Apparel with Hats, white Neckcloths, and Sashes about their waists, and Ribbons upon their shoulders; but when they came near, there was a vast difference between the lovely faces of Christians, and the foul looks of these Heathens, which much damped my spirit again. (italics in original 94)

Rowlandson's intense attention to the physical detail of the Praying Indians in this instance is worth noting, as is her carefully structured retelling of this encounter. In the written version of this event Rowlandson breaks with the chronology of the original occurrence by clearly identifying the men as "Indians" before she ever reveals to her reader that she first believed they were English men. Her initial excitement and consequent heartbreak upon seeing the group is negated in this retelling of the event, thus voiding for her reader the shock she had originally experienced and preventing his/her deception. Through altering the sequence of events in this passage, Rowlandson is effectively erasing the power held by these Praying Indians. Their ability to not only accurately assume the cultural accoutrements of the English, as evidenced through her precise description of their clothing, even down to the peculiarities of their English accessories, but also their ability to "become" English, at

least for that moment in which Rowlandson believed them to be so, are destabilizing events for Rowlandson. If she can be deceived into seeing Indianness as Englishness, then the boundaries of identity are permeable and fluid. She must reassert the definitional distinction between the two identities and reinscribe the Praying Indians as the absolute other to Englishness. Consequently, she declares that once the men come closer, the “foul looks of these Heathens,” their non-Christian appearance, distinguishes their true identities. She is quick to note, “[t]here was a vast difference between the lovely faces of Christians” and those of the Praying Indians. The “foulness” of the Indians’ faces supersedes any of the other markers of Englishness they may have adopted and deceived Rowlandson with.

It is the difference between Christian and heathen that matters for Rowlandson, not the culturally appropriated appearance of this group of Indians, because that is a factor that undermines not only her Christian exceptionality but also her authorial agency. If truly Christian Indians were to exist in Rowlandson’s narrative, or even in her consciousness, her singular position as the sainted Christian in the wilderness would be diminished, her authority to textualize her story would be forfeited. It is the “praying” part of these Indians not their “Englishness” that so rankles Rowlandson because, simply put, for her Indians can not be both Christian and Indian. Christianity and Indianness are irreconcilable essences that can not coexist because if they do, they begin to undermine the foundations of her own identity as English and Christian.

However, the undeniable, un-erasable presence of the Praying Indians does make its way into Rowlandson’s consciousness and narrative. At the beginning of the

nineteenth remove when the second ransom letter from the Council is being delivered to the Indian encampment, Rowlandson writes,

Then came *Tom* and *Peter*, with the second Letter from the Council, about the Captives. Though they were *Indians*, I gat them by the hand, and burst out into tears; my heart was so full that I could not speak to them; but recovering my self, I asked them how my husband did, and all my friends and acquaintance? they said, *They are all very well, but melancholy*. They brought me two Biskets, and a pound of Tobacco.

(92)

In this passage, the Tom and Peter Rowlandson refers to are Tom Dublet (Nepanet), and Peter Conway (Tatatiqunea), both Nipmuc Indians who were sympathetic to the English cause, and both Praying Indians. Both men had been confined to Deer Island in Boston Harbor with other English-loyal Massachusett and Nipmuc families during King Philip's War and volunteered to carry messages between the Council and the Native captors.<sup>33</sup> The fact that Rowlandson mentions these Indians by name and in such warm and affectionate terms is very interesting. She clearly recognizes these men as individuals whom she can trust to give her truthful information about her friends and family, much in the same way she recognizes the kindness and honesty of certain individuals among her Indian captors. What is especially notable about this passage, however, is Rowlandson's absolute erasure of Tom and Peter's

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<sup>33</sup> Tom Dublet alone volunteered to carry the first message at the persuasion of John Hoar, an advocate of Christian Indians and a Concord lawyer. Because previous attempts to find willing volunteers among those Christian Indians interred on Deer Island had not surprisingly failed, Joseph Rowlandson persuaded Hoar to intercede with the Indians on his behalf and Dublet agreed to Hoar's request. When the Nipmuc sachems insisted upon two messengers to transport the letters of redemption, Peter Conway joined Dublet in the second exchange of letters. See Salisbury 32-35 and 132-137 and Lepore 145-147.

Christian identities. Whereas the earlier band of English Indians who approached Rowlandson's group were quickly dismissed as Christian imposters by Rowlandson's because of their "foul looks," these men are mentioned by name and warmly welcomed by Rowlandson with hand shakes and tears. Obviously, Tom and Peter rate higher with Rowlandson than previously encountered Praying Indians because of the nature of their mission—to procure her release—but the fact of their Christianness is not even acknowledged by Rowlandson. She can not acknowledge it. For if Rowlandson recognizes this gesture of goodness, one that ultimately leads to her redemption, as originating from Christian Indians, the line between the "us" and "them" becomes so blurred and permeable that the Indians are no longer the absolute other. Rowlandson can not sustain the momentum of her text and her own authorial agency if she recognizes that there is an "in between"—Indians that are truly Christian and acculturated as Tom and Peter appear to be. Rowlandson must re-inscribe the Praying Indian as malevolent; by the end of the nineteenth remove, she has done just that.

As the ransom negotiations are being finalized and Rowlandson sets the twenty pound amount for her own ransom as requested by the Indians, she acknowledges that it was a "Praying Indian that wrote their letter for them" but avoids the actual mention of James Printer's name (Rowlandson 98). From there, however, she launches into a vicious tirade against other Praying Indians who have committed such atrocities as defying Old Testament mandates and personal conscience to eat horse, betraying their fathers into English hands in order to escape punishment themselves, fighting against their own Christian kindred at the Battle of Sudbury, wearing a string of Christian fingers about their necks, and leading a heathen "powaw" before battle (Rowlandson

98). Rowlandson then spends a great deal of time and descriptive effort to detail the events of the Praying Indian-led pow wow, betraying perhaps her own interest in such an event or her keen awareness of her audience's thirst for such gory, titillating information.<sup>34</sup> Either way, her entire diatribe about the atrocities committed by the Praying Indians she encountered is built upon the notion inherent in the colony's seal: the idea of the Indians' stereotypical duality. They can be everything and nothing the colonists want them to be, consequently undermining any chance of the colonists achieving a coherent understanding of themselves. These Praying Indians in particular have successfully passed as both Christian and "civilized," yet they willingly and even gleefully, in Rowlandson's estimation, flaunt their "savagery" against the English at every given opportunity. She is horrified not so much by the violence of these Praying Indian's actions—she's fascinated by their pow wow—but by the threat this poses to her own colonial identity. If they can so easily slip in and out of Englishness and do so undetected by the English themselves, then is Englishness really the stable identity the colonists claimed it to be? Can Rowlandson herself slip away from her Englishness simply by virtue of her exposure and acculturation to Indianness? Therefore, Rowlandson must write over the reality of these individuals, Praying Indians such as Tom Dublet, Peter Conway and James Printer, whose very real existences thrust such questions and anxieties into the forefront and expose the vulnerabilities of colonial dominance.

Rowlandson's Praying Indians can not be acknowledged by her; they must be downplayed, stereotyped, and removed to the background. Yet their specters are still

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<sup>34</sup> See Salisbury, p. 98.

evident in her text through the ruptures and slippages in her text. Rowlandson must continually create and revise the “paper Indians” in her narrative in order to establish her own agency and authorial identity. It was unimportant that there were contradictions in her narrative depictions of the Praying Indians, just as it did not matter to the colony that its “fixed” seal vacillated among divergent representations of Indianness and the colonial mission. Ultimately, the colonists were not concerned with the fixity or facticity of the textualized Indians on their seals or in their texts. The importance for the colonists and Rowlandson lay in the agency provided by these Indian constructions, which they could mold to certain expectations and use to confirm their own interpretation New World American identity that they wished to foreground, to fix. The “real Indians” existed only to serve as templates for the construction of a New World English identity, an identity that constantly needed to revision itself in order to maintain its tenuous grasp of stability and authority.

## CHAPTER TWO

### MASCULINE IMAGERY AND FEMININE VOICE IN REVOLUTIONARY AMERICA: PAUL REVERE'S "SWORD-IN-HAND SEAL" AND ANN ELIZA BLEECKER'S DOMESTICATED NATIONALISM

On July 19 of 1775, the province of Massachusetts made arrangements for a new official seal. The figure of a nearly nude Indian clutching a bow and arrow and crying out for aid that had been in and out of use since the colony's inception in 1629 was no longer the image the beleaguered colony wanted to present of itself. Similarly, the royal coat of arms that had been in use in various forms with various English-appointed governors since the revocation of the charter in 1692 was not a proper reflection of the colony's newly revolutionary and independent stance. An appropriate, official, seal image was needed to signify the severance of any lingering ties with English rule and set Massachusetts apart from the other colonies as the pacesetter of the patriotic movement. Having suffered alongside all of the American colonies through the various attempts at taxation by Parliament since the French and Indian War,<sup>35</sup> and having

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<sup>35</sup> At the end of the French and Indian War of 1763, British ministers decided that instead of demobilizing troops, they would keep their military leadership and troops at wartime strength levels just in case hostilities should renew with the French or their Indian allies. Because England was financially exhausted after the costly, lengthy war, the country could not bear additional taxes. Therefore, it was decided to send large portions of the army to Ireland and America and require the citizens of those regions to provide local support for the troops. The American Revenue Act (or Sugar Act) of 1764, the Stamp Act of 1765, and the Townshend Duties of 1767 were acts of taxation intended to defray the costs of maintaining the troops stationed in America.

experienced on their own the very specific fall out of the Boston Massacre and the Boston Tea Party,<sup>36</sup> Massachusetts was the “example” in colonial America. Parliament, with their closure of Boston Harbor and the passing of the restrictive Coercive Acts in March of 1774,<sup>37</sup> wanted to use Massachusetts as a negative example, isolating the colony in order to illustrate the fate that would await other colonies if they continued to be defiant. As Gordon Wood notes, “The British government had long assumed that Boston was the center of the disturbances in America: the collapse of colonial resistance would follow simply from isolating and punishing the port” (252). To the American patriots, however, Massachusetts was an example of the dire situation that awaited all Americans if they failed to resist Parliament’s ever-increasing demands for taxation and legislative control. Consequently, the eyes of both nations—America and

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<sup>36</sup> The Boston Massacre occurred on March 5, 1770 when a squad of British soldiers, who had come to aid a sentry being harassed by a crowd of colonial hecklers, fired shots into the mob of people. Three persons were killed immediately and two died later of their wounds. John Adams and Josiah Quincy, in an attempt to demonstrate the impartiality of colonial courts, voluntarily defended the British officer and his eight men. The officer and six of his men were acquitted and the two remaining soldiers were found guilty of manslaughter, branded on their hands, and released. The Boston Tea Party occurred on December 16, 1773 in Boston Harbor in resistance to the Tea Act, imposed on May 10, 1773. The Act, which adjusted import duties so that the East India Company could undersell even smugglers, had named consignees in Boston, New York, Charleston, and Philadelphia to receive tea shipments. The consignees in New York, and Philadelphia refused the shipments under pressure from Patriot groups in September, but the Boston (and Charleston) consignees refused to concede. The tea arrived in Boston in late November, and after a series of meetings attempting to convince the consignees to return the tea to England failed, a small group of Sons of Liberty disguised as Indians raided the ships on December 16 and threw 342 chests of tea into the harbor, bringing the resistance movement to life.

<sup>37</sup> The Coercive Acts were passed by Parliament as an attempt to punish Massachusetts for its resistance to Parliament. The first act

closed the port of Boston until the destroyed tea was paid for. The second altered the Massachusetts charter and reorganized the government: council members were now to be appointed by the royal governor rather than elected by the legislature, town meetings were restricted, and the governor’s power of appointing judges and sheriffs was strengthened. The third act allowed royal officials who had been charged with capital offenses to be tried in England or in another colony to avoid a hostile jury. The fourth gave the governor power to take other private buildings for the quartering of troops instead of using barracks. (Wood 240)

England—were upon Massachusetts and the colony needed a symbol reflective of its position at the forefront of the fight for American independence.

Therefore, on that July day in 1775, a committee appointed by the Council presented a seal “somewhat similar to that under the first charter to be established as the seal of the colony for the future” (Middlebrook 8). A sketch of this new seal was undoubtedly presented to Council, and although now lost, the image suggested can be determined from the Council’s reaction to it; they approved the seal design on August 7, 1775, but with one amendment: “Instead of an Indian holding a Tomahawk and Cap of Liberty, there [is to] be an English American holding a Sword in the Right Hand, and Magna Charta in the Left Hand, with the Words ‘*Magna Charta*,’ imprinted on it” (*Journal of the Honorable House of Representatives*, as qtd. in Greenough 3) [Figure 11].<sup>38</sup> Around the figure were to be the words “Ense Petit Placidam Sub Libertate Quietam”—“By the sword we seek peace, but peace only under liberty,” which remains the motto of the Commonwealth today.<sup>39</sup> Within a few days, this new official seal,

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<sup>38</sup> Magna Carta, as we know it today, has been also been referred to throughout history as “Magna Charta,” with the “h,” as is seen on the “Sword-in-Hand” seal. I will refer to this document as modern scholars do, as Magna Carta, but will retain traditional spellings when used in other sources. Magna Carta is also correctly referenced without the use of the article “the” as it is actually not a single, static document but a series of evolving documents.

<sup>39</sup> When the original recommendation was made by the Committee for the new seal to feature an Indian figure holding a cap of liberty and tomahawk, a different motto was also suggested. According to Chester Greenough, “[T]he new seal was intended to bear a shorter motto: ‘Petit sub libertate quietem’ (Greenough 4). However, when the Council amended the petition to change the figure from an Indian one to an Anglo-American one, they also specified that on the seal, “previous to the word Petit be Inserted the word Ense and subsequent to it the word placidam” (Greenough 4). The original, shorter motto—“We seek peace under liberty”—obviously lacks the force of the revised statement, which clarifies the colony’s desire for peace, but *only* under liberty and their willingness to achieve both through the use of the sword. It is possible the original, shorter motto is simply a misquote.

The longer of the two phrases is a quite well known quote traditionally attributed to Algernon Sidney. The author of *Discourses Concerning Government*, Sidney was a well-known political theorist and very influential thinker of the time, often cited by leaders of the American Revolution. John Adams, for example, wrote, that “revolution principles” are “the principles of Aristotle and Plato, of Livy and Ciero, and Sydney, Harrington and Locke. The Principles of nature and eternal reason. The principles on



Fig. 11 Paul Revere, The “Sword-in-Hand” Seal of the  
Commonwealth of Massachusetts (1775-1780)

Image courtesy of the Office of the Secretary of the Commonwealth

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which government over us stands” (as qtd. in Greenough, 5). This motto is still in use on the Great Seal of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts today.

known as the “Sword-in-Hand” seal, was engraved onto copper plates by Paul Revere and was immediately featured on bills of credit with the words, “*Issued in defence of American Liberty*” printed below it (Middlebrook 8, italics in original).

In this new version of the seal, the Native has been replaced by the native; the bow and the arrow replaced by more culturally “developed” weapons of Magna Carta and the sword; the leaf or fabric loin cloths and the disheveled and wild hair are similarly replaced by a bicorne hat, smart breeches, a vest and a topcoat—the uniform of a military officer. The Indian who for so long had defined the Massachusetts Colony, and was even the Committee’s instinctive first choice for the basis of the new seal, has been removed from the official symbol of the province. Indianness can no longer be the identifying mark of New World or Massachusetts exceptionalism. On the cusp of the Revolution, the colony must present an image of equality to the world and especially to England. The Indian, while for so long the “standout” image in a colony where “[n]early every seaboard settlement. . . derived its living from the sea” and consequently, employed seals of a maritime design, was also an image of difference and “inferiority” (Middlebrook 6-7). As discussed in chapter one, the Massachusetts Bay colonists embraced the autochthony represented by the Indian figure of the seal. Simultaneously however, they also struggled to contain their own dis-ease and discomfort caused by their close proximity to Indianness. In short, the very Indians that lent exceptionalism to the Massachusetts Bay and their New World errand into the wilderness also underscored the colonial fears of devolving” into that very Indianness. The Indian on the earlier seals, consequently, wavered between an image of uniqueness

and authority and an admission of colonial frailty. With the onset of a war with England, such an image must be remade and re-visioned to erase any signs of weakness and self-doubt.

Similarly, earlier seal images that fluctuated between feminine and masculine versions of Indianness, between visions of “savage” female sexuality and feminized Indian manhood, must be remade into a more constant, dominant image with which the world, and particularly England, could grapple—that of a white male. Therefore, the new seal image becomes one that showcases—or attempts to showcase—Anglo-American masculinity in its most physically and politically threatening form: a uniformed and armed officer carrying the guarantee of his inalienable rights as an Englishman, a copy of Magna Carta. But for all of its seemingly “direct” symbolism and clarity, what emerges when viewing this seal, however, are ambivalences akin more to the earlier Indian seals than a confident assertion of the identity of a newly forming Republic.

Although now clearly “whitewashed” and masculinized, the “Sword-in-Hand” figure of the seal still contains vestiges of Indianness from earlier seal versions [Figures 2, 5]. Rather than boldly declaring a culturally and politically independent “American” identity, the new Massachusetts seal is instead a restatement of former conceptions of Indianness; it presents an Anglo-American man in the form, stance, and armament of the Indians that preceded him. He is the Indian only in a more “civilized”—and notably silent—form.<sup>40</sup> Whereas the Indian before him openly pleaded for colonial domination,

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<sup>40</sup> Although sharing many similarities with the earlier Indian seals, the “Sword-in-Hand” seal does have some notable differences from its forbears. This newer seal, as a whole, is much less cluttered than

the lone Anglo-American male figure stands silently in the center of the new seal image, holding a sword, actually a saber, in his right hand with its point upward and grasping a scrolled Magna Carta, slightly unrolled, in his left. He is armed and prepared for “combat,” just as the Indian in the original seal was, only now this figure carries Anglo-specific weapons of resistance, although they are in the same position as the Indian’s weaponry before him. The saber is in the same hand, the right, and in the same position—extended outward from the body in a right angle—as the Indian’s arrow was in previous seals. While the tip of the saber is now pointed upward whereas the Indian’s arrow pointed downward in a show of peace, the position of the arm holding the weapon is identical. The figure also stands fully facing the viewer, his knees slightly bent with his toes turned outward and his arms bent at the elbows, slightly extended away from his body, just as his Indian predecessors were pictured. This awkward pose that offered such an unnatural and ambivalent representation of Indianness in the earliest seals as simultaneously aggressive and passive is now reenacted in the stance of the Anglo-American figure. Is his crouched position one of defense, recoiling to ward off an onslaught from the Crown? Or is he the aggressor,

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previous versions. The central figure of the image is not backed by trees and uncultivated earth nor is he contained by dual rows of leafy, orderly garlands as his Indian predecessors had been. Additionally, the newer seal is round instead of elliptical as the previous Indian seals had always been, and is offset by a simple, beaded circle that separates the outer rims of the image. The “Sword-in-Hand” seal also contains the now pared-down designation of the seal—*Sigillum Coloniae Massachusettsensis 1775*—in an outer ring, with an additional inner ring consisting of an unfurled banner that states the colony’s new motto: “By the sword we seek peace, but peace only under liberty.” However, in a striking departure from his Indian counterpart from previous colony seals, the Anglo-American man of this image is silent; no banner pleading for aid unfurls from his mouth. My own sense of the figure’s silence is that it is reflective of the colony’s own conflicted sense of loyalty, independence, and cultural identity, hence the man’s silence. As I will argue later, however, Ann Eliza Bleecker views this “silence” of the symbolic Anglo-American male on the seal as an opportunity for herself as a female writer to re-script the nationalist discourses from a distinctly female and domestic perspective. Bleecker essentially creates the dialogue surrounding this silent figure of the Revolution.

pointing his saber skyward in a bold declaration of Massachusetts' intent to take the offensive in defiance of England? Is this figure defining himself as subject to Englishness—a “victim” reacting to it—or is he defining himself against Englishness—as completely separate from it? His intentions, like the Indians' before him, are unclear.

This Anglo-American man of the “Sword-in-Hand” seal has essentially been “remade” in the image of his Indian forbear, the very Indian that caused so much anxiety in the formation of the colonial self. The Indian, at once evoking colonial repulsion and desire, was an ambivalent image that for all of its perceived and intended fixity relayed more about the complexities of New World identity than it did to stabilize it. Now, the image of Anglo-American masculinity that dominates the seal essentially reinscribes the same conflicted sense of identity that had as its genesis the colonial encounters with Indianness. While the Indianness has been ostensibly “removed” from the focus of this seal, vestiges of its ambivalence remain and serve to underscore the still malleable and conflicted nature of American identity on the cusp of the Revolution.

The colonists of Massachusetts were clearly grappling with their relationship to and understanding of “Englishness” at the onset of the Revolutionary War. Were they subjects to the crown with inalienable rights? Or were they independent of the crown and citizens of their own nation? The slightly unfurled copy of Magna Carta in the figure's left hand only adds to this ambivalence. Long known as the “symbol of the ‘Rights of Englishmen,’” Magna Carta is arguably the basis for the rule of constitutional law throughout the modern world and was most certainly the basis for colonial protest against England at the outset of the Revolution (Young 326). First issued in 1215 on the plains of Runnymede, when English Barons confronted a despotic King John about

his overzealous financial policies, the document required the king to limit his ability to raise funds, respect certain legal procedures, and accept that his will could be bound by law.<sup>41</sup> Because Magna Carta was perceived as the guarantor of “common law” over sovereign law, many patriotic American citizens and leaders looked to it when asserting their rightful liberty from English Parliament and King George III. Specifically, they looked to the words of Sir Edmund Coke, a seventeenth century attorney general to Queen Elizabeth who used Magna Carta as a way to combat the oppressive maneuvers of the Stuart kings. According to Coke in a 1628 address to Parliament, “Magna Carta. . . will have no sovereign” (U.S. National Archives).<sup>42</sup> But would the colonists?

The document, after all, is a contract between the “freemen” of England and their king. It is an assertion of an equitable relationship with the king, one in which the rights of English citizens were guaranteed to be recognized by the sovereign power. However, at the time when Paul Revere engraved the image of the “Sword-in-Hand” seal, most American Patriots desired not an equitable relationship with their king, but an entirely separate and independent identity altogether. The colonists wanted freedom and separation from the English crown and Parliamentary rule. Americans had been in open rebellion since the Coercive Acts of 1774 and “[w]hatever royal authority was left

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<sup>41</sup> Interestingly, the “original” document issued and signed on June 15, 1215 was called the “Articles of the Barons” and is now lost; however, the document was redrawn with some wording and formality changes and officially reissued on June 19, 1215 as the Magna Carta. One of the significant changes that would affect future generations was the change of the wording from “any baron” in the original document to “any freeman” in the final, authorized version of the Magna Carta. Although barons and freemen were both statistically small proportions of the population in 1215, over time, the term “any freeman” grew to include all English and was consequently, a very significant change.

<sup>42</sup> Coke’s four volume *Institutes of the Laws of England* was “widely read by American law students[.] [Y]oung colonists such as John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, and James Madison learned of the spirit of the charter [Magna Carta] and the common law--or at least Coke’s interpretation of them” from these texts (U.S. National Archives). Therefore, with Coke’s powerful influence on American legal thought and his own strong support of Magna Carta, it is not surprising that on the cusp of the Revolution, many colonists would turn to Coke and Magna Carta for justification.

in the colonies [was] dissolved” (Wood 248). By the spring and summer of 1775, fighting had broken out in Massachusetts with the Battle of Concord and Paul Revere’s famous ride to warn John Hancock in April and the Battle of Bunker Hill in June, so by July when the Council passed the orders for a new seal to be inscribed, the idea of remaining under Parliamentary control and subject to the crown must have been inconceivable. So while the use of Magna Carta in the image certainly champions the ideas of rights for all men and the limitations of the crown, it also, perhaps unwittingly, reinforces the authority of the crown and the colonists’ conflicted and still dependent relationship to it. The newly inscribed seal image fluctuates uneasily between an independent American identity and an English subject identity, and when the accoutrement of the Anglo-American figure is considered, this dis-ease is even more apparent.

Wearing breeches gathered at the knee, calf-length gaiters, a single-breasted frock coat with the more practical shorter skirts worn open to expose the waistcoat beneath, and a bicorne, or cocked, hat this figure is the picture of military sensibility. He is uniformed, armed, and ready to defend his rights as defined by Magna Carta wielded in his left hand. Yet his military attire is confusing. Is this man a British figure, representing provincial control and authoritarian rule, or is he a patriot, championing colonial independence and resistance of that authoritarian control? Just as the Indians of previous seals were portrayed in ambivalent positions and in a conflicted relationship with the viewer, so, too, is this figure sending similarly mixed signals. It is unclear whether this man is a Continental or British soldier.

Although many of the myths of America's revolutionary origins champion the idea of a colonial population unequivocally supportive of the Patriot cause, the fact of the matter is that not all Americans supported the idea of a revolution. Many Americans supported the Crown even after the start of the conflict; it has been estimated that "loyalists may have numbered close to half a million, or 20 percent of white Americans" (Wood 285). Further, Gordon Wood notes that as many as "20,000 of them fought for the crown in the regiments of His Majesty's army, and thousands of others served in local loyalist militia bodies" (285). David Mass has observed that some loyalists "decided to hide underground by masking their true feelings. The number of Tories who remained in Massachusetts throughout the war was higher than most patriotic citizens were willing to admit" (106).<sup>43</sup> Other Americans simply tried to avoid involvement with either side in the struggle. Some recent European emigrants, pacifists, and otherwise apolitical men simply wanted to avoid a conflict with the British Army, a "well-trained professional force, having at one point in 1778 nearly 50,000 troops in North America alone; and more than 30,000 hired German mercenaries" (Wood 261). Conversely, the Continental Army, which basically began from scratch, consisted at times "of less than 5,000 troops, supplemented by state militia

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<sup>43</sup> Those Americans who remained devoted supporters to the Crown, while viewed as honorable by the British, were looked upon as dangerous traitors to the American Patriots. Once independence had been declared, and Patriots controlled virtually all of the territory and population of the thirteen states, no resident was allowed to show loyalty to a foreign power, although neutrality was accepted. In many regions of the country, Loyalists faced being tarred and feathered, the confiscation of property, or just plain out harassment from the Patriots. As a consequence in March of 1776, many Massachusetts' loyalists had to flee the colony along with the departing British troops with only a few days' notice. Robert Calhoon notes, "Gathering whatever personal property they could carry, a thousand loyalists crowded onto ships and sailed with the army to Halifax, Nova Scotia. . . Most exiles made their way to England within a few weeks" (280). Certainly, being a loyalist, or even a neutral during the Revolution was a risky, if not downright dangerous prospect. Colonists who believed this way, however, did exist and reflected a substantial proportion of the population.

units of varying sizes . . . [with] inexperienced, amateur officers serv[ing] as American military leaders” (Wood 262). The idea of a conflict between two such disproportionately numbered and experienced sides must have been inconceivable to many Americans, and abhorrent to those who were in support of the crown.

Additionally, there was some ambivalence among American patriots as to why the revolution was even being waged. Gordon Wood notes that throughout most of the imperial crisis,

American patriot leaders insisted they were rebelling not against the principles of the English constitution, but on behalf of them. . . By emphasizing that it was the letter and spirit of the English constitution that justified their resistance, Americans could easily believe that they were simply preserving what Englishmen had valued from the beginning of their history. (257)

However, many of the principles held dear by the Americans were actually “revolution principles” that were beyond the mainstream of English thought (Wood 257). Many colonists supported the “country opposition” espoused by English intellectuals like Jonathan Swift and Alexander Pope, which lamented the commercialization of English life and the networks of influence controlled by the luxurious courtly classes. Americans, who viewed themselves as more simple in character than their sophisticated English counterparts, understood the relevance of these “grass roots” rumblings and had even invoked these ideas off and on in colonial assemblies during the first half of the century. Now, however, on the cusp of the revolution, such ideas “not only prepared the colonists intellectually for resistance, but

also offered them a powerful justification of their many differences from a decayed and corrupted mother country” (Wood 258).

However, such ideas leave the colonists in an ambivalent relationship with that mother country. Are they her children and subject to her laws but merely want their constitutional rights to be heard and their voices counted? Or are they divorcing themselves from the crown, rejecting not only the English way of life but also its royal power? Further, what about the citizens who fall into neither camp, those who are loyal to British rule and have no desire whatsoever to rebel or voice complaints? Colonists of all these varying degrees of “Britishness” occupied American soil. Consequently, American identity during the onset of the revolution was clearly a confused and diffuse matter for the colonists. Depicting that identity as static and cohesive in a symbol, like the Massachusetts Colony seal, would be nearly impossible. No single image, no matter how distinctively marked, would carry the same meaning for the various Anglo-Americans who would view it.

Further, because British troops so vastly outnumbered American forces, it would be far more likely that colonists of any political leaning would have encountered well-uniformed and armed British troops that more closely matched the figure on the seal than a Continental soldier who looked the same way. The colonial militia, described by the Revolutionary era British general John Burgoyne as “untrained rabble,” was often without uniforms or any uniformity of dress throughout most of the Revolution (qtd in Wood 252). As Captain Oscar Long has noted in his overview of American Army uniforms between 1774 and 1895, “At Lexington, as well as at Concord. . .not an officer or soldier of the Continental troops engaged was in uniform, but were in the

plain ordinary dress of citizens” (2). Once George Washington was elected General and Commander-in-Chief of the American Army in 1775, an order was issued that that different colored cockades would be used in the hats of the various ranks in order to distinguish “the commissioned officer from the non-commissioned, and the non-commissioned from the privates” due to the fact that “the Continental Army have, unfortunately, no uniforms” (as qtd. in Long 2).

By November of 1775, Congress resolved “that the clothing for the Army should be paid for by stoppages from the men’s pay” and that it “be dyed brown and the distinctions of regiments made in the facings” of the waistcoats (Long 2). However, due to scarcity of cloth and difficulty of distribution, many soldiers remained without uniforms even after this order. In July of 1776 Washington consequently “encouraged. . . [for] those who would have been unprovided with uniforms the use of hunting shirts, with long breeches made of the same cloth” (Long 2). Even at Valley Forge in the winter of 1777-1778, American troops were still a motley crew of mismatched uniforms and equipment. Inspector General Baron de Steuben even noted that during his inspection of the troops he “saw officers at the grand parade at Valley Forge mounting guard in every sort of dressing gown, made of an old blanket or woolen bed-cover” and that officers had “every color and make” of coats (as qtd. in Long 3). Although some well-heeled Continental troops and officers, like Washington, undoubtedly had the ability financially to outfit themselves in military finery befitting their positions and their post, many other Continentals would have worn actual British uniforms that had been issued to them during the earlier colonial wars when they served as volunteer regiments. For example, during “the early stages of the French-Indian Wars expeditions

of colonial volunteers were mounted to seize French forts or build British ones” (Windrow and Embleton 13). Such recruits would have often been given the “[t]ypical British infantry private’s coat,” although “[c]olonial units probably wore coats. . .without the decorations” (Windrow and Embleton 12). Some Continental troops, therefore, would have literally donned British “red coats,” perhaps with altered facings and decorations, during the Revolutionary War. How, then, can the impeccably uniformed figure on the seal have reflected the Continental reality? The uniformed figure of the seal could just as easily signify an American or British soldier because of the inconsistent attire of the Continental soldiers and the varying allegiances of colonial citizens. Once disseminated into the heterogeneous public of the colony on official broadsides or bills of credit, this seal image becomes one of diffuse and multiple meanings. It is not the static and stable image the design committee and House undoubtedly intended it to be.

Beyond the confusion of national identity represented in the “Sword-in-Hand” seal is a conflict of class. Not only does the Anglo-American man vacillate between remnants of Indianness from previous seals and British and American identity, he also wavers between distinctions of social class. The idea that the Revolution was, at its heart, a “class war” has been posited by scholars such as J. Franklin Jameson in the early twentieth century. Jameson posits,

it seems clear that in most states the strength of the revolutionary party lay most largely in the plain people, as distinguished from the aristocracy. It lay not in the mob or rabble, for American society was overwhelmingly rural and not urban. . .but in the peasantry, substantial

and energetic though poor, in the small farmers and frontiersmen. And so, although there were men of great possessions like George Washington and Charles Carroll of Carrollton who contributed a conservative element, in the main we must expect to see our social changes tending in the direction of leveling democracy. (25)

Although this interpretation has been largely abandoned by more recent historians who tend to emphasize the ideological unity of the American colonists rather than their class differences, Jameson's observations about class disparity during the Revolution are worthy of note. Class differences did exist in early America and were at the core of many of the issues that led to the conflict with England. Many Americans despised the extravagant, courtly lifestyles of their English counterparts, championing their own brand of "country opposition" and frill-free sensibilities. The most incendiary pamphlet of the Revolutionary Era, Thomas Paine's *Common Sense*, not only dismissed King George III as a "brute" and called for American independence, but reached out to "new readers among the artisan- and tavern-centered worlds of the cities"<sup>44</sup> Paine eschewed fancy Latin quotations and references to erudite literary sources in favor of coarse imagery and Biblical references in order to reach his "common man" audiences. America not only wanted to be free of England's political tyranny, but also wanted political equality among its citizens. For too long, America had been the poorer, country cousin to England and no longer desired to simply reintegrate social stratification into the newly forming republic. Consequently, whether or not the

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<sup>44</sup> Paine's *Common Sense* was first published in January 1776 and went through some twenty-five editions in 1776 (Wood 254).

Revolution was fought as a “class war,” issues of class certainly underpinned many facets of the conflict, and because of his complete and stylish uniform, the figure pictured on the “Sword-in-Hand” seal is obviously a member of the higher classes.

He is outfitted in a full, proper military uniform from his knee-length breeches and gaiters, which were heavy coverings of cloth or leather that protected the leg from the foot to the knee, to his waistcoat and military frock coat, complete with a contrasting color facing along the collar and lapels. Additionally, the coat features the more elegant cut and style of the day with features like lowered “shoulder seams, reduce[ed] fullness of the skirts, and curv[ed] . . . fronts [of the facings]” as well as and a series of buttons that run down each lapel, which traditionally displayed the regimental numbers or symbols on military uniforms of the day (Mollo 48). This is no cast-off civilian coat or hastily “made from scraps,” homespun cloth uniform. It is clearly a well-made and official Army costume that conforms to General Washington’s orders that the uniforms of the Continental Army consist of “blue coats, waistcoats and breeches” with “the facings for certain states [to] be of different colors” (Long 4).<sup>45</sup> However, such complete and professional uniforms were almost unilaterally reserved for officers. As John Mollo has noted in his text, *Military Fashion*, in the early to mid-eighteenth century, “The provincial militia were supplied with weapons and equipment

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<sup>45</sup> Once Congress passed a resolution in 1779 that required a uniformity of costume among the troops, Washington passed the above-mentioned general order “prescribing the uniform in general terms, to be furnished as soon as the state of public supplies would permit” (Long 3). Although this decree comes years after the Massachusetts “Sword-in-Hand” seal would have been engraved, the basic appearance of the uniform described by Washington was identical to those uniforms of other nations, including Britain, which had been in use for many years. The main difference in Continental troop uniforms was to be in the color choice—blue. Washington was basically making official the style and type of uniform that had already been in use, albeit sporadically, among Continental troops for years. Therefore, this order essentially confirms the uniform style pictured on the “Sword in Hand” seal.

only. The men wore their own clothes and only the officers had any semblance of uniform” (67). Further, Mollo notes that, in the case of Washington, it was his officers who were “smartly turned out in blue with red facings, laced waistcoats and hats” (67). People who witnessed Washington’s troops noted that the “ordinary soldiers [had] no uniforms nor [did] they affect any regularity” (Mollo 67). The Anglo-American man of the seal, then, is no “ordinary” Continental soldier; his uniform identifies him as a privileged officer, a man of some esteem. He is not representative of the typical American militiaman.

The figure of the seal also grasps a sword, or saber to be more accurate. Sabers, which are a form of a sword that are typically curved and have only one cutting edge, were often carried by Continental troops during the Revolution. Specifically, the figure appears to be grasping a short saber, which was the “fighting style of sword worn by many officers [and] had a light cut-and-thrust blade (straight or curved) of about 30 inches, with a guard on the hilt” (Neumann 217).<sup>46</sup> The figure’s saber also has the “simple separated guard with a knuckle-bow and one branch on either side” as is “most common” on this particular style of short saber (Peterson 273). George Neumann in his *The History of Weapons of the American Revolution* further notes that the short saber was “one of the most popular styles [of sword], especially during the second half of the [eighteenth] century” (240). Harold Peterson notes that these short sabers were,

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<sup>46</sup> Based on the position and extension of the saber blade in the image—from the figure’s rib cage to about his temple/tip of his head—the blade of his saber would measure approximately 30 inches, categorizing this edged weapon as a short saber. Other Revolutionary era swords and sabers, such as the hunting sword, naval cutlass, horseman’s saber, and small sword (to name just a few) typically had blades of different lengths; in my research, the short saber was the only edged weapon I found to be curved, of this approximate length, and in wide use during this time period. For further reading, see Neumann, Peterson, and Moore.

next to the small sword. . .the most widely used type. Both mounted and foot officers carried such [sabers]. Indeed, they were almost mandatory for the mounted officer who expected to become personally involved in a hand-to-hand conflict, for none of the other types were practical for use on horse back. (273)

Clearly then, it is a short saber raised in defiance/agitation by the AngloAmerican man of the seal, as it was the weapon that was “indispensable for mounted officers” (126).

But what about the average militiaman? What about those men who volunteered to fill infantry positions without officers’ commissions or prestigious appointments? Would they have carried swords like the man in the seal? Not likely. As Alfred Hopkins, Curator of the Morristown National Historical Park, has noted, swords and sabers were worn “principally by officers, [and] for the most part . . . carried by the gentry of the time” (1). The reason for this, according to Harold Peterson in his *Arms and Armor of Colonial America*, is that by the time of the Revolution most colonies required the barest of armament requirements for local militias and those requirements typically followed the British pattern. When British infantry privates, for example, began abandoning swords during first part of the eighteenth century leaving the “sergeants alone among enlisted men [to] retain the traditional weapon,” American militias soon followed suit (257). Peterson notes that in 1705, for example, Virginia required militia members to have a sword, but that by “1738 either a bayonet or sword was acceptable; and in 1755 the sword was omitted for all but corporals and sergeants and the bayonet became mandatory” (257). Many other colonies, per the recommendation of Congress, required their militias to arm themselves with “a sword

or hatchet in addition to the bayonet” by 1775 (Peterson 257, emphasis mine). Peterson further observes, only “non-commissioned officers of both state and Continental troops were required to wear swords when obtainable throughout the war” (Peterson 258). As a consequence, the sword was slowly working its way out of the hands of the “common” fighting foot soldier and into the hands of officers and the cavalrymen. It was becoming a weapon for the elite and the higher-ranking soldiers rather than the “everyman” weapon it had been in the past.<sup>47</sup> The Anglo-American figure on the seal, therefore, is clearly not a reflection of the “average” Massachusetts, or even American, fighting man or citizen. He is an amalgamation of elitist New World fantasy and blatant Old World prejudices. Even though the man on the seal is meant to represent Massachusetts, the vanguard in the patriotic fight against British oppression, he instead depicts the privileged few in American society: white, wealthy, men of English ancestry.

However, the “reality” of revolutionary era Massachusetts peeps through the polished, elitist veneer of Revere’s “Sword-in-Hand” seal. Just as the Indianness from

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<sup>47</sup> Harold Peterson has noted that of all the edged weapons, the one that was in most wide spread usage throughout the entire period of American colonization was the sword. He states, “All men on military duty whether they carried a firearm or not were required to have a sword. Since all able-bodied men in a colony were normally called upon for such a duty, this meant that all had to be familiar with the use of that weapon” (69). He further comments that when Captain John Smith left Virginia in 1608, “he reported that there were on hand in the colony more swords than men and that in 1618 a Committee for Smythes Hundred in Virginia recommended that 40 swords and daggers be provided for 35 men expecting to come from England” (as qtd. in Peterson 69). Swords and edged weapons, therefore, were the armament of choice of all classes of men, not merely the gentry.

Undoubtedly, there would have been swords in the hands of militiamen and foot soldiers during the Revolution; I am not attempting to argue against this point. As Warren Moore has noted, “Americans used almost anything they could lay their hands on. At the beginning of the Revolution the American colonials were asked to bring along swords as well as shoulder arms. As the war continued, the United States gradually acquired a quantity of swords to issue its soldiers” (128). However, I am trying to assert that, as these Revolutionary era weapons’ experts have claimed, officers and the higher classes would have “carried a greater variety of . . . swords during the period under consideration” than civilians or militia men of lower classes (Peterson 268).

previous seals is still apparent behind the “white-washed” image of the well-accountered cavalryman in the seal, so, too, is the tension between colonial identifications of “Englishness” and “Americanness.” The colonists’ own uncertainty about their communal identity as an independent entity from England is unwittingly portrayed through the ambivalent nature of the image. The unclear signifiers, such as the soldier’s uniform and his presentation of Magna Carta, as well as his awkward stance, make comprehension of his wavering image dependent upon the situation in which it is viewed and the circumstances of the viewer. Persons of different means, allegiances, and even genders would view this declaration of Massachusetts’ unity through vastly different lenses. Once disseminated on Continental bills or other government documents, the “Sword-in-Hand” seal, rather than stabilizing a communal Massachusetts’ identity, instead produced countless variations and interpretations of that identity due to the cracks inherent in its construction.

### **The Indian Returns**

Clearly, this was a serious issue for the residents because within five years of the “Sword-in-Hand” seal’s design, it was replaced with an updated version of the original silver seal from 1629. In November of 1780, when Massachusetts became a state, “one of the first acts of the legislature was the establishment of a new seal” (Cummings 11). By December of that same year, council Records report that Nathan Cushing was ordered to

Prepare a Seal for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts who reported a Device for a Seal for Said Commonwealth as follows viz. a Sapphire, an Indian dressed in his Shirt; Moggosins, belted

proper, in his right Hand a Bow Topaz, in his left an Arrow, its point towards the Base; of the second, on the Dexter side of the Indian's head, a Star; Pearl, for one of the United States of America (as qtd in Cummings 12-13)<sup>48</sup> [Figure 12]

The Indian has returned. This time, however, he returns as unequivocally and permanently male as well as doggedly silent—just as his Anglo-American forbear had been. There is no more ambivalence about his gender and no curled banner emerging from his mouth as in the earliest versions of the seal. Although he is still no less ambivalent than his predecessors, the Indian figure that was first established in 1629 with the colony's original charter once again becomes the marker of Massachusetts', and unity and prosperity, these seal images underscore the raced, and more especially gendered, discourses that underpin nationalism of revolutionary and early republican America. And those discourses distinctly exclude white womanhood and the domestic sphere. However, due to the stoic silence of these differently raced but similarly masculine seal images and their overwhelming ambivalence, there remains a gap through which feminine agency can assert itself by providing the dialogue to accompany these potent images. A feminine voice can be scripted to accompany these

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<sup>48</sup> The entry describing the seal goes on to read: "Crest. On a Wreath a Dexter Arm cloathed and ruffled proper, grasping a Broad Sword, the Pommel and Hilt Topaz with this Motto...ENSE PETIT PLACIDAM SUB LIBERTATE QUIETEM—And around the Seal SIGILLUM PEIPUBLICAE MASSACHUSETTENSIS" (as qtd. in Cummings, 13).



