

THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY
Writing Self and Race in the Early Twentieth Century:
The Autobiographical Essays of Zitkala-Sa

by
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A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

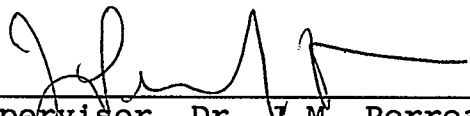
CALGARY, ALBERTA

MAY, 1996

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FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled "Writing Self and Race in the Early Twentieth Century: The Autobiographical Essays of Zitkala-Sa" submitted by Rosanna D'Agnillo in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.



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Zitkala-Sa was one of the most active and outspoken Native American women to work politically on behalf of her race in the early twentieth century. Although previously neglected by literary critics, her autobiographical writing is receiving a growing amount of acclaim in discussions of early Native American autobiographical narrative. This thesis participates in this affirmative reevaluation of Zitkala-Sa's contribution to the literary and political mobilization of Native Americans. Zitkala-Sa's textual representation of racial identity is both innovative and transgressive; she adopts and modifies discourses conventionally used to represent Native Americans in order to articulate the specifics of her own position between cultures. In her autobiographical texts she also incorporates a sophisticated discussion of assimilation strategies and education, offering an insightful critique of these two Anglo-American institutions so fundamental to early Native American reformers.

A special thanks is due to the University of Calgary, the Faculty of Graduate Studies and to the Department of English, all of which have generously supported my studies with scholarships and mentorship. I also wish to thank the staff of the University of Calgary, who worked hard to obtain for me all the obscure documents necessary to this research, and also for bearing with me. Finally, I want to thank Jeanne Perreault, whose unfailing support, guidance, enthusiasm, and patience with me in this process made this project possible. The example of her scholarship and her dedication to feminist political work has been an inspiration to me throughout the last five years.

To my family and my beloved, who make so many things
beautiful.

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INTRODUCTION

Issues and Contexts

Like many Native Americans writing before World War II, Zitkala-Sa, also known as Gertrude Simmons Bonnin, fell into obscurity after her death. Bernd C. Peyer notes in the introduction to The Singing Spirit, an anthology of short stories by early twentieth century Native American writers, that much of this oeuvre, often published by small, transitory journals and presses to which there are few references, remains inaccessible today (v). Zitkala-Sa's autobiographical essays, however, were published by the Atlantic Monthly, the most prestigious literary magazine of the nineteenth century. In addition, some of the stories and essays she wrote between 1900 and 1903 appeared in such prominent mass-circulation journals as Harper's Monthly Magazine and Everybody's Magazine.¹ She later collected this writing and published it as American Indian Stories (Hayworth, 1921).

¹"Impressions of an Indian Childhood," "The School Days of an Indian Girl" and "An Indian Teacher Among Indians," The Atlantic Monthly 85(January, February, March 1900): 37-47, 185-194, 381-386; "The Soft Hearted Sioux," Harper's Monthly Magazine 102(March 1901): 505-508; "The Trial Path," Harper's Monthly Magazine 103(October 1901): 505-508; "A Warrior's Daughter," Everybody's Magazine 6(April 1902): 346-352; "Why I Am a Pagan," Atlantic Monthly 90(December 1902): 801-803. Publications in smaller journals and newsletters during this period that I have been able to find include "The Indian Dance," Red Man and Helper 22 August 1902; "Iya, the Camp-Eater," Twin Territories 4(September 1902):274-276; and "The Shooting of Red Eagle," Indian Leader 12 August 1904.