Fig. 12 Variations of the Revised Indian Seal of the Commonwealth of  
Massachusetts, (1780-1885)

Image courtesy of The Office of the Secretary of the Commonwealth

fluctuating representations of race and masculinity that asserts not only feminine agency, but exposes the historic realities and hardships faced by women and the domestic sphere during the nation-defining moment of the Revolution. Ann Eliza Bleecker in her revolutionary-era Indian captivity narrative, *The History of Maria Kittle*, does just that. By deploying the trappings of the feminine sphere in the uniquely feminine genre of the captivity narrative, Bleecker aggressively addresses these seal images of Indian and Anglo-American masculinity and writes the feminine into national rhetoric in a bold and significant way.

### **Captivity, White Womanhood, and Nation-building**

Although white womanhood and the domestic realm have never been dominant features in the varying discourses structuring American identity, they have always had some semblance of voice and agency through the phenomenal popularity of the Indian captivity narrative. These narratives, which often “depend on a central and sympathetic figure of a captive woman” and, indeed, often feature the authorial voice and perspective of white womanhood, have always been inherently political (Burnham 2). They are texts that seek to discipline, dominate, and restructure the uncolonized inhabitants of the New World by deploying the racial, cultural, and gendered infrastructures of the colonizers. As such, these narratives are intimately connected to process of nation building and the construction of a nation’s identity. Through the appropriation of Indian identity and the centralized focus on the outrages suffered by the captives (and the remainder of the population vicariously) at the hands of these Indians, the Indian captivity narrative often served as a defining trope for establishing and maintaining a cohesive national identity, especially in America. Although varying

in their historical context, mode of authorship, artistic style (and merit), and the experiences of the captive, captivity narratives have as their fundamental core a sort of “divisive unity.” By aligning the “us” of the colonial European audience, and later, the audiences of the early republic, against the “them” of the indigenous Indians, these narratives presumed cohesion among the disparate and often distant colonists by offering a unifying experience against the Indians. Consequently, these narratives connect the colonists to each other through a racially and culturally fueled hatred of what they perceived as the “inferior,” invading other and resolved that conflict by reinscribing the “rightful” racial, cultural, and gendered order of the nation. The nation and its boundaries have been reaffirmed through the disruptive, but ultimately resolved, experience of captivity.

However, the ideas of “nation” and “nationalism” are uncertain abstractions. As Tom Nairn has eloquently noted, nationalism is a “Janus-faced” concept, being at once collective and authoritarian, at once cordial and belligerent, and ultimately encompassing both the past and the present. Similarly, Timothy Brennan writes of the concept of nation,

[I]t is both historically determined and general. As a term, it refers both to the modern nation-state and to something more ancient and nebulous—the ‘natio’—the local community, domicile, family, condition of belonging. This distinction is often obscured by nationalists who seek to place their own country in an ‘immemorial past’ where its arbitrariness cannot be questioned. (45)

Nations and nationalism are also, as Benedict Anderson suggests in *Imagined Communities*, systems of cultural signification rather than political ones: “Nationalism has to be understood, by aligning it not with self-consciously held political ideologies, but with large cultural systems that preceded it, out of which—as well as against which—it came into being” (Anderson 19).

These competing discourses of nation—the “mythic” repository of national history and culture, and the modern site of often divisive political and social realities — are ultimately collapsed into a single, unified, if not paradoxical, understanding of a nation’s history and culture. Because the genre of the Indian captivity narrative, with its own ambiguous and competing discourses about nation, race, and cultural identity, was textually able to “resolve” its own liminality (at least on the surface) through the reintegration or redemption of the captive, it became a key element in the process of building and defining the mythology of a nation, particularly in America.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Many scholars have explored this connection between captivity narratives and the construction of an American national identity. For example, Captain Greg Sieminski has proposed the boom of captivity narratives in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century was a result of the wish to define “the American character by proclaiming the rejection of British culture” (36). Gordon Sayre has similarly noted that “the typical captivity plot served ideologically to invert the true terms of the colonial invasion of America,” revising the imperialist identity of the colonizers and negating a previously held notion (6). Neal Salisbury points out that the captivity experience is a “means by which audiences can journey vicariously beyond the boundaries of their given cultural identities, reinforcing or loosening those boundaries, but either way, returning to where they started” (55). Tara Fitzpatrick also notes that Indian captivities articulated a “particularly American discourse regarding. . . historical identity” (3) and Zabelle Stoddola and James Levernier posit that the figure of the captive within the narratives served “as a mediator between savagery and civilization,” aiding in the colonists’ definition of themselves “not just in terms of their difference from, and hostility to, Indians, but also in terms of their identity as Americans” (42). Additionally, David Sewell has observed that through acts of cultural translation “the captivity narrative exists to repair breaches in the palisade of language. . . [by building] a new and larger palisade around the damaged structure” in essence, redefining the self through language (53) and Rosalie Murphy Baum suggests that the “paradigmatic expectation” which defined the other in captivities also served to “further clarif[y] the nature of the ethnic Norm” (57). The captivity narrative is arguably, as Richard Slotkin has noted, the genre within which “the first American mythology took shape” (21).

As a consequence, captivity narratives have tended to thrive in moments of national crisis when the unity of a cohesive “American” community is threatened, such as during wartime, moments of racial upheaval, and gender conflicts. The racialized mentality, the heightened sentimental and emotional language describing the captive’s suffering, and the re-inscription of traditional gender roles contained in the captivity formula made it the perfect vehicle for reviving a consensus, both historical and social, from many differing viewpoints during a time of national crisis, such as the Revolutionary War.<sup>50</sup> Ann Eliza Bleecker, however, appropriates the captivity genre to subvert this re-inscription of the dominant discourses governing race, gender, and history.

In her *The History of Maria Kittle*, published posthumously in 1793, Bleecker moves beyond simply writing about gender, history, and the nation into offering a radical re-visioning of them.<sup>51</sup> Beyond merely bringing a woman’s genre, style, and

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<sup>50</sup> Michelle Burnham notes, “The publication of captivity narratives dramatically increased in the decade before the [Revolutionary] [W]ar, older captivities were suddenly reprinted, and the captive heroines of . . . sentimental novels became popular symbols of the tyrannized colonies” (67). Julie Ellison similarly points out that “the popularity of captivity narratives during and immediately after the Revolution was motivated by the need to express the cultural value, physical exposure, and political entanglements of white women” (*Cato’s Tears*, 127).

<sup>51</sup> *The History of Maria Kittle* has been almost completely overlooked by scholars. While *The History* has been recognized by critics as “America’s first captivity fiction” (Castiglia 125) and been noted for its skillful use of sensibility and sentiment as a techniques to enter into the traditionally masculine discourse of history, sustained critical attention has been directed towards Bleecker’s poetry rather than her narrative.<sup>51</sup> Additionally, although some analyses of Bleecker’s *The History* recognize Bleecker’s use of feminine agency in her visualization of female-centered support communities and the validation of sentiment as a means of understanding and inscribing history, few comment on how these feminist maneuvers moved beyond simply writing about history into re-inscribing it. Scholars who have attended Bleecker’s *The History*, although briefly, include Christopher Castiglia who sees the narrative as not only critiquing masculine agency, but encouraging female readers to “witness the powerful benefits of female community, to sympathize with female suffering, and to admire female strength, endurance, and resolution” (127); Julie Ellison, who posits that “affecting histories” like Bleecker’s are invested in “powerful feminine sadness that takes the form of an attachment to place” and ultimately situates that place, the family home, “in national and international perspectives” (*Cato’s Tears*, 125); Michelle Burnham, who argues that sentimental versions of Indian captivity such as Bleecker’s

sphere in to the national dialogue surrounding the raced and gendered infrastructure of America, Bleecker deploys these trappings of the feminine sphere to challenge and rupture that structure, writing the feminine into national existence. Additionally, she offers harsh critique of the Anglo-American patriarchy that that has silenced and, in many ways left vulnerable and unprotected, the feminine voices that undergird and stabilize that national existence. In order to do so, however, she must appropriate and manipulate the image of the Indian because it is the Indian—the stereotyped and imagined Indian predecessor depicted on the Massachusetts Bay Colony seal—that grants Bleecker the authority to enter into the discourses of nationalism. Just as Mary Rowlandson uses the experience of her captivity and the flattened image of the seal Indian to establish and validate her own authorial identity, so, too, does Bleecker draw from her own personal experiences with displacement and loss during the Revolutionary War as well as her understanding of the dynamics of white womanhood in captivity to offer a revision of national identity of the fledgling America, one that figures women and domestic space into being in a historical, powerful way.

The incursions during the war of the masculine, political, and national realms of Anglo-America into the traditionally feminine, domestic and private realms represented by Bleecker’s home and family certainly gave her the right to critique those systems and enter into the national dialogue; however, the Indians of her fictionalized version of a real captivity and massacre that occurred some twenty years earlier gave her the

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“offered an ideal entry point into the discourse of history” (94); and Sharon M. Harris who views Bleecker role in *The History* as that of a “resisting colonizer,” one who “sentimentalize[s] one’s own colonial practices” (*Executing*, 99). More extended attention has granted to Bleecker’s overtly pastoral/political poetry which has been analyzed at length by Julie Ellison, Sharon M. Harris (*Executing Race*), Larry Kutchen, and Allison Giffen.

authority to do so. In order to write feminine gendered agency and reality into the national rhetoric, Bleecker must necessarily critique and subvert the masculine discourses, both Indian and Anglo-American, that dominate and terrorize white womanhood. She must aggressively censure white patriarchy and write out Indian reality in *The History of Maria Kittle* while simultaneously writing herself and her experiences in. In short, she takes to task the two Revolutionary-era versions of the Massachusetts Bay Colony/Commonwealth's seal—the male Anglo soldier and the revised Indian man—and supplies a differently gendered dialogue to fill the ambivalent silences these images leave behind.

**A Narrative Palimpsest:**

Set during the French and Indian Wars, *The History* relates the tumultuous experiences of Maria Kittle, a wife and mother of two young children who is captured and taken from her home in upstate New York by a band of neighboring Indians with whom she had previously been friendly. The attack occurs, in predictable captivity fashion, when Maria's husband is away procuring wagons for evacuation and she is left at home alone with her children and several members of her extended family, including a heavily pregnant sister-in-law, Comelia Kittle, and her hapless, yet unnamed husband. The Indians descend upon the Kittle home, killing Maria's in-laws and her own infant son in the most brutal fashion, and then setting the house ablaze with Maria's young daughter inside. Maria, along with her brother-in-law Henry (who is the only other survivor from the raid on the home), is then marched to Montreal, Canada, where she is fortuitously adopted into a supportive female community. Introduced into this circle of sympathetic French and similarly displaced English women by Mrs. D\_\_\_, an English

woman who accommodates and employs her, Maria finds herself surrounded by women who commiserate with her trials and losses as a woman and mother. For two years the women forge lasting friendships, sharing their stories of grief and captivity and offering sympathetic support to one another. Then, almost inexplicably, Maria's husband, who has been serving in the Army in an almost suicidal capacity because of his grief, finally reunites with her in an emotional denouement that at long last "redeems" Maria from her captivity and brings the narrative to its close.

With its overly sentimentalized diction, surplus of affecting scenes, and obvious ties to the conventions of the sentimental fiction of the day, *The History* has long been viewed as a purely fictionalized tale of captivity, as "one of America's first novels" (Derounian-Stodola and Levernier 186), and as "a novel of sensibility" (Castiglia 131). Sharon M. Harris in her *Executing Race* argues, however, that "the narrative is not fiction or at least is not a wholly imaginative production" as has been the conventional (mis)understanding of *The History* for years (100). Although the story did come to Bleecker second-hand and has almost certainly been augmented with affective embellishments, Harris points out that a nearly identical account of the Kittle family's captivity (also spelled as "Kittlehuyne" or "Ketlyne") exists in Grace Greylock Niles's 1912 text *The Hoosac Valley* which "indicates how accurate the basic outline of Bleecker's story is" (100).<sup>52</sup> However, superimposed upon that "basic outline" of the

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<sup>52</sup> Bleecker, as would most families in the Schaghticoke region around Albany, would have been familiar with the Kittle family massacre and captivity, which was "one of the most notorious incidents during King George's War" and, subsequently, a well-known part of Dutch and English lore in the region (Harris, *Executing Race* 101). As Sharon M. Harris has noted, it was most likely Maria Kittle's death in 1779 that served as Bleecker's impetus for retelling the story of Maria's captivity. It is unclear whether Bleecker actually received the specific details of the story from a Kittle family member shortly after

historical fact of Maria Kittle's captivity are glimpses of Bleecker's own life and experiences as woman, wife, and mother during the Revolutionary War some twenty years later. Like Maria Kittle before her, Ann Eliza Bleecker also faced the domestic displacement and familial destruction of war as well as the realization of the vulnerabilities of a woman—any woman—living during a war—any war.<sup>53</sup> Although never captured and imprisoned by Indians like Kittle was, Bleecker endured many of the same distinctly gendered degradations and violences as Kittle did; and by uniting her own historical moment and life experiences with Kittle's, Bleecker sought to expose those gendered injustices through writing. By melding the historical fact of the captivity of Maria Kittle during the French and Indian Wars with her own observations and experiences gleaned during the American Revolution, Bleecker constructs a

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Maria's death as the narrative states or if this claim to authenticity was merely generic convention. However, as Harris states, "the basis of the narrative is factual" (*Executing Race*, 100).

<sup>53</sup> The memoirs of Ann Eliza Bleecker, written by her daughter, Margaretta Bleecker Faugeres and included with both mother's and daughter's works in *The Posthumous Works of Anne Eliza Bleecker in Prose and Verse*, details much of Bleecker's Revolutionary war-related experiences. Faugeres notes that in August of 1777, General Burgoyne's army advanced toward the Bleecker's Tomahanick, New York, estate on their way toward Lake Champlain, "burning and murdering all before them" (v). The violent advance of the British—who undoubtedly favored the masculine, uniformed image on the seal of the Massachusetts Commonwealth to Bleecker—forced Bleecker to flee on foot from her home with her two young daughters, an infant and a four year old, while her husband was away procuring temporary lodgings for the family. Her infant daughter, Abella, later died of dysentery once the family was reunited and were attempting to reach the safe haven of Albany, New York, by water. Bleecker's beloved mother, who had evacuated the Tomhanick residence earlier with Bleecker's sister, Catharine, died soon after the extended family was reunited. Catherine then died on the family's return journey home to Tomhanick after their exile of four months. In 1781 Bleecker's husband John was seized by "a raiding party of Tories, British regulars, and Hessians (one bearing a tomahawk)" while he and two servants were harvesting the family's crops, but he was liberated by Connecticut troops six days later (Ellison, "Race," 452). In a letter to a friend after the incident dated May 8, 1783, Bleecker notes, that shortly after this experience, "I fell into premature labour, and was delivered of a dead child. Since that, I have been declining" (Faugeres 178).

narrative that forefronts not only the experiences of white women but also the failures of white men during moments of historical, national crises and gives them a distinctly feminine voice: her own.

From the very beginning of *The History of Maria Kittle*, Ann Eliza Bleecker places her authorial voice and her own historical moment as the organizing frames of the text. Subtitled *In a Letter to Miss Ten Eyck*, dated “Tomhanick, December, 1779,” and begun with the salutation “Dear Susan,” *The History* from its very opening positions Bleecker as an active participant—albeit as a narrator—in the events of Kittle’s captivity and return (3).<sup>54</sup> Structured as a letter to Bleecker’s beloved half sister Susan, and ostensibly based on Bleecker’s knowledge of “the unfortunate adventures of one of [her] neighbours, who died yesterday,” *The History* becomes a female-centered nexus of moments of historical crises, a palimpsest of women’s lives, voices, and specters (Bleecker 3). The disparate elements of time, place and experience that separate the two women, Kittle and Bleecker, from each other, and even further separate Susan Ten Eyck from them both, become melded into one narrative experience that highlights the vulnerability of women and their domestic domain during any war. By placing Kittle’s story of maternal and domestic losses into the framework of Bleecker’s own fixed place in time and history—Tomhanick, New York during the heart of the Revolution in 1779— and into the context of a letter shared between feeling, compassionate sisters, Bleecker creates a circuit of women readers, writers and factual

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<sup>54</sup> For my analysis, I have chosen to reference the edition of *The History* that appears in Sharon M. Harris’ *Women’s Early Historical Narratives* (2003) because of its ready availability and ease of access; however, when citing Margareta Fagueres’ biography of her mother, I have used the original 1793 version of the text because this biographical material is typically not reproduced in later editions of *The History*.

personages united by the horrors of war. And through the production and publication of *The History*, she also writes that circuit into the historical and national consciousness of the fledgling republic that worked to erase its gendered existence.

### **Nationhood and Womanhood**

The organizing myth of a nation, any nation, perpetuates the idea that it is a “natural,” ahistorical entity, constituted through popular unity and shared communal experiences. However, because of the socially constructed and unstable nature of nations as well as their reliance on ideology and the performance of social difference, not similarity, in order to maintain cohesion, nations and nationalism are at their core social competitions. They work to consolidate and represent the dominant power groups within their borders through agencies of state power (court systems, the military and police, religious and social hierarchies, etc.) and suppress or exclude those who do not. Perhaps the most conspicuous and most universal exclusion from representations of a nation or nationalism is that of women. Anne McClintock states in *Imperial Leather*,

All nations depend on powerful constructions of gender. Despite many nationalists’ ideological investment in the idea of popular *unity*, nations have historically amounted to the sanctioned institutionalization of gender *difference*. No nation in the world gives women and men the same access to the rights and resources of the nation-state. (italics in original, 353)

McClintock further posits that women figure into a national identity only as “its boundary and metaphoric limit” (“No Longer,” 90). Consequently, they are excluded

from any direct agency or influence within the nation building and governing process and are relegated to the symbolic role of “the bearers of the nation” (McClintock, “No Longer,” 90).<sup>55</sup>

Further, nations and nationalisms have always been founded on gender difference; McClintock notes,

Not only are the needs of the nation typically identified with the frustrations and aspirations of men, but the representation of male *national* power depends on the prior construction of *gender* difference. All too often in male nationalisms, gender difference between women and men serves to symbolically define the limits of national difference and power between *men*. (“No Longer,” 89)

Nations and their discourses, therefore, are often figured through the imagery of the domestic and the feminine: nations are referred to “homelands” or “motherlands” and their constituents are the “sons” and “daughters”; immigrants “adopt” their non-native culture and habits while their native language remains their “mother tongue.” Domestic, maternal, and particularly familial images rule the symbology of national discourse, serving both to naturalize a unified hierarchical structure, i.e. the gendered and stratified structure of the family, and offering “an indispensable metaphoric figure by which national difference could be shaped into a single historical genesis narrative” (McClintock, “No Longer,” 91). Because the child was deemed naturally subordinate

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<sup>55</sup> Elleke Boehmer argues that the male role in the national arena is metonymic, meaning they are relationally contiguous with each other and the nation as a whole (although not all men are availed of this privilege). Women, however, operate in “a metaphoric or symbolic role” (Boehmer 6). Nira Yuval-Davis and Floya Anthias further point out that one of the ways in which women have been implicated in nationalism is “as symbolic signifiers of national difference” (7).

to the adult and the woman subordinate to the man within the family, social difference within the nation could be conveniently portrayed through familial terms in order to maintain social and gender difference as contiguously “natural” categories. However, while these domesticated and feminine images offered a sanctioned narrative of national history and served to patch the temporal rupture in the conception of nation, they were paradoxically devoid of history and power themselves. As McClintock notes, women were figured

as inherently atavistic—the conservative repository of the national archaic. Women were seen not as inhabiting history proper but as existing . . . in a permanently anterior time within the modern nation. White, middle-class men, by contrast, were seen to embody the forward-thrusting agency of national progress . . . National progress (conventionally the invented domain of male, public space) was figured as familial, while the family itself (conventionally the domain of private, female space) was figured as beyond history. (“No Longer,” 93)

Consequently, nations and nationhood were figured without the actual agency of the familial/feminine; only the essence, the specter of the private realm, was employed to give a nation its meaning.

In the American colonies a new nation was being formed right before the eyes of Ann Eliza Bleecker. Bleecker was a living, active, and most importantly, a writing participant in the formation of a new nation, both scarred and empowered by what she endured; she saw her opportunity to ‘rewrite’ the place of women, the family, and the domestic in the role of nationhood. Bleecker infuses her text with strong critiques of

the masculinist ideals of the nation/family and the foundational, necessary and rightful role of women in the formation of a new republic. However, it was the Indian, disallowed participation and membership in that new republic, that was the key element in Bleecker's revision of the nation. Indeed, while she was certainly feminist in her vision of the American nation, Bleecker was also most uncompromisingly racist. As Sharon M. Harris has noted, Bleecker in her writing often transferred her maternal guilt from the death of her youngest daughter, Abella, and the Revolutionary War's chaotic disruption of her idyllic life onto "a series of construction of 'savages' who attack and destroy innocent lives" in her poetry and earliest writings rather than the actual sources of her suffering (94). Harris goes so far as to argue Bleecker's racialism is actually a "hatred of Native Americans" and that "The most complex and revealing representation of [her] sentimentalized vision of the Dutch American settlers coupled with her racist attitudes toward Native Americans occurs in *The History of Maria Kittle*" (*Executing Race*, 98). While I would certainly not argue with Harris' point about Bleecker's racist attitudes, I question her assertion of Bleecker's hatred of the Indians. Bleecker's relationship to and understanding of the Native Americans around her was far more complex than the simple emotion of "hate." Just as the earliest colonists struggled to define themselves in relational terms to the Indians around them—in terms of likeness as well as difference as demonstrated on the various seals of the Massachusetts Colony/Commonwealth—so too does Bleecker, especially in her *History of Maria Kittle*.

The power of the Native American figure in the American colonial mind, as I have argued in chapter one, was potent and fraught with anxiety. At once signaling an

indigenous identity that could be appropriated and claimed by the European colonists as their mark of certainty and belonging in the New World, and simultaneously functioning as a symbol of ungovernable difference that both highlighted and threatened European “superiority” and stability, the Indian was more than simply an object of hatred for Bleeker. In the figure of the imagined Indian—the colonist-created specter of loathing and desire from the seal—Bleeker found her ground, her point of departure from which she could launch her gendered revision of the nation. The Indian, imagined rather than real, served both as a veil and a justification for her female characters’ “inappropriate” actions and by contrast, the male character’s failures and errors. The Indian, with his “disorderly” and “savage” body and his incursion into the “civilized” realm of the feminine, allowed for and even excused the non-traditional, disorderly behavior of Bleeker’s characters, giving her the opportunity to posit an alternative gender vision, one that revised and revalued women and their sphere and wrote them into historic specificity. The ambiguity of the Indian in the colonizer’s mind allowed for ambiguity in the interactions with him. Acts of colonial/EuroAmerican feminine agency that would ordinarily be deemed unacceptable, become excusable, if not logical, when figure of the Indian is brought into contact with white womanhood.

However, beyond merely bringing Indianness into collision with white, feminine domesticity, Bleeker suggestively and aggressively genders that Indianness as male. In earlier colonial depictions of Indians, such as the images on the earliest Bay Colony seals and the personages in Mary Rowlandson’s captivity narrative discussed in chapter one, gender was a much more fluid category. The Indians of these earlier texts could smoothly transition among being male, female, or some blended composite of the two

genders and still affirm the gendered, cultural, intellectual and religious paradigms that underpinned white colonial identity. Indianness, regardless of the gender assigned to it, was the most potent signifier in these earlier texts, and the addition of feminine or masculine characteristics to that Indianness varied depending upon the historical moment in which it was contrived. This is not the case for Bleecker and her text; gender matters for her in a very significant way because her focus is the gendered realm of the domestic. Further, the image of masculine Indianness from the Massachusetts seal of 1780 was a dominating and powerful visual that not only depicted “savage” Indiannes, but also calcified that Indianness as masculine, establishing the masculine gender of any race as “the” national identity. Masculinity, even when coupled with an Indian body, supercedes white womanhood. Consequently, Bleecker vigorously racializes the domestic, almost universally equating the destructive, anti-domestic forces of Indian “otherness” with masculinity. By masculinizing Indianness, and then bringing white womanhood into contact with it in an assertive, productive way, Bleecker is able to inscribe the feminine and the domestic with a new agency and even begin the visualization of a differently gendered nation.

### **Reimagining Feminine Authority, Empowering the Domestic**

One of the most interesting authorial moves Bleecker makes in *The History* is her decision to not only bring the domestic sphere into direct contact and conflict with the political/public sphere, but also to do so within the confines of the domestic realm. As Linda Kerber has pointed out, the “private sphere” in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was more of a metaphorical concept rather than a descriptive phrase; the particular contents of any given private sphere could vary radically from one

interpreter to another and increasingly began to coincide with the masculine, public sphere. Elizabeth Dillon, in *The Gender of Freedom*, carries this assertion even further and argues that the interactions of the public and private occur in a “recursive loop” (35). Dillon notes that “the intimate sphere ‘prequalifies’ certain subjects for participation in the political public sphere, and in which the public sphere in turn produces the very privacy understood as the predicate of public sphere participation” (35). In *Romances of the Republic*, Shirley Samuels additionally observes that during the time between the American Revolution and the Civil War, women and the family—the traditional occupants of the “private” realm—were often represented “paradoxically as at once embodiments and abstractions of national values” (14). Samuels asserts, “The concept of a republican family implied neither absolute separation nor absolute joining of state and family, but unstable relations with permeable and unfixed boundaries” (15). In short, the public and private realms were not necessarily separate, but rather conjoined in a “distinct but problematized ‘fit’” (Samuels 15). Such ambivalent and overlapping relations between public and private spheres, however, did not necessarily signify parity between them. The simple existence of the idea of two spheres and their purported separation signified the basic, culturally accepted beliefs of the time that women and men were “naturally” physically different and that consequently, a division of labor and tasks (spheres) based upon sexual difference was not only practical, but necessary. That is not to say, however, that women fully accepted this hierarchical system between the sexes. As Nina Baym argues, women did try to

devise more intellectual maternal and household tasks, to use domestic ideology as a wedge for securing access to related work like teaching or charity, or to insist that activities that did not unfit women for their household duties should not be prohibited to them. (5)

During the Revolutionary War, especially, this hierarchical system was, as Cathy Davidson notes, “often breached. . .when many American women were suddenly forced to survive without the economic assistance or legal protection of a husband. . .[T]he War ambiguously emphasized to women both their private capability and their public powerlessness” (120). As a consequence, many women, like Bleecker, who had demonstrated their abilities to preserve their families and homes in the face of the national crisis of the War—a traditionally masculine responsibility—were unwilling to relinquish their rightfully and newly earned “public” privileges and responsibilities as protectors of the domestic and participants in the process of nation-building. Yet after the War, the constitution of the newly formed American nation, “did nothing to acknowledge women’s contribution to the war effort. . . Married or single, she had virtually no rights within society and no visibility within the political operations of government” (Davidson 120). Postwar, women were once-again required to return to their old roles, “tending the house and husband and raising the children to repeople the Republic” (Davidson 121).

Bleecker, however, resists this re-domestication of women’s rights and the rejection of feminine contributions to nation-building in *The History of Maria Kittle* through an aggressive politicalization of the domestic sphere. Rather than move her female characters outside of their domestic realm and into the “savage” wilderness

where the traditional constraints of gendered codes of behavior and household responsibilities are removed (or at least displaced to an Indian setting and system) as in the traditional captivity format, Bleecker instead injects the external political, historical and racial conflicts into province of the domestic scene.<sup>56</sup> She makes the familial and the domestic the locus for nation-defining moments in her narrative, positing this domain as the point from which the nation should ultimately rebuild itself. Because nearly all of the moments of crisis and conflict that occur in *The History* occur within the dominion of white, European womanhood—the home and its surrounding grounds—Bleecker inscribes this realm with paramount significance, not only entering into the complex and multifaceted discourses governing nationalism in the early Republic but also offering a radical critique of patriarchal hegemony. Bleecker boldly re-scripts and disrupts the images of militaristic and Indian masculinity as portrayed on the Massachusetts seals of the Revolutionary era.<sup>57</sup>

Only a small portion of the text occurs out in the wilderness during Maria's forced removal from her home to Montreal, Canada. However, even when she arrives in Canada, Maria is almost immediately placed into another domestic scene, the home of the good Mrs. D\_\_\_\_\_, an Englishwoman living in Montreal. By focusing so

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<sup>56</sup> See Derounian-Stodola and Levernier, VanDerBeets, and Vaughan for further discussion of the captivity formula.

<sup>57</sup> Many scholars have argued against the ideas of “separate spheres” and a single, “official” discourse governing nationalism in early Republican and Victorian America. In addition to Cathy Davidson, Shirley Samuels, and Linda Kerber noted above, see also Carroll Smith-Rosenberg who examines the private writings of American women in the Victoria Era as moments of “disorderly conduct” that disrupt the gendered and socioeconomic systems working to contain them; David Waldstreicher whose work with celebrations, “fetes,” in early nationalist America examines how these social events worked both to reinscribe women and minorities as non-citizens, but also resisted such prescriptions when deployed by these excluded groups; and Julia Stern who demonstrates that sentimental and melodramatic novels of the early Republic served as counternarratives to the dominant, male-authored narratives of nationalism.

intently upon the realities of a woman's existence and the circumscribed territory and cultural responsibilities that define them, Bleecker is able to place the habitat and work of women at the forefront of her narrative. Furthermore, as she brings the domestic and all it entails, even stereotypically, into focus and into contact with the public, masculine realm, she can interrogate the gendered hierarchies already in place, and more importantly, revalue and reiterate the role of women and the domestic in the various national dialogues.

Bleecker begins the narrative of Maria's captivity experience in a traditionally feminine manner, both in terms of novelistic style and womanly sentiment. Using the epistolary format, a genre that Cathy N. Davidson notes accounted for "almost one third of the novels written in American before 1820" (14), Bleecker informs the recipient of her letter, her half-sister, Susan Ten Eyck, that she is about to engage her sister's "benevolent and feeling heart" in the unfortunate experiences of one of her neighbors (Bleecker 4). Bleecker promises, "However fond of novels and romances you may be, the unfortunate adventures of my neighbours, who died yesterday, will make you despise that fiction, in which knowing the subject to be fabulous, we can never be so truly interested" (4). Bleecker is, as Zabelle Stoddola and James Levernier note, drawing "heavily upon the conventions of the sentimental novel so popular in England and American during the late eighteenth century" and that her text is "[d]esigned to evoke a maximum of sentimental response on the part of the reader" (186-187). The entirety of Bleecker's text, without question, is filled with sentimental forms. With Maria occasionally "bursting afresh into grievous lamentations" (13) and "unlock[ing] the sluices of her eyes" (17), and other female characters, self-proclaimed "sister[s] in

affliction” (27), often indulging in “time spent in tears, and pleasing melancholy” (27), Bleecker’s use of sentimental convention is obvious.<sup>58</sup>

However, beyond the obvious trappings of sentimentality that Bleecker readily employs, it is significant to note the ways in which Bleecker consciously undermines these same conventions. Bleecker is clearly gesturing toward the rhetoric and style of the newly popular novels, serialized narratives, and the hybrid form of the captivity narrative/sentimental novel so prevalent at this time; however, she is also differentiating her text from these other forms. Dana D. Nelson has suggested the possibility that white women writers often utilized sentiment “as an effective strategy to gain authorial advantage” (67), which in turn allowed for “an active intercession on behalf of the object of sympathy” (77). Bleecker, while certainly employing sentiment for the authority and recognition it affords, also clearly questions it. For example, she observes in the very first line that regardless of how much women may enjoy the other fictive works of the day, a true interest in such texts is never really present for these readers because of the underlying awareness of the “fabulous” nature of the text. Positioning her “history” of Maria Kittle as the antithesis these fanciful creations while still appropriating their rhetoric, Bleecker moves her text away from the realm of the sentimental novel, and establishes it as worthy of interest and attention, not merely “feeling.”<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> See also Julie Ellison, *Cato’s Tears*, 126-129; Sharon M. Harris, *Executing Race*, ch. 3; Michelle Burnham, 92-96; Christopher Castiglia, 131-136; and Zabelle Stodola and James Levernier, 185-191 for further discussion of the sentimental in Bleecker texts, including *The History of Maria Kittle*.

<sup>59</sup> While I see Bleecker in *The History of Maria Kittle* as utilizing the conventions of sentiment only to undermine them and move women out of the sentimental realm and into existence within the historical/political, other critics disagree. For example, Sharon M. Harris, while recognizing Bleecker’s use of sentiment and the “positive aspects of the politicized nature of sentimentalism,” argues that

Bleecker's use of the term "history" to describe her narrative, both in the title and in the opening paragraph, further separates her text from the fiction of the day. As Sharon M. Harris has noted,

[H]istory writing was integral to the formation of the new republic in the Revolutionary and post-Revolutionary years. Histories were taught in schools and read widely among the literate class, in published books and in the burgeoning periodical literature published in the United States.

The writing and reading of historical narratives was considered essential in the construction of an "American" identity (*Women's Narratives*, vii)

By labeling her text a history, Bleecker was placing herself "within the realm of the rational, intellectual being so important to the enlightenment's vision of the ideal citizen" (Harris, *Women's Narratives*, viii). She is positioning her text as not only based in fact, but as a constitutive part of the national narrative of identity construction; it is a "history" of the French and Indian War from a civilian female's perspective. She ruptures the masculine and militaristic narrative of war and national identity as established by the "Sword –in-Hand" seal of the Massachusetts Commonwealth and asserts a feminine counterbalance, a female voice recounting female experiences during

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Bleecker's narrative instead "offers us an opportunity to examine how she used the literary technique for a conservative, racist agenda" (103). Christopher Castiglia argues that Bleecker "also contradicts and modifies the expectations produced by the appearance of 'sensibility' . . . by contradicting the signifiers of suffering," taking suffering from an inflicted state to one that is chosen (131). It becomes instead subjective, "a relished and cultivated form of expression" (Castiglia 131). Julie Ellison and Michelle Burnham share similar views of Bleecker's use of sentimentality with my own, although neither treats *The History* in any extended fashion. Ellison notes that sentimentality is "the practice of mobile connection," constructing associations between emotion and historical events (*Cato's Tears*, 123); Burnham furthers this train of thought by asserting that sentimentality ultimately "offered an ideal entry point into the discourse of history" (94). My view is that Bleecker's use of sentiment is tangential and secondary to her more overt incursions into the historical/political realm.

a war. And it is through this retelling of a woman's experience of domestic and maternal loss and female camaraderie during her captivity that she is, in the words of Nina Baym, "demolishing whatever imagined and intellectual boundaries [her] culture may have been trying to maintain between domestic and public worlds" (1). She is, as a woman author, "claiming on behalf of all women the rights to know and opine on the world outside the home, as well as to circulate [her] knowledge and opinions among the public . . . contribut[ing] to the vital intellectual tasks of forging and publicizing national identity by placing the new nation in world history and giving it a history of its own" (Baym 1). And furthermore, giving that history a decidedly female-centered focus.

Additionally, Bleecker brings the home of Maria Kittle into the immediate focus of her reader. Not just a place to raise a family and sleep at night, Maria's new home with her new husband is a small estate, defined by

a small neat house, surrounded by tall cedars, which gave it a contemplative air. It was situated on an eminence, with a green inclosure in the front, graced by a well cultivated garden on one side, and on the other by a clear stream, which rushing over a bed of white pebble, gave them a high polish, that cast a soft gleam through the water. (Bleecker 4)

It was here that the Kittles "resided in the tranquil enjoyment of that happiness which so much merit and innocence deserved" and where they welcomed their first child, Anna, a year after their marriage and eleven years later a son, William (Bleecker 4). This lovely home-site on a hill would have defined the parameters of Maria's world

and the scope of her responsibilities as an eighteenth century woman.<sup>60</sup> As Laurel Thatcher Ulrich has noted, “By English tradition, a woman’s environment was the family dwelling and the yard or yards surrounding it” (13). Domestic spaces were almost synonymous with the women who governed them. Consequently, the “contemplative” nature and “well cultivated” grounds of the Kittle home correlate to the home’s mistress and her own “civilized” place within the wilderness as well as her ability to maintain that status in the face of the Indians and wilderness that surround her. In fact, Bleecker makes it clear that the Kittle home and its inhabitants are so well-respected by all who knew them that “even the wild savages themselves, who often resorted thither for refreshments when hunting, expressed the greatest regard for them, and admiration of their virtues” (Bleecker 4). These are the same “savages” who will later destroy the idyllic Kittle homestead and take Maria captive, but for now, their acceptance and recognition of the Kittle home as a place of rejuvenation and tranquility serve to validate not only civilization’s rightful place in the “Indian wilderness” but also to legitimize Maria’s governance of it—even the “wild savages” can recognize her and her home’s “civilized,” domesticated “superiority.”

Because feminine authority was restricted to the province of the home, including its surrounding property and any children or servants who occupied that sphere,

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<sup>60</sup> Interestingly, the description of Bleecker’s own homestead, as provided by daughter Margaretta in the biography, is strikingly similar to that of the Kittle home. Margaretta notes that her parents’ Tomahanick estate was built “on a little eminence, which commanded a pleasing prospect” (Fagueres ii). She further describes how the home had to its east “an elegantly simple garden, where fruits and flowers, exotics as well as natives, flourished with beauty” and to its front “a meadow, through which wandered a dimpling stream” (Fagueres ii-iii). She further notes, “this was such a retreat as [Bleecker] had always desired” (iii). It is unclear whether Margaretta intentionally romanticized her childhood home, consciously blending its descriptions with the one mother penned of the Kittle home in *The History*, or whether Bleecker herself patterned the Kittle home after her own. Either way, the similarities between the two women’s residences are striking and invite more comparisons between them.

Bleecker takes great pains to assign this sphere and its inhabitants weighty significance. She makes certain to imbue Maria with transcendent female authority through the exceptional nature of her family, particularly her daughter, Anna. Anna, a child who was “the lovelier resemblance of her lovely mother” provides further validation of the domestic and its female head (Bleecker 4). Bleecker writes,

The Indians, in particular, were extremely fond of the smiling Anna; whenever they found a young fawn, or caught a brood of wood-ducks, or surprised the young beaver in their daily excursions through the forests, they presented them with pleasure to her; they brought her the earliest strawberries, the scarlet plumb, and other delicate wild fruits in painted baskets. (4-5)

Stereotypically portrayed with their rustic painted baskets and “uncivilized” gifts of wild animals and fruits, the Indians in this passage validate not only the goodness and open-mindedness of the Kittles in their familiar relationship with their native neighbors, but also the relevance of motherhood through their approval of Maria’s infant daughter. If the Indians can see the precocity and value of Anna—and act in an accordingly worshipful manner—then she must indeed be a precious child, and her parents, or more specifically her mother in whose image Anna is made, have produced a being that literally bridges the gap between nations, cultures, and races. Motherhood and infancy, specifically white motherhood and infancy, Bleecker is suggesting here, are such powerful states of being that even the “wild savages” of the forest can be brought under their thrall and in such a way that is compatible with and beneficial to white colonial society. It is almost as if colonial motherhood and

childhood have a civilizing and neutralizing effect upon the Indians, something has heretofore has not been achieved with any great regularity or success with male dominated processes such as proselytizing, treaties, and martial law.

Although these same Indians will later function in the text as the threats to and destroyers of Kittle's motherhood, in this instance, they serve to validate it. It is their recognition of Anna's superior graces that substantiates the Kittles', and more particularly Maria's, identities as colonial parents in the New World. These doting parents' hearts "delight to see their beloved one so universally caressed" because the caressing of Anna by the natives serves to demarcate their own identities as non-native indigenes (Bleecker 5). As parents, the Kittles are extensions of their child and the Indians' recognition of the difference and exceptionality of that child reflects back onto them. This new generation of colonist in the New World wilderness has clearly not devolved into "savagery" (or else the Indians would take no notice of young Anna because she would be just like them); therefore, the parents obviously have not degenerated either or they would be incapable of producing such a remarkable child. Furthermore, the fact of the Indians' acceptance of Anna and by extension her parents, places the Kittle family as natural, native members of the landscape. Through their attentions and considerations to Anna and her family, the Indians have essentially "adopted" them, authenticating the Kittles' rightful place in the American wilderness—as native Americans. The Kittles are simultaneously validated as "different from" but also "part of" the native land and people around them by their Indian neighbors. Further, they have been recognized, though the obeisance given to Anna by the Indians, as rightful owners and rulers of the land.

These Indians who bring Anna treasures and offer adoration at the Kittle home operate in much in the same fashion as Rowlandson's Indians before them. They serve to validate white motherhood and womanhood as positions of power in the arena of national relations; however, to produce such corroborative Indians, Bleecker necessarily relegates Indianness to a flattened out and stereotypical fantasy that can only stand to define and highlight white domesticity. The Indians of *The History* are not attempts by Bleecker at an authentic portrayal of Indian reality, but rather updated versions of previous colonial imagination. Although Massachusetts attempted to "modernize" its seal image by reinstating the figure of a male Indian with a more culturally accurate appearance in 1780, Bleecker resists that update and the contingent masculinity it implies by re-inscribing the Indian of colonial imagination in her text.

Bleecker further accentuates the domestic scene of the Kittle home by foregrounding the generative power of the Kittle women within the home through images of nursing babies and pregnant bodies. Bleecker reports that after eleven years of marriage and no signs of a second pregnancy, Mr. Kittle "silently wished for a son, and his desires were at length gratified; [Maria] was delivered of a charming boy, who was named, after him, William" (5). However, soon after the birth of William, Maria and her family find themselves facing the grim realities of the French and Indian War. The Indians from the region around Schochticook, where the Kittles reside, are beginning to make raids into the colonial settlements and committing "the most horrid depredations on the English frontiers" (Bleecker 5), so Mr. Kittle decides for safety purposes to bring his brothers and their wives, one of whom is hugely pregnant, to reside with them for the duration of the war. However, no sooner do the relatives arrive

than “the enemy made further incursions into the country, burning the villages and scalping the inhabitants, neither respecting age or sex” (Bleecker 5).

In this set up, Bleecker is clearly invoking the topos/threat of captivity and the duality of Indian nature. At once threatening and dangerous and at once friendly and neighborly, but ultimately unknowable, these Indians are the same ones of the seal who plague colonial identity, serving to define it through difference at some moments and by mirroring it back as the “almost but not quite” at others. Additionally, the emphasis of the heightened maternal state of the entire Kittle household is especially noteworthy. Maria has just delivered her second child, a boy, who at eight months, is an extension of his mother, still nursing and sleeping in Maria’s chambers. William is not yet a “separate” individual from his mother and is dependent upon her in every way, highlighting Maria’s important function as a literal “Republican mother” who is still physically nourishing the next generation of male leadership. Anna, Maria’s eldest child who is now eleven years old, functions as a miniaturized version of her mother. Tending to her infant brother, doting upon her father, and serving as a mediator between her family/home and the Native others, young Anna is already performing her future role as a potential woman under the guidance and tutelage of her mother.

There is also the hugely pregnant Comelia, the wife of one of Mr. Kittle’s brothers, in the home. The advanced and precarious nature of her situation serves not only to heighten the immediacy of the Kittle family’s evacuation, but also to invoke the sentimentality and horror of the captivity tradition.<sup>61</sup> Comelia, with her productive,

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<sup>61</sup> As Michelle Burnham has noted, “Captivity narratives nearly always begin with the moment of Indian attack, and the descriptions of these attacks incessantly focus the reader’s attention on the abduction or

potent belly as her one outstanding characteristic, becomes, at least on the surface, representative of the metaphoric woman, “the strength or virtue of the nation incarnate, its fecund first matriarch, . . . a role which excludes her from the sphere of public national life” (Boehmer 6). In fact, Maria, Anna, and Comelia, by virtue of their confinement to the home and range of domestic duties, all exemplify the deeply rooted notions of women as “apolitical [and] isolated with their children in a world of pure emotion, far removed from the welter of politics and social struggle” (Orleck 3). Each one epitomizes a different point on the prescribed continuum of a woman’s existence—pre-maternity, maternity, and active motherhood; unfortunately for the Kittle women, however, all of these stages of motherhood are effectively extinguished as the political, masculine world of war and nationalism invade the sanctity of the domestic. During the raid of the Indians against the home, both of Maria’s children are killed, Comelia and her unborn baby are slain, and Maria is marched away to Canada, childless.

Bleecker uses the presence of these maternal bodies in all their forms, and their inevitable and drastic losses, to not only highlight their necessary generative powers in the production and maintenance of a nation, but also to disrupt the gendered paradigms which underpin that nation. Simply through its existence as a written text, Bleecker’s narrative disrupts the official nationalist discourse by challenging it with a woman’s voice and experiences, both of which are excluded from that nationalist narrative.

Further, by framing the narrative with her own history and telling about the maternal,

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death of infants . . . Clearly, this stylized scenario was both politically effective and potently affective” (50). However, it was not a purely fictionalized scenario; Laurel Ulrich notes that “[f]ully one fifth of adult female captives from northern New England were either pregnant or newly delivered of a child” (205).

lived experiences and vulnerabilities of women—recording a feminine “geography” so to speak—Bleecker is further challenging the nation’s understanding of itself through “territorial claims, through the reclamation of the past and the canonisation of [female] heroes” (Boehmer 11). By depicting women not only in their most stereotypical and gendered role, as mothers, but by demonstrating how that maternity interacts and collides with the political realities of a nation still defining itself, Bleecker re-scripts the national picture of martial, Anglo-American masculinity and its Indian counterpart depicted on the Massachusetts’ seals in a bold way. As Annelise Orleck notes,

[I]t is impossible to speak about motherhood without speaking of social systems of power and domination. For, while motherhood is an individual and highly personal experience, it is also a social institution, shaped by and tied to the ideology of the nuclear family. . . [M]otherhood is always a politicized role, especially in its most romantic and idealized portrayals. . . The institution of Motherhood with a capital M regulates acceptable behavior, restricts expression, and designates appropriate spaces for action. (5)

Bleecker is revising and foregrounding the institution of motherhood, in essence, enacting “motherist” politics in the pages of *The History* through which she suggests that that maternity, beyond merely defining a woman by her proximity to it, affects the stability and perpetuation of nationalism, as well as the history of a nation in profound and very political ways (Orleck 5).

### **Border Crossings: The Domestic Ruptures the Political**

Once Bleecker posits the re-visionary idea of the validity and potency of the domestic/maternal, she moves directly into having that sphere intersect with the masculine, political sphere. As the extended Kittle family makes preparations for their departure from Tomhanick due to the encroaching battles, a group of neighboring Indians who “always seemed well affected to the English” approaches the home (Bleecker 5). An older Indian, speaking on behalf of the others “desired the family to compose themselves, assuring them they should be cautioned against any approaching danger. To enforce his argument, he presents Maria with a belt interwoven with silk and beads” (Bleecker 5). As she takes the token offering, the Indian also offers Maria this promise: “There, receive my token of friendship: we go to dig up the hatchet, to sink i’ in the heads of your enemies; we shall guard this wood with a wall of fire—you shall be safe” (Bleecker 5). Maria, now with “a warm glow of hope deep[ening] in [her] cheeks,” orders wine to be brought to the “friendly savages” to signify her acceptance of the proffered deal (Bleecker 5).

However, lest she be too hasty in bestowing her faith in the word of an Indian, Maria seeks additional reassurance from the Indians. She expresses her concerns that necessity or “neglect of promise” may cause the tribe to abandon her family, even after this promise was made. The elder of the group, after having given a token of sincerity before, now makes a more solemn, verbal oath to relieve Maria of her concerns:

Neglect of my promise! . . . No, Maria, I am a true man; I shoot the  
arrow up to the Great Captain every new moon: depend upon it, I will  
trample down briars round your dwelling, that you do not hurt your feet.

(Bleecker 6)

This brief speech, although a mix of racist stereotype, caricature, and romantic subservience with its Christianized rendition of Native belief and “Noble Savage” sentimentality, placates Maria. “[W]ith a sort of exultation,” she returns to her home to relate the news to her husband who, it turns out, had absented himself from the meeting, “having formed some suspicion of the sincerity of their friendship and not being willing to be duped by the dissimulation” (Bleecker 6). She boastfully tells him, “[O]ur fears may again subside: Oh my dear! My happiness is trebled into rapture, by seeing you and my sweet babes out of danger” (Bleecker 6).

In this vignette, Bleecker is masterfully disrupting the male-dominant hierarchical structure of the family unit and consequently, the nation. It is the lead female character—a wife and mother—who ventures outside to not only face the “savage” threat of the Indians, but also to negotiate with them for the safety of her family and succeed at it. The dialogue and descriptors chosen by Bleecker to characterize Maria clearly indicate her subjective agency as well; she returns “exultant” to share the news of her victory because she has conducted—“seen”—her entire family, including her husband, out of danger on her own. Maria has stepped into the authoritative, masculine role in this instance, going out to meet a high-ranking representative of another nation and then not only accepting, but also granting the symbolic gifts that serve to bind the alliance, even insisting on a restatement of the terms of the deal before she acquiesces. She has in effect, served as an international diplomat but on a singularly domestic level; the deal with the head of another nation is made to protect her specific home and family within the confines of her very own yard,

but during an international, nation-defining crisis—the French and Indian War. This alliance between nations, an opportunity to share information and defenses in a wartime situation, is made and confirmed by Maria and without the presence or sanctification of a male authority figure. Even more interesting is the fact that Bleecker chooses not to mediate the absence of a male authority at the Indian conference by providing any extenuating circumstances that could have physically prevented Mr. Kittle’s presence at the meeting; she makes it clear that he simply chooses not to be in attendance. Bleecker is clearly interrogating naturalized beliefs of the legitimacy of masculine political and domestic leadership and positing the possibility of feminine leadership.

When the Kittle family home is later attacked by Maria’s “friendly Indians,” the same ones who swore to protect her only the evening before, Bleecker further disrupts the masculinized power relations of nation through an intense moment of recognition and mis-recognition. As the Indians storm the home in a violent attack, Bleecker writes,

Maria soon recognized her old friend that presented her with the belt, through the loads of shells and feathers that disguised him. This was not time, however, to irritate him, by reminding him of his promise; yet guessing her thoughts, he anticipated her remonstrance. ‘Maria,’ said he, ‘be not afraid, I have promised to protect you; you shall live and dance with us around the fire at Canada: but you have one small incumbrance, which, if not removed, will much impede your progress thither.’ So

saying he seized her laughing babe by the wrists, and forcibly endeavoured to draw him from her arms. (11)<sup>62</sup>

In this moment, Maria and her attacker are both recognized for who they are, or at least were the night before: independent parties engaging in a contractual exchange. Not only does Maria recognize the Indian, despite his costume, as the legal entity who gave her his word, which she expects him to keep—after all she is tempted to scold him and call to mind their deal—but he also recognizes her, both as “Mrs. Kittle” the acting head of this household and as his partner in the deal. She is expecting and deserving of not only their deal being kept, but also an explanation as to what is going on, and he gives it to her. He intends to keep his end of the deal, it turns out, and take Maria away to Canada where she will be safe; however, he intends to do so at the fate of her family and children and home.

Undeniably, this passage smacks of racist and sexualized stereotypes with the threat of the dark other desiring the white woman for a possible sexual relationship, and its rendering of the Indian, much like Said’s *Oriental*, as an “inveterate[e] lia[r], . . . ‘lethargic and suspicious,’ and in everything oppose[d] [to] the clarity, directness, and nobility of the Anglo-Saxon race” (Said 39). Bleecker has produced an Indian that, in the words of Gerald Vizenor in his seminal work *Manifest Manners*, is an “occidental

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<sup>62</sup> “Be not afraid” is the same phrase used by Jesus when he walks across the sea to appear to his apostles in a nearly fatal sea storm in Matthew 14:27, Mark 6:50, and John 6:20. Jesus also uses this phrase to calm the ruler of a synagogue in Mark 5:36 before he enters to restore a twelve-year-old girl to life. Having a “savage” Indian speak the words of Jesus to Maria, words evocative of Christ’s redemptive, sacred powers in moments of life and death, is an interesting and perhaps contentious move on Bleecker’s part. I would suggest she is attempting to legitimize the Indian’s vow of protection made earlier to Maria and his honorable intent to keep it rather than legitimizing or Christianizing the Indian himself. Bleecker is validating Maria’s political negotiation with the Indian, showing that the Indian, not unlike like Jesus, protects and saves those who trust in him and his word.

invention” (11), a “simulation” of Indianness that enacts “the absence of the tribal real,” (4) and provides for the colonial audience a “vicious encounter[r] with the antisel[f] of civilization, the invented savage” (7). She has, in short, reproduced the flattened out Indian image of the Bay Colony seal in prose form; she has also reproduced its inherent anxiety and ambivalence concerning colonial identity. The Indian’s presence in this scene, like his precursors’ on the seal, is one of both resemblance and menace. Because he keeps his word to Maria, offers her no unwanted sexual advances, and transports her safely to Canada to a supportive, female community, his presence becomes one of resemblance to colonial sensibility rather than one of utter difference; yet his wholesale destruction of white domesticity and family, underscores his “savage” otherness. Similarly, he at once serves to validate Maria and her rightful place in the domain of politics and history, but his Indianness undermines any authority his actions may bestow upon her. His existence in the narrative, although providing a rupture through which Bleecker can assert feminine agency, ultimately highlights a fracture in the colonial certainty of absolute difference and reveals the limitations of colonial domination. Consequently, he drops out of textual existence after this point in the narrative. Designed by Bleecker as a tool for validating the legitimacy of the domestic and the feminine in the domain of national politics and history, this Indian quickly becomes a figure of ambivalence and anxiety (a figure of “almost but not quite”) and must be erased from the narrative (Bhabha, “Of Mimicry” 129). Much like Rowlandson’s Christian Indians who threatened her own authorial status as a Christian exemplar in the wilderness, Bleecker’s male Indian threatens also threatens her own authorial status, as well as her heroine’s, as being capable of political agency because

he, too, exercises it within the text. After all, how exceptional is a white woman, author or character, who rises above her subjugated place to enter the historic and political realms as an illustrative prototype when a duplicitous, murdering Indian can do it, too? Perhaps most importantly, though, Bleecker's Indian must be erased because even in his most threatening moments he challenges the naturalized belief in the authority and superiority of colonial manhood by enacting standards of feminine protection and valuation of which his white counterparts are incapable. Such a move, while certainly working to destabilize white patriarchy, also potentially posits an Indian "superiority" over white womanhood. Bleecker must do away with her male Indianness in order to maintain feminine agency. In authorial moves such as these, Bleecker is successfully providing subversive dialogue for the silent, masculine images of the Revolutionary era Massachusetts seals—both Anglo and Indian. It is a dialogue that clearly records the absence of Anglo masculinity and erases the potential disruption of the Indian.

### **Men Behaving Badly, Women Behaving Boldly: A Study in Contrast**

One of the most intriguing aspects of Bleecker's narrative is her extended contrast of male and female characters' behaviors in moments of familial and national crisis, and her triangulation of that contrast with Indianness. Most captivity narratives recount the experiences from a singular perspective—that of a single gender, single captive, and single race. Bleecker's *The History of Maria Kittle* distances itself from this formula, however, in that it juxtaposes the differing reactions of men and women in the same or similar situations throughout the entire narrative and positions those reactions in close proximity to Indianness. Men and women both face brutal assaults, the loss of family and children, and the physical hardships of captivity in detail in *The*

*History*, and while Bleecker is certainly writing about these experiences through the gendered filter of womanhood, both hers and Maria's, she is still attempting to provide an extended view of both genders in the circumstances surrounding Indian captivity and in contact with Indians themselves. In doing so, Bleecker creates an opportunity to not only represent both genders, but also to critique them, particularly the white male perspective, when they are confronted with the legitimizing-yet-threatening Indianness of colonial imagination, and then offer alternative visions of how they are viewed in terms of nationhood and the family.

On the morning before Maria's Indian "friends" descend upon the Kittle home, Mr. Kittle and his brother, Peter, set off on a preplanned but ill-advised hunting trip in order not to "intimidate the neighbours by cloistering [them]selves up with women and children" (Bleecker 6). The two men are on their return home at the end of the day when they end up exchanging fire with a pair of Indians who had tracked the Kittle brothers from the sound of Peter's gunfire at an unsuspecting doe.<sup>63</sup> Peter is immediately shot by the Indians, forcing Maria's husband to fight back, killing both Indian attackers. He loads his brother's body onto his horse and returns home in an understandably agitated state. Once there, Mr. Kittle laments to Maria, "[M]y angel! The very "savages" that solemnly engaged to protect us have deprived him of life" and that he believes they attacked "no doubt . . . from some private pique" (Bleecker 8-9).

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<sup>63</sup> Peter spots a "fat doe walking securely on the beach" and shoots it, as he and his brother had vowed not to return home without killing anything (Bleecker 7). Bleecker comments that "This seeming success was, however, the origin of their calamities; for immediately after, two savages appeared," pointedly connecting the two men's competitive and rash sport hunt with the proceeding attack and deaths (Bleecker 7). Sharon Harris notes that it is a pregnant doe that Peter kills, which foreshadows "the many mother/child deaths in the narrative. It also recalls the shift in 'To Miss Ten Eyck' from the human mother/child to the doe and her child" (*Executing*, 104). Bleecker does not definitely state if the doe was in fact pregnant in her narrative.

These are interesting comments from Mr. Kittle, both in terms of their admonitory tone toward Maria, their stereotypical portrayal of Indians, and their complete disjuncture from the historical moment in which the Kittles reside. Through his invocation of the “very savages” that had visited Maria the previous night, Mr. Kittle is not only casting dispersion upon the duplicitous nature of these specific Indians (it couldn’t have been any others), but he is also implicating Maria in the death of his brother, intimating that her gullibility and her deference to the Indians during their visit were at the root of this attack. He also dismissively nullifies the importance and validity of Maria’s pact with the Indians; clearly, her negotiation skills and word were not highly valued by the Indians because they violated the agreement almost immediately and in the most violent of ways. The word of a woman, apparently much like that of an Indian, at least in Mr. Kittle’s eyes, is not something of weight and consequence.

Even more significant is Mr. Kittle’s denial of the war-torn environment in which he and his family live. By claiming the same Indians who formed an alliance with Maria are the ones who attacked him and his brother due to some trivial offense, Mr. Kittle is not only erasing the existence of the various tribes with differing allegiances (not to mention appearances, languages and customs) in his region, but he is also diminishing the war around them to nothing more than a personal affront between neighbors. Maria’s treaty and the Indians’ willingness to enter into it to form an allegiance between nations becomes nothing more than a misguided and broken promise made between petty and feuding neighbors instead of a potential political alliance. Further, the fact that the Indians willingly recognize Maria’s feminine agency

and deal with her directly and successfully concerning matters of military intelligence—things Mr. Kittle summarily dismisses—highlights the circumscribed racist and masculinist beliefs of Mr. Kittle and positions the Indian other as a legitimizing force in Bleecker’s feminist revision. When read in this manner, Mr. Kittle’s oblivion to the realities around him and his antithetical position to Indianness become a powerful critique of the kind of misuse of white, masculine agency, or lack thereof, that Bleecker is aggressively pursuing.

Once he has brought his brother’s body home and explained everything to Maria, Mr. Kittle prepares to set off once again, this time to procure wagons so he can evacuate his family from the area. The evacuation has already been suspended once by Mr. Kittle because after the Indians’ warning and promise of protection to Maria the night before, he determined that “to be suspicious might be suddenly fatal”; therefore, the family should delay their departure for a few days even though he placed no confidence in the word of an Indian (Bleecker 6). Now, however, Mr. Kittle is ready to swing the evacuation plan into action, leaving his family unprotected, despite the fact that he just engaged in a deadly fire fight in the near vicinity of his home, a site that even he himself now describes as a “hostile place” (Bleecker 9). Maria begs her husband not to leave her and their children, even chastising him, “Is it not enough . . . that you have escaped one danger, but must you be so very eager to encounter others?” (Bleecker 9). Young Anna also begs her papa not to go:

Oh papa! Do not leave us; if any accident should happen to you,  
mamma will die of grief, and what will become of poor Anna and Billy?

Who will care for me? Who will teach me when my papa, my mamma's  
papa is gone? (Bleeker 9)

However, Mr. Kittle, in a manly show of bravado (or obtuseness), tells Anna, "[T]here is no danger!" and after kissing his wife and babies, promptly departs, promising to return in an hour (Bleeker10).

Both Maria and Anna in this instance are pointedly interrogating the logic and sanity of Mr. Kittle's behavior. Maria sharply critiques his rash actions that earlier in the day cost his brother his life and served as the opening volley, the "origin of calamities," that brings the Kittle family and home into the war sooner rather than later and quite possibly is the entire reason the Indians later attack: to revenge what they view as an assault stemming from war-based allegiances. Anna similarly questions her father's plans to abandon the family. In the self-absorbed way of children, Anna wonders who will care for and teach her and her younger brother once "her mamma's papa is gone." These female characters confront Mr. Kittle with very real concerns over the most basic of necessities that are stereotypically the province of the male authority figure in a family: the guarantee of physical presence/governance, protection, and the provision of necessities, including educational guidance. It is the women who are thinking in logical terms of preservation, both of the sanctity of the family unit and the safety of its head and protector, not the actual head and protector himself. He, on the other hand, is behaving in self-destructive and impulsive ways, a pattern that Mr. Kittle is doomed to repeat for the remainder of the text. After the destruction of his family and home, he becomes reduced to a state of emotional instability and confusion, suffering from a lingering illness for six weeks and then throwing himself into a suicidal

enlistment in the Army. He never once seeks answers about the attack, attempts to rebuild a domestic scene, or considers that anyone in his family could have survived or been captured. Mr. Kittle's culturally defined role as masculine provider and protector is completely forfeited and forgotten by him. Even when he does have a moment proactive agency late in the text and decides that his brother Henry just might be alive and determines to search for him, Mr. Kittle's masculine priorities are still entirely out of the prescribed, hierarchical order. Rather than seeking his wife (or her female substitute) so that he could repopulate the devastated republic and rebuild the familial sphere, Mr. Kittle throws himself into a search for his brother, which, even if successful, would be a sterile and fruitless reunion that would rupture not only the structure of the conventional, male-governed family unit, but also the patriarchal structure of the nation, which is built upon the microcosm of the family. Instead of attempting to preserve or reconstruct his family (and by proxy, the nation)—which is his defined role as its masculine head—Mr. Kittle's behavior becomes just as destructive for the nation as the assailing Indians' had been against his own family. Bleecker has essentially created a speaking, narrative version of the Anglo-American soldier on the "Sword-in-Hand" seal through the character of Mr. Kittle. Her version, however, simply exposes the flaws and failures of white masculinity rather than perpetuating an ambivalent and static impression of its potency. When Mr. Kittle does reunite with Maria in Canada after two long years, it is quite by accident, and only after he has reunited with his brother Henry first. The family dynamic and the drive to sustain it are subverted by Mr. Kittle's disordered masculine mind and lack of focus.

Conversely, after the witnessing and surviving the trauma of the attacks on her family as well as her own captivity, Maria becomes more poised, self-assertive and focused on reconstructing her domestic and familial domain. While she certainly does engage in grief-stricken soliloquies and tearful lamentations frequently, Maria also maintains her reason and her maternal sensibilities. Even when she has determined not to eat anything the Indians offer her—in effect committing suicide—Maria’s brother makes a passionate plea that she should continue to live because her husband will “soon get [them] exchanged” (Bleecker 18). However, Maria acquiesces to Henry’s pleadings only after he rouses her with the suggestion that “the smiles of a new lovely progeny may again dawn a paradise of happiness on [her]” (Bleecker 18). With this, she tells Henry, “O my brother! How consoling do your words sink on my heart! Though my reason tells me your arguments are improbably and fallacious, yet it soothes the tempest of my soul” (Bleecker 18). Maria is still thinking rationally and about domestic preservation; she knows her husband isn’t going to ride to her rescue because he hasn’t done anything that logical or assertive so far, but the potentiality of regaining her domestic, maternal domain is enough of an incentive to keep her going. Although Maria is certainly responding to the pathos of her brother’s plea, her ability to logically comprehend the actuality of her situation and her likelihood of rescue is still intact. It is her maternal and domestic sensibilities that propel her forward to survival, while it is Mr. Kittle’s failure to honor and preserve these institutions that handicaps him.

In a similar episode that highlights of the starkly contrasting gendered perceptions of the domestic, Comelia Kittle, the wife of one of Mr. Kittle’s brothers who is never named has to beg her “rash, rash, unfortunate husband” not to open the

door to the Indian attackers when they raid the home (Bleecker 10). Hugely pregnant, Comelia falls to her knees, beseeching her husband, “O pity me! Have mercy on yourself, on me, on my child!” as he numbly heads toward to door having given all for lost (Bleecker 10). Her final plea for mercy, as Christopher Castiglia aptly observes, is “made not to the Indians, but of her nominal ‘protector’” (126). Comelia’s husband’s half-hearted response is just as bewildering and irresponsible as his brother’s earlier response is to Maria and Anna when he is leaving to procure evacuation supplies; he says to Comelia, “Alas! My love . . . what can we do? Let us be resigned to the will of God” (Bleecker 11). Mr. Comelia then, upon opening the door to the war party, promptly receives “a fatal bullet in his bosom, and [falls] backward writhing in agonies of death” (Bleecker 11). Unfortunately, Comelia herself and her unborn baby, also pay for her husband’s reckless behavior. Indians storm into the Kittle home and after scalping her husband, one advances on Comelia, cleaving her forehead with his tomahawk and then, “not yet satisfied with blood; he deformed her lovely body with deep gashes; and, tearing her unborn babe away, dashed it to pieces against the stone wall; with many additional circumstances of infernal cruelty” (Bleecker 11). Cruelties, Bleecker suggests, which are tied to, if not caused by, white masculine misguidance and ineptitude.

Enabling this critique of masculine “governance” of the domestic sphere are Bleecker’s Indians. Without the presence of this “savage” other who throws the hierarchy and stability of the domestic sphere into fractured disarray, Bleecker would be unable to offer her revisions of those structures. As the Indians invade, scatter, and destroy the Kittle home and massacre the family, previously held regulations about

gendered participation in the public arena are suspended, and extraordinary behaviors and usurpations of those roles, particularly by women, are excused. In the (seemingly) understandable absence or failure of white male authority in the face of the disorder and violence of Indianness, white female authority and agency can emerge and offer an alternative vision of the preservation and guidance of the familial, domestic domain, and by proxy, the nation.

However, Bleecker does not evacuate all masculinity from the picture; she instead simply racializes it, figuring the invading Indians as male. This is where Bleecker's social critique of patriarchal tyranny is its most aggressive and her racialization of the domestic most obvious. Although it is clearly the "savage" Native other rending the Kittle home and family into fragments in this scene, it is also just as clearly the *male* Native other, the counterpart to the Anglo-American figure on the "Sword-in-Hand" seal. It is Indian's masculine disregard of and contempt for the sanctity and vulnerability of the white, feminine domestic that Bleecker is certainly analyzing, but because this Indian invasion occurs very closely on the narrative heels of the failures and trancies of white masculinity—failures and trancies that directly led to this attack—Bleecker is simultaneously criticizing white masculinity. Through the presence of the male Indian, Bleecker is pointedly interrogating the absence of the male EuroAmerican. If Bleecker had removed all vestiges of masculinity, white or Indian, from this scene of invasion and destruction of the domestic realm, her critique of the gendered, patriarchal structures of colonial society would be nonexistent. Similarly, if that invading masculinity was not "Indianized," she, as the crusader for white, feminine

domesticity would have no authority from which to launch her attack. Consequently, nearly all Indian encounters within Bleecker's text are with male Indians.<sup>64</sup>

Bleecker further bolsters her critique of masculinity by writing it into the lives of other female characters in her text besides just the Kittle women. She removes these instances of masculine ineptitude from the realm of isolated occurrences in a single family into the realm of widespread and rampant reality. For example, once in captivity in Canada, Maria's fellow captives tell her strikingly similar stories of masculine desertion and betrayal from their own lives. Mrs. Bratt, for example, who lived in Schohticook near Maria and had been acquainted with her prior to captivity, relates how as a widow, she dedicated herself to the education of her two sons in order to find a "suspension of [her] sorrows in the execution of [her] duty" (Bleecker 27). However, when the war encroaches upon their home, Mrs. Bratt watches in horror as her youngest son, Charles, is shot beside her in the doorway by a party of Indians, and her eldest son, Richard, flees on horseback, leaving her behind to defend her son's body from being scalped and rage against the attackers. Mrs. Bratt is mindful of her domestic duties,

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<sup>64</sup> Interestingly, there is one encounter between Maria and a female Indian. It is after Maria and Henry have been stripped of their English clothes and are facing their last stop at an Indian settlement before they reach Montreal. As the captives are canoed across a river, Maria tells Henry, "Here, my brother! . . . I shall find some of my own sex, to whom simple Nature, no doubt, has taught humanity; this is the first precept she inculcates in the female mind, and this they generally retain through life, in spite of every evil propensity" (Bleecker 22). Upon reaching shore, however, the hopeful Maria encounters "the fair, tawny villagers" who attack her and Henry with "clubs and a shower of stones, accompanying their strokes with the most virulent language" (Bleecker 22). Among the group is an old, deformed squaw who "with the rage of Tisiphone, flew to Maria, aiming a pine-knot at her head, and would certainly have given the wretched mourner he quietus had she not been opposed by the savage that guarded Mrs. Kittle" (Bleecker 22-23). The guard, after scolding the woman, must finally pull the cudgel from the woman's hand and force her to the ground where she is left to "howl and yell at leisure" (Bleecker 23). I argue that this encounter, although differently gendered than the others, is still working to racialize the domestic and forefront the agency of white womanhood. Maria has expectations of meeting up and possibly bonding with other "civilized," domesticated women; instead, however, she is greeted with furious, savage violence at the hands of female Indian others. Clearly, Bleecker is suggesting not only the competency if white womanhood, but also its exceptionality.

educating and protecting her sons in the absence of her husband, and resisting the Indians who truncate her efforts; her sons, however, are unable to fulfill their masculine duties and are erased from picture.

Mrs. Willis, another English captive, relates her story of hiding in the attic with her two young daughters as her husband, “all pale and astonished” is threatened and then led away by a party of Indians, who set fire to the home before they depart (Bleecker 30). After struggling to escape the burning house with her thirteen-year-old daughter and six month old infant only to hide in a hollow tree for the remainder of the night, Mrs. Willis is horrified to realize the next morning that her infant is dead in her arms and she and her remaining daughter are homeless, destitute, and alone. She is literally without masculine guidance or her domestic realm, much like Maria was. At this point, however, Mrs. Willis’ story takes an interesting departure from the other women’s tales of captivity and loss. She tells the women how, after a period of weeping “incessantly; and hearing nothing from [her] dear Willis,” she resolved to “traverse the wilds of *Canada* in pursuit of him” (Bleecker, italics in original, 31). Braving the opposition of her friends and even petitioning the Governor for permission to proceed with her plan, Mrs. Willis reports that undeterred, she “sat out, flushed with hope, and indefatigable industry and painful solicitude” to redeem her husband (Bleecker 32). Unfortunately, she is unable to do so, because after finally arriving in Montreal, she finds out that her husband had “perished in jail, on his first arrival, of a dysentery” (Bleecker 32). Mrs. Willis says,

Here my expectations terminated in despair. I had no money to return with, and indeed but for my Sophia no inclination—the

whole world seemed dark and cheerless to me as the fabled region of *Cimmeria*, and I was nigh perishing for very want, when Mrs. Bratt, hearing of my distress, sought my acquaintance: she kindly participated my sorrows, and too—too generously shared her purse and bed with me. (Bleecker, italics in original, 32)

In instances such as these where masculine agency is either absent or incapacitated, Bleecker, as Christopher Castiglia has argued, is clearly offering critique of “the masculine agency at the center of conventional rescue plots” and positing female characters who are “rational and courageous . . . either aided by other women or self-delivered” (125-6). Sharon M. Harris similarly sees such instances in Bleecker’s text as condemning of “white men who fail in their role as protectors” (104). However, I argue that beyond this simple critique of gender roles and “flipping the binary” is a more complex portrayal of men’s and women’s duties in nation building that occurs throughout *The History of Maria Kittle*. Although Bleecker is trafficking in racist, gendered and sentimental stereotypes to characterize the action and the players in scenes such as these, she has disrupted this formula with insight from her perspective as woman writer during the Revolutionary war in order to question the societal paradigms already in place and to posit new possibilities for refiguring them, possibilities that include women in meaningful ways.

Notably, Bleecker does not stop her critique of white patriarchy at the boundary of the domestic realm. Beyond merely examining how fathers and sons manage and/or mismanage their own families and homes within the confines of those homes, Bleecker also scrutinizes that same masculinity in a broader context that transcends the domestic;

she critiques white, adult manhood as it functions in a far more public, masculine realm: the Indian wilderness. Bleecker depicts white manhood in direct contact and conflict with Indianness, as well as in stark contrast to white womanhood in the same environs, in order to rupture and revise the masculine standards that undergird colonial society. Consequently, she is able to politicize and historicize not only femininity as it participates in nation-defining events, but also bring her narrative of masculine critique into national focus.

For example, Bleecker devotes much narrative attention to Maria's brother-in-law Henry, the only other member of the Kittle family taken captive along with Maria. Henry is another male figure who behaves in as questionable a manner as his brothers and other male protectors do. While he is not as blatantly neglectful or rash as the unnamed Mr. Comelia and Maria's husband are, or as prone to desertion as the husbands and sons of Mrs. Bratt and Mrs. Willis, Henry still exhibits traits that bring the whole conception of masculine protection and leadership into question, especially when it is directly confronted with the threat of Indianness and contrasted with Maria's femininity. When Maria and Henry are first taken prisoner and being marched away from the smoking, flaming inferno that was once their home filled with their loved ones, Maria gives vent to her anger, sorrow, and rage over the situation:

There, there my brother, my children are wrapt in arching sheets of flames, that used to be circled in my arms! They are entombed in ruins that breathed their slumbers on my bosom! Yet, oh! Their spotless souls even now rise from this chaos of blood and fire, and are pleading our injured cause before our God, my brother! (Bleecker 13)

Maria's sentimental and vivid description of the sight before her infuses maternal, domestic imagery with the religious in an attempt to reconcile the horrific events that just occurred. Her focus is the loss of her family and home and its spiritual continuation in heaven. Maria's children are still with her and still her concern, albeit on a spiritual level. However now, the mother and child roles are somewhat reversed. Maria recognizes that her children will now be the ones to protect and look after her by pleading with God for her safety. The mother now looks to her children, rather than any earthly masculine authority (even her brother-in-law standing beside her) for deliverance. Maria's feminine, maternal sensibilities are clearly still in place. Henry, however, "replied only in sighs and groans, he scarcely heard her; horror had froze up the avenues of his soul; and all amazed and all trembling, he followed his leaders like a person in a troublesome dream" (Bleeker 13-14). What a contrast! Masculine "brotherhood" struck dumb, offering no resistance to, no critique of, no outrage over the events that have just transpired, only dumbly following its new "leaders"—an act that clearly bestows the Indians with a power, according to Bleeker's racist views, that they do not deserve.

As the captivity and the march to Canada progress, Henry again displays questionable behaviors in terms of his prescribed masculine role. Always careful to please the Indians and smilingly obey their commands, Henry becomes, in effect, the model prisoner; however, because of the perceived inferiority, degeneracy, and "savagery" of his captors, Henry's supplication to the Indians (while carefully justified or at least explained by Bleeker) becomes a critique of his own manhood and national

allegiances.<sup>65</sup> For example, on the morning after their captivity, when Henry and Maria are caught conversing in English over Maria's refusal to eat the Indian's food, Bleecker notes, "the savages were inquisitive to know the subject of [the conversation], [and] at the same time enjoin[ed] them both never to utter a syllable in their presence except in their own uncouth dialect" (Bleecker 18). Maria says nothing to this demand, but Henry immediately relates the gist of his and Maria's conversation to their captors with some minor changes. He, of course, omits the sentimental overtones of his entreaty that blatantly appealed to Maria's roles as wife and mother, and excludes Maria's refusal to take nourishment from "bloody hands yet dropping with murder" (Bleecker 17). However, he also turns Maria's refusal of food due to anger and grief into one of taste. Henry proclaims to the Indians, "his sister, objecting to their method of preparing food, had desired him to prevail with them to indulge her in dressing her meals herself" (Bleecker 18). Maria's reasons for not eating, described by Bleecker as stemming from "the dignity of conscious merit in distress," are reduced by Henry to superficial issues of culinary preference (Bleecker 17). Further, Henry's quick response to the Indians, and in their own tongue as requested, is also an attempt to place Maria back into her domestic place even in the disorder of the wilderness.

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<sup>65</sup> Certainly, the willing compliance of Maria's brother-in-law Henry during his captivity with the Indians can be viewed as a strategic method of survival and subversion. As noted by Zabelle Stodola and James Levernier, most "tortures were reserved for adult male captives. . . . Because captives were tortured primarily to avenge the death of Indian warriors, adult men were generally considered the appropriate object of Indian vengeance" (3). Therefore, Henry could conceivably be working as much to ensure his own survival as that of Maria's through his careful, obsequious actions toward his captors. However, as I will argue, because of the close proximity of Henry's acquiescent actions and Maria's contrary ones, Bleecker is clearly critiquing Henry's faltering responsibilities in his masculine role rather than positing an alternative mode of survival.

By requesting from his captors the permission for Maria to prepare her own food, Henry is struggling to reassert his masculine dominance over not only Maria, but the Indians as well. He has already been emasculated and deposed from his position of authority through the very act of his captivity and the destruction of hierarchical white domesticity; consequently, Henry tries to restore some semblance of “civilized” order by re-domesticating Maria and requesting that the Indians adhere to that order. As author, however, Bleecker subverts this attempt by white masculinity to reaffirm itself by already declaring it subject to Indianness; Henry’s immediate and submissive response to the Indians’ demands, particularly in the face of Maria’s noncompliance and silence, clearly indicate his subjugation to the Indian, and ultimately his subservience to Maria. When the Indians do grant Henry’s supposed request from Maria and bring a brood of wood pigeons for her, it is Henry who “cleaned and broiled them on sticks, with an officious solicitude to please his sister” (Bleecker 18). Henry is clearly functioning in a feminized role.

Later, Henry’s “eager to please” manner again receives careful attention from Bleecker. As the captives are approaching their final destination in Canada, they are stripped of their English clothes and “attired each with remnants of old blankets” (Bleecker 20). Maria expostulates with her captors, but realizing she is getting nowhere with them, finally retires to some brush to arrange her blanket the best she can and to “indulg[e] herself in the luxury of sorrow” (Bleecker 20). Such a scene is a prime example of what Christopher Castiglia has called Bleecker’s “play with the content of sensibility” in which she not only modifies the expectations of a sentimental text, but also “complicates the sentimental depiction of women as domestic, emotional, and

spiritual, juxtaposing the world of feeling . . . with the world of action” (132).

However, I argue that Bleecker goes beyond the mere complication of women’s domestic roles to critique and assess the perceived superiority and dominance of masculinity, because she places in close proximity to such a stereotypically feminine response, a starkly contrasting masculine one. Bleecker writes,

Henry, sensible that [the Indians] expected more fortitude from him, and that if he sunk under his adverse fortune he should be worse treated, affected to be cheerful; he assisted them in catching salmon, with which the lake abounds; an incredible quantity of wild fowl frequenting the lake also, he laid snares for those on the lesser sort (not being allowed fire-arms), and succeeded so well that his dexterity was highly commended, and in night coming on they regaled themselves on the fruits of their industry. (Bleecker20-21)

Although in this passage Bleecker depicts Henry in a manner that showcases his masculine abilities in hunting, providing, and assisting his captors, she also suggests that Henry is seeking the praise and recognition of the Indians. His efforts to be cheerful and supportive of his captors’ activities—in effect helping them to provide for their own domestic, familial needs—produces a rupture in the paradigm of white manhood and its relationship to nationhood. As one of the designated providers for and leaders of the fledgling American nation and on a smaller scale, his own family, Henry, as a white male, should be serving the interests and needs of his own nation. Instead, however, he is working diligently to meet the domestic needs of another nation, that of the Indian other, and striving cheerfully to meet their cultural expectations of manhood.

Henry is no longer operating within the accepted and expected gendered and raced paradigms of colonial America; instead, he has entirely and willingly inverted them.

Bleecker is clearly suggesting, through the actions of male characters like Henry, Mr. Kittle, and the other husbands and sons that the naturalized colonial system of patriarchy is perhaps flawed and subject to not only history and its complex progression, but also to the various cultural lenses through which it might be viewed. White masculine patriarchy is clearly not enacted and deployed in universally unchanging forms; there are varying degrees of “manhood” that emerge and subside depending on the situation, the cultural environment, and the aptitude of the man wielding it. Bleecker is clearly suggesting that not all men are capable of appropriately managing the wholesale power over the domestic that is invested in them; however, some women just might be. Once the masculine realm makes its incursion into the domestic/feminine realm and leaves it fractured, vulnerable, and without patriarchal attendance, Bleecker authorizes an active feminine response that does not need masculine validation, and consequently, can act independently to preserve the sanctity of the home, family, and ultimately the nation.

### **Women’s Voices: Speaking and Writing the Domestic History of a Nation**

In her own life, Bleecker sought for many years after the Revolutionary War to recreate the supportive women’s community she shared with her younger half-sister Susan and her mother Margareta at her beloved Tomhanick estate. It was something she was never able to realize due to the fractured nature of her family after the war; however, that did not prohibit her from attempting to recreate it within the pages of *The History*. The final passages of Maria’s narrative are played out in Canada, where Maria

has spent the two years of her captivity ensconced in a women's group, visiting, working, and chronicling her life with her sympathetic "sister[s] in affliction" (Bleecker 27). Much of the time spent with the women, who include French Canadians as well as English captives like Maria, is stereotypically feminine and homely, devoted to the exchange of gifts and womanly sentiment. It is also, once again, restricted entirely to the confines of the domestic realm. Bleecker, however, infuses the gatherings of this feminine community and its discussions with topics of national and political concern, once again articulating the potential role of women in nation building. The women, although appropriately positioned within their proscribed domestic environment, and appropriately desirous of their former married and maternal identities, participate in a uniquely female-centered nation within a larger nation. They compose another circuit of empowered women writers/narrators and readers/auditors that are united across cultural, experiential, and historical boundaries much like the circuit Bleecker constructed at the onset of her narrative between herself, her sister Susan, and her female audience. These women within the confines of their group are able to discuss at length the horrors and casualties of war, their experiences as women during and after the war, and even their own understandings of what caused the war. In a telling moment in the final pages of *The History*, one of the French women, Madame De R., after hearing Mrs. Willis' tale of misfortune, expostulates, "Would to Heaven . . . that brutal nations were extinct, for never—never can the united humanity of *France* and *Britain* compensate for the horrid cruelties of their savage allies" (Bleecker 32, italics in original). Such an exclamation clearly articulates the awareness of these women of not only the international scope of the war being fought literally in their own back yards,

but also the great threat posed by that war to European “humanity” and domesticity. However, the authority to vocalize such sentiments comes not from the lived wartime experiences of these women, but from the Indian males, reviled and misappropriated, who have “savagely” intruded into their feminine realm.

Without this execration of the “brutal” Indian nations and the recognition of European humanity, Madame De R., nor any of these captive women, would be able to voice their histories and opinions. The Indian’s displacement and destruction of the domestic order—in short, his spectral presence in the narrative—allows Bleecker to voice her critique of the gendered nation from the sanctioned position of feminine outrage. It is the white male protector figures within the text that deny or restrict those voices. Nowhere does Bleecker more powerfully illustrate this than at the end of *The History*, because, once reunited with her husband and vocalizing a brief lament over their shared domestic loss, Maria is silenced, as are the other women of her group. *The History*, which has previously been filled with women’s stories of and concerns with the domestic and its role within the larger nation is now filled with Mr. Kittle’s relation of his own masculine experiences during his lengthy (and ill-conceived) separation from his wife. Although Maria is obviously present during the reunion and the telling of Mr. Kittle’s account, even relating her own experiences to her husband, it is done so indirectly. Bleecker never directly quotes Maria’s words after the initial reunion with her husband.<sup>66</sup> She and the rest of the women in her support group fall silent, subsumed

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<sup>66</sup> Maria’s last words are spoken after she sinks into her husband’s bosom upon his first arrival. She exclaims, “Alas! how can your beggared wife give you a proper reception? She cannot restore your prattling babes to your arms—she comes alone! Alas! her presence will only serve to remind you of the treasures—the filial delights you have lost!” (Bleecker 33). While this passage certainly places Maria

once again by the patriarchal versions of the war around them and that history patriarchy is making. Mr. Kittle's voice takes over and brings the narrative to its close, effectively reassigning Maria and the other women to their places of subordination within the domestic realm.