The relative availability of her writing, in comparison to that of her contemporaries, certainly facilitated the rise of academic interest in Zitkala-Sa in the 1970s. To date, she has been studied in three doctoral dissertations,² and her books have enjoyed renewed popularity with publishers. American Indian Stories was reprinted in 1976 by the Rio Grande Press, and both Old Indian Legends, Zitkala-Sa's first book (Gunn & Co., 1901) and American Indian Stories were reprinted in 1985 by the University of Nebraska Press. As well, the autobiographical essays have recently been anthologized in a number of collections, some with an impressively wide circulation.³ The inclusion of "Impressions of an Indian Childhood" in Arnold Krupat's Native American Autobiography: An Anthology

² These are: Dexter Fisher, The Transformation of Tradition: A Study of Zitkala-Sa and Mourning Dove, Two Transitional American Indian Writers (City University of New York, 1979); Margaret Austin Lukens, Creating Cultural Spaces: The Pluralist Project of American Women Writers, 1843-1902 (Margaret Fuller, Harriet Jacobs, Sara Winnemucca, and Zitkala-Sa, (University of Colorado, 1992); Deborah Sue Welch, Zitkala-Sa: An American Indian Leader, 1876-1938 (University of Wyoming, 1985).

³ Anthologies which incorporate some or all of Zitkala-Sa's autobiographical writing include William Andrew's Classic American Autobiographies (NY: Penguin, 1992), Eileen Barrett's American Women Writers: Diverse Voices in Prose Since 1845 (NY: St. Martin's Press, 1992); The Norton Anthology of American Literature, (3rd ed., 1989) and Arnold Krupat's Native American Autobiography: An Anthology, (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1994). Bernd C. Peyer's collection of early Native American short stories, The Singing Spirit: Early Short Stories by North American Indians (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1989) includes two of Zitkala-Sa's short stories, "The Soft-Hearted Sioux" and "A Warrior's Daughter."

(University of Wisconsin Press, 1994) indicates Zitkala-Sa's growing profile and importance in discussions of early twentieth century Native American autobiographical narratives.

Zitkala-Sa's autobiographical essays were printed in the January, February and March 1900 issues of the Atlantic Monthly. She published the series while teaching at Carlisle Indian School; before the year's end she would break ideologically with Richard Henry Pratt, its founder and director, enroll at the Boston Conservatory of Music, and fall in love with Yavapai physician Carlos Montezuma. She spent the first two years of the century, her greatest period of literary productivity, in and out of eastern America's limelight. Taken up eagerly by the public, she was invited to recite for a literary club chaired by the current American president, William McKinley, in March 1900. In the fall of the same year she accompanied the Carlisle band to Paris, where she also gained musical acclaim for her violin solos. She returned to her reservation in May 1901, where she obtained a position as an issue clerk, married Raymond Talesfase Bonnin, and became pregnant with her first and apparently only child, a boy named Ohiya. "Why I Am a Pagan," which appeared in the Atlantic Monthly's December 1902 issue, was the last autobiographical narrative she wrote. The journal's editor, Bliss Perry, was apparently very enthusiastic about the series and offered his editorial

assistance at her convenience if she wished to expand it.⁴ Why she abandoned her autobiographical project is unknown; she writes, however, to Carlos Montezuma before her marriage of how family responsibilities and problems made writing itself difficult and time for writing scarce. Perhaps this frustration, combined with the additional stress of being a wife and mother were factors that prevented her from continuing the series.

The appearance of the autobiographical essays marks the first time Zitkala-Sa published under this name. Native American scholar Agnes Picotte notes that it is neither English nor Nakota, the Sioux dialect she spoke, but a Lakota name meaning Red Bird (Picotte xi). Her explanation of the name to Montezuma is suggestive of the cross-cultural strain she lived under:

I have a half-brother whose name is Simmons. Once my own father scolded my brother and my mother took such offense from it that eventually it resulted in a parting. So as I grew I was

⁴ Correspondence between Zitkala-Sa and MacGregor Jenkins, one of Perry's assistants, is held in the journal's archives at Harvard University. Although the influence of Bliss Perry's editorial direction is a matter of debate, Atlantic Monthly historian Ellery Sedgwick groups him in the tradition of an "older, more passive style of editing, where initiative was left to the writer" (278). Apparently Perry was not a proponent of the "trend in progressive publishing toward centralized control of a magazine by an editor who generated and shaped material" (278). Sedgwick notes that Perry urged "writers to treat comments as suggestions over which their own decision was final" (279).

called by my brother's name--Simmons. I bore it a long time till my brother's wife--angry with me because I insisted upon getting an education--said I had deserted home and I might give up my brother's name "Simmons" too. Well--you can guess how queer I felt--away from my own people--homeless--penniless--and without a name!