However, because Bleeker has so effectively critiqued the masculine agency of white manhood, especially Mr. Kittle's, and aggressively fore-grounded feminine agency throughout the text of *The History*, this conclusion rings hollow and leaves a gaping hole where the reader recognizes a feminine voice should be. The reunion of this husband and wife certainly completes the anticipated story arc; the captive is "redeemed" and returned to her former, domesticated life as the traditional captivity formula demands. However, in the wake of Bleeker's aggressive assertion of a differently gendered nation and her exposure of the wholesale destruction of the domestic realm, the reader is left wondering what there is for Maria to return to. Her home has been destroyed, her children murdered, and the masculine authority that was designated to protect and foster her domestic existence has been rendered ineffectual time and again. Consequently, the silence on the parts of Maria and her formerly outspoken group, rather than indicating an acquiescent submission to masculinity once that presence (finally) reemerges, instead signifies a grudging unwillingness to reenter into that subordinate feminine role, a refusal to validate the gendered, and necessarily masculine, voice of the nation. However, even within that final narrative silence,

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firmly within the maternal/domestic spheres, I would argue it also shows aggressive agency in her desire to restore the sanctity of her family on her own and then present it, fully realized, to her husband. Maria does not look to her husband for aid or assistance in this effort (and has not for the entire narrative); she is utterly dependent upon herself in these ventures, and is lamenting her inability to do so.

Bleecker has constructed a narrative that not only confronts the masculine imagery of nation-building as envisioned on the Revolutionary era seals of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, but also forefronts the experiences of women in moments of historical, national crises and empowers their domestic world with agency and distinctly feminine voice: her own.

## CHAPTER THREE

### “MIXED-BLOOD” MASCULINITY: THOMAS ROLFE AND CHARLES HOBOMOK CONANT

As we have seen in earlier chapters, a transculturated Indian figure was a troubling one for Anglo-American colonists. Whether such a figure originated from colonial imagination and anxiety, as did the Indian of the seal, or existed as a threatening, cross-cultural reality as James Printer did, an Indian who “crossed over” into European culture and custom was problematic. Such a “mimic man” would reflect the gaps and fissures in colonial discourse through his continual production of an identity that was not quite like the colonizer’s—Bhabha’s “almost the same, *but not quite*”—which would in turn underscore the inherent weakness in colonial discourse: namely, its uncertainty in exercising control and dominance over the behavior of the colonized (italics in original, “Of Mimicry” 123). This blurred copy of the colonizer, what Bhabha calls a “partial presence,” “articulate[d] those disturbances of cultural, racial and historical difference that menace the narcissistic demand of colonial authority” by simultaneously resembling it and mocking it (“Of Mimicry” 126). Consequently, the adoption of Anglo-American cultural identity by an Indian, while a necessary part of the process of colonization, was still profoundly disturbing for New World colonists struggling to maintain their dominant role in colonial discourse and to establish their own uniquely American identity.

However, far more threatening to colonial discourse than such assimilated Indian “mimic men” were Indians who held claim to both European and Native ancestry. The vocabulary for describing these people of mixed ancestry is, at best, problematic. Terms like *metis*, *mestizo*, crossblood, hybrid, and bi- and multi-racial are other working phrases often employed to reflect racial mixture, but many of these underscore the “otherness” and perceived exoticism of “mixed-blood” people—at least to Anglo-American ears. They may also reflect the false notion that biologically pure races exist (as in bi- and multi-racial) or, as in the case of the term “hybrid,” accentuate the colonial notion of racial contamination through “interbreeding”—a modern day version of the nineteenth-century pejorative for mixed-race Indians, “half-breed.” The term “mixed blood,” however, is less deterministic than these phrases. As Thomas Ingersoll has argued, the term “mixed blood” is perhaps “a helpful metaphor to express mixed ancestry precisely because blood itself is racially meaningless (for example, the basic ABO blood system is universal but its original function, for the most part, is unknown)” (xxi). Although the term “mixed blood” risks perpetuating the notion that racial differences can be traced to an essential, racial identity that exists in the blood at a cellular level, it also and perhaps more importantly, underscores the constructedness of Anglo-Indian identity within colonial discourse.

On a certain level, such figures, although existing as realities in the New World since the earliest English settlements in America, were far too menacing to be recognized and preserved as a part the developing American identity. In Anglo-American imagination, the “mixed blood” was the embodiment of the erasure of the distinction between “civilized” and “savage,” colonizer and colonized, the very binaries

that inscribed colonial identity as dominant and “superior.” A “mixed-blood” Indian represented the political possibility of the loss of the colonists’ mastery and dominance, not only because the Indian had now become, at least in part, Anglo-American, but also because s/he would represent what the colonists’ perceived as the corruption of their own racial purity. Whiteness was now “tainted” with Indianness. As a consequence, “mixed-blood” Indians were erased from the master narratives of colonization that attempted to hierarchize and structure a Anglo-American New World identity.

A prime example of such historical erasure is Thomas Rolfe, the son of John Rolfe and Pocahontas, a figure about whom little is known and of whom only one disputed image exists. Born out of the extended contact between the Indians and colonists at England’s first permanent colony in the New World at Jamestown, Virginia, Thomas Rolfe is the embodiment of the complexities and anxieties that characterized New World Anglo-American identity. His near erasure from the mainstream legends, lore, and histories surrounding the Jamestown colony and its legacy reveal just how threatening Thomas’ biracial identity and, more specifically, his male gender was to the formation of a cohesive New World identity. Not only of biracial ancestry, but also a privileged male of high social status in both of his ancestral cultures, Thomas jeopardized the legitimacy of racist, masculinist discourses that structured the colonial project. While the invocation of his mother Pocahontas was a crucial tool for domesticating and claiming dominion over the New World, the invocation and even the idea of her male heir were too destabilizing to the colonial cause and the colonists’ understanding of their own identity. Consequently, Thomas’ narrative is all but erased from Virginia’s history.

On another level, “mixed bloodedness” also embodied a potential alternative to the white, patriarchal history being forged in the New World. Earlier Anglo-American women authors who pursued Indian topics, such as Ann Eliza Bleecker in the late eighteenth century (discussed in chapter two), discarded the Indian themes and Indian characters, particularly male ones, from their texts once they had mined Indianness for its utility—providing legitimacy for their own authorial identity as white women. Because Indianness in contact with white womanhood, whether through captivity as in the case of Mary Rowlandson or through friendship and negotiation as with Bleecker’s Maria Kittle, was such a potent, threatening situation, white women who came through it unscathed were granted an authority unavailable to other women. However, for later women writers, the intriguing possibility of uniting Indianness and Anglo-Americanness in a marriage of cultures, and a literal marriage of men and women, as well as the resultant biracial offspring of such a union was an intriguing possibility. It posited a more humane way of reconciling racial conflicts and legitimizing American exceptionalism through the absorption of Indianness through intermarriage, rather than its extinction. Precisely because of the disruptive potential and miscegenetic origins of figures, such as Thomas, “mixed-blood” characters and interracial unions were often explored in literature. Thomas Rolfe’s narrative, although expunged from historical record, was revived and revised, at least spectrally, in fictional texts, dramas, poetry, and art of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that celebrated the life of his mother and claimed her story and noble lineage for white America.<sup>67</sup> Women writers in

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<sup>67</sup> The explosion of Pocahontas-related texts and images began in earnest, according to Ann Uhry Abrams, in the early eighteenth century when “the plantation elite were determined to substantiate the

particular often incorporated Indian “mixed bloods” and re-visionary versions of the Pocahontas-John Rolfe-Thomas Rolfe story into their works of fiction. Such male, Thomas-like figures with their binary-defying identities, as well as the cross-cultural Pocahontas-John Rolfe couplings that generated them, could be successfully deployed by female authors to rupture and destabilize colonial hegemony, while simultaneously opening a space within the white, masculine New World identity where white womanhood and female authorship could emerge. Womanhood, when undergirded by the authenticating power of Indianness, could be inscribed as a significant and constituent part of American identity. Women authors, such as Lydia Maria Child and Catharine Maria Sedgwick, could rewrite the master narratives governing race, nationalism and American identity through the domestication of Indianness and posit the possibility of not only a differently raced nation, but also a differently gendered one where white Anglo-American women had a voice—even if their voice came through the appropriation of Indian identity. However, in order to do so, women writers had to adopt and adapt the already ambivalent master narratives and images that governed “mixed bloodedness,” such as those that subsumed—and ultimately erased—figures like Thomas Rolfe.

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aristocratic credentials of Pocahontas” in order to recast the “savage” Indian with a regal pedigree and justify, if not celebrate, “the mixed blood that flowed through many elite Old Dominion veins” (64, 65). Interest in the narrative continued into the nineteenth century with various versions cropping up during the Indian Removals of the 1830s, and both before and after the Civil War.

Although Thomas was not a major component in these Pocahontas-revival narratives, the very nature of their creation—to celebrate and reinforce an autochthonous connection of white Americans to the native/Native land and to Pocahontas’ originary role in the foundation of America—established the *a priori* existence of Thomas. Thomas is the often unacknowledged “mixed-blood” bridge that allowed Americans to posit these “authentic” (i.e. “blood”) claims to Indianness. See Abrams, Rebecca Blevins Faery, and Robert S. Tilton for further discussion of the variations and progression of the Pocahontas myth.

### **The Sedgeford Hall Portrait: Earrings and Authenticity**

The marriage of Pocahontas and John Rolfe, as Annette Kolodny has noted, served “in some symbolic sense, as a kind of objective correlative for the possibility of Europeans actually possessing the charms inherent in the virgin continent” (5). It was an accepted and necessary union that allowed Anglo-Americans to lay claim to Indianness as well as the cultural and geographical markers of Indianness; it was also the genesis of a uniquely “American” family tree. As Frances Mossiker notes,

A long line of proud Virginians claims consanguinity or affinity with Pocahontas: Jeffersons, Lees, Randolphs, Marshalls, along with other lesser lights—to the number of two million, if the calculations of twentieth-century genealogists are accurate. (319)

Yet Thomas Rolfe, the first descendant of that “long line of proud Virginians” is unilaterally de-emphasized in these family trees. It was Thomas Rolfe’s marriage and birth of his daughter, who later married and had a son, that first established the lineage and then enabled it to continue, beginning a New World dynasty which disseminated Thomas’ privileged, bicultural lineage to future generations of Americans, many of whom still today proudly claim his ancestry, or rather his mother’s.<sup>68</sup> It is not Thomas and his uniquely American, biracial identity that these many descendants embrace;

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<sup>68</sup> Thomas and his wife, Jane Poythress, had one daughter, Jane, who married Colonel Robert Bolling in 1675. The Bollings had one only son, John, with whom Jane died in childbirth. Robert Bolling then remarried Anne Stith, with whom he had other children. Frances Mossiker notes that the descendants of this second marriage of Colonel Bolling’s to a white woman [came] to be known as “White Bollings,” in distinction to the descendants of his first marriage, who are known to this day as “Red Bollings,” in token of the royal red blood bequeathed to them by their progenitress Pocahontas. (318)

John, the grandson of Pocahontas and John Rolfe, “sired a progeny sufficiently numerous to covey the imperial Powhatan bloodline to families. . . throughout the South” thereby giving rise to the long line of descendants who claim Pocahontas’ heritage (Mossiker 319).

rather they embrace the ancestral links to his mother, Pocahontas, omitting the critical player whose very existence paved the way for their own membership in the “Imperial Family of Virginia” (William Stith as qtd, in Mossiker, 319). Americans reach back beyond Thomas to Pocahontas, the ubiquitous “Indian grandmother” of America. Vine Deloria Jr. notes of this “Indian-grandmother complex,”

It doesn't take much insight into racial attitudes to understand the real meaning of [it] . . . A male ancestor has too much the aura of a savage warrior, the unknown primitive, the instinctive animal to make him a respectable member of the family tree. But a young Indian princess? Ah, there was royalty for the taking. (11)

The biracial, masculine Thomas complicates these lines of descent. As a consequence, Thomas' image and identity, although absolutely crucial to the transmission of Pocahontas' lineage, is one that is aggressively excised from all types of historic chronicles, even the more creative, aesthetic forms, such as portraiture.

The *Sedgeford Hall Portrait*, so-called because of its one-time residency in Sedgeford Hall, a Rolfe family property in Norfolk, England, is purportedly a portrait of Pocahontas and her son with John Rolfe, Thomas, as a child; it is the only image of mother and son together, and the only image of Thomas known to exist [Figure 13]. It is also perhaps the most disputed of all the Pocahontas engravings, paintings, and portraits in terms of its authenticity, stemming mainly, I would argue, from its visual record of Thomas' existence.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Certainly, nearly all images of Pocahontas have been scrutinized and criticized for their various “artistic liberties” and authenticity. Many, such as the nineteenth century paintings by Edward Corbould



Fig. 13 *The Sedgford Hall Portrait*

Image courtesy of the Borough of King's Lynn and West Norfolk, England

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and Alonzo Chappell that depict Pocahontas rescuing John Smith, for example, have been noted for their overt sexualization of the Pocahontas figure as well as their cultural inaccuracies. Others, like the series of Sully portraits of Pocahontas (by both Thomas Sully and Robert Matthew Sully based on the badly damaged *Turkey Island Portrait* of Pocahontas and painted during the nineteenth century), have been critiqued for their romantic, Anglicized portrayals of Pocahontas. However, I will suggest that while the *Sedgford Hall Portrait* is, in some ways, more historically connected to Pocahontas and her son, Thomas, it is summarily rejected as an authentic depiction of them because of the “mixed blood” presence of Thomas. Other paintings, such as those mentioned above, that were based upon pre-existing images or even produced from pure imagination, remain undisputed as depictions of Pocahontas. See Robert S. Tilton, *Pocahontas: The Evolution of an American Narrative* and Ann Uhry Abrams, *The Pilgrims and Pocahontas: Rival Myths of American Origin*, for excellent analysis of the many and varied Pocahontas-related images, although neither deals with the *Sedgford Hall Portrait* in any depth.

A hauntingly beautiful and complex image of post-colonial American identity about which the artist and date are unknown, the *Sedgeford Hall Portrait* depicts a young, seated Indian woman, Pocahontas, with her right arm loosely draped behind the shoulders of a young Indian boy, presumably Thomas, at about three or four years of age. The woman's left hand rests in her lap, lightly clasping the child's left hand. Both the woman and the child are looking straight ahead, directly into the eyes of the viewer although the child's body is positioned perpendicular to that of the forward-facing woman, so that his chest and stomach rest lightly against her thigh. Neither the woman or child is smiling, but they aren't gazing unhappily out of their woodland background, either. Rather, they are regarding the artist, the viewer, with a composed, relaxed confidence; the woman's hands aren't tightly grasping those of the child in a show of nerves or apprehension nor is the child pressing himself closely to the woman's body in a gesture of childish fear. They seem comfortable with each other and the situation of the sitting. The duo is strikingly beautiful, peaceful and intimate with each other; they are also clearly raced as Indians.

The mother wears her sleek, black hair parted in the center and hanging loosely down her back—no elegant or complicated up-dos. Her black eyes, prominent cheekbones and nose, and olive skin clearly indicate her non-European ancestry. The child is equally as “dark” with a fringe of glossy, black bangs that hang across his forehead and almost over one eye, covering his ears and reaching his shirt collar in the back. His chubby arms, still bearing the slightest trace of baby-fat rolls at the wrist, are just as darkly colored as his mother's. Further enhancing the Indianness of the duo is the natural landscape in the background. Posed as if in front of an arched window, a

broad expanse of cloud-filled sky and leafy boughs hang down behind the pair. The portrait depicts a little bit of nature—both the landscape behind and the Indians at center—brought in and contained by European sensibility in not only the calcifying moment of the portrait but also the display of the culturally stabilizing accoutrements within it. The portrait is not unlike the seal of the Massachusetts Bay Colony when considered in these terms; Indianness is “captured” and “domesticated” so that non-Indian viewers can gaze at and ingest the authenticity of “otherness” in order to form their own senses of self.

This portrait is strikingly like the seal in another way; the Indians at the center, while clearly raced as “others,” are also clearly cultured as European. Their clothing, environment, and even the physical artifact of the portrait itself are entirely European. The mother is dressed in a red embroidered bodice with silver buttons and three-quarter length poufed sleeves. Her skirt is olive with a row of the same ornate silver buttons running down the front. She is also wearing what appears to be a string of graduated pearls around her neck and unusual shell earrings in each ear. The child is wearing the same colors as his mother: green knee breeches, a white, short-sleeved shirt with a large ruffled collar, and a red fringed and embroidered sash around his waist. This portrait with its mixing of Indian and English markers is clearly attempting to work out the same anxieties present in the seal over the melding of New World identity. The woman and her child are displayed in this portrait as having convincingly adopted Englishness in their poses and dress; they have become the model, Anglicized Indians the colonists sought to produce. At the same time, though, these figures have also clearly remained the Indian “others” with their dark skin, eyes and hair, signifying the immutable and

stable nature of racial identity, an uncertain conviction that continually needed validation in colonial imagination. In short, this woman and her child are the ideal “mimic men” of Bhabha—they are “almost but not quite” European in an aesthetically pleasing form. They underscore the ambivalence of colonial dominance through their imperfect replication of the colonizer’s identity. However, when inscribed with the identities of Pocahontas and Thomas Rolfe, the pair from the portrait become more than just mimics of the colonizer—the young boy becomes the colonizer and his mother becomes his indelible ties to Indianness. The child in the portrait, Thomas, visually defies the binaries that regulate race and identity, straddling the divide between Anglo-American/Indian, “civilized”/“savage,” and embodying both. Perhaps as a consequence of this ambivalent figure of Thomas, the authenticity of the *Sedgeford Hall Portrait* as a true-to-life depiction of Pocahontas and her son is hotly debated.

Also known as the *Heacham Hall Pocahontas* after the residence where it originated, the portrait has many critics of its authenticity. The history surrounding the painting indicates that it was supposedly painted during the time of Pocahontas’ visit to her husband’s family in Heacham near the end of her seven month stay in England some time in 1616 or 1617, or possibly may have been made at a later date from sketches obtained during this visit. After the death of Pocahontas and his subsequent return to Virginia without his son, whom he left in the custody of family in England, Rolfe purportedly had the painting sent to him in America. The timeline of the portrait becomes sketchy after this initial transport to the New World; it is unclear how long the painting remained in America or how it found its way out of the Rolfe family. It is only acknowledged that sometime later, according to the *Rolfe Family Records*, the portrait

was finally returned to the possession of the Rolfe family when it was purchased by Eustace Neville Rolfe of Heacham Hall from a “Mrs. Charlton, who stated that ‘her husband had bought it in America years ago’ “ (as qtd. in Barbour, 235). It then hung in the home of Mrs. Alexander J. Stevenson of West Calder, Midlothian, a grand niece of Eustace Neville Rolfe, for many years as a family relic and portrait of the Indian princess. Presently, the portrait resides in the custody of the Borough Council of King’s Lynn and West Norfolk, King’s Lynn, England, where it hangs in a place of honor, still identified as the *Sedgeford Hall Portrait*, after a Rolfe family property.

According to Philip Barbour in his *Pocahontas and Her World*, however, the portrait “has nothing to do with Pocahontas” (235). Barbour consulted Dr. William C. Sturtevant of the Smithsonian Insititute on the matter, noting that Sturtevant seconds Barbour’s opinion and reveals to him in a personal letter that the portrait may instead represent “an 18th-century Iroquois woman and child” (235). Additional critics similarly assert that the painting is of eighteenth-century origins based on its style (Tilton 108). Others cite the apocryphal age of the child as evidence of the portrait’s spuriousness. They note that Thomas would have been only about two when the portrait would have been painted or sketches made in 1617; the child in the portrait is clearly older than that—perhaps about four years of age—and consequently, could not be a representation of Pocahontas or her son. For this particular group of critics, there are no “maybes” or equivocal statements about the portrait that indicate there are other possibilities to explain these inaccuracies. The portrait and its mythology are simply untrue; the *Sedgeford Hall Portrait* does not and could not possibly depict Pocahontas or her son.

There are legends surrounding the painting and its authenticity which dispute these criticisms. For example, it has been suggested that the painting in existence today is an eighteenth-century copy of the now lost original, hence the anachronistic style and wardrobe of the subjects. The jump in the child's age, it has also been argued, stems perhaps from the same copyist in the eighteenth century who, in an overly imaginative way, took artistic liberties with the content of the original painting and altered the child's aged appearance for whatever reason. Additionally, believers in the veracity of the portrait finally note quite simply that the careful preservation of the picture and its lore proves that its value was appreciated and that its regal identity was known. However, perhaps the most potent and tangible element cited by believers that for them validates the authenticity of this painting is the unusual pair of earrings worn by Pocahontas in the portrait that are still in existence today [Figure 14].

These earrings, "of a peculiar white shell, set in silver" are interestingly, much less contested artifacts than the painting in which they appear. They are described in the *Rolfe Family Records* as, at their earliest documentation, belonging to John Girdlestone Rolfe and as being "identical with the earrings represented in the Sedgeford portrait" (as qtd. in Barbour, 236). Each earring is formed of a rare, white, double mussel-shell of a kind "found only on the eastern shore of the Berings [sic] Strait" that were reserved "exclusively for the adornment of priests and princes" (Palmer, par. 14). The setting of the earrings, which is sterling silver inlaid with small steel points, indicates that they most likely were set in England and perhaps even given to



Fig. 14 Pocahontas' Earrings

Photograph by Katherine Wetzel, Courtesy APVA Preservation Virginia

Pocahontas by her husband's family during her visit with them in 1616.<sup>70</sup> When Pocahontas died shortly thereafter at the outset of her return journey to Virginia in 1617, the earrings apparently passed into the family of John Rolfe's brother, Henry Rolfe, along with the young child, Thomas, who would live with his uncle in England until maturity. The earrings were then passed down through the Rolfe family with occasional references being made to them as in 1866 when a new bride in the family was presented with the earrings and was told they were Pochaontas' (Prudames, par. 11). In 1923, however, a second wife of one of the Rolfe men bequeathed the earrings to her sister, Mrs. Jessie Hodgson Meggy, rather than another Rolfe family member, thus ending their possession by the Rolfes (Palmer, par 12). Now in the hands of the Meggy family, the earrings, touted authoritatively as "Pocahontas' earrings," were put "on exhibition at the World's Fair in Chicago in 1893, and were shown again at the Jamestown Exposition in 1907" (Palmer, par. 17).

In 1935, the officers of the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Artifacts (APVA) even secured them temporarily to be put "on private view at the John Marshall House" (Palmer, par. 17). Although the APVA actively pursued the purchase of the earrings from the Meggys to make them a permanent part of their collection, their exorbitant price in 1935, \$5,000, was prohibitive for the Association (Palmer, par 13). Finally, however, the Association was able to acquire the earrings in 1945, and ever since, they have been a key part of their collection, being displayed most often at the

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<sup>70</sup> Interestingly, there are additional legends circulating that these double shell earrings were reset for Pocahontas in the silver mounting by the Earl of Northumberland while he was imprisoned in the Tower of London (Palmer, Woodward, Quarles, Museum of London Group). That the earrings from the portrait have such a specifically grounded (and infamous) lineage certainly adds not only to the mystique and power of the portrait, but also complicates the disavowal of the portrait by critics.

Jamestown settlement, but more recently being shown in England in 2005 along with other relics from the Jamestown excavation site in commemoration of the four-hundred year anniversary of the founding of England's first permanent settlement in the New World. Shown alongside a natty silver ear picker, quartz arrowhead points, and other relics that were actually unearthed from Jamestown soil, these earrings, simply by their proximity to genuine Jamestown artifacts, received validation as authentic, as historically grounded, tangible possessions that once belonged to the legendary Pocahontas. With just as little or less factual information existing about them than the *Sedgeford Hall Portrait* (the portrait is the only physical evidence that corroborates a connection between the earrings and Pocahontas; all other connections are based on verbal family lore), they are still referred to without hesitation by the APVA and Jamestown curators as "Pocahontas' earrings"<sup>71</sup>; several museum gift shops, including the one at Jamestown, even sell replicas of the earrings, and although the fine print in the ad describing the baubles at the APVA's Museum Store guardedly notes that they "have a tradition of ownership by Pocahontas," they are still boldly and clearly marketed as replicas of "Pocahontas' Earrings" (*APVA Museum Store*). Why would these earrings, although no less tangible or surrounded by uncorroborated legend than the *Sedgford Hall Portrait*, be so much easier to accept as authentic, as a legitimate and "true" representation of and connection to the figure of Pocahontas?

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<sup>71</sup> In 2005 during the showing of the Jamestown materials in England, Bly Straube, then the curator of the Jamestown Rediscovery Project, noted in an interview that while it was not known for sure if the earrings were actually Pocahontas', "the circumstantial evidence provides a decent case" (Prudames). Such statements, staged showings of the earrings, and their "Pocahontas" title all clearly validate and confirm the authenticity of the earrings in a way that the *Sedgeford Hall Portrait* is not authenticated.

Clearly both the earrings and the portrait are potent markers of the originary connection between Indianness and Europeanness. They both showcase the positive, transformative effects of European civilization on the “savage” Native other. However, the earrings, which represent a direct lineage to Pocahontas and all of her laudable and legendary experiences as well as her regal status, maintain a clear distinction between the colonizer and the colonized that the painting does not. With the earrings, both believers in the legend and non-believers can unproblematically accept or reject a connection with the Indianness that undergirds Anglo-American identity. In other words, by accepting the earrings as actual relics of the “Princess Pocahontas,” believers can embrace a Anglicized link with Indianness that only flows in one direction; they can appreciate the elegant, “civilized” baubles that Pocahontas accepted and wore, much as she accepted Anglo-American culture, yet they can do so without having to accept any element of Indian culture or identity in return. They can remain separate from the “taint” of Indianness while still enjoying a proprietary connection to it. The earrings represent the positive transformation of “savage” Indianness by Anglo-American-ness without the anxiety of reciprocation or Indianness transforming Anglo-American identity.

The portrait, however, with its depiction of both Pocahontas and her son, Thomas, represents a more problematic and destabilizing relationship to Indianness; it represents the physical reality of miscegenation with the Indian other and the resultant hybrid identity that was neither purely Indian nor Anglo-American. Young Thomas, simply put, is no pair of English-made and English-given earrings that represents the “triumph” of Anglo-American culture and identity over Indianness. Instead, he

represents the melding of Anglo-American and Indian identities rather than their separation and, perhaps more disconcertingly, a challenge to the “superiority” of white masculinity. The portrait confronts its viewers with the hybrid “mixed blood” that, in order to maintain colonial identity, mastery, and utter difference from Indianness, must be rejected, and so must the biracial reality of one of the subjects of the painting: Thomas Rolfe.

### **Destablizing “Mixed Bloodedness”: Thomas Rolfe**

Born in 1615, Thomas Rolfe, almost certainly named after the governor of Jamestown colony, Sir Thomas Dale—the “patron” of John and Pocahontas who granted their request to marry—was literally a hybrid of American identity. His mother, the favorite daughter of Chief Powhatan, came to historical attention through her “salvation” of Captain John Smith during his captivity among the Powhatans in 1607.<sup>72</sup> After experiencing a captivity of her own among the English at Jamestown, she eventually became a converted, transculturated Indian who not only took up the cultural

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<sup>72</sup> There is, of course, much dispute concerning the episode from Smith’s *Generall Historie* in which Pocahontas saves his life. Much of the controversy stems from claims originating in the nineteenth century that the rescue itself never occurred but was rather a fictional creation by Smith. Critics such as Charles Deane and John Gorham Palfrey actively worked at the outset of the Civil War to undercut the historicity of Pocahontas’ rescue, most likely to downplay Pocahontas’ use by Southerners as an emblem expressive of their unique culture; she became for Southerners “a sectional symbol with the violent independence considered characteristic of Indians in general” and was lauded by the newly nationalistic South (Norton 183). Modern scholars (Frances Mossiker, Grace Steele Woodward and Leo Lemay), led by Philip Barbour and his suggestion that the rescue of Smith by Pocahontas not only occurred, but also was actually part of an adoption ritual misinterpreted by Smith, have attempted to find explanation for the events surrounding Smith’s capture and rescue rather than refuting their occurrence. Helen Rountree and Aden T. Vaughan, however, have argued that due to lack of information about Powhatan adoption rituals or even the specifics surrounding Smith’s imprisonment, a definitive answer about the rescue may never be attained. My interest, however, is purely with the resultant outcome of Pocahontas’ meeting with Smith and the colonists, and that is her marriage to John Rolfe and the birth of her mixed race son, Thomas.

values and accoutrements of the English colonists, but also changed her name and religion in order to marry one of them.<sup>73</sup>

Thomas' father, John Rolfe, was a newly married man of twenty-four when he first came to Jamestown in 1609 seeking his fortune as a merchant, later finding it as a tobacco farmer. After his English wife's death and extended contact with Pocahontas during her captivity in Jamestown, perhaps in the capacity of an English tutor, Rolfe purportedly realized his love for Pocahontas. In a 1614 letter to Sir Thomas Dale that covered both sides of four pieces of paper, Rolfe poured out his heart and asked the governor's permission to marry Pocahontas, noting that she was "to whom my hart and best thoughts are and have byn a longe tyme so intangled & inthralled in so intricate a Laborinth, that I was even awearied to unwynde my selfe thereout" (qtd. in Barbour, 248).<sup>74</sup> Dale granted Rolfe's request and the couple were married that same year, but only after Pocahontas publicly declared herself a Christian, accepted Baptism, and received her new name of Rebecca.<sup>75</sup> The couple's marriage began the so-called "Peace

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<sup>73</sup> In 1613 when she would have been about 16 or 18, Pocahontas was taken captive by Samuel Argall in order to gain leverage against Powhatan. In a letter to a friend in England that appears in Samuel Purchas' *Purchas His Pilgrimes*, Argall notes that he resolved to "possesse my selfe of her [Pocahontas] by any stratagem that I could use, for the ransoming of so many Englishmen as were prisoners of Powhatan, as to get [back] such armes and tooles as hee, and other Indians had got by murther and stealing [. . .] with some quantitie of Corne for the Colonies reliefe" (1764). Consequently, while visiting a nearby Patawomeck village, Pocahontas, under the threat of military action, and, according to Ralph Hamor the bribe of "a small copper kettle, and some other les valuable toies so highly by him esteemed" (5), was betrayed into Argall's hands by village chieftain, Yapassus, under the guise of taking a tour of Argall's boat. Once on board Argall's ship, the *Treasurer*, Pocahontas was not allowed to leave. She was taken first to Jamestown and then up the river to the new town of Henrico where she was placed in the care of the Reverend Alexander Whitaker for education and conversion. It was here that she would meet and later marry John Rolfe and where she would remain until her ill-fated trip to London in 1616.

<sup>74</sup> For further discussion of Rolfe's "love letter," see Townsend and 114-118; Faery 118-119.

<sup>75</sup> The order of these events—Rolfe's official declaration of intent to marry Pocahontas, then Pocahontas' conversion and name reassignment, and finally, the marriage, is significant to note. Pocahontas had already resided at the home of the zealous Reverend Alexander Whitaker for more than a year by the time Rolfe made his intentions known, yet she had not accepted baptism before this point. Camilla Townsend suggests that this particular moment was chosen by Pocahontas because "she was sure she had the

of Pocahontas” that calmed the “war that had sporadically broken out between them [the Powhatans and the English], caused as much by English violations of custom, persons, or property as by Native fear, suspicion, and anger at the foreigners’ incursions” (Allen 207). The peace lasted until about 1622, five years after Pocahontas’ death, when Opechancanough, her more hostile uncle, launched open war against the English; this was perhaps “the first time that open warfare rather than sporadic armed conflict raged” in the colonies (Allen 207).

After their marriage, however, Rolfe and Pocahontas, now officially Mistress Rebecca Rolfe, lived on Rolfe’s property across the river from Jamestown and began conducting agricultural experiments with tobacco seeds from a species of the plant grown in the Spanish Caribbean. Before long, Rolfe was sending his first shipment of the milder tobacco to England for a hefty profit, not only turning the colony’s bedraggled fortune around, but also breaking the Spanish monopoly on the exportation of tobacco. Rolfe’s success with the tobacco may have been directly related to his Indian wife, who perhaps acquainted him with the much more effective method of carefully hanging each leaf to dry as the Indians did, or showing him how burned woodland and a southern exposure would aid in the crop’s growth.<sup>76</sup>

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political agreement she sought well in order: when she was converted, she was probably living up to her implied part of the treaty [of alliance]” (124). Paula Gunn Allen, however, posits the idea that Pocahontas’ marriage and conversion, instead of attempting to cement an alliance with the English, was instead arranged as a covert spy mission; further, Allen considers Pocahontas an “intelligence agent” of the Powhatans (208). Allen writes, “no longer isolated as a hostage and convert-in-training, [. . .] [Pocahontas] could plant and harvest information. She had a ready network of informants and couriers available” (208-9). Consequently, she chose this point to marry Rolfe.

<sup>76</sup> Among the scholars who suggest Pocahontas’ essential role in Rolfe’s agricultural success are Frances Mossiker, Paula Gunn Allen, and Camilla Townsend.

Within a few months of his marriage to Pocahontas, Rolfe was appointed to the position of secretary of the colony, a position that brought with it a salary and increased rank. Rolfe consequently hired help to do the more menial chores around the farm that he and his wife would no longer be able, much less be expected, to do. Undoubtedly, many of the people who worked for the Rolfe's were Indians, because as Camilla Townsend has noted,

Eight years later, when there were far more immigrants available and John was financially better off, he had only three white indentured servants laboring with him in the fields, and they were recent acquisitions. (131)

Therefore, Rolfe's young wife, aged about 17, would have been surrounded by Indian companions who could converse in her own language and help her maintain a close link to her Indian roots. It was also most likely these Indian attendant-companions who aided Pocahontas with the birth of her son Thomas about a year after her marriage. The mother and her baby boy thrived due, no doubt, to the more sanitary and comforting birthing methods used by Pocahontas' Indian companions. This must have been a relief to Rolfe; he had already lost one child shortly after its birth, a daughter born in Virginia in 1610 of his first wife, who also died shortly thereafter due to complications from the birth. Thomas, unlike Rolfe's first born, however, would survive into adulthood.

In his childhood, Thomas would have lived a singularly bicultural lifestyle. Although born as the product of a mixed race union between the "superior" European and the "inferior" Indian other, he would have publicly and officially lived an

Anglicized existence. However, behind closed doors or out in the fields Thomas was probably as well acquainted with his Indian roots as he was with his English, at least in his early years. Considering the close proximity of Pocahontas' family, neighboring Indian tribes, and the presence of Indian attendant-companions on the Rolfe farm, Thomas would have undoubtedly had intimate and extended contact with Indians besides his mother. And, because of his mother's own proximity to Indianness, she would have been an active source of Indian culture herself for the young boy, as well. Perhaps she taught him some of the Powhatan language, or called Thomas by a nickname, as was the custom with her people.<sup>77</sup> Perhaps she even carried him to visit his uncles, aunts, and grandfather who would have lived nearby. This, of course, is merely speculation, but it is more certain that Thomas would have lived his young years as more than just a person of biologically mixed ancestry who was culturally, linguistically, and socially identified as English; he would have lived an Indian existence as well. He would have been conversant and knowledgeable in both cultures, both worlds, and although young, could have functioned comfortably in both, much like the adult James Printer would have in New England. However, Thomas might have been even more threatening and destabilizing to the colonists around him than a James Printer figure would have been because Thomas would have actually embodied both

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<sup>77</sup> Pocahontas' own memorable name was itself a childhood nickname. As Camilla Townsend notes, Like all children [in Powhatan culture], she was given two names: she was called Amonute in a ceremony before the village, and she was probably also given a private or hidden name, which her parents revealed to no one else. Everyone assumed that her mother or father would eventually give her another name reflective of her personality. By the time she was ten, the child was known as Pocahontas, apparently meaning something like "Mischievous" or "Little Playful One." (13-14)

Her private name, later revealed, may have been Matoaka. Although most sources and scholars generally agree on what Pocahontas' names were, their meanings are contestable or even lost.

worlds; he was not just a cultural/social cross-over. Thomas was a literal, biological crossover, a mixture of identities that had heretofore been awkwardly and anxiously and repetitively demarcated as separate and opposite by the colonizers. He would have represented what the colonists had told themselves repeatedly could not exist, for if it did, it would void not only their own superiority and purity, but also their very existences. Consequently, Thomas Rolfe was systematically and almost completely erased from colonial memory. Aside from a few short mentions in colonial historical records and the *Sedgeford Hall Portrait*, Thomas, after the death of his mother, all but ceases to exist.<sup>78</sup>

After about the age of two, little is known about Thomas Rolfe; actually, very little is even known about his life as an infant in Jamestown. There is a conspicuous absence in the mountains of Pocahontas scholarship where Thomas is concerned.<sup>79</sup> He becomes the prototype for the vanishing Indian or the tragic “mixed-blood” by virtue of his erasure from colonial memory. He left Jamestown at about the age of two in 1616 with his mother, father, and retinue of Indian “specimens” and attendant-companions bound for London so that his mother “might serve as a living advertisement for the

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<sup>78</sup> Thomas Rolfe after living his entire life beyond the age of two in England “went to Virginia upon reaching manhood, arriving in the colony sometime in the mid-1630s, possible as early as 1635 (at age twenty), not later than 1640 (at age twenty-five)” (Mossiker 311). A large inheritance of land, including a four-hundred acre plantation across the river from Jamestown that was left to him by his father, and an adjoining tract “three times as large” from his mother’s uncle, Opechancanough, awaited him upon his arrival (Mossiker 312). Virginia records indicate that Thomas petitioned the governor in 1641 to go and visit his great-uncle, although it is unclear whether or not the visit actually occurred, and that in 1646, he was “commissioned a lieutenant in the colonial militia, assigned guard duty at Fort James in defense of the colonists against the Indians,” (Mossiker 313). It is known he married Jane Poythress and had a single daughter with her, also Jane, but the dates and pertinent information about these events are not recorded. Thomas’ name is mentioned in a land patent from 1658—the last time his name appears in historical record.

<sup>79</sup> Among the scholars who devote any discussion to Thomas at all—besides simply acknowledging his existence—include Frances Mossiker, Rebecca Blevins Faery, and Camilla Townsend.

Virginia Company's enterprise" and garner additional funds to keep the tobacco-growing endeavor afloat a bit longer (Faery 127). She, along with twenty thousand pounds of the colony's finest tobacco, was, no doubt, intended to serve as an exemplar of the colonial enterprise, an "Indian paragon of missionary zeal and [a] cash crop, indicator[s] of solid investment opportunities" (Allen 271). Setting sail on the *Treasurer*, captained by Samuel Argall,<sup>80</sup> the Indian "princess" and her retinue arrived in London to an entirely different world. Given a stipend of four pounds a week by the Virginia Company, "Lady Rebecca" was suddenly expected to "dress like a Jacobean grande dame and feed her attendants decently" (Townsend 139). She would

have to go beyond anything she had worn in Virginia, with canvases to hold out her skirts, sleeves so large they nearly immobilized her, and a wooden board placed along her stomach and the lower part of her breast to ensure a certain shape once she was dressed. (Townsend 140)

In short, she would have to perform not only her exceptionality as an Indian princess, but also her fluency and ability as an English lady.

However, for all of the effort and bewilderment such accoutering may have caused Pocahontas, her efforts were rewarded. Mentions of "Pocahuntas" began appearing in diaries and letters such as those by John Chamberlain, and invitations began to arrive. Pocahontas was entertained, visited by, and remarked upon by the important and elite of London society; she was even invited to the annual Twelfth Night masque at the Court of King James, where she would have had a formal audience with

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<sup>80</sup> This, ironically enough, is the same boat sailing under the same captain that took Pocahontas downstream as a captive from her family and village to James Fort in 1613.

the king. However, in all of these mentions in missives and diaries and public appearances, Thomas, Pocahontas' young son, who would have now been walking and talking, perhaps even uttering a pidgin-like amalgamation of Powhatan and English words, is conspicuously absent.

Although he would have only been around two years of age and certainly not a consideration when party invitations were issued or gossipy letters penned, Thomas' existence is not even registered as a passing remark by those who met with Pocahontas, both publicly and privately. Even John Smith, who visited her at her lodgings in England in late 1616, and takes pains to record her impassioned response to his refusal to accept the address "father," makes no mention of meeting of Pocahontas' son and barely even acknowledges his existence.<sup>81</sup> Surely, Pocahontas would have been eager to show off her young son, especially to Smith, one of her oldest English acquaintances and someone whom she regarded with enough familiarity to address as "father"—whether for political reasons or genuine affection.<sup>82</sup> And Smith, given his obvious fondness for Pocahontas as evidenced through his journey to visit her and the letter he wrote on her behalf to Queen Anne—again, whether motivated by his desires for self-

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<sup>81</sup> In the Fourth Book of the *Generall Historie*, Smith mentions Thomas a mere handful of times and only in passing. For example, Smith notes that Pocahontas was "the first Christian ever of that [Powhatan] Nation, the first Virginian ever spake English or had a childe in marriage by an Englishman" (*Generall* 2:259-60). He also notes that upon Pocahontas' death, "Her little childe Thomas Rolfe. . .was left at Plimoth with Sir Lewis Stukly" (*Generall* 2:262).

<sup>82</sup> John Smith came to visit Pocahontas sometime in the fall of 1616 in her lodgings in Brentford, England. At first, she would have no audience with Smith, possibly, Smith conjectures in *The Generall Historie*, because her fluency in English had declined. However, after a couple of hours, Pocahontas reappears and according to Smith's record of the event, tells him, "You did promise Powhatan what was yours should bee his, and he the like to you; you called him father being in his land a stranger, and by the same reason so must I doe you" (*Generall* 2:261). Smith genteelly refuses to let her do so; Pocahontas, however, responds heatedly, telling Smith, "[F]eare you here I should call you father. I tell you then I will, and you shall call mee childe, and so I will be for ever and ever your Countrieman" (*Generall* 2:261). Critics who have commented on the meaning of this exchange include Daniel Richter, Paula Gunn Allen, Camilla Townsend, and Philip Barbour.

promotion or by true attachment—surely would have been anxious to see and meet the child if only to use the moment as more grist for his own publicity mill.<sup>83</sup> The existence of this child would have undoubtedly been common knowledge to Smith and to others in England and might have been an exotic object of curiosity from the strange New World, just as his mother and her retinue were. Thomas would have ostensibly symbolized the reality of the commitment between Pocahontas and her English husband; Thomas would have been a physical realization of the “civilizing” effects of colonization and the rehabilitation of non-European others. However, there is no record, no preservation, no analysis of Thomas’ existence among the dozens of portraits, stories, letters, and plays that memorialize his mother’s.

Thomas was the embodiment, the result of the successful colonial project; he represented both the subsumption of the useful traces of Native identity—its autochthony and nobility—and the domestication and colonization of its “savage” underbelly—he was, after all, an “English” man. He is what makes the many descendants of Pocahontas who and what they are. Without Thomas Rolfe “the only aristocracy in America,” would not, could not exist; yet that existence is continually erased from American cultural consciousness in favor of his mother’s iconic “Indian princess” status (Edith Wilson as qtd. in Abrams, 12). Despite his more securely

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<sup>83</sup> John Smith wrote to Queen Anne in 1616 at the behest of the gentlemen of the Popular Party to interest her in receiving Pocahontas. Smith’s letter, obsequiously addressed to “Most Admired Queene” and describing Pocahontas’ “extraordinarie affection to our Nation,” gave a brief overview of Pocahontas’ life after her captivity in 1613 and ended with the bold assertion from Smith that if she was not well-received, her present “love to us and Christianity might turn to such scorn and fury, as to divert all this good to the worst of evil” (Smith, *Generall* 2:258-260).

Anglo-American identity and his patrilineal connections to elite families of both Indian and English societies, Thomas' life is consistently overwritten by the narrative of his mother's.

Within Anglo-American society “mixed bloodedness” was a transgressive and threatening construct not easily accepted or even understood. Jace Weaver observes that in Anglo-American imagination, in between the stereotypes of the “good Indian”—those Indians who live in harmony with nature in a state of simple, loyal liberty—and the “bad Indian”—the bloodthirsty, destructive “savage”—developed the even more derogatory stereotype of the “half-breed.” Weaver writes, “An extension of the ‘bad Indian’ image, half-breeds have no redeeming virtues. They are neither White nor Indian. As such, they are the degenerate products of miscegenation, distrusted by both cultures and fitting in nowhere” (104). Clearly reflective of the dis-ease and anxiety caused by their hybrid identity, the marking of “mixed-blooded” people as without value in terms Anglo-American discourse and society was the colonizers' attempt to reassert the binary, to contain and regulate these disruptive hybrid bodies. The “almost but not quite” status of Indian “mixed bloods” was simply too unsettling for Anglo-American subjectivity. Obviously Thomas Rolfe, although existing some time before these derogatory stereotypes were fully calcified in Anglo-American consciousness, still caused dis-ease and uncertainty in the minds of his contemporaries and descendants. Rather than being as marked “without value” as later biracial Indians were, Thomas was simply erased and forgotten by Anglo-Americans.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Although he was never to see his son again, John Rolfe did make reference to his son shortly after his return to Virginia in a letter to Sir Edwin Sandys in June of 1617. After meeting with the Indians to

Beyond his “mixed-bloodedness,” however, Thomas is threatening to the project of colonization for another reason: his gender. Because Thomas was a biracial man, he further disrupted the colonial project of constructing a gendered, as well as raced, American identity. As I have previously discussed in chapter two, nations are ultimately social constructions that magnify the differences between dominant power groups and the excluded and powerless fringes in order to institutionalize the idea of the inequality among the citizens. Most often and most universally, these exclusions are gendered, leaving the terms of any nation-state to be defined by male desires, male difference, and male power. A figure like Thomas, who embodies markers of both the dominant power group—wealth, significant heritage, education—and the excluded, subaltern group—a “savage” race, culture, and physical appearance—all in a male body, creates conflict in the creation of a cohesive national narrative. His maleness, lineage, and wealth warrant recognition and a place in the construction of the new nation. He validates nation building through the transmission of Indian land, power, and identity to the colonizers through blood inheritance, yet his Indianness combined with his maleness undercuts that transmission. Consequently, attempts to consolidate and construct the identity of a white, male American nation that is culturally separate from England becomes thwarted by the existence of a figure like Thomas Rolfe.

Thomas’ presence, his masculine, “mixed-blood” status, highlights what Bhabha calls the “partializing process of hybridity” in which “the hybrid object [. . .] retains the actual semblance of the authoritative symbol but revalues its presence by resisting it as

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inform them of Pocahontas’ death and explain Thomas’ absence, Rolfe notes “The Indyans [are] very loving. . . My wive’s death is much lamented; my childe much desired, when it is of better strength to endure so hard a passage” (*Records* 3:70-71)

the signifier of *Entstellung*—*after the intervention of difference*” (“Signs,” 163-164, italics in original). In other words, Thomas occupies a space in between the colonizer and colonized, not merely blending the two identities, but transforming both, without fully resembling or performing either one. He shatters the binary sensibilities of difference that inflect and simplify colonial understanding. Consequently, such a transformative identity interrupts the hierarchical alignment of subjects in colonial discourse posing a “paranoid threat” to colonial power (Bhabha, “Signs,” 165). The threat of the hybrid is “finally uncontainable because it breaks down the symmetry and the duality of self/other, inside/outside. In the productivity of power, the boundaries of authority—its reality effects—are always besieged by ‘the other scene’ of fixations and phantoms” (Bhabha, “Signs,” 165-66). Consequently, Thomas must be erased, purged from colonial consciousness. Yet this can not ever be completely accomplished because hybrid, “mixed-blood” figures like Thomas did, indeed, exist and their uncontainable, racially ambiguous identities, which were essential to the formation of a truly “American” lineage, did emerge in fact, record, art, and fiction, puncturing and fracturing the racialized boundaries of colonial power.

#### **“Mixed-Blood” Masculinity: Hobomok**

In many ways, Charles Hobomok Conant, the son of Mary Conant and the noble, English-friendly Indian Hobomok in Lydia Maria Child’s 1824 novel, *Hobomok*, is the literary equivalent of Thomas Rolfe. Born into an interracial marriage of notable Indian and English ancestry in one of the earliest English colonies in the New World, “Little Hobomok” as he is called by Child, ultimately lives a purely Anglicized existence after the age of about two. After the loss of his Indian parent, Little Hobomok

even goes to college in England, eventually leaving all remnants of his Indian heritage behind him and becoming an “Englishman” living far beyond the anxious eyes of Anglo-Americans in England, just as Thomas did. However, in a significant departure from the narrative trajectory of his fictionalized counterpart, Thomas Rolfe, the real, historic entity, eventually returns to the New World; Charles Hobomok Conant does not. He remains perpetually in England as the novel is brought to its close. This narrative distinction made by Child, while effectively removing the disruptive, “mixed-blood” masculinity of Little Hobomok from narrative view, delivers her character from the fate of erasure suffered by Thomas Rolfe; Little Hobomok remains as a destabilizing presence, but for another nation.

Charles Hobomok Conant, like Thomas Rolfe before him, exemplifies the problematic existence of biracial children/people—particularly biracial males—in the formation of a distinctive New World literary identity. Not only did their “mixed blood” complicated the racial binaries that underpinned colonial hegemony, but when coupled with their masculinity, it also challenged the legitimacy of the patriarchal discourses that governed Anglo-American society. Consequently, although significant to the story arc and the historical scope of the novel, Little Hobomok’s ambivalent presence must be obviated by Child by the novel’s end, becoming a culturally and socially Anglicized character who no longer even lives in America and consequently, is no longer a threat to New World/American identity. Little Hobomok is literally removed from America and American identity by the end of the novel, being recreated by Child as the English educated and England-dwelling Charles Conant Brown. Just as Thomas Rolfe functions as the originary link to the Pocahontas legend, the literal blood

ties that allows so many Americans to claim autochthony with the American landscape and its first people, Charles Hobomok Conant serves as the originary link with Indianness that grants Child, as an Anglo-American woman writer, the authority from which to launch her critique of the white, patriarchal hegemony dominating nationalist discourse. However, while Thomas is ultimately discarded from the American narrative of Pocahontas after his usefulness has been mined and the complexities of his identity emerge, Little Hobomok is instead re-scripted in Child's narrative as an Englishman once his usefulness as a signifier of American autochthony has run its course. He is not fully discarded and/or discredited by Child, because, after all, she created Little Hobomok and has an artistic responsibility to him and to her own story line, which posits the possibility of Indian and Anglo-American intermarriage. Child just ships him off to become the citizen (the "problem") of another, separate nation, England, where his "problematic" identity becomes decidedly less so as he successfully becomes a fully acculturated Englishman.

Although Child's goals as author have been posited variously as "rebellion against patriarchy" (Karcher xx) and working "to bring white women out of spectrality" (Bergland 70), most scholars agree that Child's ultimate intent was to rupture and revise both the racist and patriarchal paradigms governing Anglo-American society. Her use of Indianness as a ground from which to validate and launch that critique, however, had to be done carefully. She had to mine the autochthony of Native identity in order to write white womanhood—and white female authorship—into existence, but she must not inadvertently write a biracial version of Indian masculinity into existence in the process, giving it dominance over Anglo-American women and equality with Anglo-

American men. Consequently, little Hobomok's "almost but not quite" status as a "mixed-blood" child and his masculinity, while in infancy, serve to support Child's work in validating white feminine agency; in adulthood, though, Child wrote this character into a marginalized existence, relegating him to an entirely acculturated Anglicized existence away from American soil—a de-emphasized fate strikingly similar to that of Pocahontas' only son, Thomas Rolfe. Male "mixed-bloodedness" was simply too uncontainable and too threatening to Anglo-American identity to remain unchecked, and in the case of Child, too threatening to her American feminine authorial identity because of its potential to reify patriarchal hegemony; as a consequence, it had to be carefully regulated and downplayed in her text—to be literally be removed from contact with Americanness through an evacuation to England.

When Child wrote *Hobomok* in 1824, critics had been "calling on American writers to do for their native land what [Sir Walter] Scott had done for his [ . . . ] to exploit the matchless resources that America's panoramic landscapes, heroic Puritan settlers, and exotic Indian folklore afforded the romancer" (Karcher xviii). Twenty-two-year-old Child, who was then unmarried and known as Lydia Maria Francis, answered that call by drafting the first chapter of *Hobomok* in a single afternoon and, as she would later insist, "exactly as it now stands" (Child as qtd. in Karcher, xviii). Although critics recognize that Child's plot of *Hobomok* may have been a little more than influenced by a review of James Wallis Eastburn's narrative poem *Yamoyden, A Tale of the Wars of King Philip: in Six Cantos* she had read that very day in her brother's study, Carolyn Karcher notes that Child had undoubtedly "already conceived the embryo of a plot that differed substantially from *Yamoyden's*, whatever hints she subsequently

derived from directly consulting the poem so frequently cited in her epigraphs” (xix). Subtitled *A Tale of Early Times* and initially published anonymously and signed only “By an American,” *Hobomok* relates the story of Mary Conant, the privileged daughter of a religiously intolerant Puritan father and an ailing mother, who is struggling to make a life in rugged the New World colony of Salem in the early seventeenth century. Mary’s lover, the Episcopalian Charles Brown is exiled from the colony for “fomenting disturbance” with his religious teachings and is supposedly killed in a shipwreck, leaving Mary on the verge of despair after suffering through the previous deaths of her beloved mother and visiting friend (Child 70). Distraught, Mary elopes with the Indian Hobomok a friend to the English who had always held Mary in special regard. She lives with Hobomok in his Indian village outside of the English settlement for two years, even having a son with the Indian, until Charles Brown unexpectedly returns. True to his “Noble Savage” form, Hobomok symbolically divorces Mary, vanishing from the scene so Mary and their son can build an English life with Mary’s original love. The groundbreaking novel, according to Karcher, is ultimately based on an insight that would guide the remainder of Child’s career as an activist and writer, exploring “interracial marriage, symbolizing both the natural alliance between white women and people of color, and the natural resolution of America’s racial and sexual contradictions” (xx).

Many critics have noted Child’s aggressive critique of the patriarchal hegemony governing Anglo-American society in *Hobomok*. Carolyn Karcher, for example, sees the narrative as an exploration of an alternative colonial history, one which “highlight[s] its underside and shift[s] focus from the saints to the sinners, from the orthodox to the

heterodox, from the white settlers to the Indians, from the venerated patriarchs to the unsung wives” (Karcher xxi). Others have suggested that Child’s exploration of intermarriage between whites and Indians posits the possibility that such unions “could serve as a positive force for transforming Indians into Englishmen or whites” (Jacobs 34). Leland Person situates Child’s novel as a nineteenth century frontier novel that seeks to expose the “miscegenation phobia” governing many texts within that genre (672). All, however, almost universally agree that Child was actively working to challenge social and cultural boundaries of one sort or another.<sup>85</sup>

However, within all of the critical discussion of Child’s radical revisioning of facets of the masculinized and patriarchal colonial encounters at Salem (Naumkeak) and Plymouth, the settings of her novel, perhaps the most radical of her revisions—her introduction of a mixed race child whose mother is white and father is Indian—is almost universally unremarked upon.<sup>86</sup> Child engages in a daring experiment with her characters by not only creating a character of mixed race—Charles Hobomok Conant—

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<sup>85</sup> Additional critics, among many, who have examined Child’s re-visionary practices in *Hobomok*, include Bruce Mills who see the text’s acceptance by Child’s audience as stemming from her attempts to “redraw social boundaries rather than erase them” (2), and Mark G. Vasquez who views Child’s circular imagery in the text as illustrating “a mediatory concern with connection and synthesis that EuroAmerican culture lacks” (175). Carl H. Sederhorn and Robert Azbug both examine Child’s critique of religion, with Sederhorn in particular noting Child’s allusions to “the doctrine of correspondence. . . suggesting that nature serves as the original revelation of Deity” (555).

<sup>86</sup> Harry J. Brown in his *Injun Joe’s Ghost: The Indian Mixed-Blood in American Writing*, is one of the few scholars who addresses, albeit briefly, the implications of Hobomok and Mary Conant’s child. Brown’s contention is that many of Child’s characters in *Hobomok* waver “between two conflicting selves,” with Charles Hobomok Conant significantly “vacillat[ing] between Indian brave and Harvard fellow” (60). Brown notes that Charles Hobomok Conant’s ultimate survival, quite possibly as the “tender slip” in the closing passage of Child’s text (Child 150), and the “narrative omission of a pure white half-brother” fail to assure the reader “of any unstained progeny” (Brown 61). Such an implication, notes Brown, positions Child “as the first to publicly imagine the unimaginable possibility that we are all half-breeds” (61). My own reading of Charles Hobomok Conant—to be discussed at length later in this chapter—differs from Brown’s very intriguing one in that I see this character as a necessary and useful “evil” for Child, something she must address but at great risk to her overall narrative structure, rather than an incendiary statement about racial purity.

but also through the reversal of the races and genders of this child's parents from the accepted "norms" of interracial love and attraction. In the standard narratives of colonization, such as narrative of Pocahontas' and John Rolfe's union, it is the "savage" woman who engages in a relationship with the "civilized" Anglo-American male. Even in the imagined, romanticized versions of Pocahontas' life, popularized in the nineteenth century and later in the 1985 Disney version, *Pocahontas*, and the 2005 Terrence Malick film *The New World*, in which she carries an unrequited love for John Smith instead of Rolfe, the flow of desire and masculine authority remains intact; it is the feminine other cleaving unto the masculine colonizer. This order of coupling was, as Margaret D. Jacobs notes, widely "tolerated within American society. Liaisons between white men and nonwhite women did not violate the hierarchical order that developed between European Americans, African Americans, and American Indians. Rather, they represented extensions and reinforcements of colonialism, conquest, and domination" (31).

Child deviates from this standardized narrative in *Hobomok*, however, and inscribes Little Hobomok's father as the noble, high-ranking Indian friend of the English, and his mother as the equally high-ranking Puritan woman who commits herself to an Indian marriage. This radical move was especially bold on Child's part, because "there was widespread opposition to marriage between white women and Native American men" in colonial America (Jacobs 32). Additionally, "[w]hen white women and nonwhite men engaged in sexual relationships or married, they violated the colonial, racial, and patriarchal order. Within this order, white men dominated both their daughters and wives as well as groups of subjugated peoples, including American

Indians and African Americans” (Jacobs 31-2). Such unions gave the colonized, dominated Indian male, “a power and a prerogative [over white women] that many white men believed should be theirs alone” (Jacobs 34). Consequently, Child’s choice to reverse the gender and race of her most significant characters rewrites not only the master narratives governing New World interracial relationships, but also the discourses governing Anglo-American masculinity and authority. She has introduced a liaison in which white patriarchy has no governance over the behaviors and actions of either of the two main actors within the relationship, Mary and Hobomok, and a situation in which colonial discourse fails to dominate the two main objects of its control: white women and nonwhite men. Child has thwarted patriarchal hegemony and created a point of rupture through which white womanhood can textually assert its own agency by making choices and living a lifestyle—at least temporarily, as in Mary’s case—that is beyond the regulatory framework of the gendered and raced discourses of colonialism. Further, by recording that narrative into textual form, Child has inscribed feminine agency and, more importantly, a feminine authorial voice, onto the standard narrative that she is aggressively rewriting.

Child further builds her specifically feminine and American authorial identity through her narrative structure, which alternates among multiple authorial voices as well as two distinct time periods. The novel begins with a short preface in which the genesis of the text is revealed through an anecdotal story told by the “friend” of the text’s author. “Frederic” relates how his friend, a young, unnamed man of “an awkward and unprepossessing appearance” (Child 4) set out in the summer of 1823 to write a “New England novel” (Child 3) with only some encouragement and historical

pamphlets, both of which are provided by Frederic. Immediately following this preface is chapter one in which the actual “novel” drafted by the awkward young man begins. However, before the plot of *Hobomok* is put into narrative action, there is another short “introduction” at the beginning of chapter one in which the awkward young author waxes poetic on his nationalistic pride as a native New Englander and the “mighty effort” of the American forefathers some two hundred years ago whose “bold outlines of . . . character alone remain to us” (Child 6). The reader is then told that although the day to day details of the lives of these colonial leaders are generally lost to contemporary audiences, some of those details “have lately been unfolded in an old, worn-out manuscript, which accidentally came in [his] way” (Child 6). The manuscript, purportedly written by one of the author’s ancestors who as a young man fled religious persecution and arrived in Salem (Naumkeak) “about the middle of June 1629,” is then recorded almost verbatim by the young author, constituting the body of the narrative and placing the remainder of the action in the narrative squarely in the seventeenth century (Child 7).

This narrative move between multiple narrators—three young men to be exact—and two different time periods—the “present” of Frederic, the awkward young author, and Child herself, and the “ancestral past” of Salem in 1629—are strategies employed by Child in order to ground her text, and her revisionary ideas within it, in both patriarchy and history so she can then rewrite them. By setting her text in the earliest and most hallowed moments of colonial history and giving it the most revered of voices—a religiously persecuted ancestor—Child is providing her text with a sense of authenticity and authority that lend her words and her story weight, connecting her

words to the ancestral past and genesis of the American nation. Additionally, by providing her text with a native American setting and an Indian protagonist, whose name provides the narrative its title, Child is establishing her narrative as representatively and foundationally American; it is an indigenous text. As author, Child is reaching back from her present day and time of 1823 in order to position her ideas as coeval with the founding of the American colonies and as authentically “American” so that she can begin her revision of history.

With numerous “editorial” interruptions from the author in which he “takes the liberty of substituting [his] expressions for [the] antiquated and almost unintelligible style” (Child 7) and a bold acknowledgment by the author’s friend Frederic in the preface that this work of fiction was written through the aid of “many old, historical pamphlets,” Child undercuts the austerity and reverence bestowed upon such sources (Child 4). As Carolyn Karcher has noted, such authorial moves allow Child “to appropriate the narrative authority of the Puritan chroniclers while rewriting the hagiography they had bequeathed to posterity” (xx). She cloaks herself in patriarchy and history in order to expose and revise the selective memory and exclusions practiced by these institutions. At the same time, however, and more interestingly, is Child’s erasure of any evidence of Indianness in these initial, foundational moments of the formation of America. Hobomok, the titular character of the text, doesn’t even appear until the very end of chapter one, and then, it is as a mysterious figure who springs into the circle of Mary’s husband divining ceremony and has to speak to Mary in order to

“convince her that he was real flesh and blood” (Child 14).<sup>87</sup> Hobomok is a one-dimensional, stock character, the “lovesick young man,” whose Indianness serves only to propel Child’s agenda of refiguring the patriarchal and racist systems of EuroAmerica. He is not grounded in specific cultural and historical moments, rather he is the Indian from the Massachusetts Bay Colony seal, begging for European domination through domestication. He is an updated version of Mary Rowlandson’s flattened out Indians and Ann Eliza Bleecker’s domestic-destroying Indians; however, instead of being a wild-eyed, blood-thirsty “savage” as Rowlandson’s and Bleecker’s Indians were, Hobomok is now a laudable “Noble Savage” seeking all the accoutrements of English civilization through a romantic union, a steam-rolled image of Indianness that is just as problematic as (although less “savage” than) Rowlandson’s and Bleecker’s versions are.

While Child is obviously banking on the colonial fantasies of Indianness and Hobomok’s future marriage to Mary to ground her ideas in a Native authenticity so early in chapter one, she is also removing the historical fact of Hobomok’s Indianness from the political, religious, and colonial focus of her text. These first few pages of the text deal overtly with the historicity of the newly arriving colonists, the dire situation of the colony at Salem, and the religious (and patriarchal) intolerance governing not only the central character of Mr. Conant, but male authority in general. Hobomok, however, only enters into the text as an illusory and forbidden love match for Mary, an ahistorical spirit of the forest out to “watch the deer tracks” and to “make the Manitto Asseinah

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<sup>87</sup> For more in depth readings of Mary’s witch-craft like ceremony for a husband, see for example Karcher, Sederholm, Person, Maddox, Bergland, and Brown.

green as the oak tree” (Child 14), not as a political, physical reality in terms of the colony’s historical corporeality. He is present, but displaced from the actual historical occurrences (and significances) in the text. “Real” Indianness is removed to where it can’t be seen, or at least doesn’t really “count”—to the romantic world of love potions and silly lovesick girls. While Hobomok is pivotal to Child’s narrative and is a necessity for her ultimate critique, he is also a threatening reminder of the “real live” Indianness underpinning the colony’s (and America’s) existence that must be textually removed to a place where it can’t really matter.

In *The National Uncanny: Indian Ghosts and American Subjects*, Renee Bergland has observed that “Child’s work . . . uses the metaphors and plots of Indian spectralization and romantic love to assert female subjectivity and to claim the body and the political community for white American women” (63). She argues that “[w]hite women and dark men dwell together in an American netherworld” and that Child’s primary purpose in the text is “to bring white women out of spectrality” (Bergland 69, 70). While Hobomok is certainly minimized as a character in the opening chapter of the text—he is essentially a romanticized stereotype—he and Mary are never entirely spectralized by Child. Although each character is, indeed, at times described in apparitional terms, Mary, and Hobomok are developed by Child as concrete, embodied entities who actively participate into her re-visioning of colonial history, most especially through their physical union as husband and wife and the birth of their son. It is this union with Hobomok and his Indianness that becomes the footing from which Mary is able to assert her own agency and Child is able to launch her critique of white patriarchy. Rather than being a disembodied specter from which Mary, and Child as a

white woman herself, seeks to escape, Hobomok's Indian presence in the novel is instead the foundation that authenticates Mary's, and Child's, voice as being "American." Although his Indianness is mediated and redrawn by Child to suit her authorial goals, the character of Hobomok, after his initial encounters with the reader, becomes a substantial—albeit at times a flattened—presence rather than a spectral one. Child's entire premise of disrupting the colonial discourses to posit new possibilities for white womanhood through Mary's marriage to and production of a child by Hobomok requires the fact of Hobomok's very real presence. Simply put, Hobomok has to be "real" in order for his son—and Child's critiques—to be real.

As the plot of *Hobomok* advances, Hobomok, as a character, figures into the action of the text more significantly. Child develops Hobomok's adversarial relationship with the anti-English Indian Corbitant, which ultimately leads to Hobomok warning the English of an impending Indian attack, and Hobomok's well-known reputation, even among his own tribe, as one "whose loves and hates had become identified with the English" (Child 31). Child also develops the affections of Hobomok, an Indian "cast in nature's noblest mould," for Mary Conant (Child 36). Child describes Hobomok as an Indian who "looked upon [Mary] with reverence, which almost amounted to adoration," even facing taunts from his own tribe because of it (Child 33). Corbitant, for example, while arguing with Hobomok about the threat posed by the English colonists to the area Indian tribes, "sarcastically" sneers at him, "Hobomok saves his tears for the white-faced daughter of Conant, and his blood for the arrow of Corbitant" (Child 31). Clearly, Hobomok's affection for Mary, which is described by Child in stereotypical terms tinged with racist undertones, is the single dominating characteristic of his character. It

is what motivates all of his actions within the course of the novel: his informing the English of the Indian attack against the colony; his marriage to a raving Mary after she suffers through the death of her mother, her good friend, Lady Arabella, and her lover, Charles Brown; and finally, his release of Mary and their son from their ties to him at the end of the novel so that she can be reunited with her white lover, Charles.

For Child, Hobomok's recognition of Anglo-American superiority and his desire for white womanhood, while certainly portrayed as pure of motive, do not need to be questioned or even explained. There is no need to justify Hobomok's choice of Anglicized lifestyle and (crazy) white wife; the allure and power of white womanhood and the domestic unions that result from it, Child Anglo-centrally implies, are explanation enough. Child figures Hobomok's English-loving Indianness so that it serves to validate the potency of the feminine domestic through his desire for it and ultimate acceptance of it. Because Hobomok is literally one with nature—he originates from "nature's noblest mould" and exits the text by "plung[ing] into a thicket and disappear[ing]" (Child 36, 141)—his acceptance of Child's domestic plan validates it in a way that Puritan patriarchy with its worn out, verbose old manuscripts and man-made laws can never be validated. Indianness, in this instance, while relegated to a one-dimensional form that keeps it cartoonishly unreal and distant from the historical moment of the text, authenticates Child's ideas and ties them to an autochthonous New World identity, separate from patriarchal hegemony.

However, at the same time, Child must disavow the validation and agency provided by Hobomok's Indianness. If she places too much stock in the power and authority of a male Indian figure, Child runs the risk of undermining her entire critique.

Child must walk the fine line between investing her Native character with too much power, making him and his Indian blood the only authoritative New World identity, and dismantling Hobomok's natural authority as a New World indigene whose acceptance of white domesticity empowers Child's alternative plan for civilizing America, much like Ann Eliza Bleecker did with her critique of nationalism in *The History of Maria Kittle*. Just as Bleecker carefully measured her use of Indianness, mediating between stereotypical but potent images of "bloodthirsty," destructive "savages" and images of Indians who valued white domesticity, in order to successfully critique the masculine discourses of nationalism, so too must Child mediate between versions of Indianness as being authentically, independently "American" and as longing for Anglo-American domestication. Both women artfully rewrite Indian identity—particularly male Indian identity—in order to create their own identities as women writers of history.

To temper Hobomok's authority and maintain her own as a white woman writer, Child enables the attraction between Mary Conant and Hobomok to grow, but under uneven conditions—Hobomok is far more invested in loving Mary than she is in loving him. Child is careful to establish Hobomok's Indianness and the autochthony that goes with it, as subject to Mary's white womanhood. Hobomok's affection for Mary is direct and unwavering throughout the text, but Mary's reactions toward Hobomok are more ambivalent; the flow of desire only moves in one direction—toward the colonizer. When the reader is first introduced to Hobomok as he leaps into Mary's marriage-divining circle in the moonlight her reaction is one of horror and disbelief; she utters an "involuntary shriek of terror" and is on the verge of "retreating from the woods" even after she recognizes her Indian friend (Child 14). Charles Brown then appears, and

“Mary eagerly [catches] his arm, and seem[s] glad amid her terror and agitation, to seek the shelter of his offered protection” (14). Later the next day, she tells her friend Sally Oldham that she has done “a wicked thing” that “frightens [her] to think thereof” (Child 20). Hobomok’s presence in this circumstance—in the forest alone at midnight with Mary—incites much anxiety and fear for the young white woman. He is the “unthinkable” for Mary in numerous ways.

However, in the safe confines of her home surrounded by her parents and the “civilization” of Naumkeak, Mary finds Hobomok an intriguing and even desirable companion. After her white lover, Charles Brown, has been exiled to England, Mary suffers through a “long and dreary winter,” during which there “was nothing to break the monotony of the scene, except the occasional visits of Hobomok” (Child 84). Hobomok becomes even more attentive to Mary at this point in the narrative, bringing her furs and other tokens of his affections, because “love deep and intense, had sunk far into [his] bosom” (Child 84). Mary, suffering through the absence of her beloved Charles, enjoys, albeit guiltily, these overtures. Child notes,

A woman’s heart loves the flattery of devoted attention, let it come from what source it may. Perhaps Mary smiled too complacently on such offerings; perhaps she listened with too much interest, to descriptions of the Indian nations, glowing as they were in the brief figurative language of nature. . . [F]emale vanity sinfully indulged [love’s] growth. (Child 84-85)

Mary also, in gushing gratitude for the exquisite gray fox furs and shells Hobomok has brought her, tells him, “I am going to make you a wampum belt of the

shells you brought, and I want you to tell me how to put them together,” not only stoking the fires of his attentions, but also showing her willingness to spend more time with Hobomok and learn about his culture (Child 86). Additionally, Mary hangs on the words of Hobomok’s stories, prompting him to continue and asking questions as the Indian tells the tales of his Native culture; she even accompanies Hobomok and his friends, chaperoned of course, on a nighttime deer hunt during which Hobomok displays his ample skill with a bow. Clearly, Mary is interested in, if not encouraging, the attentions Hobomok is bestowing upon her. She is also just as clearly interested in Hobomok’s Indian identity. Through her willingness to learn about and even adopt some of the cultural markings of Indianness as introduced to her by Hobomok, Mary is flirting with Native identity. By having Mary accept the furs and shells, and learn Hobomok’s stories and traditions with relish, Child is not only setting the seeds for the future marriage of the young couple, she is also having Mary “absorb” Indian autochthony. Mary is becoming N/native through her relationship with Hobomok. Although the idea of Mary’s whiteness being a blank canvas that can imbibe prime bits and pieces of Indianness is certainly reflective of the colonial hegemony Child is writing against, it is also a bold move by Child that invests Mary with N/native authority and a truly American identity that white patriarchy does not have.

Child is sure to make clear, however, that Hobomok’s intentions toward Mary are innocently, and quite naturally motivated. Child writes that

the untutored chief knew not the strange visitant which had usurped such empire in his heart; if he found himself gazing up her face in silent eagerness, ‘twas but adoration for so bright an emanation from the Good

Spirit; if something within taught him to copy, with promptitude, all the kind attentions of the white man, 'twas gratitude for the life of his mother which she had preserved. (Child 84)

Hobomok's feelings for Mary stem from both gratitude and a cognizance of her innate goodness, as well as a deep-seated desire to adopt the ways of white man. He is desirous of winning the recognition and acceptance of the colonizers, particularly those of the blushing, youthful Mary.

Here, Child is developing the attachment between Hobomok and Mary Conant in carefully measured steps. If there were no return of affection on the part of Mary, Hobomok's pursuit of her would become aggressive and threatening to white patriarchy and white readers; he would become the "savage other" who desires and corrupts white womanhood with his dark desires, even vaguely threatening kidnap and capture. However, if Mary is too receptive of Hobomok's overtures, she becomes too rebellious to be given any credence as a character. She becomes the ungovernable, passionate woman whose protection and management the patriarchal paradigms of society were purportedly enacted to protect. Child circumvents such issues by bringing Mary to the brink of infatuation with her Indian suitor, but with the full realization that what she is doing is unacceptable; for example, Mary regards her relationship with Hobomok with "shuddering superstition" (Child 85). Additionally, Child depicts Hobomok as genuinely and innocently infatuated with Mary's English goodness, essentially making him into the colonizer's willing love-slave. Such a combination allows Child to pursue her interracial love affair and simultaneous restructuring of patriarchy unopposed. However, when it comes to the actual marriage of Mary and her Indian lover, Child

turns many accepted norms on their ends. While she quickly moves to make Mary's decisions and behaviors toward Hobomok excusable/understandable for her readers, she also puts Mary in the driver's seat of that relationship.

Mary's marriage to Hobomok occurs shortly after and in direct response to the deaths of her mother and her dear friend, Lady Arabella, in chapter fifteen, and that of Charles Brown in a shipwreck immediately after in chapter sixteen. Initially, after the deaths of the two women, Mary, although devastated, is able to "discharge her daily duties with tolerable cheerfulness" (Child 115). The ideas of "asking her father's permission to return to England" and the "prospect of Brown's arrival in the ensuing spring" keep Mary's spirit alive and her thought processes intact (Child 144). However, when Hobomok appears a short time later, bearing a letter from Plymouth that reveals Charles Brown was a passenger on a shipwrecked East India vessel, Mary's "heart reel[s], and the blow threaten[s] to suspend her faculties" (Child 117). And destroy her faculties it does. Mary becomes a pale and trembling shell of herself, suffering "a partial derangement of [her] faculties" and "[a] bewilderment of despair that almost amounted to insanity" (Child 120). With her brain in a "burning agony" she visits the grave of her mother where Hobomok finds her and tells her he "wish he could make [her] happy" in the stereotypical broken English of Indians (Child 121). With the remembrance of "the idolatry [Hobomok] had always paid her, and in the desolation of the moment, [Mary] felt as if he was the only being in the wide world left to love her" (Child 121); so, in "the midst of this whirlwind of thoughts and passions" she proposes to Hobomok. Mary says, "I will be your wife, Hobomok, if you love me" (Child 121).

This scene of consensual miscegenation has polarized readers and scholars since the publication of *Hobomok* in 1824. Originally described by a reviewer in the *North American Review* as “unnatural. . .[and] revolting,” Mary’s proposal to her Indian lover is no less disruptive and disputed among scholars today. For example, Harry Brown notes the scene is one more reminiscent of “an abduction rather than an elopement” that occurs as a “tragic consequence of the collapse of [Mary’s] will” (57), while Carolyn Karcher sees it as a moment where Mary seizes “the right to define her own fate, choose her own religion, reclaim her own sexuality, assert her own worth” (xxx), and Renee Bergland suggests Mary’s proposal was “an attempt to evade death, and to claim her own fate” (75).<sup>88</sup> While these readings do focus on Mary’s agency (or lack thereof) in her proposal to Hobomok—and Child’s revisionary efforts as author—they ultimately do not underscore the complexity of Child’s maneuverings in this scene. I assert that it is an intricate and bold textual negotiation by Child between Indianness and womanhood, a careful moderation of binaristic extremes that enables the emergence of female authorship, one of many Child makes in the narrative. Mary neither completely collapses and “gives up” nor flagrantly asserts her rights in this scene; instead, Child has her carefully walk a line between the two extremes, bringing Mary to the brink of full and conscious rebellion and to the edge of being absolutely incapable of reason, and therefore, not responsible for her actions. Mary’s “insanity” is, after all, only temporary and rightfully due to the overwhelming grief she suffers from the loss of her mother, her

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<sup>88</sup> Additionally, Nina Baym sees the scene as one in which Mary’s proposal “is a maddened attempt to escape from a community to which she is so far superior, and in which she is totally isolated” (156).

friend, and her lover. Mary's lapse in judgment and subsequent Indian marriage is therefore justified, almost understandable.

Because Mary's actions fly directly in the face of the racist, patriarchal paradigms under which she lived in the seventeenth century and Child still lived in the nineteenth century, Child must carefully temper Mary's aggressive actions of feminine rebellion through the reactions and behaviors of the Indian Hobomok. Child balances Mary's disruption of patriarchal hegemony through her dominant, masculine act of pursuing a husband and marriage by reinforcing colonial hegemony through Hobomok's eager and worshipful acceptance of the proposal. This is made clear when Hobomok confesses the nature of his love to Mary. He says, "Hobomok has loved you many long moons. . .but he loved like as he loves the Great Spirit" (Child 121). Hobomok's love is not a lustful, carnal one, but rather one of distant adoration undergirded by a sense of his own inadequacy as an Indian and his perception of Mary's superiority as an English woman. He loves and worships Mary almost as one would a deity, a "Great Spirit," making his acceptance of Mary's proposal into a model of what the "acceptable" relationship of the colonized to the colonizer should be: pure subservient veneration. Consequently, Mary's aggressive and threatening act of agency is mediated by the positive result it achieves: a sort of willing "domestic colonization" of the Indians. Rather than simply working to reinforce or disrupt the colonial system, Child has used Hobomok's Indianness, and its colonial-perceived compliance, as a justification for Mary's radical act. The ends justify the means, or so Child seems to boldly suggest.

Child further mediates these bold assertions by placing Mary into a state of “unreasonableness of mingled grief and anger,” and under a “stupefying influence,” so that she only delivers “mournful and incoherent soliloqu[ies]” when she speaks at all (122-123). Mary is understandably, legitimately, heartbroken and bereft over the loss of so many people who were close to her, so her breakdown in reason is not a sign of weakness, but rather a sign of her sensitive nature and is excusable. Yet, a woman who is deemed “mad” by her future mother-in-law is clearly not capable of making sound decisions about whom she should marry and for what reasons, whether her “madness” stems from legitimate reasons or not (Child 124). Consequently, Mary’s choices and actions are devalued or at least downplayed in the narrative even though the cause of her incoherent state is reasonable. Although Mary has exercised agency in negotiating relations with the Native other, much like Maria Kittle did when she brokered a peace treaty with an Indian party in Bleeker’s *The History of Maria Kittle*, the potency of that agency is undercut because of its entanglement with Indianness, and in Mary’s case, insanity—albeit justifiable and temporary insanity. A deal made with an Indian, even if based on progressive ideas of unity rather than disunity (as both Kittle and Mary Conant establish) isn’t really a deal at all, at least in Anglo-American terms, because it was made with a non-citizen—an “uncivilized savage.” Similarly, such a choice, even a radical one, isn’t much of a choice—or a threat to established authority—if you make it while not in possession of your faculties. Bleeker and Child both suggest the power of Indianness for establishing white, feminine identity and authority in instances such as these. These women authors are aware that Indianness, especially male Indianness, is what can legitimize the actions of their female protagonists in ways that white

patriarchy can not and will not; however, it is ultimately a fraught legitimacy, because it has to be so carefully justified and distanced from the Indianness that enables it and because it often must occur at the problematic expense of feminine agency.

Further veiling Mary's feminine agency and advancing the notion that Mary's choice to marry Hobomok was a non-choice, a fictional non-reality, is the process through which Hobomok ends his marriage to her. Once Charles Brown has returned from his presumed death and is ready to renew his relationship with Mary, Hobomok, upon encountering Charles in the woods before anyone else, agrees to relinquish his hold on Mary and the couple's two-year-old son, little Hobomok. Hobomok tells Charles, "Good and kind [Mary] has been; but the heart of Mary is not with the Indian. . . Hobomok will go far off. . .and Mary may sing the marriage song in the wigwam of the Englishman" (Child 139). Before Brown can protest, Hobomok is gone, disappearing into the wilderness, leaving Charles free to rekindle his love with Mary. Later on at the home of Mary's good friend, the now-married Sally Oldham Collier, a note is found attached to the carcasses of three foxes and a huge deer. It is from Hobomok and reads:

This doth certifie that the witche hazel sticks, which were givene to the witnesses of my marriage are all burnt by my requeste: therefore by Indian laws, Hobomok and Mary Conant are divorced. And this I doe, that Mary may be happie. . .The deere and foxes are for my goode Mary, and my boy. (Child 146)

Although dictated to and signed by Governor Edward Winslow and containing the mark of Hobomok, the note underscores further, at least for English audiences, the

“unreal” state of Mary’s marriage. Her commitment to Hobomok is severed by the “mere” burning of a few twigs and Hobomok’s declaration (the word of an Indian, no less) that the marriage is finished. There are no appeals to either colonial or Christian religious authorities to dissolve this union; instead, Indians who bore witness to the marriage are the authorities asked to grant the divorce by burning symbolic sticks. This was clearly a union that was only recognized and sanctioned within the Indian community, and is not, Child is suggesting, anything to be held against Mary or prevent her return to the colonial fold because it was not “real” in terms of English law. Further undermining the legality of Mary’s union to Hobomok is the reason cited for the dissolution of the marriage: so that “Mary may be happy.” “Happiness” was certainly a non-standard reason to end a marriage in seventeenth-century Anglo-American society, and the fact that it is Mary’s happiness being considered would be almost unfathomable. Although Child is clearly imbuing Mary with agency in allowing her to procure her own happiness and then endowing the achievement of that happiness with value, these moves are only possible through the endorsement of an Indian, which, in colonial America, had no value. Mary technically has done no wrong by entering into marriage with an Indian; however, at the same time, Child takes pains to demonstrate that Mary’s marriage is authentic. She gives Mary and Hobomok a child together. Children that resulted from the unions of white women and a racially “other” man were especially challenging to the established social order because, “[n]either white nor Indian, [they] made a mockery of racial categories, revealing their instability and impermanence” (Jacobs 34).

Because so much of Child's critique involves the subversion of binaries that undergird the white, patriarchal structures of American identity—man/woman, Christian/heathen, culture/nature, colonizer/colonized—she needs those binaries to be firmly in place and universally understood—not thrown into disarray by a character—if she is to successfully unravel them. The existence of a complex and figure like Charles Hobomok Conant, who does the work of destabilizing these very binary structures—in essence negating their existence—potentially undoes Child's interrogation of the racist and gendered paradigms in the text. How can she critique structures that one of her own characters disavows as existing? Consequently, she must ultimately downplay him and remove his “mixed-blood” identity from her critique.

Simultaneously however, Child needs the figure of Charles Hobomok Conant in her narrative in order to validate not only the authenticity of her text, but also to embody her alternative solutions to the dichotomies governing Anglo-American society. By bringing in a biracial, Thomas Rolfe-like figure, a male heir who can transmit his heritage patrilineally, Child is signifying ancestral claims to the American land and unique Indian cultural identity through literal blood ties, as well as positing a way to disrupt the tyranny of Anglo-American patriarchy, through a traditionally feminine means: marriage, children, and a traditionally domestic existence. Little Hobomok is Child's link to Indian “authenticity” that validates her narrative possibilities for a differently raced and gendered American nation and Mary's acts of agency; however, the uncontainable nature of his biracial identity and his problematic ties to patriarchy as a man demands his withdrawal from the text.