Then I chose to make a name for myself--I guess I have made "Zitkala-Sa" known--for even Italy writes it in her language! (n.d.[June-July 1901])

This act of self-naming, a response to her sense of alienation from her home and also from whites, signals both a dislocation from and a bond with her Sioux and Anglo-American cultures. Zitkala-Sa would attempt to mediate these tensions in her writing and performances for the rest of her life, struggling, as historian Dexter Fisher observes, "toward a vision of wholeness in which the conflicting parts of her existence could be reconciled" (1979 38).

As Fisher's appraisal suggests, Zitkala-Sa's writing has been recognized for its innovative exploration of cross-cultural conflict. Her choice of a name is an example of her flexible, creative, and self-conscious production of a racial identity. This is a skill she made use of throughout her life in order to obtain recognition and power within the

limited terms of visibility allowed to Native Americans by whites. Literary historian Mary Stout asserts that Zitkala-Sa's writing sets a precedent for Native American writers to come, "giving us the first insight into the inner life of the transitional Native American; the person who had to straddle two worlds" (73). Native American writer Linda Hogan confirms this importance, calling Zitkala-Sa a "teacher," one of "those who before me found the first ways to speak of these things" (I Tell You Now 243). The need to negotiate the demands of living in between cultures and races comprised, for Zitkala-Sa, the predominant condition of production and reception. How she managed to become visible, vocal and intrusive in a white-dominated society and within the confines of white-dominated discourses, and, in turn, how she managed to articulate a cross-cultural subjectivity and an anti-racist position on issues pertaining to Native Americans in this setting are the subjects of this study. As well as examining the difficulties and compromises involved in reaching out to a white audience, I also intend to explore her adoption and modification of prevalent discourses about Native Americans and her textual construction of racial identity.

Zitkala-Sa's writing reflects the changing and conflicted politics of reform during the transition period between the 1887 Dawes Act and the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934. The first, in an effort to force Native Americans

to assimilate, partitioned reservations into individual family allotments. The latter, being the New Deal provided for Native Americans by Roosevelt and Indian Commissioner John Collier, was predicated on a new and growing but limited appreciation of cultural pluralism. Her autobiographical essays are particularly suited to the context in which they emerged, for her faith in the power of self-representation is characteristic of the progressive era to which the spirit of reform and exposure gave birth to at the turn of the century. Zitkala-Sa was a member of the first generation of Native American professionals and political activists to emerge from off-reservation boarding schools; as for her contemporaries, the promises of Christian brotherhood and constitutional rhetoric still held an appeal in the progressive era they would not twenty-five years later. Reform efforts revolved around the equality of opportunity promised by these liberal discourses rather than the impact of systemic discrimination, toward which they would later gravitate. The pre-war period of the twentieth century, characterized by a concern for domestic reform, nurtured a faith in the power of the individual and of dialogue to interfere with dominant relations of power. How Zitkala-Sa's contemporary political history, crises of cultural and national identity, and changing attitudes towards race figure into her autobiographical production is an integral concern of this research. An important subtext

throughout this study is Zitkala-Sa's definition of a racial identity in relation to and in distinction from the national American identity that was so compelling for Native American reformers. Also of continuous interest is her appeal to a primarily white and eastern but in other ways diverse audience consisting of both republicans and democrats, elite literary circles and young children, missionaries and reformers.