When Hobomok does not return home after his encounter with Charles Brown, Mary is devastated, lamenting, “perhaps, like everything else that I ever loved, he is snatched away from me” (Child 147). She clearly has grown to rely on and even love Hobomok, a point that is underscored by the existence of little Hobomok, Mary’s child with the Indian.<sup>89</sup> This child confirms, even without patriarchal or legal sanctification, the realness of Mary’s marriage and the potential of such interracial unions to bring Indianness and Englishness together in a fruitful way. Further, without little Hobomok, Child’s dismantling of white patriarchy would falter. He is the “proof” that Child needs to underpin her critique of colonial hegemony; he demonstrates that Indianness can in some way be incorporated into the American identity without being eradicated. However, little Hobomok simultaneously ruptures Child’s own critique and consequently, must be contained within the text.

Once Charles Brown returns to Mary and declares his intentions to marry her and raise “the brave boy” as his own son, little Hobomok’s presence becomes problematic (Child 148). The once adored and petted child of Mary, for whom she felt “more love for. . .than she thought she should ever again experience” when she was a member of Indian society, becomes a permanent mark of shame and guilt that Mary must carry back with her into colonial civilization (Child 136). For example, when Brown proposes that Mary be his wife “either here or in England,” Mary refuses on

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<sup>89</sup> Critical views of Child’s depiction of Mary’s marriage, of course, vary. Harry Brown, for example, has suggested that rather than feeling genuine affection for Hobomok, Mary’s union with him is “a kind of death” and that Child portrays Mary’s choice to wed the Indian “not [as] an empowering act of will but rather the tragic consequence of the collapse of her will” (Brown 57). Carolyn Karcher posits that through “an insistent pattern of doubling” (xxx) of the characters Hobomok and Charles Brown, Child has produced characters that ultimately “merge as [Mary’s] quest for one leads her to the other” (xxix). My own view of the marriage is discussed at length above.

account of little Hobomok. “I cannot got to England,” she tells Brown, “My boy would disgrace me and I will never leave him” (Child 148). At the wedding, the young child’s “restless motions” at the service must be restrained by his mother, with “her hand resting on the sleek head of the swarthy boy” (Child 149). Little Hobomok, who through his “mixed blood” already ties Mary to Indianness permanently—she “will never leave him”—is now a literal bodily extension of Mary, a visible marker of her entanglement with Indianness, that simply by virtue of his existence can never be denied or forgotten. Even Mary’s stodgy, unsupportive father warms to the dark little boy, making him a “peculiar favorite” (Child 150), but only, Child is careful to explain, because of a “consciousness of blame, and . . . a mixed feeling of compassion and affection” (Child 149). Little Hobomok has become a guilty problem for the family and a hurdle in the process of Mary’s redemption into Anglo-American society. On one hand, he is Mary’s son, a descendant of one of the hardy, founding families of the colony with prominent English ties. He is also nominally marked as Mary’s descendant; as Mary explains to Charles, little Hobomok “[a]ccording to the Indian custom, took the name of his mother. . . Charles Hobomok Conant” (Child 149).

On the other hand, little Hobomok is also unquestionably Mary’s *Indian* son, a direct descendant of both “savage” and elite Puritan blood who would, potentially, as a grown man reared in white society, usurp patriarchal power reserved solely for white men. He would become, for all intents and purposes one of them. If that did occur, Child would have unwittingly reproduced in her own text the same hegemony she is writing against. Little Hobomok, if allowed to progress into active, participatory adulthood within the colony, would prove incredibly destabilizing for colonial

hegemony and counterproductive to Child's own critique of patriarchy. Charles Hobomok Conant would be a living testament to the impermanence and mutability of the "stable" identity of the colonists, and in Child's own time, citizens of the early republic; he would be an Indian man who had literally become Anglo-American through blood, not just acculturation or habit. He would underscore the permeability of the membrane that separated the races in the minds of the colonizers and budding Americans and, perhaps more significantly for Child, would reify masculine authority. So Child must defuse the threat of little Hobomok by mitigating his effects upon American identity.

She does so by completely assimilating the boy into Anglo-European culture and sending him away to England, where he presumably passes as English and never returns to America. It is this removal from America and American soil that effectively diffuses the potentially crippling effects of Charles Hobomok Conant's "mixed-blooded" masculinity. By becoming a successful "Englishman" the "mixed-blooded" male child has been contained and minimized as a threat to American identity. Child writes that after the boy was left a sizable inheritance to be "appropriated to his education," he became "a distinguished graduate at Cambridge . . . [then] left that infant university . . . to finish his studies in England" (150). Little Hobomok's father "was seldom spoken of; and by degrees his Indian appellation was silently omitted" from his name (Child 150). Little Hobomok has been literally "removed" from Child's text. Sent away to England and separated from both his Indian heritage and his native (and Native) land, little Hobomok, now undoubtedly "Charles," becomes a non-issue for Mary, her family, the white patriarchy of the settlement, and the reader. Any power the

boy may have held in the text due to his foundational lineage, both Indian and Anglo-American, and his autochthonous connection to the American landscape, both Indian and Anglo-American, is contained and neutralized by his Anglicized and distant existence in England.

However, when read in another way, Child's removal of Little Hobomok, is actually her preservation of him. Unlike Thomas Rolfe who is erased in order to be forgotten and denied, Child has written Little Hobomok into a fully realized and fully accepted English existence. He is educated, financially provided for with a trust fund, and a noteworthy university student—all as a biracial character within the realm of “white” society. He is, as the last line of Child's narrative nostalgically notes, “the tender slip which [Hobomok] protected, [and] has since become a mighty tree” (Child 150).<sup>90</sup> Although seemingly shuffled aside by the author and the characters within her text, Child has allowed Little Hobomok to “succeed” in the only terms acceptable to her audience: he has become unquestionably English and excelled at it. It would have been unimaginable for Little Hobomok to assume a lifestyle that involved the incorporation of his Indian identity on any level or allowed him to remain in America. Such plot developments would have undoubtedly been viewed by Child's readers, and quite possibly Child herself, as disturbing failures, as instances of Indianness triumphing over the “superior” blood and culture of Anglo-Americaness and ultimately proving the devastation of miscegenation to American identity. Consequently, Child has to

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<sup>90</sup> This final, ambiguous passage of *Hobomok* has also been interpreted by many scholars as referencing the Puritan colony as the “tender slip” protected by Hobomok. However, Harry Brown, like myself, notes the possibility that Hobomok's son could also be the tender slip, but diverges from my own opinion by noting that such a suggestion would “publicly imagine the unimaginable possibility that we are all half-breeds” (61). I see Child's ending as affirmative rather than ominous.

anglicize Little Hobomok and bring him successfully into white society as a contributing citizen, but as one who exists safely beyond the confines of her textual, colonial American world. In doing so, Child has also brought her critique of Anglo-American patriarchy full circle by proving the validity of it through a favorable conclusion in which there is a space for all (white) citizens—especially women—within colonial discourses of nationalism. However, Indianness, particularly “mixed-blooded” Indianness, while serving as a point from which Child can launch her disruption of hegemony, is too disruptive of those American discourses and is removed to another nation to assume another national identity.

In both the historic existence of Thomas Rolfe and the textual existence of Charles Hobomok Conant, maleness when combined with Indianness is clearly a potentially dangerous mixture for American identity. Whether it is descendants of Pocahontas eliding the “savage” biracial ancestry of their forefather or a woman writer dealing with the dual concerns of race and patriarchy embedded in one of her characters, Anglo-American consciousness struggles to contain “mixed-blooded” male identities. Such identities hover beyond the grasp of the secure binaries that defined the Anglo-American nation and self: “civilized”/“savage,” self/other, English/Indian, man/beast. They complicated the systems by which they could be marked and understood by Anglo-Americans, and in doing so complicated and destabilized the same systems by which Anglo-Americans could identify or understand themselves. “Mixed-blooded” masculinity existing within Anglo-American society was a combination that necessarily relegated itself to obscurity, and removal, or, in the case of Thomas Rolfe, flat out erasure. It was simply too transgressive, too threatening to remain an

unchecked addition to American identity, so, quite simply, it was removed from historic record and consciousness.

Just as actual, historic Indians of various tribes were removed from their ancestral lands in the American South and east in the early nineteenth century in order to “make room” for white settlers, white civilization, and “progress,” so, too, are these biracial males removed from the discourses concerning American identity.<sup>91</sup> Figures like Thomas Rolfe and characters like Charles Hobomok Conant posed too many questions and emphasized too many of the cracks in the raced and gendered paradigms that structured Anglo-American identity to remain in plain view unmediated. Their nineteenth century counterparts, the Cherokees, Chickasaws, Creeks, Choctaws, and Seminoles, were simply too “present,” taking up too much valuable land, for the physical manifestation of that Anglo-American identity to be realized. All, however, were removed from historical record, from authorial/reader consciousness, and from literal, physical occupation of the land in order to accommodate the budding, yet fragile and ambivalent, development of the American self. Although in several of her post-*Hobomok* works, Child returns to “the theme of interracial marriage that she had instinctively recognized as both the crux of America’s racial and sexual contradictions” and even actively campaign against Indian dispossession, she quite easily dispossesses the “mixed-blooded” Charles Hobomok Conant (Karcher xxxiii). By transforming him

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<sup>91</sup> A nineteenth century government policy of the United States, Indian Removal attempted to move Native tribes occupying ancestral lands east of the Mississippi to lands west of the river. After the Revolutionary War, the Indians (many of whom sided with the British) were suddenly “in the way” of white Americans’ desire for organized growth and for the expansion of civilization and agricultural pursuits. The government, after a series of Indian treaties and attempts to civilize and/or “buy out” the Indians, finally resorted to forced expulsion when the Indian Removal Act of 1830 was passed. This act, passed under the presidency of Andrew Jackson, provided funds for Indians to move west and threatened the loss of protection and funds if they stayed. See Perdue and Green.

into a successful Englishman living on English soil, Child has summarily undone her authorial “problem” of biracial masculinity and its effects on feminine agency and American identity. She has simply removed it to the domain of another nation.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### “MIXED-BLOOD” WOMANHOOD: POCAHONTAS, *THE FEMALE AMERICAN*, AND FEMININE AUTHORIAL IDENTITY

The Pocahontas narrative is a potent one for Americans, even today. As demonstrated in chapter three, the trope of the acculturated Indian princess who through her marriage to Anglo-America gives literal and figurative birth to a unique American identity that, although foundational, is problematic. The Anglo-American narrative, historic, and artistic retellings of the story that commemorate Pocahontas' life and marriage are very clear about the unidirectional flow of this significant event of acculturation. Pocahontas imbibed Anglo-Americanness; Anglo-Americans did not internalize her Indianness. Any evidence that suggested Indianness was being absorbed into and recognized by Anglo-Americans was erased or muted, pushed from colonial consciousness in order to preserve the fantasy of a “pure” American origin. For the colonial project in America to be successful, Indianness, especially potentially disruptive male Indianness, had to completely lose itself in Anglo-Americanness. Thomas Rolfe had to become Anglicized, living his life on American soil as a fully realized English man. Charles Hobomok Conant had to become Charles Conant Brown and be removed to England where he could disappear into academia, leaving all remnants of his Indianness and ties to America behind—at least in the ideal conceptions of New World identity in Anglo-American imagination.

But the fact of the matter is that Anglo-American identities were changed by their contact with Indianness. Even when Indianness was moving toward and adopting the “superior” ways of the EuroAmerican colonists—when acculturation flowed unidirectionally as colonial consciousness desired and demanded—alterations were occurring in the supposedly unchangeable, essential EuroAmerican core identity. By admitting Indianness into the “civilized” ways of English society, that very civility was being transformed and diversified. Acculturated Indians were proving that the perceived superior essence of Anglo-American identity was neither superior nor essential. Indians could (and did) successfully appropriate Anglo-Americanness, changing its unchangeable nature by their very presence within the system. Any evidence of remaining Indianness had to be denied or excised from colonial consciousness, especially when it accompanied a male Indian body. Male Indians and male “mixed bloods,” as discussed in previous chapters, were incredibly threatening to Anglo-American discourse. Although the male Indian was an intriguing figure for women writers like Mary Rowlandson, Ann Eliza Bleecker, and Lydia Maria Child, to use as a tool to disturb and disorient the certainty of white, patriarchal dominance, the “inappropriateness” of the male Indian often proved to be too potent for these women. After all, a male Indian, whether “real” or of a “mixed-blood” or a fictitious existence, who successfully penetrates and replicates white patriarchy, while incredibly subversive to that discourse on one level, is still ultimately a figure who reproduces patriarchy. This mimicry, Bhabha’s “*almost the same but not quite*,” does indeed threaten the “civilizing mission. . . [through] the displacing gaze of its disciplinary double,” yet the gendered mission, the patriarchal discourses regulating the role of women, remains

unchallenged (“Of Mimicry” italics in original, 122, 123). Male Indianness, although a threat to the normality of the racist hegemony of Anglo-America, does not necessarily fracture the sexist one. Consequently, male Indianness, even when invoked intentionally by American women writers, had to be ultimately disarmed, downplayed, or even removed from historic and fictional texts alike.

Indian women, however, were another story. In Anglo-American society, women were *feme covert*, literally “covered” and protected by the men in their lives, first by fathers and brothers, then by husbands, in terms of identity, property ownership, and the law. As Cathy Davidson has noted,

[A] wife’s status as a *feme covert* effectively rendered her legally invisible. . . [T] married woman typically lost her property upon marriage. She lost her legal right to make a will or to inherit property beyond the one-third widow’s rights. . . [B]y law and legal precedent, a married woman’s signature had no weight on legal documents and she had no individual legal identity. (118)<sup>92</sup>

Thus, the incorporation of Indian women into such a limited and limiting system for women would, on the surface, be far less problematic—and less potentially insurgent—than the incorporation of their male Indian counterparts. Indian women who married and/or lived among EuroAmerican men as servants or slaves would summarily be subjected to the same patriarchal system that disallowed feminine forms of agency and

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<sup>92</sup> Of course, as Davidson and scholars such as Linda Kerber, Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, Julia A. Stern and others have noted, the system of coverture, while restrictive of women’s lives in Revolutionary era America, was not absolute. There was room for “disorderly conduct” (to use Rosenberg’s term) and women quite often attacked the system of coverture to their advantage, exposing “the conflict between motherhood and citizenship [and]. . . the world of domesticity and the world of politics” that the system seemingly belied (Basch 232). See chapter two on Ann Eliza Bleecker for further discussion of this issue.

identity independent of their male guardian's. The Indian woman would become not only Anglicized through her acculturation, but she would also become enthralled by white masculinity. Just as Pocahontas "fell in love with" and became subservient to white manhood, first with John Smith and later with John Rolfe—at least in the constructed narratives of Anglo-American fantasy—so too would other Indian and "mixed-blood" women. They would abandon all vestiges of Indianness and succumb to Anglo-Americanness, at least hypothetically. Of course in reality, such acculturations were never so smooth or unimpeded. Indian women who acculturated, such as Pocahontas, did not/could not/would not entirely leave their Indianness behind. It remained with them marking the alternative presence of these figures within Anglo-American consciousness. Pocahontas, as I discussed in chapter three, likely maintained many of her ties to her Powhatan ancestry and relatives, even leaving the indelible stamp of her Indian pedigree on future generations of Americans through her son, Thomas. Therefore, the presence of acculturated Indian women such as Pocahontas within the racist, sexist hegemony was always strategically insurgent just by the nature of its existence; by being within the system, they were, like their male counterparts, disproving its essential exclusivity. Indian women who were of "mixed blood" as well as Anglicized, however, were even more potentially insurgent because of their capacity to rupture both the racist and gendered discourses governing New World ideology. Consequently, for Anglo women writers, the figure of the female "mixed blood" was an intriguing and potent one. More so than their male "mixed-blood" counterparts, who warranted removal, female "mixed bloods" could be deployed by women writers to disrupt the dominant discourses that structured colonial/early republican hegemonies.

Women authors could rewrite these master narratives governing race, gender, and Anglo-American national identity through the fictional portrayal of female characters that resisted categorization in the established binaries of colonial discourse. And when coupled with authorial anonymity and underpinned by the foundational narrative of Pocahontas, texts such as *The Female American*, published in 1767 can posit radical possibilities for not only female authorship but also for racial and gendered multiplicity within the American identity.

### **Pocahontas Redux: The Simon Van de Passe Engraving**

Although Pocahontas was not of literal “mixed blood,” she was of a culturally mixed identity. She was a figure who, at least in the imagination of Anglo-America, recognized the worth and validity of English identity and rescinded the “savage” identity of her birth to become a Christian, an Englishman’s wife, and the mother of a “mixed-blooded” son, beginning a line of descent that, as I have noted in chapter three, that is the only “imperial” family tree in the New World. The only life-image known to exist of Pocahontas, an engraving made by a young Dutch-German artist named Simon Van de Passe in 1616, vividly illustrates her cultural duality. Made from a sketch obtained from an actual sitting had with Pocahontas near the end of her ill-fated visit to England, the engraving is a complex image of an Indian and Anglo mixed identity [Figure 15]. Although Pocahontas also purportedly sat for the *Sedgeford Hall Portrait* or at least for preliminary sketches that would later become the portrait during her stay in England in 1616-1617, there are many questions concerning that portrait’s authenticity due to its unclear provenance and anachronistic portrayal of the Indian



Fig. 15 Simon Van de Passe. Engraving, *Matoaka als Rebecca* (1616)

Image courtesy of the Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia

woman and her child in the picture. As I argued in chapter three, it is more likely the masculine, biracial presence of Thomas Rolfe in the *Sedgeford Hall Portrait*, rather than its indistinct origins, that makes the image's authenticity so open to debate and so easy to dismiss. The Van de Passe engraving of Pocahontas, however, is different because, as Philip Barbour notes, it "is signed by the artist, . . . [and] [t]he date when prints of it were available is attested by John Chamberlain" (232).<sup>102</sup> In short, it is an image authenticated through historical record and white patriarchy. Consequently, the Van de Passe engraving enjoys a validation, a credibility that other depictions of Pocahontas do not; it is an image that is widely accepted as "true," as a snapshot of Pocahontas' real-life physical appearance and a testament to her successful transition from "savage Indian" into a "a great lady of the Jacobean court" (Townsend 151).

When preparing for the portrait sitting with Van de Passe, Pocahontas and her handlers, a group undoubtedly consisting of her husband and perhaps other members or representatives of the Virginian Company who desired (and footed the bill for) this engraving, would have carefully chosen each item of dress, each accessory, to be depicted in this portrait. As Karen Robertson has noted, Pocahontas' "transformation into a Christian woman is signaled by her abandonment of what the English saw as the lewd clothing of the savage. . . The familiar coverings of Englishwomen's dress not only signal her abandonment of heathen ways but facilitate the marking of her rank" (568). Certainly not wanting Pocahontas to appear as anything less than an ideal "success

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<sup>102</sup> John Chamberlain authored a series of letters between 1553 and 1628, chiefly to Sir Dudley Carleton, concerning life in England. On Feb. 22, 1617 in a letter to Carleton containing a copy of the engraving, Chamberlain scathingly remarks, "Here is a fine picture of no fayre Lady. . . with her tricking up and high stile and titles you might thincke her and her worshipfull husband to be somebody" (2:56-7). Barbour, as well as other scholars, cites this reference as evidence of the engraving's authenticity. See Robertson, Townsend, and Mossiker for extended readings of Chamberlain's comments about the engraving.

story” of colonization, and as nothing less than an Indian emperor’s daughter, she was accoutered according to Elizabethan and Jacobean standards. However, within those rigid standards of dress and visible identity are contradictions, ruptures in the logic of “self” and “other,” that become exposed when an “other” is fashioned into the “self.” The Anglo-American desire was to “reform” and “civilize” the Indian other, to turn them into copies of themselves, and to use the original “difference” of the Indian other to affirm the Anglo-American center. However, that center becomes de-centered when the difference of the other, the periphery, rather than being negated through acculturation, becomes the centralized focus, as in the case of the Pocahontas engraving. Such ruptures expose not only the uncertainty of colonial dominance, but the permeability and instability of Anglo-American identity. Pocahontas “became” an English lady of the court in this engraving, yet her Indianness alters that identity, changing her Anglo accessories into signifiers of Indian identity rather than Anglo-American “superiority.” It is her Indianness that decides the meaning of this image rather than the Anglo-American signifiers.

As an image, the Van de Passe engraving of Pocahontas is perhaps as well known as another famous graven Indian—the Indian from the Massachusetts Bay Colony Seal. Like the seal, the engraving of Pocahontas was meant to not only capture an image that commemorated the success of the colonial enterprise—conversion of the Indians—but it was also intended to raise money to continue the work of colonization. Although the Massachusetts Bay seal was perhaps more overt in its pleas (“Come over and help us!” is pretty direct), the image of Pocahontas was still an attempt to inspire

interest and garner funds for the still struggling Virginia colony. As Camilla Townsend points out, the Virginia Company at this time,

was involved in various lawsuits. It had sued various investors who had promised certain sums of money but then failed to deliver after reading some of the more dire reports coming back from Virginia. The organization's financial situation would remain shaky until the general public became convinced that Virginia was truly a land of promise. Naturally, tobacco shipments would be critical, but to raise a significant crop the company first needed to convince potential settlers and investors that the Indians were not bloodthirsty savages. (140)

Pocahontas and her Indian retinue would certainly make this point while they were actively present in London, but in order to preserve the memory of her visit and the message it entailed, a permanent record, an image, of her visit would need to be made available to the public. Such an image that could then be sold, displayed, and reproduced at will, much like the Bay Colony seal on broadsides and pamphlets, would be a more permanent reminder that could be continuously revised and revived at different times to invoke the great transformation of the Indian princess and the success of the Virginia Colony. Consequently, just like the Massachusetts Bay Colony Seal, the single engraved image of Pocahontas created by Simon Van de Passe, exists in multiple forms and resurfaces at various times throughout history.

The earliest copies of this life-image of Pocahontas, appeared, as intended by the Virginia Company, on "piece[s] of memorabilia that could be distributed" to commemorate Lady Rebecca's sojourn in England and celebrate the colonial progress

in the New World (Townsend 151). John Smith also included the original engraving in his *General Historie* in 1624, alongside a similarly styled engraving of himself, also by Van de Passe, undoubtedly as a calculated attempt to capitalize on the renown of Pocahontas and his ties to her. [Figure 16] Later, variations of this striking image of the acculturated Indian princess surfaced in the late eighteenth century in another engraving, *Matoaka als Rebecka*, by an artist only known as “W. Richardson” which was styled after the original Van de Passe engraving, although it depicts Pocahontas as slightly less “Indian” with softer features and lighter skin [Figure 17]. In the mid-eighteenth century an oil painting in the style of Van de Passe’s engraving, known as the *Booton Hall Portrait*, also appeared [Figure 18]. This depiction aggressively Anglicized Pocahontas by lightening her skin, softening her features, and even giving her lovely—albeit unrealistic—Auburn-hued hair.<sup>103</sup> Another representation of Van de Passe’s Pocahontas appeared in the eighteenth century; this one, as Robert Tilton notes,

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<sup>103</sup> Also called the *Rolfe Portrait* or the *Gorleston Portrait*, this image of Pocahontas hangs in the National Portrait Gallery in Washington, D.C. This painting has been the focus of lively academic debate concerning whether or not Van de Passe created it because of its close resemblance to the engraving and the fact that it is unsigned. Scholars further debate that if Van de Passe is the artist, whether this painting or the engraving of Pocahontas was created first. Most scholars, among them Philip Barbour and Ann Uhry Abrams, now believe that the engraving came first and that the portrait is a copy of the painting, most likely originating in the mid-eighteenth century and by an artist other than Van de Passe. Philip Barbour notes, “There is not even any evidence that the painting [*Booton Hall*] dates back to the early seventeenth century, although it is known to have been in existence in Norfolk at least since the 1760’s or 1770’s” (233). Further, critics observe that because of Pocahontas’ more European appearance in the painting—lighter, reddish-brown hair and fairer skin—and the lack of fine detail in the painting—the missing damask print on her overcoat and the simplification of the lace on her ruff and cuffs—indicate that the portrait was derived from the engraving rather than the reverse order. The portrait, regardless of its origins, however, proves an interesting counterpoint to the Van de Passe engraving because of its progression toward a more Anglicized depiction of Pocahontas. Interestingly, Grace Steele Woodward has suggested that the auburn hair depicted in the *Booton Hall Portrait* of Pocahontas, rather than being a “white-washing” of her Indianness, is instead, “a reddish-colored wig of the style popular among high-born Englishwomen of the day” (177). I disagree with this assessment because, as I discuss later, the hat Pocahontas has chosen to wear marks her as distinctly “middle-class”; therefore, she would most likely not don a wig that identified her as “high-born” or a fashionable Englishwoman.



Fig. 16 Simon Van de Passe. Engraving, *Captain John Smith* (1616)

Image courtesy of the Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia



Fig. 17 W. Richardson. Engraving, *Matoaka als Rebecca* (late 18<sup>th</sup> c)

Image courtesy of the Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia



Fig. 18 *The Boon Hall Portrait* (mid-eighteenth century)

Image courtesy of the National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution

was “certainly the first original depiction of Pocahontas produced in the New World, and almost surely the first done by a woman” (111). This painting, done by Mary Woodbury in the 1730s in a style that today would be considered folk art, pictures Pocahontas in European attire, and although quite different from it, “[t]he Van de Passe engraving may have provided a thematic model for this work” (Tilton 111) [Figure 19]. There have even been twentieth-century variations of this engraving, such as Mary Ellen Howe’s 1994 portrait, *Pocahontas*, that she hoped would resurrect the true appearance of Pocahontas by combining research into the facial structure and skin tones of modern Virginian Indians and Van de Passe’s work from nearly four centuries before [Figure 20].

Clearly, this singular image of Pocahontas from 1616 is a potent one, not only because of its stature as the only acknowledged life-image of Pocahontas, but also because of its depiction of an “Indian princess” as an “English lady,” and its simultaneous and disruptive suggestion that an “English lady” can be Indian. The melding of identities in this image, the fusion of supposedly “diametrically opposed” cultures, races, and sensibilities is what endows it with an ominous, threatening power that necessitates revision and repetition. Underlying the surface intention of the engraving—to preserve Pocahontas in her beautifully acculturated “glory”—is the veiled threat of Pocahontas’ usurpation of English identity, a disruption that modern artists like Moceauz and Howe embraced. In the Van de Passe engraving, however, Pocahontas has not only become “English” for all intents and purposes as these images suggest, but she has irrevocably changed what it means to be “English” simply by the



Fig. 19 Mary Woodbury Jones. *Pocahontas* (1730s)

Image courtesy of the Massachusetts Historical Society



Fig. 20 Mary Ellen Howe. *Pocahontas* (1994)

Image courtesy of the Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia

virtue of her Indianness. Englishness and Indianness are fluid, these images seem to suggest; they inform and shape one another as identities. They are not binaristic extremes on the identity continuum. Consequently, the Van de Passe engraving of Pocahontas has been repetitively remade, re-recorded with varying degrees of Englishness, formality, and aesthetic detail in attempts to regulate its suggestive power as a marker—and disruption—of both English and Indian identity. Just as the Massachusetts Bay Colony seal (discussed in chapter one) necessarily had to be replicated at various times in the colony’s history to reinscribe Indianness as separate from, yet necessary to, the forming Anglo-American identity, so too must Van de Passe’s image, with its rife portrayal of an Indian “English” woman, be anxiously revised and reinterpreted in an attempt to contain the Indianness within it.

On the surface, the engraving by Simon Van de Passe appears to be quite typical of its genre. The subject is a young woman, certainly of no more than about nineteen years of age, although listed as twenty-one in Latin directly beneath her image<sup>104</sup>; interestingly, the artist was himself young, about the same age as his subject. Perhaps his youth and inexperience explains some of the clumsy proportions of the figure and the strangely crooked fingers of subject’s right hand. The image is framed by an oval ring containing the Latin words, “Matoaka Als Rebecca Filia Potentiss Princ Powhatani Imp Virginiae,” and the center features a close up image of the young woman—from about the waist up—whose body and face fill the oval. The young woman’s eyes stare

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<sup>104</sup> Camilla Townsend notes that the use of the age of twenty-one instead of Pocahontas’ actual nineteen years on the portrait stems from “Virginia Company officials [who] would have wanted to hide that, as they needed to present a convert who was a consenting adult in order to make their point effectively” (151-2). See Townsend for further discussion as to Pocahontas’ actual age during her various encounters with the English.

directly, almost challengingly, out at the viewer rather than being diverted in a show of coy, submissive femininity, and her posture is stiff, full of straight-backed pride and discipline.<sup>105</sup> She is decked out in Jacobean finery with layers of luxurious, expensive fabrics, exquisitely worked lace on her cuffs and collar, and accessorized by a stately beaver hat and ostrich feather fan.<sup>106</sup> Beneath the portrait is an expanded inscription echoing the Latin words in the frame of the engraving: “Motoaks als Rebecka, daughter to the mighty Prince Powhatan, Emperour of Attanoughakomouch als Virginia converted and baptized in the Christian faith and wife to the wor<sup>ff</sup> Mr. John Rolff.” Karen Robertson notes that this second inscription, through its dissemination of Pocahontas’s secret familial name, Matoaka, “asserts English verbal dominance through their possession and exposure. The makers of the portrait define her status and label her as property: daughter of a king, trophy of conversion, and, finally, wife of an

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<sup>105</sup> See Robertson and Townsend for a more detailed reading of Pocahontas’ posture and facial expression.

<sup>106</sup> Although not the focus of my analysis here, Pocahontas’ clothing in this image is of note. Her garment appears to be a full-length gown of a heavy, fine brocade or embroidered fabric with a similarly embellished over gown, perhaps linen, worn open to display the sumptuous layers beneath. Millia Davenport notes that this layered dress is “a development of the Spanish coat-dress spreading wide to show the underbodice and skirt” (507). The visible short sleeve of Pocahontas’ outer gown is, according to seventeenth century fashion, “slit down the inseam, and caught with a rosette, where it is cut off above the elbow” and is fastened over a fashionably slashed sleeve of her long-sleeved dress beneath it (Davenport 507). Both dress and outer gown are complimented by her ruff and cuffs, which are of fine reticella lace. Contrary to fashion however, is Pocahontas’ decision to eschew any signs of décolleté with her clothing, even though the contemporary fashion trend was toward “lowering necklines” (Davenport 506). Clearly, as I discuss later in this chapter, this was a move to prevent Pocahontas from being aligned with the stereotypical perception of a “naked savage.”

Pocahontas’ hair, although covered by her hat, appears to be in the upswept style of the day, which was typically worn full at the sides but flatter at the crown in order to meet the current trend for “elongation of the female appearance” (Ribeiro and Cumming, 102). Although her accessories in the image—her hat, earrings, and fan—suggest another interpretation which I will discuss in this chapter, her clothing projects an somewhat straightforward image of appropriate, popular, court finery, befitting of a “Lady” and Indian “princess” of her time. See Robertson for a brief reading of Pocahontas’ wardrobe in this image.

Englishman” (570-1).<sup>107</sup> Pocahontas becomes an exemplar of the success of the colonial project in this image; she is a converted Indian princess, encased in all of the finery of English tradition: erudite Latin headings, fine clothing, and symbolic accessories.

However, the engraving also reveals a tension between “Matoaka” and “Lady Rebecca,” between Indianness and Englishness. Even though she is clearly depicted as culturally “English,” in this image, Pocahontas’ Indianness, her “almost but not quite” status as an acculturated woman is still undeniably visible. For example, she is clearly raced as an Indian. Although in later depictions of this image, such as the *Bootan Hall* version, Pocahontas is portrayed with lighter skin and hair and more Anglicized features, in Van de Passe’s version, she is decidedly indigenous. Dark, thick hair pulled

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<sup>107</sup> See Robertson’s excellent work for further discussion on Pocahontas’s “containment” through the various rhetorical and visual strategies of patriarchy in the Van de Passe engraving as well as other, male-authored sources. Camilla Townsend however, extends Robertson’s work by noting that although Pocahontas is, indeed, “contained” by the second inscription on the Van de Passe engraving, there is evidence of “distinct decisions that were made by Pocahontas” peeping through (152). Townsend posits the use of the name “Matoaka” instead of Pocahontas and the appearance of the word “Attanoughskomouck,” which is a phonetic representation of the Indian pronunciation of Virginia, a word the English typically spelled as “Tsenacomoc(o)” as proof of this. She writes,

It would not have been John Rolfe or Sir Edwin [Sandys] who gave the term to Van de Passe, but Matoaka. The English men probably wouldn’t have cared to include it, but if they did, they would have spelled it as the English always did. This rendition was obviously the result of Matoaka’s sounding it out for a Dutchman, just as it was undoubtedly the woman herself who insisted on using the name Matoaka rather than her more famous and attention-grabbing nickname, which everyone else was using. She knew Pocahontas was a name for a child; they did not. (154)

These instances of Pocahontas’ textual disruption of her prescribed Anglo-American appearance in the engraving, while not exactly the focus of my own reading of the image, do bolster my assertion that Pocahontas’s Indianness ruptures and defies the identity placed upon her by Anglo-Americans. Further, it is important to note that the text beneath the engraving is, in essence, a mini-narrative that tells the story of Pocahontas’ life in brief. Consequently, since the “narrative” ends on the note of her conversion to Christianity and marriage to Rolfe, and the picture above it depicts her in her newly “civilized” role, this identity is the one that is stressed. She is a remade woman who no longer holds any affinity with her former, Indian self. Of course, as my reading will demonstrate, this is purely an Anglo-American fantasy and Pocahontas’ Indianness absolutely still disrupts and revises the intent of the image. It is important to note also that in the naming and representation of Pocahontas in the Van de Passe engraving, she is not once identified as “mother.” She is merely a daughter, wife, and convert. Thomas Rolfe, once again, is erased from colonial consciousness. See chapter three for more on this.

back from her face is visible beneath the beaver hat and heavy, dark brows frame equally dark, almond-shaped eyes. Also, Pocahontas' skin is heavily etched by the artist in this rendition, reflecting not only her darker, "tawny" complexion, but also through shading, accentuating her high cheekbones—"the" stereotypical mark of Indianness, even today. Especially interesting, however, is the rather square, dimpled chin and slightly pronounced upper lip ascribed to Pocahontas in this engraving. While such fine details serve, of course, as marks of Pocahontas' unique and individual appearance, they also serve as indelible physical ties to Pocahontas' Indian heritage.

When Virginia artist Mary Ellen Howe set out in 2004 to paint as accurate a representation as possible of Pocahontas' likeness using historical and anthropological research as well as Van de Passe's engraving, she found that the same overbite, dimpled chin, and high cheekbones were similar to the facial structures of modern Virginia Indians ("Pocahontas Revealed").<sup>108</sup> Pocahontas' "Indianness," therefore, is professed by more than just her "tawny" skin and black hair in the Van de Passe engraving. She literally, structurally embodies traits of her Virginian tribal ancestry. Even in later depictions of the engraving, such as the *Booton Hall Portrait* and the 1793 engraving done in imitation of Van de Passe's, when Pocahontas has been aggressively "whitened" or made softer and more Anglicized in her appearance, the overbite and slightly dimpled chin remain. Her ties to the Pamunkey, Mattaponi, and Rappahannock

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<sup>108</sup> Mary Ellen Howe studied the complexions of living Virginia Indians from the Mattapani, Rappahancok, and Pamunkey tribes (descendants of the larger "Powhatan" grouping) in order to bring the most accurate coloring to her depiction of Pocahontas. As Pocahontas' sitting for this engraving would have been during the winter of 1616, Howe even took into consideration the lightening of skin tone that would have naturally occurred due to less exposure to the sun and more time spent indoors (interview). My deepest gratitude goes to Ms. Howe for these valuable insights into the six painstaking years of research that went into her beautiful reproduction of this image.

tribes of Virginia persists in these later, revised images through her facial structure even when the more obvious signs of it—skin and hair color—were excised (“Pocahontas Revealed”).

Pocahontas’ accessories in the Van de Passe engraving are also remarkable in terms of their disruptive undercurrents. There are signs that indicate her choices for clothing and accessories were politically and personally motivated. For example, the beaver hat she wears in the high copotain style was “once only worn by men, [but] had recently been adopted by some women. Queen Anne [even] wore one” (Townsend 152).<sup>109</sup> Women who chose to defy convention and wear such hats, however, were often criticized as unfeminine and, when they opted to wear one in a portrait, were recognized as obviously middle-class. As Karen Robertson has noted, “Aristocratic women did not usually wear hats for indoor portraits, although middle-class women did. Pocahontas’s fan and ruff suggest indoor dress, not hunting or outdoor clothing” (573). Also, Pocahontas’ choice of this particular style of hat is especially worthy of note. A copotain, or capotain, is a conical, high-crowned, small-brimmed hat that was a fashionable hat in the sixteenth century; however, historians note that by the mid-

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<sup>109</sup> Although copotain hats during the early seventeenth century were made of both felt and beaver, R. Turner Wilcox in her *The Mode in Hats and Headdress* notes that Pocahontas’ hat in the Van de Passe engraving is beaver with a “galloon band” (130). Wilcox further comments, “The American Colonies exported great hogsheads of beaver pelts to England and Holland to be made into hats. . . The great vogue of the beaver hat naturally caused a serious depletion in the number of beaver in this country [America]. . . Beaver was most costly, in fact any good hat was costly in those days, valuable enough to be left among bequests in a will” (113). Pocahontas’ hat, therefore, was undoubtedly made of beaver and a clear attempt to assign her high status within Anglo-American society. Mary Ellen Howe further asserts that the beaver hat was definitely white, as she depicts in her 1994 rendition of the image, and that the elaborate hat band was attached to the hat itself by a series of gold, hexagonal buttons, something she discovered when she enlarged Van de Passe’s image in order to begin her own research (interview). Howe notes that the Virginia Historical Society holds one of these tiny, gold, hexagonal hat band buttons in their collections, previously believing it to be from Pocahontas’ dress in the Van de Passe image rather than her hat (interview).

seventeenth century, it was the style worn by supporters of the Puritan faction in England and was more commonly known as the “Pilgrim hat.” Although her choice of hat was somewhat Puritanical— “Puritans and Pilgrims favored the high crown with wide brim uncocked and a simple ribbon held in place by a small silver buckle” (Wilcox 114)—many “adopted the Cavalier fashion with jeweled bands and ostrich [plumes],” or *aigrette*, worn off to one side, as Pocahontas has done in the engraving (Wilcox 114).<sup>110</sup> Her hat, therefore, was much “closer to the kind favored by the bourgeois Puritans than it had to be” (Townsend 152).

Donning a hat, but particularly this style of hat, for her portrait sitting is almost certainly the choice of Pocahontas and not her husband’s or handlers’ because of the multiple, divergent messages it sends. Pocahontas is clearly indicating that she is no ignorant, “backwoods” Indian unaware of fashion trends in England, nor is she afraid to buck convention by being one of the earlier women to defy feminine convention and try out a new style. By deciding to be immortalized in such a fashion-forward and somewhat scandalous accessory, Pocahontas is leaving her personal “mark” on the portrait. The fact that a high copotain hat would have carried distinctly masculine connotations suggests she wished to avoid being viewed in terms of stereotypical Anglo-American femininity; she would not be thought of as dainty or feeble, but strong and daring. Further, the fact that middle-class women were the ones to pose in hats— not the elite—indicate that she held no illusions about who she really was as the wife of

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<sup>110</sup> Wilcox further notes that the feminine version of the copotain, “when worn either for travel or hunting, was a replica of the masculine headpiece in felt, beaver or velvet” (121). Although Pocahontas’ beaver copotain was the height of fashion, her choice to wear it with indoor clothing for a portrait sitting was highly unusual, to say the least.

John Rolfe, a middle-class, man from a struggling Virginia colony. At the same time, though, her choice of a copotain with a fashionable aigrette and fancy band separates her from the fundamental Puritans who would have chosen this particular style of hat but would have worn it plainly dressed. Clearly, the choice of this particular hat is one that Pocahontas' husband and handlers, who were anxious to tout her status as New World royalty and recently acquired position as a fully acculturated English lady, would not have condoned. All of these competing messages posed by Pocahontas' seemingly straightforward choice to cover her head with a hat in her portrait are significant because they not only underscore her awareness of the nuances of seventeenth-century English popular culture, but also her defiance of them. She was unwilling to fit the mold prescribed for her by Anglo-American society as a genteel lady of the court, an acculturated Indian princess. She instead disrupts and counters that identity with one of her own composition: that of a very savvy young woman very much in control of her own image and confident in her own identity.

Pocahontas makes a similarly complex statement with another accessory she wears in the engraving: her pearl earrings. The earrings feature a teardrop shaped pearl dangling from a hoop worn in the lobe of her ear. This is not an unusual choice of jewelry because pearls were a fashionable and expensive item of personal embellishment popular in Elizabethan times. Many well-heeled women wore them as necklaces, pendants, brooches, and earrings, especially since they signified wealth and status. In fact, Queen Elizabeth I of England "was not only draped in pearl necklaces, but she had so many pearls stitched to her dresses that she was literally upholstered in pearls" (Loring 9). Because the process of producing man-made pearls, a process called

“essence d’orient” that involved manipulating the luster of fish scales, was not developed until 1656, natural pearls were quite costly and reserved for the elite classes of Europe during the early part of the seventeenth century, when the Van de Passe engraving was made. Consequently, women of the highest social classes adorned themselves with costly pearls as a sign of their status. Additionally, since pearls were known for their lustrous glow and prized for their white, creamy colors, they came to represent modesty, chastity, and purity, even becoming a key jewelry item for brides to wear on their wedding day and as embellishments for their bridal gowns. Pearls were even significant gifts to young brides to signify their “purity” before marriage as well as their future modesty as married women. The pearl earrings worn by Pocahontas in her portrait, therefore, seem to be an appropriate adornment for Lady Rebecca, the privileged daughter of an Indian “emperor” and the chaste wife of a Puritan man.

However, these earrings may also have been worn, as Camilla Townsend has noted, as “a sign [Pocahontas] is from the New World and specifically Virginia ...Virginia had been seen as a rich source of pearls from the beginning of the colonization project” (152). In fact, the entire New World was often called the “Land of Pearls” after Christopher Columbus’ discovery of a seemingly endless supply of pearls off the coast of Venezuela in 1498 (Loring 41). As John Loring has noted, “It is estimated that between 1513 and 1540 over thirteen tons of Cubagua pearls were taken to Europe by the Spanish,” yet “[f]rom the Gulf of Mexico to the Gulf of Lower California, from the Mississippi River to the Ohio River, from Wisconsin, Tennessee, Texas, and Arkansas to New Jersey” American waters produced wide varieties of fresh and saltwater pearls as well (Loring 41-2).

Indians were an especially important source for these pearls in the early days of colonization. Thomas Hariot, for example, relates in his *A Briefe and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia*, that one of his companions, “a man of skill in such matters,” had obtained about five thousand pearls from the Indians and made “a fair chain, which for their [the pearls’] likeness and uniformity in roundness were very fair and rare, and had therefore been presented to her majesty” (Hariot 37). Colonizers had long taken note of Indians wearing pearls and using pearls for trade. John Smith notes that the Powhatan Indians paid their tributes to Powhatan in “skinner, beades, copper, pearle, deare, turkies, wild beasts, and corne” (“Map of Virginia” 1:174). Even the dead among the Virginia Indians were sent into the afterlife with pearls. For example, Smith writes that Powhatan had a storehouse of his personal treasures, such as “skinner, copper, pearle, and beades, which he storeth up against the time of his death and burial” (“Map of Virginia” 1:173). Powhatan also, according to Smith, gave Sir Thomas Dale a “greate bracelet, and a chaine of pearle, [through] an ancient Orator” (“The Proceedings” 1:249). Helen Rountree observes that such voluntary exchanges of strings of pearls were most likely attempts to make peace with the English after previous exchanges of belts of wampum and clothing became less effective. In fact, Rountree notes, “The English demanded such a chain as a sign of peace from the Nansemonds in September 1608, after which Indian ‘royalty’ voluntarily used chains of pearls in appeasing angry English visitors” (125). In lore surrounding Pocahontas, a pearl necklace was the supposed gift Powhatan sent to his daughter upon her marriage to John Rolfe. Clearly then, the pearl earrings in Pocahontas’ ears in the Van de Passe engraving signify more than simple European wealth and status. They mark Pocahontas

as not only of Virginian provenance, but also as an Indian. She is not an “English” lady posing in pearls, the markers of courtly, Jacobean finery; she is instead wearing the jewelry of her ancestors and tribe, visibly marking herself as “Indian.”

She is also signaling her peaceful mission to England as an emissary for the Virginia Company as well as her recognition of the political nature of her visit. Pearls had also been used as a symbol between the English and the Powhatans as a token of the peaceful intent of either side when sending messengers back and forth. In fact, as Helen Rountree has noted, “In 1614, a chain of pearls was agreed upon as a badge of safe conduct for messengers between Powhatan and the English” (125). The earrings, in this context, not only serve as items that confirm the wealth and abundance of her ancestral home and peoples rather than the English court for which she is dressed and posed, but also serve as stark reminders of the peaceful exchanges her people have had with the English colonists. Perhaps this is Pocahontas’ way of requesting “safe conduct” for herself and her retinue from her English audience; she may not feel safe among the English who have “saved” her from “savagery.” Perhaps it is her way of reminding the English of the lengthy and peaceful relationship they have shared with her tribe in the New World; she may fear her people and their cooperation with the English has been forgotten. In the ears of Pocahontas, these earrings become a critique of colonialism and corrode the goal of the colonial project—fully acculturated converts; clearly, Pocahontas has not been fully acculturated. The earrings undermine the assumed “facticity” of her identity as an English lady and have an unstable and shifting meaning in this image. In other words, pearl jewelry does not always automatically identify the wearer as a member of the European elite. When coupled with darker skin

and Indian features, as well as an Indian identity, those same symbols signify something quite different, something foreign and perhaps even threatening to established hegemony. This complex message contained in her earrings would have been both recognizable and disruptive to those who viewed her image.

The ostrich feather fan held awkwardly in long, slender fingers in the Van de Passe engraving also sends a similarly “mixed” message to the portrait’s viewers. The fan is composed of three ostrich feathers with a fancy engraved clasp at the base of the feathers that connects them to the handle, a delicate wand, grasped in Pocahontas’ fingers. This style of rigid fan did not fold or expand as the more common folding fans did and, because of the ostrich feathers, was not intended to serve the practical purpose of moving air. The fluffy, wispy nature of the ostrich feathers and the narrow width of the fan itself mark it as a merely a decorative item. Fans of this nature “came from Italy. . .in the time of Henry the Eighth, [and] were. . .used by both men and women” (Egerton 109). However, such fans were distinctive symbols of luxury and wealth. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, luxury items from South Africa such as silks, carpets, ceramics, glassware and animal products like lion and leopard hides and ostrich plumes were incorporated into European courtly culture. Consequently, fans of this period were often of considerable value. The Countess of Wilton, Mary Margaret Stanley Egerton, notes that the most costly of these fans “were made of ostrich-feathers, fastened into handles composed of gold, silver, or ivory, curiously worked. . .The bright-coloured feathers from the peacock’s tail, too, were frequently formed into the same ornament” (109-10). One fan of this particular style was even “presented to Elizabeth, the handle of which was studded with diamonds” (Egerton 109). In the Van

de Passe engraving, Pocahontas appears to be holding just such a fan, its chain just barely visible against the richly embroidered material of her dress and over gown. Further, ostrich feathers in heraldic symbolism were associated with willing obedience and serenity, and in English society, three ostrich feathers surrounded by a crown have been the crest of the Prince of Wales, the heir to the British throne, since 1301.<sup>111</sup> As a result, ostrich feathers were reserved for the aristocratic of society, especially the pure white plumes, as in Pocahontas' fan, which occur in nature only on mature male birds. Such an exquisite and fashionable fan marked Pocahontas in this image as one of the elite of society—a true “Indian princess” in an English court. This fan is a striking contrast to her decidedly “middle class” choice of head gear, creating a tension between that further complicates Pocahontas' already complex and fluid identity. Is she a fine lady of the court or the unashamedly middle-class wife of a tobacco farmer?

Simultaneously, however, the elegant feathers clutched by Pocahontas call stark attention to her identity as an Indian. Feathers were, for Anglo-American audiences, one of the main visual markers of Indianness. Earlier images of Indians from the

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<sup>111</sup> The crest of the Prince of Wales consists of three silver (or white) feathers rising through a gold coronet of alternate crosses and fleur-de-lies. The motto "Ich Dien" (I serve) is on a dark blue ribbon beneath the coronet. Pocahontas' fan in the Van de Passe engraving closely resembles this badge of English royalty, and although it undoubtedly was not intended to usurp or mimic the symbolic power of the Prince of Wales' crest, it resonates with it, nonetheless. I find this similarity especially interesting considering that the detailed description of Pocahontas' identity beneath the engraving labels her as “daughter of the mighty Prince Powhatan Emperour of Attanoughskomouk als Virginia.” Certainly, the insinuation that Pocahontas, like the Prince of Wales, is heir to the throne of a nation cannot be overlooked. However, as Karen Robertson notes, the description of Pocahontas as the daughter of the emperor of a nation was problematic for the English, at best. “In defining Powhatan as emperor of a nation, and Pocahontas as daughter of an emperor, English colonists aggrandized their achievements” (553). At the same time, though,

the English court did not ratify claims of her father's imperial status by greeting her as the representative of an equal nation, a discrepancy that exposes a contradiction in the logic of colonization. Were Pocahontas recognized as ambassador of an emperor, the English would expose themselves as entirely illegitimate invaders of another nation and would thus undermine their own self-definition as civilized. (Robertson 553).

Virginia Colony, such as the drawing of Eiakintomino in St. James's Park used to advertise a fundraising lottery for the Company just two years before Pocahontas' portrait, relied heavily on animal skins, bows and arrows, and feathered headdresses to relay the subject's otherness. [Figure 21]<sup>112</sup> Pocahontas' portrait seems to be entirely different from images such as these with her high-class accoutrements and elegant clothing that entirely covers her body. However, due to the ambivalence of some of the items within the image, such as her hat, her pearl earrings and more importantly, her feather fan, Pocahontas' Indianness is still clearly, almost defiantly, reiterated for the viewer. In this engraving, she is still a "feathered Indian" of sorts, and whether through intent or happenstance, that irony cannot be denied. Because of the significance of her identity as an acculturated Indian, as the crowning accomplishment of the colonizing work in the New World, the stock markers of Anglo-American aristocracy, such as the ostrich feather fan, become doubtful and unstable when placed on her person. These markers become mutable and inconstant depending on the environment in which they appear, and they no longer signify a single, established meaning. The ostrich feather fan that would typically symbolize affluence and class when held by an Anglo-American person, now also hints at "savagery" and Indianness, the antithesis of civilization, when held by "Matoaks als Rebecka."

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<sup>112</sup> Eiakintomino was one of two Indians featured on a Virginia Company lottery broadside in 1615-1616. An Adaptation of the original image of Eiakintomino from the broadside, which is now lost, appear in Helen Rountree's *The Powhatan Indians of Virginia*, and Karen Robertson's "Pocahontas at the Masque," among others. A watercolor copy of the image is in the Michael van Meer autograph album in the Edinburgh University Library.



Fig. 21 *Eiakintomino in St. James Park (1614)*

as pictured in Michael Van Meer's *Album Amicorum*

Image courtesy of the Special Collections, Edinburgh University Library

Rather than existing in this engraving as either Matoaka *or* Rebecka, or Matoaka *as* Rebecka, Pocahontas is Matoaka *and* Rebecka, embodying both her Indian identity and her newly acquired English one simultaneously. The Indian cannot be separated from the acculturated English woman on display in this portrait because the acculturated English woman is an Indian. The two identities are inextricably bound together, two halves of a singularly mixed identity, and the Van de Passe engraving unwittingly demonstrates this. Although it was commissioned as a visual testimony of not only the success of the Virginia Company in the New World, but also of the stabilizing and transformative powers of English identity, the Van de Passe engraving instead posits ambivalence. It becomes, like the seals of the Massachusetts colony, a visual text at odds with itself that presents a wavering uncertainty about Anglo-American identity rather than any semblance of certainty.

**“Mixed Blood” Womanhood: *The Female American***

Pocahontas, her image, and her narrative have certainly been useful and popular tools in the endeavor to create a distinctly Anglo-American identity for hundreds of years now, and although there are moments of disconnect and ambivalence in that master narrative of colonization, as evidenced in the Van de Passe engraving, her life and image have been enduring ones. However, images—and even the idea—of her son, the biracial Thomas Rolfe have all but been evacuated from colonial consciousness and current memory—only his mother remains. But what if Pocahontas and John Rolfe had had a daughter instead of a son? What if that “imperial” line of descent stemmed from female progenitors, Pocahontas and her daughter, named Virginia, or perhaps Anne after the queen, or even Rebecca, after her own newly adopted English name?

Would existence of a differently gendered “mixed-blooded” Rolfe child have changed the trajectory of the Pocahontas narrative?

Although this is historically unknowable, the idea of a daughter of Pocahontas has been a subject of fiction for women writers. A biracial identity is a potent one, as I demonstrated in chapter three; however, when such an identity is coupled with womanhood, as in the case of a “Virginia Rolfe,” an even more destabilizing situation results than with a male biracial identity. In the mind of the colonizer, a female “mixed blood” could seemingly be controlled and contained by white patriarchy because of her feminine gender; however, because of her biracial identity, a “mixed-blooded” woman would ultimately be transgressive of those very boundaries. Mixed race men, such as Thomas Rolfe and the fictional Charles Hobomok Conant, while certainly signaling their existences with disruptions and vacancies in the master narrative, are at their core, too disruptive and threatening to remain as unregulated presences in Anglo-American hegemony. Ultimately forced to become “either/or” at the hands of Anglo-American society, and then “disappeared” into either whiteness or literally removed from American consciousness, male “mixed bloods,” because of their privileged gender, have to be voided from white imagination, history, and texts. Their biracial-ness prohibits their containment by the most significant paradigm governing masculinity, race, so they simply have to be evacuated from Anglo-American consciousness.

A woman of “mixed blood,” however, is quite another story. Because of the numerous cultural, social, and legal discourses governing the feminine gender of any race, a mixed race woman seems on the surface to be more containable than her male counterpart. She can be married off. She can be silenced through religion. She can be

denied an authorial voice because of her gender. Consequently, she can remain in Anglo-American imagination in order to be colonized. However, her biracial position allows her to navigate among these many discourses of containment and subvert them. Even in texts authored by white, Anglo-Americans, the “mixed-blood” woman can circulate beyond the grasp of colonial discourse and authorial control. Her biracial identity and her gender create textual slippages and ruptures that breach Anglo-American authority in ways that male characters simply cannot.

Gerald Vizenor argues that beyond being trapped in a binary system, the bifurcated, hybrid figure of the “mixed blood” is an emblem of survival, despite unsuccessful Anglo-American attempts to contain or erase it. Although not speaking directly to the place of womanhood and “mixed bloodedness,” Vizenor’s ideas are intriguing when considered in terms of the nexus of race and gender. Vizenor writes,

The crossblood, or mixedblood, is a new metaphor, a transitive contradancer between communal tribal cultures and those material and urban pretensions that counter conservative traditions. The crossblood wavers in myths and autobiographies; we move between reservations and cities, the stories of the crane with a trickster signature. (*Interior* 263)

The “mixed-blood” identity, in fact, is similar to that of the trickster figure for Vizenor; for him, the biracial Indian reflects the “necessary and productive tension found in the metaphor of the mixedblood position” (Murray 29). As David Murray notes, the “mixed blood” for Vizenor “acts as a supplement, both in *adding to*, but also in *replacing* the idea of a pure tribal Indian identity based on blood and lineage, and it is

this shifting and ultimately undecidable relation of the two terms which [. . .] reflects Vizenor's enterprise" (21, italics in original). I would further add that a "mixed-blooded" identity not only *adds to* and *replaces* the idea of a pure Indian identity, but also the idea of a pure Anglo-American identity. A person of "mixed blood" resists and subverts any notion of racial purity and posits instead a more fluid, permeable conception of race with their elusive "trickster signatures." When buttressed with a feminine history that is both potent and historically grounded through a Pocahontas'-like narrative, such a female "mixed-blood" figure becomes even more uncontrollable and disruptive. And when that figure is deployed through an anonymously published work of fiction in which the only "author" is the central female character herself, a "mixed-blooded" woman with Pocahontas-like origins, the result is a radical text that is transgressive of the raced and gendered discourses that undergird colonialism.

First published anonymously in 1767 in London, *The Female American; or, The Adventures of Unca Eliza Winkfield*, was purportedly the autobiography of Unca Eliza Winkfield, a "mixed-blooded" New World woman. It is the story of the granddaughter of both Edward Maria Winkfield (or Wingfield as it is more commonly spelled), a founding father of the Virginia colony, and a powerful Indian chief of the region, a Powhatan-like figure who captures and then ultimately allows the English-born William to become a husband to his favorite daughter, the Indian princess, Unca; the happy couple ultimately becomes the parents of Unca Eliza. The heroine/narrator who is born out of this star-crossed and very Pocahontas-like union is a uniquely biracial, bicultural, bilingual character.

Unca Eliza's real adventures begin when, as an adult, she is attempting to return to England after visiting her father in Virginia and her scheming ship's captain strands her on a desert island in the Atlantic for refusing to marry (and sign over her great wealth to) his son. Unca Eliza survives on her own in the island wilderness because of her pluck and the fortunate discovery of some instructions in a diary left by a hermit who inhabited the island before her. By the novel's end, Unca Eliza has not only survived her exile and increased her already substantial fortune, but also even managed to convert the local Indians on a neighboring island to Christianity, ultimately choosing to stay with them, ministering to them for the rest of her life, instead of returning to England when her cousin and future husband finally arrives to redeem her. Most of Unca Eliza's text occurs within the confines of the deserted island where, for the most part, she is entirely alone. Beyond the grasp of the racist, gendered hegemonies of Anglo-America, Unca Eliza's identity showcased as uniquely mixed-raced, mixed-culture, and even mixed-gendered; it is potent and full of possibilities.

She is a fictionalized, female version of Thomas Rolfe that is celebrated, not erased. Unca Eliza is raised on her father's English plantation as a part of English society and educated in England through adulthood, much like Thomas Rolfe and Charles Hobomok Conant. However, Unca Eliza is also taught Indian customs, language, and skills, and even allowed to dress in a motley amalgamation of English and Indian inspired clothing. So while certainly comparable, Unca Eliza, who is more "Indian" and culturally "mixed blooded" than either Thomas Rolfe or Charles Hobomok Conant, is even more disruptive to the discourses of colonialism than her male counterparts. However, because she is also a woman, Unca Eliza's gendered

transgressions become equally disruptive to patriarchy. As a consequence, hers is an identity white women authors could appropriate and utilize to deploy biracial femininity in their texts with more force and radical possibility than they ever could with a male version of this identity. Whereas a biracial male figure ultimately threatens to reinforce patriarchy with his masculine presence, a biracial woman can shatter the discourses of patriarchy that governed both gender and race, leaving in their place discourses of multiplicity and possibility instead of binary containment. In short, a “mixed-blooded” female character like Unca Eliza Winkfield can function as the ultimate trickster figure.

When first published, *The Female American* was touted by its editor as being “highly fit to be perused by the youth of both sexes, as a rational, moral entertainment”; it was a text that would no doubt “descend to late posterity, when, most of its contemporaries, founded only in fiction, will have been long forgotten” (as qtd. in Burnham, 33).<sup>113</sup> Such flamboyant boasting ultimately proved to be untrue; as Michelle Burnham notes, when the text was first released, “only two brief reviews of it appeared, neither of which gave the novel much in the way of either attention or praise” (9). *The Female American* also did not fare very well in terms of “late posterity” either. Going through only two re-printings after the London original appeared—one in Newburyport, Massachusetts in 1800, and the other in Vergennes, Vermont in 1814 (Burnham 23)—the text never found the wide-ranging contemporary readership its editor both championed and desired. In modern times, scholars have all but overlooked *The*

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<sup>113</sup> For my work with *The Female American*, I have chosen to use Michelle Burnham’s readily available edition of the text, which closely follows the original London edition published in 1767. Burnham notes that in the later reprints of the text, both in New England, this advertisement is signed by “The Author” rather than by “The Editor”(33).

*Female American* with Michelle Burnham and Roxann Wheeler being two of a very small group to critically examine the text in any depth.<sup>114</sup> The few critics who have devoted attention to the text have focused almost exclusively on the anonymous author's gendered transgressions through Unca Eliza's character. Often focusing on the masterful usurpation and re-visioning of the Robinson Crusoe narrative by the author, these analyses have as their central concern the destabilization of the hegemonic discourses regulating gender and how Unca Eliza subverts them through her "specifically 'American' identity [. . .] her Native American cultural upbringing and identity as the daughter of an Indian princess [. . . which] enable[s] her to engage in activities and to fashion an identity that would be unavailable to an ordinary English heroine" (Burnham 16).<sup>115</sup>

My own analysis, however, focuses on Unca Eliza's "mixed-blood" status as a destabilizing force on its own; her bicultural, biracial identity is what is significant for me. I argue that it is Unca Eliza's "mixed-blood" identity that provides her character with the disruptive power that causes the text to be at odds with itself, leading to its "rejection" by Anglo audiences. It is Unca Eliza's "almost but not quite" identity as a person of two distinct and supposedly diametrically opposed races, her literal in-

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<sup>114</sup> Burnham offers insightful analysis of *The Female American* in the introduction to her edition of the text and Roxann Wheeler examines the novel in some depth in both her *The Complexion of Race* and "The Complexion of Desire." Betty Joseph also provides an extended reading in her article "Re Crusoe/Pocahontas: Circum-Atlantic Stagings in *The Female American*." Others who briefly reference the text include:-----

<sup>115</sup> See Burnham, p. 9-30, and Joseph for further discussion of the challenges to gender roles within *The Female American*, as well as its place within the Robinsonade tradition. See Wheeler, p. 167-173 for specific discussion of intermarriage within *The Female American*, which, although based on the conversion and acculturation of the female Native other, Wheeler argues, does not "propound a deterministic view of race; [. . . instead it] promotes the notion that however unsettling dark color may be it is ultimately insignificant" (*Complexion* 168). Still, though, Wheeler's primary basis for her analysis of race is based on the gendered expectations/transgressions of a woman within the marriage contract and before she assents to it.

between status, that proves to be the most destabilizing and problematic element within the text—even more so than her gender—and the characteristic that makes the text radically transgressive of the discourses of colonialism and patriarchy. While Unca Eliza certainly transgresses many gendered boundaries in true “female adventure narrative” fashion, I argue that it is her status as a mixed-race figure rather coupled with her status as a woman that the anonymous author celebrates. Unca Eliza’s gender enters the text as a mechanism with which the dominant discourses of patriarchy attempt to assert racial surety over Unca Eliza by reinscribing her dialectical role as a woman. However, her “mixed-blood” identity makes such gendered certainty an impossibility. Rather than attempting to fracture and revise the discourses that governed womanhood by opening up and expanding them, the text of *The Female American* is instead attempting to celebrate ambivalence over certainty and multiply raced and gendered identities over prescribed binaries. Because of the disruptive nature of her “mixed-blood” identity and her castaway status beyond the confines of mainstream society, Unca Eliza ends up not only defying classification within the racial binary, but also complicating the patriarchal terms that define and regulate New World womanhood. She becomes the locus for a critique of the colonial and patriarchal discourses governing not only race and identity, but also intermarriage, cultural assimilation, religious conversion, and especially the terms of female authorship in Anglo-America.

**Female Authorship: Unca Eliza Winkfield**

Although the author of *The Female American* has never been identified as either male or female, it is a text that is almost universally spoken of in terms of its feminist

foci and feminine voice. With its strong resemblance to Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, the narrative belongs to a genre of female adventure fiction that has been dubbed by Jeanine Blackwell as "female Robinsonades," narratives that place a woman in the circumstances of Defoe's hero (qtd. in Burnham 13). *The Female American*, however, does not necessarily fit so neatly into the mold of a *Robinson Crusoe* imitation. According to Michelle Burnham, the text

revises the narratives of capitalist accumulation, colonial conquest, and political imperialism that have been associated with Defoe's book.

Winkfield's story engages instead in fantasies of a feminist utopianism and cross-racial community. (11).

It also deals quite pointedly with the issue of the female authorial voice. From the very title page of the 1767 London edition, the text boldly announces that both the focus and the voice of the text will be feminine [Figure 22]. Fully entitled, *The Female American; or the Adventures of Unca Eliza Winkfield. Compiled by Herself. In Two Volumes*, female-centered nature of the text is decidedly apparent. Not only is the story within the cover going to be about a specific type of American—the *female* American—but it is also going to be authored and "compiled" by that actual person herself. Such distinctions, while seemingly minor, clearly place the authorial voice of Unca Eliza in control of the text's production. She assumes agency in the act of gathering, arranging and telling her own story herself, a far cry from the narratives of "mixed-blood" men like Thomas Rolfe and Charles Hobomok Conant, who both stepped quietly into historical and fictional record.

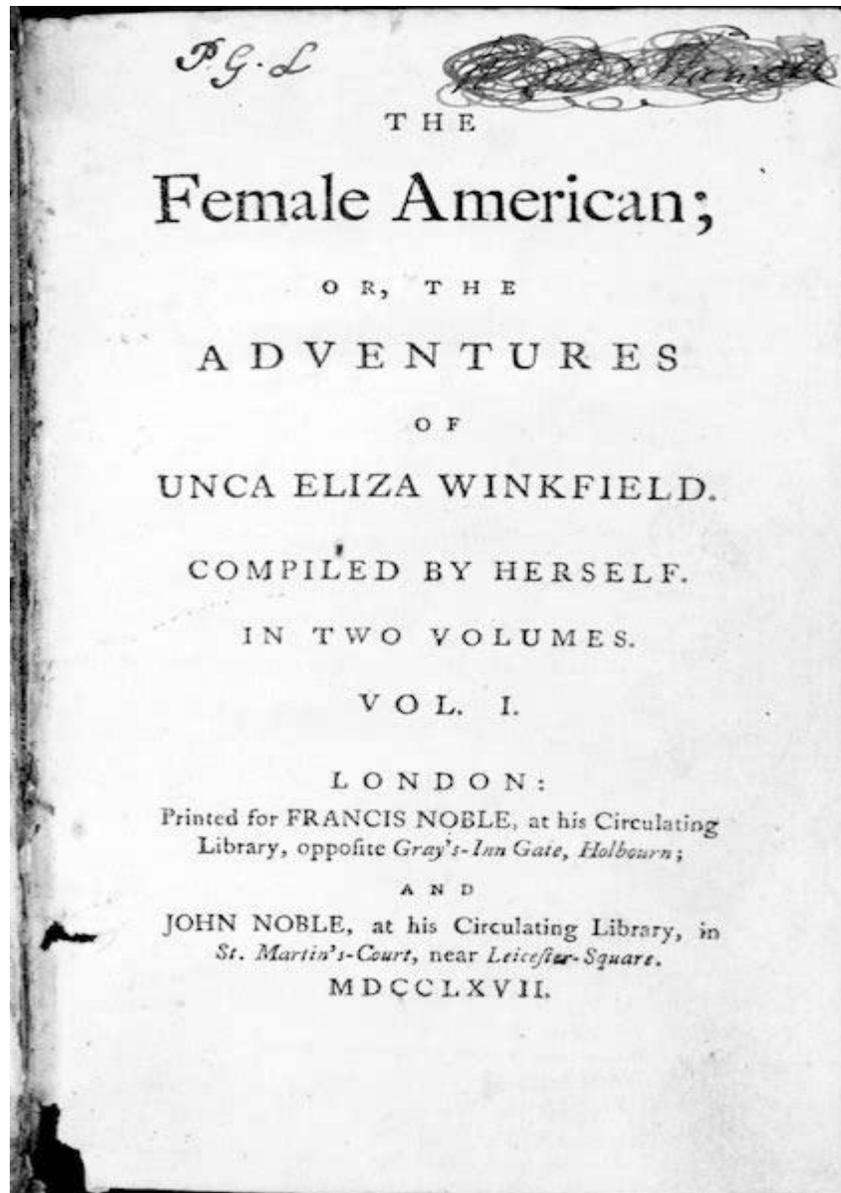


Fig. 22 Title page of 1767 London edition of *The Female American*  
Image courtesy of the Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke  
Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

Further, the biracial name of the text's heroine is prominently featured on the title page in font that is just as large as the word *Adventures* of the title, giving the biracial heroine of the tale at least as much weight as the genre in which the text is fashioned. Clearly, her identity is intended to be as much of a textual draw as the adventures she embarks upon. Each portion of the name, *Unca Eliza Winkfield*, also signifies upon a distinct aspect of the heroine's complex identity: she is Indian, she is a woman, she is a direct descendant of the founding fathers of America. In this continuation of the Pocahontas narrative, the heroine is not simply "Rebecka" or "Matoaka," but both simultaneously. Additionally, her name "Unca" is, as Betty Joseph has observed, "a feminized version of an important player in American colonial history. 'Uncas' was chief of the Mohicans when the tribe joined the Puritan settlers in a war against a fellow tribe (the Pequots) in the 1630s" (320). Unca Eliza is clearly not going to function in a purely feminized or colonized role.

All of these elements, while working to add interest and sensation to the text itself, also work to establish the femininity, the uniquely "mixed-blood" and mixed-gender identity, and the historical authority of the female narrator. Such titling calls attention to Unca Eliza's race and biological ancestry as being key points of the narrative to follow. Her Indian identity and notable heritage are just as important as, if not more so, than her womanhood, which is undoubtedly going to be tempered with masculine attributes based on her name. At a time when female Robinsonades were gaining in popularity and production—Jeanine Blackwell notes that in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries at least 26 female Robinsonades appeared in Germany, Holland, France, England and America, a number that Michelle Burnham says is

“almost certainly an underestimate” (Burnham 13)—the narrator’s feminine gender would not have been the text’s unique and creative draw. Unca Eliza’s gender instead places her as part of a somewhat lengthy, and somewhat mainstream, tradition of female adventure narratives. It is her cultural and historic identity as well as her masculinized role that sets her narrative apart and as Betty Joseph has observed, creates “as narrative excess, the figure of Pocahontas who installs a remarkably different civilizing project from that of her male counterparts” (318). It is this invocation of Pocahontas and the foundational American mythology that her narrative of acculturation initiated that not only underscores Unca Eliza’s racial and cultural identity as Indian, but also positions her as a constituent part of the discourse of national identity.

Following the title page of the London edition appears an advertisement signed by “The Editor” in which the same “worn out old manuscript” technique employed by Child in *Hobomok* is invoked. The Editor begins h/her brief statement by noting that the following “extraordinary History will prove either acceptable or not to the reader; in either case, it ought to be a matter of indifference to him from what quarter or by what means, he receives it” (*Female* 33). However, h/she continues, “if curiosity demands a satisfaction of this kind, all that he can receive is this, that I found it among the papers of my late father” (*Female* 33). By deeming the narrative a “history” and stating that it was found, presumably as is, among the papers of a deceased patriarchal figure, the author/editor is establishing the credibility and authenticity of what is to follow. Just as Child summoned up the antiquated voices of noble New England founders, enabled by the voice of a young, male author, numerous historical pamphlets, and the fabricated “worn out old manuscript” only to disrupt and over-write them with her own, this

author, too, is summoning up a voice of the noble Virginia colony founders, facilitated by the presence of an editorial voice and the patriarchal preservation of the text. However in this instance, the preserved voice and text are those of a “mixed-blood” woman daring to appropriate a very masculine task—telling her own story in her own voice; *The Female American* does not need the mediation granted by a veneer (or voice) of masculinity. This text is the direct compilation of a woman and related in a woman’s voice. And although *The Female American* is “sanctified” by the masculine authority of the editor’s “stamp of approval”<sup>116</sup>—the editor states h/she found the text “both pleasing and instructive”—and preserved through the ages by a father-figure, it still provides a feminine voice that needs no direct mediation, that does not need to be veiled by a masculine voice-over (*Female* 33). Unca Eliza’s double ties to an originary American identity, both Indian and English, grant her the authority to speak without masculine arbitration. However, her femininity still positions her, at least theoretically, under the guardianship and containment of a masculine authority whose presence can be seen through the editor and the fatherly figure who preserved the manuscript. Unca Eliza’s “mixed bloodedness,” though, eclipses these points of patriarchy and her feminine, uniquely biracial voice clearly emerges. She becomes, for all intents and purposes, one of Vizenor’s “postindian warriors of survivance.” who arises from the existing Westernized interpretations of Indianness, Indian “mixed bloodedness,” and, I would add, womanhood and attempts through the engagement of those “simulations”—

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<sup>116</sup> Although I do allow for the possibility that the editor could very well be a woman (hence my use of h/she and h/her), or even a contrived creation of the anonymous author him/herself, I submit that the traditional position of an editor is a masculine, authoritative one. The role of an editor is to regulate and control the content, organization, and on some level, the dissemination of a text. Consequently, whether that position is occupied by a man or a woman, the editor serves as a figure of power and patriarchy that validates Unca Eliza’s voice as authentic.

copies of copies grounded in Western imagination—to liberate tribal reality (again, I would add feminine reality) from the tradition of oppression. These postindian warriors bear their own simulations and revisions to contend with manifest manners, the ‘authentic’ summaries of ethnology, and the curse of racialism and modernism in the ruins of representation. The wild incursions of the warriors of survivance undermine the simulations of the unreal in the literature of dominance. (*Manifest 12*)

This survivance over dominance is located by Vizenor in “the silence of heard stories, or the imagination of oral literature in translation” (*Manifest 12*), in “the shimmers of imagination [. . . and] an aesthetic restoration of trickster hermeneutics” (*Manifest 14*). In essence, the resistance of Vizenor’s postindian warriors is found in the liminal spaces between “liberation and survivance without the dominance of closure,” not unlike the agency and survivance of Unca Eliza’s authorial voice, which asserts itself over the editorial voice of patriarchy and creates a uniquely biracial feminine authorial identity (*Manifest 14*).

### **Rupturing Containment: Defying Conversion, Marriage, Acculturation**

At the time of *The Female American*’s 1767 publication, America still operated under the principles of the *feme covert*. Simply put, when a woman married, her identity and any property she owned became legally subsumed by her husband. She literally became “covered” by him, possessing no independent relationship to the state. This was why relationships between white women and Indian men, like the marriage of Mary Conant and Hobomok, were so very troubling for EuroAmerican hegemony; a white woman was becoming legally “covered” by an Indian. Simultaneously, however,

the institution of marriage was a very useful tool for subduing rebellious or independent women, or safely bringing Indianness—female Indianness—into EuroAmerican society. An Indian bride’s position would not only follow her husband’s but also be mediated by it. She would, at least ostensibly, become “civilized” and “white” through her marriage, and her threat of otherness, if not entirely erased, would be subdued. She would be colonized through marital domestication, and, as a component of that marriage, also made over as a Christian. The acceptance of and conversion to Christianity was an understood part of any Indian woman’s marriage to a white man. Just as Pocahontas publicly declared her acceptance of Christianity, was baptized, and given a new Christian name before her union with John Rolfe, other Indian women who intended to marry EuroAmerican men and live within EuroAmerican society, were expected to become Christian. Not only would the conversion of the Indian bride-to-be insure the acceptance of the marriage by colonial authority, it would also doubly insure the new bride’s subservience to her husband. Legally she was already “covered” by her husband through the marriage, now religiously she would accept that coverage as part of God’s divine plan that women be subordinate to their husbands.

Within the text of *The Female American*, the author details two such conversions and marriages between European men and Indian or biracial Indian women: the marriage of Unca Eliza’s mother and father, and Unca Eliza’s own marriage to her cousin, John Winkfield. Both of these marriages are interesting in that they represent overt the attempts—and failures—of colonial patriarchy to inscribe Unca Eliza’s mother, the Indian princess, and Unca Eliza herself in terms of the EuroAmerican, male-dominated discourse in which as women, they were to be

subordinate to their husbands (and all other male figures) through the naturalized notions of families as hierarchical units reflective of the inherent differences between men and women.<sup>117</sup> In colonial discourses, the religious conversions that accompanied and sanctified such marriages worked in tandem with the domestic union to further define woman's subordinate role in terms of Christian ideology; in other words, the conversion to Christianity, which dictated a woman's submission to God's will nicely reinforced her submission to her husband in her domestic union. By attempting to bring these two female characters, Unca Eliza and her princess mother, both powerful and independent in terms of their elevated social status, influence, and wealth under the thrall of EuroAmerican marriage contracts and Christianity—but then inscribing those transformations as incomplete—the author is exposing cracks in the surety of colonial dominance. Neither full-blooded nor “mixed-blooded” femininity are ever completely regulated by it. Instead the uncontrollable, trickster-like power of the “mixed blood”—and in the case of Unca Eliza's mother, her culturally mixed identity—ultimately subvert this domination.

When Unca Eliza's mother first meets her European soon-to-be husband, William Winkfield, it is in a situation where the Indians, especially Princess Unca, hold all the power. William had come to Virginia with his father, who had begun a plantation “which was the largest and most successful” in the area and ultimately “devolved in a flourishing state to [Unca Eliza's] father” (*Female* 26). After an attack on the colony led by the “native Indians, who came unexpectedly upon them, and

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<sup>117</sup> For further discussion of the naturalization of familial, domestic, and national hierarchies and the position of women within them, see chapter two.

massacred three hundred of them,” Unca Eliza’s father, William, was taken captive (*Female* 36). Marched for miles through the wilderness to a remote cabin, William and his fellow captives are stripped naked and encircled by Indians of both sexes. Interestingly, however, the Indians display some European standards of modesty by wearing “a small covering of foliage about their middle, which decently covered the distinction of the sexes. The local covering of several of the females was composed of beautiful flowers” (*Female* 38).<sup>118</sup> The chief of the group then addresses the surrounded captives in his native tongue, telling them, “You designed to kill us, but we hurt no man who has not first offended us; our god has given you into our hands and you must die” (*Female* 39). The captives are then bound and one by one, they are beheaded; however, just as William is about to meet the same fate as the others,

a maiden, who stood by the king, and whose neck, breast, and arms, were curiously adorned with jewels, diamonds, and solid pieces of gold and silver, and who was one of the king’s daughters, stroked [Unca Eliza’s] father with a wand. This was the signal for deliverance; he was immediately unbound and a covering, like that the Indians wore was put around his body (*Female* 39).

William is then led with a woven grass chain placed around his neck to a shady bower by the princess where she “examined him from head to foot, felt his face and hands, but with the greatest modesty” (*Female* 39). Clearly reminiscent of John Smith’s

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<sup>118</sup> This idea of a floral and foliage covering about the sexual organs of the Indians is clearly reminiscent of the earliest seal images from the Massachusetts Bay Colony and, I would argue, reflective of the author’s attempt to Anglicize the Indian stock from whom his/her heroine, Unca, will ultimately come. By “civilizing” Unca Eliza’s ancestors, logic would hold that Unca Eliza herself is that much more closely tied to European customs and culture through nature as well as blood and can be readily acculturated to European standards.

“rescue” by Pocahontas, this scene works to establish Princess Unca’s ready recognition of William’s superiority over the other captives’, and by proxy the superiority of English manhood and culture.<sup>119</sup> Just as Pocahontas presumably felt instant attraction for Smith (and perhaps even romantic desire as Smith subtly intimates), consequently enacting his timely and touching rescue, so, too, does Princess Unca feel attraction for William. Only now in the fictionalized world of *The Female American*, the Indian princess and her English paramour will be united in love.

Obviously pleased with her new possession, the princess offers William food and drink, and once he awakens from his post-luncheon nap, she leads him by the chain back to a cabin in which her father, the chief, is waiting. After she passes the lead to her father and he graciously returns it to the hands of his daughter, the princess immediately “break[s] the chain from around his neck, thr[ows] it at his feet, [and] make[s] a motion that he should put his foot upon it” (*Female* 40). Understanding that the princess has given him his liberty, William prostrates himself “at her feet, [and] she in return offer[s] him her hand to rise, and then le[ads] him into another cabin” (*Female* 40). Unca Eliza’s father has clearly been saved from certain death in these passages, Unca tells her reader, due to his youth, vigor and “remarkable fair complexion for a man, with brown hair, black eyes and [being] well shaped”; however, he has not been

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<sup>119</sup> Smith’s rescue by Pocahontas does not appear in his earlier accounts of the Virginia colony; it is first recorded by Smith in his “The General Historie” of 1624. Of the rescue, Smith notes that while being held prisoner by Powhatan,

two great stones were brought before Powhatan: then as many as could layd hands on him [Smith himself], dragged him to them, and thereon laid his head, and being ready with their clubs, to beate out his braines, Pocahontas the Kings dearest daughter, when no intreaty could prevaile, got his head in her armes, and laid her own upon his to save him from death; whereat the Empoerour was contented he should live to make him hatchets [.]. (“The Generall Historie” 2: 259)

fully redeemed to his former status of dominant white manhood. Still subject to the Indian people around him, especially his princess, William is not in a position of power at this point in the narrative. He must acquiesce to Princess Unca's will and dress, behave, and live in the manner of his captors. Although Unca Eliza implies it was physical attraction, perhaps even love at first sight, that draws the princess to William and causes her to save him—investing William with some power of sexuality or exoticism—William clearly does not retain the upper hand in this Pocahontas-John Smith type relationship.

However, just as John Smith is ultimately able to reassert his authority over both the Powhatans and his savior, Pocahontas, through his European civility and intellect—and John Rolfe is able to further “civilize” Pocahontas through love, conversion and marriage—so, too, does William reclaim his sovereignty over his Indian princess. Through daily contact with Princess Unca, William “at last [. . .] began to understand her language, which redoubled all her past pleasures, when, according to the simplicity of the uncorrupted Indians, she declared that love for him, which he had long before understood by her actions” (*Female* 41). William, by securing the love and devotion of his Indian princess, has now gained the authority in their romantic relationship; he has the power to either accept or refuse the princess' advances and to do so on his own terms. Anglo-American patriarchy is now regaining its role as authoritarian leader. Unca Eliza makes it clear, however, that her father used his masculine control over her mother kindly and prudently. She notes,

Though a complexion so different, as that of the princess from an European, cannot but at first disgust, yet by degrees my father grew

insensible to the difference, and in other respects her person was not inferior to that of the greatest European beauty; but what was more, her understanding was uncommonly great, pleasantly lively, and wonderfully comprehensive, even of subjects unknown to her, till informed of them by my father, who took extraordinary pains to instruct her; for now he loved in his turn [.] (*Female* 41)

William, through learning the tribe's language and taking pains to educate the princess in discourses of European knowledge, has begun the process of subduing the power of the feminine other. However, that feminine other is not yet fully contained. William has not completely reasserted his European dominance over the Indian other. The threat of the sexualized, seductive female other as anxiously expressed in the earliest seals of the Massachusetts Bay colony again resurfaces. Unca Eliza relates that in the flush of love and companionship, her father

almost forgot his former situation, and begun to look upon the country he was in as his own, nor indeed did he ever expect to see any other again; he now loved Unca as much as she did him, and was therefore willing to make her and her county his forever. (*Female* 42)

William is in danger of succumbing to degenerative powers of the New World environment and Indianness and “going Native.”

The author further complicates this threat of Indian womanhood by introducing yet another powerful, female Indian character: Princess Unca's sister Alluca. Just as the seductive, natural Indian womanhood of Princess Unca can enthrall and delight, so, too, the author seems to be suggesting, can that womanhood turn “savage” and threatening,

as in the case of Alluca. Alluca is another of the king's daughters who falls under the romantic spell of William. Approaching him one day while he is alone, Alluca tells William, "[K]now, Winca, then, that I have seen you, and that the oftener I have seen you the more I love you; I know my sister loves you, but I am my father's eldest daughter, and as he has no son, whoever married me will be king after his death" (*Female* 43). Of course, the noble William rebuffs this advance, but that only sends the vengeful, passionate Alluca into a rage. She threatens William: "If you will not love me, you shall die; my sister shall never enjoy an happiness that I aspire to" (*Female* 43). William, still refusing to consider Alluca's proposition, is suddenly seized by six male Indians waiting at a distance and forced to drink a poisonous potion prepared by Alluca, all the while steadfastly insisting that he "can love none but Unca" (*Female* 44). He swallows the potion declaring, "I cannot do too much for Unca; she gave me life, and for her sake I will lose it—I drink Unca's health; her love shall make it sweet" (*Female* 44). Alluca and her henchmen then leave William to die alone in the forest. Fortunately, however, Princess Unca finds him and is able to administer an antidote to the poison her sister gave him and, as a result, manages to "giv[e] [William] life for a second time" (*Female* 45).