Autobiography published serially may well have been the genre and mode through which acclaim was most accessible to Zitkala-Sa. Despite Perry's interest in Zitkala-Sa, the Atlantic Monthly did not publish any of her short fiction or poetry, and the more popular Everybody's Magazine and Harper's Monthly printed her short stories only after she achieved fame in the Atlantic Monthly.⁵ Neither did the journal print the short stories and verse of Pauline Johnson, who also became well-known in the northeastern United States. Zitkala-Sa may have chosen autobiography as a form for a number of reasons, a principal one being its validation of personal experience as a source of authority. Bataille and Sands, in their study of Native American women's autobiography, American Indian Women: Telling Their

⁵ Zitkala-Sa published no poetry in a mass-circulating magazine. I have been able to track only a few poems: "A Ballad" printed in her college newspaper, the Earlhamite (9 January 1897: 97-98), "The Indian's Awakening" in the American Indian Magazine (4(January-March 1916): 381) and "The Red Man's American" in the American Indian Magazine (5(January-March 1917):64).

Lives (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984) observe that Native American women who engage this genre often tap into the particular powers of the autobiographical "I." The women Bataille and Sands study often use the additional authority this position provides to correct misinformation about aboriginal peoples, to bring white and aboriginal worlds closer together, and to share with readers an understanding of the difficulty of being an aboriginal person in a society dominated by whites (19, 24). The topoi Bataille and Sands take note of in the diverse texts they study include those Zitkala-Sa makes use of in her autobiography: the importance of tradition, the impact of culture contact and acculturation, the relationships of protagonists with their Native American and white communities, the difficult decisions made by women in transition, the process of survival and maturation, and the growth of protagonists into models of individual strength and action.

The optimism shared by politically mobilized Native Americans at the turn of the century is in many ways similar to the current belief of critics today in the politically and socially transformative power of language, and in the importance of marginalized voices to any emerging postcolonial understanding and restructuring. Feminist and post-colonial analysis provide a variety of tools useful for examining the aspects of Zitkala-Sa's production and

reception. The questions posed in these discourses about autobiographical practice provide a useful departure point for my research. Geopolitical context and colonial history, as well as the value and power of difference, are central to Smith and Watson in Decolonizing the Subject, who ask,

Given the colonial, postcolonial and neocolonial locales in which a writer produces an autobiographical text, what then does the speaker make of the autobiographical "I"? And what strategies drive, what means emerge from, what uses define her autobiographical project?" (xix)

The issue of strategic subjectivity informs Neuman's inquiry into how "the author came to command an audience rhetorically, ideologically and economically" (4). Gilmore, also concerned with a writer's negotiation for agency, asks: "How is self presentation and its constitutive possibilities for agency and subjectivity used to become no longer primarily subject matter for exchange but a subject who exchanges the position of object for self representational agency"? (32) These concerns are at the heart of my consideration of Zitkala-Sa's autobiographical essays, where Zitkala-Sa takes advantage of her autobiographical subject position to put forth some radical political ideas for her time. One impulse of the autobiographical essays is the need to provide for readers what theorist Nancy Harstock describes as "an account of the world as seen from the

margins, an account which can expose the falseness of the view from the top. . ." (Harstock 171). How she manages to configure her alternative vision on such crucial issues as assimilation and racism is vital to this thesis.

Zitkala-Sa is a forerunner in a tradition of Native American women working to develop a language by which to discuss the experience of racial oppression and cultural dislocation, for which study current feminist and post-colonial critical discussion of autobiography has developed a variety of useful discourses. Often these discourses consider the conflicts in both genre and self-representation generated by a marginalized subject's negotiation of race, gender, culture, and form to be of principal interest. The terms life-writing, self-writing, autography, *testimonio*, auto-bio-history, biomythography, and autoethnography were developed by critics to emphasize the diverse potentials of the autobiographical occasion, to account for the particular nuances of a text's relations of production and consumption, and to give name to the "processes set in motion when a marginalized subject struggles toward voice, history, and a future" (Smith and Watson xvii). Implicit in this creation of alternative terminology is an acknowledgement of the difficulty or even futility of establishing rigid conditions to delimit what constitutes autobiographical writing. It is from the perspective of these discourses that I hope to reconsider Zitkala-Sa's contribution to the literary