This juxtaposition between the literal "good Indian" and "bad Indian" stereotypes is significant, especially in terms of how it presents complex variations of Indian womanhood. Princess Unca, although undeniably the "good Indian" in this binary is, as of yet, untamed by the domesticating institutions of marriage and Christianity; she could clearly devolve into the "bad Indian" as represented by her sister Alluca, who behaves in an aggressive, threatening manner toward EuroAmerican

manhood. While Unca has begun the process of civilization, that process is not yet complete and the looming figure of Alluca serves to demonstrate what can happen to Indian womanhood when it remains in an “uncivilized,” unlearned state of “savagery” or when the process of colonization fails. Although a willing disciple of William’s colonialism, the docile Princess Unca always necessarily embodies the potential threat of becoming the uncolonized and destructive Alluca, her alter ego. Consequently, to reign in this threat, Unca must be removed from the wilderness marriage, a move even Princess Unca’s father recognizes. The king tells the couple that

to prevent all future danger, [William] and the princess should be immediately married; and that they should both set out instantly for the place of [William’s] abode, and that on his account, he [the king] would enter into a treaty of friendship with his countrymen; and added, that he would give [William] a portion worthy of a princess. (*Female* 45)

William consents to the Indian marriage, as he “considered marriage as a civil, as well as a religious ceremony, and found [. . .] that their matrimonial ceremonies had nothing in them contrary to his own religion” (*Female* 45).

A few days later, William, his new wife, an Indian retinue and a considerable fortune in gold and gems, returns to the English settlement, where “they were now married, according to the rights of the church of England, by an English chaplain” (*Female* 46). Set up in his former plantation with his new Indian fortune and Indian wife, William begins the final stages of domesticating Princess Unca and containing her power. He “persuade[s] his wife to conform to the European dress [. . .]He [takes] every opportunity that offered to send part of his riches over to England [. . .

and]buil[ds] him a more elegant house, which was suitably furnished, and his plantation by far was the best and largest of any about him” (*Female* 46-7). As Unca had been taught about Christianity by William and had already been “convinced of her errors [in belief, which] helped to forward her conversion” (*Female* 41), her acculturation and containment seems to be complete at this point in the narrative. She appears to be fully domesticated and Anglicized—a success story of colonization—by the time Unca Eliza, her daughter and the narrator of the text, is born.

It becomes clear to the reader that Princess Unca has not been entirely acculturated into English society, and in fact, violently refuses some aspects of colonization, so the destabilizing threat of her Indianness still remains. She does not eschew all of her Indian ways and beliefs for European ones. For example, she refuses to leave the New World and return to England with William. Unca relates that although her father had “no inclination to leave his habitation, [. . .] the thoughts of it were highly disgusting to the princess” (*Female* 46). The princess also maintains close contact with her Indian family; her father, the king, often “sent a messenger to inquire after his children, who always attended with some present of fruit, flowers or something more valuable” (*Female* 47). She also dresses her daughter in a uniquely Anglo-Indian fashion that calls attention to not only her own Indian heritage, but also her daughter’s biracial, bicultural identity. Unca Eliza notes,

My tawny complexion, and the oddity of my dress, attracted every one’s attention, for my mother used to dress me in a kind of mixed habit, neither perfectly Indian, nor yet in the European taste, either of fine white linen, or a rich silk. I never wore a cap; but my lank black hair

was adorned with diamonds and flowers. [. . .] My uncommon complexion, singular dress, and the grand manner in which I appeared, always attended by two female and two male slaves, could not fail of making me much taking notice of. (*Female* 49)

The incomplete conversion of Princess Unca clearly establishes the uniquely bicultural identity of her daughter, Unca Eliza, and sets the scene for Unca Eliza's later adventures based on her biracial status. It establishes Unca Eliza as an amalgamation of cultures and social systems; she is a cultural "mixed blood" by her own agency, in which

the trace of what is disavowed is not repressed but repeated as something different—a mutation, a hybrid. It is such a partial and double force that is more than the mimetic but less than the symbolic, that disturbs the visibility of the colonial presence and makes the recognition of its authority problematic. (Bhabha, "Signs," 159).

Princess Unca, through her steadfast refusal to leave the New World for England or ornament her daughter in proper English raiment, is revaluing the assumption of colonial identity through the "deformation and displacement of all sites of discrimination and domination" (Bhabha, "Signs," 159); she is unsettling the mimetic demands of colonial power, performing Bhabha's "almost but not quite." Although Princess Unca is established as functioning in the capacity of the "good Indian" and "good wife"—she has, after all, given up her tribal status and lifestyle and has forfeited her immense wealth to her husband who is stockpiling it in England—she is also functioning as the incomplete Indian convert, the mimic woman who signals the failure

of the colonizing process. She becomes a “transitive contradancer,” to use Vizenor’s term, that has slipped beyond authorial control. In this way, she is just as threatening and disconcerting to colonial identity as her “bad Indian” sister, Alluca, because both highlight the inherent weaknesses in the colonizing process: the possibility of mockery inherent in the mimicry of colonial subjects and the inscrutable, uncontrollable “savagery” of the uncolonized. These sisters work together to illustrate the ultimate realization reached by colonial discourse—“faced with the hybridity of its objects, the presence of power is revealed as something other than what its rules of recognition assert” (Bhabha, “Signs,” 160). And what is even more interesting about these Indian sisters is that once their problematic presences are “removed” from the text, they do not stay removed. Instead, both re-emerge, in true trickster form, as elements of the “mixed blood” Unca Eliza’s character.

Alluca, still unable to overcome the romantic slight she received from William, eventually ascends to her father’s throne and sends assassins to the couple’s home to enact her revenge. Ordered to kill both William and her sister, her henchmen only succeed in attacking Princess Unca. She is stabbed to death, dying in her beloved William’s arms. However, Alluca, because of her power as Queen and unstable behavior, does not suffer retribution, at least from the earthly hands of the English. Her power and reputation are such that the colonists, “considering the infant state of the colony and the temper of the reigning princess, [. . .] thought it prudent to avoid every thing that might occasion a quarrel with the Indians,” so her act goes unpunished and her rule unquestioned (*Female* 48). Shortly thereafter, however, Unca Eliza reveals that

“the queen died of grief” but not before making preparations to have her heart sent William with a plea for forgiveness and “a very great present of gold dust, and her bow and arrows, of exquisite workmanship for [Unca Eliza]” (*Female* 48). This violent and politically powerful woman seems to have been succinctly contained by the author—first, through her complete infatuation with and willingness to serve an English man, and then, through her death by a broken heart. Alluca is “tamed” before her death, indicating her susceptibility as both a woman and an Indian to the superior colonizing forces of the English; even though she does not go down without a savage fight, Alluca’s actions were motivated out of admiration and desire for the colonizer.

However, both of these Indian characters—the willing-if-incomplete convert and the destructive-yet-desiring “savage,” two points on the imagined spectrum of Indianness—although presumably contained by colonialism and written out of the narrative, vividly reemerge in the figure of Unca Eliza. Without her mother’s romantic involvement with her English husband and commitment to his cultural, social, and religious discourses, Unca Eliza could not have existed as an acceptable “English” heroine. Simultaneously, however, Unca Eliza’s character is given American autochthony and made exceptional through her strong ties to her Indian heritage and strength, both in blood and in culture, as granted by her mother and more specifically her Aunt Alluca, who leaves not only her wealth and the possibility of becoming queen of the Indian nation to Unca Eliza, but also her prized bow and arrows “of exquisite workmanship” (*Female* 48). Yet both Princess Unca and her sister Alluca, after they have done their work of infusing Unca Eliza with authentic “Indianness,” are purged from the text. If either Princess Unca or her sister, Queen Alluca, survived, even

distantly, in the pages of the narrative, Unca Eliza could always potentially “go Native” again. Unca Eliza’s familial ties to Indianness are literally “killed off”—her grandfather the chief, her mother and her Aunt all die—in order to fulfill the narrative trajectory of colonization, the full acculturation of Unca Eliza into Englishness.

However, Unca Eliza still does “go Native”; she literally lives among the Indians during her time as a castaway, essentially becoming one of them. Unca Eliza adopts their language and lives a fully Indian lifestyle among the tribe, but not exactly as an equal with them. Unca Eliza takes pains to install herself among the tribe as a sort of holy woman or queen—a woman who has complete and utter control over the people; she essentially becomes her Aunt Alluca—a ruler of an Indian nation. Once Unca Eliza decides to go with the tribe to their island to further her Christian mission among them, she tells the tribal elders from inside the oracle statue,

A person shall come to you...that person shall be a woman... You must be sure to show the greatest respect to her, do every thing that she shall command you, never ask who she is, from whence she comes, or when, whether she will leave you. Never hinder her from coming to this island.  
... You must all believe, and do as she shall instruct you. (*Female* 111)

The commanding, feminine specter of Alluca has reemerged in the text in the figure of Unca Eliza, although in a more subdued, peaceful form. After all, Unca Eliza’s purpose for going among the tribe is to bring Christianity to them and her various demands for full and complete obedience are made only to establish her “credentials. . . [and] to support the novel [Christian] doctrines [she] was to introduce” (*Female* 110). In this respect, Unca Eliza is channeling the figure of her mother,

Princess Unca, the “civilized” and Christianized “good Indian.” Neither Unca Eliza’s mother nor her aunt has been contained or even erased from the narrative. Instead these powerful figures of Indian womanhood have simply been refigured and revised to become aspects of Unca Eliza’s character. Their re-emergence in the actions and behaviors of Unca Eliza serve to complicate her character and the trajectory of the text itself. Is Unca Eliza moving toward containment within colonialist discourses as the dominant raced and gendered paradigms insist Indians and women must? Or is she moving further away from the certainty of containment, in fact becoming more “Indian” and more masculine as the text progresses? Unca Eliza’s character transgresses and defies both of these extremes, opening a space for the possibility of ambivalence and multiplicity in identity instead of static binaries.

The juggling act of balancing Unca Eliza’s uncontainable, “mixed-blood” identity and the fantastic nature of her experiences against the paradigm of colonialism becomes increasingly more complex as the novel progresses. *The Female American* comes to be more at odds with itself, especially when Unca Eliza’s ambivalent character is faced with the ultimate act of colonial indoctrination for Indian/”mixed-blooded” woman: marriage to an Englishman. Early in the text, the author introduces Unca Eliza into specifically “English” ways of thinking, living, and believing from a very young age. Shortly after her mother’s death, Unca Eliza’s father sends her to live in England with his brother, a clergyman in Surrey who has children of his own. There, Unca Eliza is treated as if she were one of her uncle’s own children and given, as were his own daughters, “the same learned education with his son” and through the years makes “great progress in the Greek and Latin languages, and other polite literature” (*Female*

50). In England, Unca Eliza notes she is “kindly entertained by [her] uncle, [and is] little less caressed by the neighbors” (*Female* 49). She is encouraged to “make one of their society” by her extended family and even entertained admirers of the opposite sex during her eleven years in England, although Unca Eliza admits, “perhaps my fortune tempted them more than my person, at least I thought so, and accordingly diverted myself at their expence; for none touched my heart” (*Female* 50). The author is clearly designating Unca Eliza as an accepted and participating member of proper English society.

However, the author also clearly denotes that Unca Eliza retains much of her Indianness as well. Unca Eliza is not entirely Anglicized; she can “speak the Indian language as well as English, or rather with more fluency” and still, despite her happy life in England, “secretly long[s] to see [her] native country, of which [she] retain[s] a perfect idea” (*Female* 50-51). Further, Unca Eliza remains fully aware of her Indian identity and agency as an Indian “princess”; she routinely dresses in Indian clothing and adorns herself with strings of diamonds and other symbols of her wealthy, royal New World lineage, and often carries her Aunt Alluca’s bow and arrow with her. In fact, she is so accomplished with these Indian weapons that she brags to the reader that she could “when very young, [. . .] shoot a bird on the wing” (*Female* 49). Unca Eliza might have even been a queen, she confides, “if my father had pleased, for on the death of my aunt, the Indians made me a formal tender of the crown to me; but I declined it” (*Female* 49).<sup>120</sup> Clearly, through this carefully described bicultural, and somewhat masculine,

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<sup>120</sup> This is a particularly interesting quote because of the dueling sense of subjective agency. On the one hand, it seems Unca’s white, European father is the decision maker when it comes to Unca’s acceptance

identity, the author is stressing Unca Eliza's unique and privileged status as both a highly educated and attractive, wealthy, young English woman, and as a noble descendant of the exotic, autochthonous Indians of the New World. As Roxann Wheeler similarly notes,

In as much as her mother's dark color initially disgusts the Englishman in America, Unca Eliza's lighter color makes her attractively exotic in England. No doubt, the rigorous religious instruction that she undergoes from her clergyman uncle helps mitigate the visual impact of her differences. (*Complexion* 171)

The author is establishing Unca Eliza's liminal yet integral position as a member of both races and cultures—a hybrid identity—that allows her not only greater flexibility to move between the two cultures of her birth, picking and choosing the elements she wishes to adapt or discard, but also allows her to move beyond the restrictive gender roles assigned to her as a EuroAmerican woman; as a Native woman, she is able to “engage in activities and to fashion an identity that would be unavailable to an ordinary *English* heroine” (Burnham 16, emphasis mine).<sup>121</sup> Further, because of

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or declination of the Indian crown and essentially her heritage—the offer would have been considered if her father “had pleased.” However, the definitive act of subjectivity comes from the narrator, Unca, when she herself finally declines the offer, clearly subverting patriarchal and EuroAmerican authority. When read in this way, the consideration she gives to “pleasing” her father signifies more her deference to his literal pleasure or enjoyment rather than signifying her submission to his controlling, discretionary whims.

<sup>121</sup> I recognize that the use of the term “hybridity” is fraught with criticism. The term, when used to describe people of color, has often been criticized due to its inherently sexual overtones that suggest the replication of colonial culture through unions of the colonized and the colonizer. Hybridity has also been used to simply indicate cross-cultural exchange, thereby negating the imbalance of power between the colonizer and colonized. I am using the term, however, as Homi Bhabha uses it—to underscore the interdependence and mutual construction of colonized and colonizer subjectivities. When figured in this way, hybridity asserts a shared post colonial condition and consequently, contains the potentiality of reversing the hegemonic structures of domination in colonial discourse.

her “mixed-blood” identity Unca Eliza can pursue ventures in Anglo culture that are traditionally reserved for men: education, hunting, travel, and even a distinctly “bachelor’s lifestyle” in which she can refuse suitors and remain unencumbered by a spouse or children. She is a uniquely “mixed-blooded” and mixed-gendered figure. However, such an identity has the capacity to slip away from the dominant discourses governing colonization and gender, becoming disruptive to those paradigms, as did the textual identities of Princess Unca and her sister, Alluca; consequently, those raced and patriarchal hegemonies structuring Anglo society demand containment of Unca Eliza’s character. Therefore, the reader is introduced Unca Eliza’s future husband, her cousin John Winkfield.

Once she turns eighteen, Unca Eliza begins to meditate on her bicultural and American roots. Upon realizing that in England it was the custom to “erect monuments for persons who often were interred elsewhere,” she presses her uncle to “erect a super mausoleum in his church-yard, sacred to the memory of [her] dear mother” (*Female* 50).<sup>122</sup> During this time of renewed interest in her origins, Unca Eliza’s father requests her return to the family home in Virginia, and having entertained a “secret long[ing] to see [her] native country, of which [she] retained a perfect idea” Unca Eliza determines to go (*Female* 51). Accompanied at the insistence of her uncle by her cousin, John, Unca Eliza begins her voyage to America. Not long into the journey, she notes with some dismay, that her cousin “neglected no opportunity to renew his address to me,

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<sup>122</sup> Unca Eliza’s monument to her mother is an interesting multicultural and transgressive symbol in and of itself. A “lofty building, supported by Indians as big as life, ornamented with coronets, and other regalia, suitable to her dignity” and the structure also contains Indian, English, and Latin inscriptions. The mausoleum blends New World, Old World, and Ancient World imagery into a fascinating amalgamation of cultures that certainly invites more analysis (*Female* 50).

which he had before begun in England” (Female 51). Unca Eliza “gravely” tells her cousin “I would never marry any man who could not use a bow and arrow as well as I could” (Female 51). Although her cousin persists in his proposals, Unca Eliza merely laughs at him or answers in “the Indian language, of which he was entirely ignorant,” until at long last, she “weary[s] him into silence” (Female 51). This is a noteworthy moment in terms of Unca Eliza’s agency because of not only her refusal to accept yoke of marriage, but her mockery of it. Her cousin’s proposals are met with bold declensions that are undergirded by her mixed race. She has declared her standards for an appropriate marriage match and they are based in her Indian heritage. Her Indianness grants her, in this case, the authority to refuse to enter into the restrictive covenant of marriage; her biracial identity is what enables her to assert feminine agency.

Although Unca Eliza’s voice clearly declares her freedom from the binds of marriage, at least for now, the author still casts the thrall of marriage as an inevitability for Unca Eliza. The author describes the cousin in such persistent terms and clearly indicates that the latest volley of proposals from him on the transatlantic voyage were not the first, and undoubtedly, will not be the last because, as Unca notes, she only “wearied him into silence” not acquiescence on that front. Consequently, the reader is made aware that Unca Eliza’s future may not only contain a marriage, but a marriage to this young man; for now, her independence is intact, enabling her to end up unaccompanied and at the mercy of the vengeful sea captain who abandons her on the island. Unca Eliza’s laughing refusal of marriage, while transgressive, at this point in

the text, is not too disruptive of a threat to the raced and gendered discourses of colonialism.

When Unca Eliza meets up with her cousin again after her long island exile, and once again, refuses his marriage proposals, the dominant discourses of Anglo culture must necessarily impose themselves more aggressively in order to textually contain her now growing independence and agency, as well as her trickster-like abilities to elude that containment. After having been shipwrecked alone on an uninhabited island for nearly three years, then making contact with, living with, and even initiating conversion among, the local Indian peoples of a nearby island, Unca Eliza asks to be returned to her original island and left alone by the Natives. Once she is alone and sitting inside the oracular statue to enjoy the island view, Unca Eliza sees Englishmen approaching. She recognizes one as her cousin, and in her excitement to stop their departure once they realize the island is deserted, cries out “Winkfield, stay!” from inside her golden enclosure (*Female* 122).

Of course, the men are startled by the booming, magnified sound of her voice, likening it to thunder, but they stay, discussing among themselves where the voice could have originated and whether or not the voice is that of a spirit or a devil. Unca Eliza, in her joy of finding her cousin alive, “determine[s] to indulge in adventure which promise[s] much pleasure”: that is, she begins to taunt and question the men from her secluded perch (*Female* 122). As she listens to the men nervously discuss their situation, Unca Eliza notes, “I could not help being much diverted at their fears; but unwilling yet to discover myself, I however determined to dissipate their terrors” so she begins to sing a hymn of her uncle’s composition that her cousin would recognize

(*Female* 123). John Winkfield immediately begins to ask questions aloud about Unca Eliza, having connected the hymn to her, and begs to be allowed to see her, asking the oracle when and where that will happen. Unca Eliza, however, not quite finished with her authoritarian fun, demands that the group of men stays where it is and sings the entirety of John's favorite, and quite long, hymn. During this time, Unca Eliza wires a homemade version of an Aeolian harp into the statue's mouth to keep the men "greatly alarmed," and accouters herself in the rich, priestly fabrics and jewels she had previously discovered (*Female* 125). When she finally appears in front of the men, she finds the men of the group standing "amazed, half leaning back as if in doubt whether to stay or run" and her cousin, although able to speak to her, frozen "like a statue" (*Female* 127). Although he recovers enough to embrace and speak with Unca Eliza, asking her question after question about her status on the island, the golden statue, and her existence on the island, Unca summarily halts his queries. She tells him "Stop, dear cousin: you have asked too many questions. . .How you should know of my being here is what I cannot conjecture. But of these things we will talk together at our leisure, when you are more composed" (*Female* 127). The discussion and the chapter then immediately come to an end.

Clearly, Unca Eliza's voice—her very powerful and thunderous voice—is in control of this entire exchange, from its beginning, when she decides to verbally reveal her presence within the statue, to its end, when she decides the conversation has run its course. Even her "diversion" at her cousin's and the crewmen's horror, anxiety, and ultimate acquiescence to her feminine, authoritative demands is indicative of Unca Eliza's agency and usurpation of traditional masculine authority. All of the emotional

and verbal acrobatics engaged in by the men happen because of the sound of Unca's voice and her commanding use of it; they are by turns threatened, terrified, and enchanted by what they hear. Unca Eliza is, in the most explicit sense, functioning as a trickster character by manipulating the men before her and skewing their perceptions of reality through her mischievous antics. Unca Eliza is in full control of her re-emergence into "civilized" consciousness, determining the terms of the when, where, and how she will be incorporated back into colonial and patriarchal discourses.

However, Unca Eliza, much like her mother and aunt before her, can not be fully reintegrated into proper English society and the raced and gendered discourses that governed it. She is simply too ambivalent to be contained within the established binaries due to her multiple identities and multiple meanings. Her peripheral existence on the fringes of society—both literally as a castaway on a deserted island and as a "mixed-blooded" trickster figure that hovers beyond the enclosure of colonialism—disallows the complete colonization of her character. Consequently, Unca Eliza's transgressive "mixed-blooded" identity can only be contained through the introduction of hegemonic structures to the island. She must be regulated in place; the center must come to her and the editorial voice of colonial domination must assume control of the text. However, in moving the center to the periphery, the author is altering the center, exposing the cracks in its certainty of dominance. How can the center be the center if it is so easily displaced by the periphery? How can the periphery remain the periphery when it, in fact, controls the locus of the center? The binaristic concepts of center and periphery, inside and outside, self and other, male and female break down when confronted with female "mixed-bloodedness" in ways that male "mixed-bloodedness"

can not accomplish. Unca Eliza Winkfield, even in her acquiescence to colonialism in the final pages of *The Female American* still ruptures the discourses dominating both race and gender and exposes their inherent flaws. Just as a Pocahontas' Indian identity disrupts and revises the graven image of "Lady Rebecka" in her European finery, so too does Unca Eliza Winkfield disrupt and revise raced and gendered discourses of colonialism when they re-enter the narrative.

Unca Eliza's feminine, "mixed-blooded" voice, which heretofore has controlled the text, is now mediated by the introduction of the format of the dramatic dialogue. After Unca Eliza calls out for her cousin to stay, the structuring "voice" of the narrative, that for so long has been Unca Eliza's and Unca Eliza's alone, shifts into an omniscient reporter-like mode, in which each speaker is identified by his/her name or title, and then his/her spoken words are noted directly after. Such a move, while certainly an attempt to clarify and simplify the cacophony of voices speaking at this point in the text, is also a method of re-introducing editorial control—in short, a way to ostensibly re-order the gendered and patriarchal hegemonies Unca Eliza has been evading. Rather than following along with the point of view of Unca Eliza, directly participating in her thoughts and feelings as s/he has before, the reader is now jolted back into a more distant, pared-down relation of this climactic meeting between cousins in which Unca Eliza, the female "mixed-blooded" character, had exerted narrative control.

This dramatic dialogue, after a few, brief shifts back into Unca Eliza's own voice, becomes the dominant narrative method for the remaining five chapters of the text, and undercuts the agency Unca Eliza once exercised in the earlier chapters, eventually erasing it all together. Although Unca Eliza's voice re-emerges on occasion,

more and more male voices or vacant, third person-governed dialogues structure the narrative, especially once the character of John Winkfield enters the narrative as a permanent presence. After his crew abandons John Winkfield on the island with Unca Eliza, her voice becomes a random and controlled addition to the text, rather than its controlling feature. Her aggressive agency and pluck are still readily evident, however, even through this editorial mediation, but on a gradually diminishing scale.

For example, after her cousin has been left in her care on the island and begins, once again, to court her, Unca Eliza firmly tells him, “Hold, this is the language of a lover, ill suited to the present time and circumstances . . . Let us consider how you are to be disposed of,” shifting the focus of the conversation to the matters at hand (*Female* 132). Just as she has previously done, Unca Eliza shuts down her cousin’s attempts at courtship by redirecting John’s focus. Later, John reveals to Unca Eliza that he has begun the process of taking holy orders and desires to stay with her, as a missionary, among the Natives, and consequently, has “but one thing more to ask, and that is, Unca Eliza’s hand for ever, in return for [his] heart, which she has long had” (*Female* 135). John ends his appeal with the query, “What says my dear cousin?” (*Female* 135). Unca Eliza’s response, once again, is one of diversion: “That we must land . . . for we are upon the shore, and the Indians waiting for us” (*Female* 135). Even her ultimate acceptance of John’s numerous and worrisome proposals comes not with an emphatic “Yes!” or even a begrudging, “Okay.” Unca Eliza instead, after much haranguing from John, finds that his words “had some weight with [her]” (*Female* 139). Although she admits that she “loved him as a friend and relation, [she] had never considered him as a lover; nor any other person,” Unca Eliza’s ultimate reason for marrying John is that she

realizes she could not be alone with a man “as it hurt [her] modesty” (*Female* 139). She has accepted the proposal out of a need to fulfill the Anglo-American, patriarchal expectations of propriety and morality now that a representative of that hegemonic center, her cousin John, has been reintroduced into the text.

This decision puts the narrative directly at odds with itself because previously, Unca Eliza held no thoughts about marriage or any sort of return to an Anglo-American way of life before her cousin’s arrival. Her life among the Indians was fulfilling and quite rewarding for her. In fact, once she had found her place among the Indians, Unca Eliza notes,

How greatly was my situation changed! From a solitary being, obliged to seek my own food from day to day, I was attended by a whole nation, all ready to serve me; and no care upon me but how to discharge the important business of an apostle, which I had now taken upon me. To this purpose, besides my daily instructing the priests in the knowledge of Christianity, I once a week taught the people in public. (*Female* 118)

No doubt, much of Unca Eliza’s happiness stems from the fact that she has positioned herself as the ideal missionary to these Indians. She is at once their respected and beloved educator, bringing her proselytes willingly and gently to Christianity, yet she is simultaneously their superior, a holy woman sent by the gods who is “attended by a whole nation.” Unca Eliza is able to achieve this “perfect” situation precisely because of her unique position as a biracial woman and her ability to merge two systems of thought: Anglo and Indian. When she initially prepared to join the Indians, Unca Eliza tells them, through the guise of the Oracle, “A person shall come to you, like yourselves

and that you may be the less fearful or suspicious, that person shall be a woman, who shall live among you as you do” (*Female* 111). It is her identity/appearance as biracial that wins her acceptance among the Indians, yet it is her gendered identity as a woman that allows her to remain there because, as Roxann Wheeler aptly observes, she “is female and therefore assimilable to the culture of the men with whom she associates” (*Complexion* 171-2). Unca Eliza has achieved an alternative model of colonization that allows for cross-cultural exchanges and the emergence of a dual, mixed-culture that melds two systems of thought, unlike the colonial project, which demands full acculturation of the colonized. She is able to adopt some of the Indians’ habits and customs, while they adopt some of her Christian habits and customs in a uniquely reciprocal fashion. Because of this success and Unca Eliza’s ability to revise and successfully perpetuate counter-paradigm to colonization, she, as a character has become too transgressive and must necessarily be contained by colonization herself through the reintroduction of her cousin John.

When Unca Eliza does marry John, her position and authority among the Indians become truncated. Where she was once the sole teacher, minister, and religious authority on the island, John has now taken on those roles. John now gives the religious sermons while Unca Eliza translates for him until he can learn the Indian language. John also takes over the religious education of the male children, leaving Unca Eliza to work with the girls. Unca Eliza even acknowledges, “From the time of my cousin’s settling here, or rather my husband, as I now for the future call him, the Indians were properly baptized, married, and many of them, at their earnest desire, admitted to the Lord’s supper” (*Female* 141). The wording of this passage seems to indicate that

John's masculine presence brings a propriety, a legitimacy, to the work Unca Eliza had previously been doing on her own with the Indians. Now the baptisms and marriages are "proper" because they are officially presided over by a sanctioned colonial and masculine authority: a white male. However, the reader recognizes that with the re-introduction of this sanctioned authority, the text has become a dull, report of Christian conversion and moral lessons. It is no longer the exciting adventure dominated by Unca Eliza's intelligent and free-spirited, feminine voice and tales of the glorious adventures she once had as the sole resident of the island. Although patriarchal and colonial hegemony have reigned in Unca Eliza's heretofore independent and liminal position as not only a "mixed-blood" woman, but also as a female castaway and missionary, this reigning in can be seen as the ultimate critique of these discourses. Unca Eliza's increasingly silent and chastened status serves only to underscore her previous freedoms and multiple identities that so enthralled the reader; now she is only an Anglo-American wife and helpmeet. This final enclosure and calcification of Unca Eliza's identity becomes the text's most devastating critique of patriarchy.

After the marriage, the text descends into a cacophony of male voices, beginning with John's, who all seek to "fill in the blanks" about what has been going on in the masculine, colonial world (i.e. the "real" world) while Unca Eliza's personal adventures have been unfolding for the reader. John's voice is accompanied by those of a Merchant Captain and Captain Shore, all of whom relate the fantastic details of how Unca Eliza came to be found through a "wonderful series of providences" that even involved repentant pirates (*Female* 152). Unca Eliza's first person voice is only heard twice more after this point, once when John finishes his relation and she informs her

readers of the return of Captain Shore, and once in the very final sentence of the narrative, when the Unca Eliza reveals that she returned her written “adventures” to Europe through the aid of Captain Shore, nicely bringing the idea of the musty recovered manuscript from the editorial introduction full circle (*Female* 154-5).<sup>123</sup> Although Unca Eliza is still a very visible presence in these passages—the whole object of the men’s narratives, after all, is to reveal how they were able to “rescue” her—the focus on her authority as a woman and adventurer has been mitigated. Her role becomes that of feminized object in these final pages. She is the focus of the frantic recovery project spearheaded by John, not the subject of her own island adventure as she had previously been; she is the wife of an authorized missionary, not the leader of her own revolutionary missionary project; she is the lesser half of a married pair, not the independent author of her own life’s story. The racist, patriarchal hegemony of Anglo-America has resumed its position as center but, as it is painfully clear to the reader, it is at the expense of Unca Eliza’s exciting and radically transgressive identity.

Although she seems to be contained by the narrative’s end through the marriage, the reintroduction of Anglo-American patriarchy, and the moderation of her authorial voice, the figure of Unca Eliza still overpowers and revises any sense of enclosure these systems attempt to enforce. She slips beyond the boundaries of authorial, racial, and gendered control in trickster-like fashion precisely because she is her own author.

Because of the “worn out manuscript” convention introduced by the “editor” at the

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<sup>123</sup> In the interim between the end of John’s story and the end of the narrative, the two points at which Unca Eliza’s first person voice is briefly reintroduced, the narrative shifts into the usage of the plural first person pronoun “we.” The “we” spoken of is obviously Unca Eliza and her husband John, but the abrupt change to a shared identity rather than the previously used individual is interesting to note.

beginning of the text and the anonymous nature of its production, Unca Eliza's feminine, "mixed-blood" voice is always already dominating the narrative. Even when first-person masculine accounts fill the final pages of the text, the reader recognizes that Unca Eliza can not be written back into Anglo-American hegemony or be "removed" from the text because she circulates beyond their grasp as their author. Her voice, even when evacuated from the final pages of the text, exists *a priori* to any of the masculine ones that invade and scatter the text. Even their stories are contained within her voice, her authorial realm, making her, in the ultimate trickster circumvention, the author of the very discourses that attempt to contain her. She has written herself into existence outside of the raced and gendered discourses of colonial patriarchy, and in doing so, establishes the possibility for the existence of a female authorial identity that defies containment as well.

## EPILOGUE

### CURTAINS, EARRINGS, AND INDIANS: TEXTS OF TODAY

A few summers ago, I was leafing through a JC Penney sale catalogue, half-heartedly scanning the pages before I tossed the booklet into the recycle bin. Flip. Flip. Flip. I wasn't even really looking for anything in particular; I was just trying to make sure I wasn't "missing out" on anything good. When I got to page 71 of the catalogue, however, my attention was riveted. There, staring back at me from beneath the screaming headline, "White Sale! It's our lowest price ever!" was the Indian of the Massachusetts Bay Colony seal (Arlington). What?! I couldn't believe my eyes, but, indeed, there he was with his bow and arrow, and his banner-like plea for help staring back at me from, of all places, curtain panels. Yes, *curtain panels*. In the JC Penney sale catalogue. On clearance.

The Indian on the seal, it seems, was a part of a fabric series manufactured by Penneys dubbed "Arlington," which, according to the catalogue description, was a pattern that had the "[t]raditional look of toile with [a] patriotic American theme" (Arlington). Very patriotic, it turns out. Scattered across a white background were images of the Liberty Bell, Mount Vernon, Liberty Hall, and the Bay Colony seal, all arranged in an artistic toile pattern with filler images of leafy trees and tri-corn topped men in horse drawn buggies placed around them. You could choose full length pole-top draperies, tailored or ascot valances, or even balloon curtains in the "Arlington" pattern and, even better, you could buy coordinating pieces in a check print to really finish off

the look. There were three color choices for the toile and check prints as well: black, navy, or spicy red (!), all on the same white background. The entire line was marked down to 25-40% off; something the JC Penney's catalogue writer wittily noted was "an historically low price!" (Arlington).

I didn't know what to make of this. I tore page 71 from the catalogue and carried it around with me for quite a few days trying to figure out how this fraught symbol of imperialism, colonialism, and even racism, made its way onto fabric that was then randomly made into curtains. I mean, why not napkins or placemats? Why not a bedding ensemble or beach towels? And why would this particular symbol be chosen as one representative of American patriotism? Were we really still using Indianness (and coordinating fabrics) to decorate our homes and define ourselves as Americans in the twenty-first century? The implications of these curtains were dizzying and fascinating to me.

I had a similar experience when I went to Jamestown for the first time in the summer of 2007. I was attending the biennial conference of the Society of Early Americanists and the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture. The conference that year was held in Williamsburg, Virginia, on the campus of the College of William and Mary and included activities at Jamestown to commemorate the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its settlement as the first permanent English colony in the New World. I had never been to either Williamsburg or Jamestown, and was excited to see both. However, I was really looking forward to seeing the fabled earrings of Pocahontas, the focus of much of my blood, sweat, and tears—otherwise known as chapter three of this work—which I hadn't begun writing yet. The earrings were on display in the museum

gallery of the Great Hall at Jamestown Settlement and were breathtaking. I had only seen grainy internet images of the earrings that were made from some obscure, early twentieth century newspaper photograph. I couldn't make out much about them from those images. In person, they were delicate and finely detailed with opalescent white shells and beautiful, silver filigree work. They were gorgeous examples of seventeenth-century jewelry that may—or may not—have had direct ties to Pocahontas herself. It was amazing just to see the real deals.

It was later on in the gift shop when I spotted the reproductions of these earrings for sale in a glass display case at the center of the store. I couldn't believe it. Here were these disputed relics of the “Princess Pocahontas,” earrings that even the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Artifacts is careful to describe as having a “tradition of ownership” by Pocahontas—not a confirmed link to her—all boxed up and ready for sale to the tourists of Jamestown as “Pocahontas’ Earrings.” And this is despite the fact that tests run on the earrings in 2006 by the London Assay office at the request of the APVA had shown the earrings were most likely produced some time between 1830 and 1900—some 200 years after Pocahontas’ death.<sup>124</sup> Yet the earrings are still known as belonging to the most famous of Indian converts. For a mere forty dollars (now \$55), you could own a bit of history, a bit of Indianness, a bit of royalty, and wear it in your ears. As I gawked through the glass display case at the reproduction earrings, a clerk asked me if I'd like to see them. I nodded, and as she unlocked the

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<sup>124</sup> My thanks go to Catherine Dean, Curator of Collections at APVA Preservation Virginia for bringing this latest research to my attention. The report from the London Assay office reveals with a 99% probability that the earrings were manufactured during the nineteenth century (APVA “Results”).

cabinet and pulled them out, she told me confidentially, “These are really popular. We only have a few pairs left. I’d go ahead and get them if I were you.”

As I looked the earrings over, I realized that even today people still want an intimate, physical connection to Indianness. They want to possess a tangible link to an autochthonous, indigenous Indian identity in the same way that the earliest Anglo-Americans grasped onto Indianness as a method of differentiating themselves from Europeans. Indianness is still the same commodity as it was four-hundred years ago; it is still appropriated, adopted, adapted, and utilized in complex ways to make (white) Americans feel more American. Indianness is enmeshed with Americanness in ways that education, scholarship, tolerance, and even four-hundred plus years of “corrective learning” can’t untangle. No matter how progressive America thinks it has become in terms of accepting and valuing “otherness,” remnants of our past appropriations of Indianness still remain; in fact, they flourish. Just as the Indian on the Massachusetts Bay Colony seal found his way back into twenty-first century consciousness by the way of “patriotic” home décor, and Pocahontas reemerged in our imaginations through fashionable (and affordably priced) earrings, so, too, does Indianness—or rather the Anglo-imagined version of Indianness—still inform much of American identity. And, ironically enough, it still informs a specifically *female* American identity as testified by these stereotypically feminine commercial objects: curtains and earrings. “Womenfolk” stuff.

I further realized, as I stood there and handled the faux Pocahontas earrings at the gift shop in Jamestown, that the early American images and constructions of Indianness that I had so agonizingly unpacked and untangled in this project were not

relics of history. I was not engaging in some arcane study of America's distant past, but was working with concepts that America is clearly not done with yet. Americans are still not sure who exactly they are and how Indianness fits into that identity, yet they do seem to universally know that Indianness belongs to them. It's theirs for the taking. But it's not just any version of Indianness that gets claimed. Americans desire the romanticized Indian of long ago, the lovingly remembered "Noble Savage" of the past who still lives on in literature, images, movies, and even commercial products. They want the Edenic Indian of Massachusetts Bay who pleads for and receives salvation from the charitable colonists; they want the glamorous earrings that were once the property of the Indian princess who so loved the colonists she gave up everything to become one of them. In short, Americans want the Anglo-constructed fantasy of Indianness. The Indianness of present reality, which often struggles with the very real issues of poverty, alcohol and drug abuse, and higher rates of school dropouts—the ugly legacies of conquest—isn't the vision of romantic autochthony the average American craves. That reality is just too hard for Americans to acknowledge or even conceive of, because with acknowledgment comes culpability and with culpability comes change. Modern Americans would have to fully recognize and take responsibility for the fallout from centuries of colonization and occupation and removal and then do something to make it "right." The implications of such a moment are almost unimaginable for American identity and consequently, simply unthinkable. So it is Indianness of the past, the idealized vision of native nobility from America's glorified and distant past from a time before the aftermath of colonization was fully revealed that dominates American imagination, even today.

There is still a deep desire within white America to have a connection to that form of Indianness, to “own” a piece of that identity that is perceived as “more authentically American” than others. Why else would there be a market for home décor featuring a half-naked Indian figure pleading for civilization or for earrings that are supposed to look like a pair that maybe, possibly, perhaps Princess Pocahontas owned? The same issues, images, and texts that define the scope of my project touch on these complexities of American identity and still have resonance and currency today. I came to this conclusion while leafing through a catalogue and browsing through a gift shop; I realized that Indianness, while still relegated to a flattened-out, primordial construction, is emblematic of the yearning Americans have always had for connectedness, for a historically and geographically rooted identity that stems from autochthony, even as that desire erases the violent repercussions of conquest. And it is still intricately bound up with white womanhood.

Indian scholars and theorists have been struggling to get out from under the weight of these romanticized constructions of Indianness and to redefine Indian identity in productive and realistic ways. Scholars such as Gerald Vizenor, Jace Weaver, Thomas King, and Robert Allan Warrior work to deconstruct the “imagined” versions of Indianness established by colonial hegemony that still influence American imagination today. These “postindian warriors of survivance,” to use Vizenor’s phrase, have continued the work begun hundreds of years ago by people like James Printer and Pocahontas—real, historical personages who were skillfully able to assert their own subject identities through the innate cracks existent in the imperial machinery. The field of Native Studies also seeks to alleviate the pressure of Anglo-created constructions of

Indianness by attempting to define not only the field itself, but also by contextualizing the concept of the “Indian,” and moving h/her out of the distant past and beyond the steam-rolled images and caricatures.

Without a doubt, many of those enduring constructions of “paper Indians” stemmed from the artistic renditions of Indianness that flooded early America. The colonial seals, the engravings, and the portraits of Indians all shaped Anglo-American perceptions of Americanness and Indianness, so much so that many Anglo women writers took up these themes and used the disruptive and ambiguous position of Indians in the Anglo-American mind to assert their own authorial identities. These women writers deployed the figure of the “imagined” Indian as leverage, as the ground from which they could launch not only themselves, but also their critiques of the hegemonic structures that regulated early American society. Women writers such as Mary Rowlandson, Ann Eliza Bleecker, Lydia Maria Child, and the pseudonymous Unca Eliza Winkfield, certainly exploited Indianness, manipulating it and the colonial imagined specter of it in order to highlight the fractures in colonial certainty and to write themselves into existence. It is clear that in engendering their own unique existences, these women summarily foreclosed on the possibility of an Indian one.

However, these women writers also wrote about Indianness in ways that opened it up. They expressed their own connections to and relationships with Indianness in these texts. The authorial moves made by these women authors transcend acts of pure appropriation to complicate and intensify Anglo-American relationships with Indianness. These texts introduced Indian characters that, while often based on crude stereotypes, were also complex refutations of those same stereotypes. In the writings of

these women authors the possibility that Indians can be “savages” *and* protectors of white womanhood, enemies *and* lovers, captors *and* friends, Indian *and* white, truly exists. The intriguing and complex assertions of Indian, Anglo-American, and feminine identity in these texts do far more to bring Indianness and Americanness closer together, to posit the *a priori* connections between them, than to erase the existence of one in order to assert the dominance of the other. These women authors were hammering out the identities of not only themselves, but also the nation—and conspicuously including Indians in that negotiation. So while trafficking in more of the same images of “paper Indians,” these women were also inscribing new possibilities for Indianness and women.

Ultimately, I realized that the “Arlington” curtains of JC Penneys and the Pocahontas earrings at Jamestown, while a bit kitschy and most definitely commercial, do similar work to the textually created “paper Indians” examined in my study. Both of these products are fraught with the underpinnings of colonial fantasy, imperialism, appropriation, and even capitalism, but they are also clear statements of America’s intricate ties to Indian identity. The curtains and the earrings speak of America’s complex history and loving infatuation with Indianness and while neither item addresses the historic realities of Indian life, they still attest to the deep and foundational ties all Americans, but especially white women, have with Indianness.

I bought both the curtains and the earrings. As a white woman and writer, how could I not?

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