mobilization of Native Americans in the early twentieth century. Those very qualities of Zitkala-Sa's texts which have generated critical anxiety in fact indicate, from this stance, the "outlaw" nature of her autobiographical writing. Her polemical intent and her construction of a group identity suggest the importance of "staying alive--cultural and personal survival," an impetus which theorist Caren Kaplan argues "fuels the narrative engines of outlaw genres" (135). Zitkala-Sa's work can be considered in the context of witnessing, as theorist John Beverley argues that a narrator of *testimonio* is distinguished by "an urgency to communicate, a problem of repression, poverty, subalternity, imprisonment or struggle for survival implicated in the act of narration itself" (94). Zitkala-Sa brings these possibilities for discourse manipulation as well as her radical political analysis to her autobiographical texts, where she employs a carefully crafted technique to challenge the logic of assimilationist rhetoric and scientific racism and to propose cultural relativism as a paradigm for race relations between Anglo and Native Americans.

CHAPTER ONE

Reading Race Then and Now:

An Introduction to Zitkala-Sa's Readership

1. Liberal Idealism and the Atlantic Monthly

The Bostonian Atlantic Monthly was integral to the development of Americanism in literature and to the establishment of high culture and intellectual scholarship as a major influence in mainstream American culture in the second half of the nineteenth century. In 1900 the magazine remained the most prestigious literary magazine in America despite its diminishing number of subscriptions and reduced profits in the face increased competition with commercial publishers. Literary historian Ellery Sedgwick, in his recent detailed study of the journal, The Atlantic Monthly 1857-1909: Yankee Humanism at High Tide and Ebb argues that the magazine was not a genteel, elitist or reactionary publication in the 1890s. His book outlines its liberal idealist tradition of engaging contemporary issues in order to cast a positive influence on national and literary culture. He states that the congruence of Zitkala-Sa's work with this impulse in the progressive era outweighed the pressure the journal felt to pacify its "sizeable missionary audience that might well take offense" to her criticism (310). Sedgwick observes that the decade from 1899 to 1909 generally held more liberal values than preceding decades. In presenting a "new application of traditional Yankee

humanism," the progressive era reaffirmed principles believed to essentially define America, such as justice and respect for individuals (302). Those with "progressive temperaments," writes Sedgwick, were intellectually tolerant, committed to public service and democratic ideals, appreciative, in a limited way, of cultural relativism, racial diversity and ethnic pluralism, and also interested in transcending the growing gap between high and low culture (277, 317). In the literary world these tendencies were apparent in the growing sense that the most vital material for stories came from immigrants and the poor. Perry's own heightened racial sensitivity was manifested in his search for material that would portray images of and give voice to the concerns of those on the fringes of mainstream American society (306). Censure of eastern, middle-class Anglo-Americans appeared frequently in the journal's non-fiction component, where Perry had more leeway to print radical material. Sedgwick observes that he took advantage of this freedom to involve the journal in "controversy that might discomfort not only the gentle reader but also the rough rider in the White House, particularly when the issue involved fundamental principles" (306). He contracted work from such African-American intellectuals as W. E. B. DuBois and Booker T. Washington, as well as articles supporting the Chinese boycott of American goods; Perry was also critical

of America's increasing anti-immigrant sentiment and foreign colonial aggression.

The renewed validity of liberal ideals in the progressive era, however, generated little interest in the current state of Anglo-Native American relations and produced no change in the way whites conventionally perceived and represented Native Americans. As Krupat observes, "after Wounded Knee it was as if the Indian had dropped out of American history" (1994 237). By the late nineteenth century, most whites had no contact with Native Americans; with the exception of missionaries and eastern reform groups, whites generally had little interest in these neighbours. In 1900, the concerns of Native Americans regarding education, national policy, and land rights were not a priority for white liberals even in the face of increasing and clearly abusive unilateral action on the part of Congress against Native Americans.¹ The general appetite for "muckraking" at the turn of the century

¹ Wards of the state since 1831, Congress made use of the subordinate, dependent legal status of Native Americans near the turn of the century to accommodate the demands of industrialists and land-hungry state governments. It dissolved the Cherokee government upon its refusal of allotment in 1898, voted to lease aboriginal lands to oil and gas companies in 1902, legislated congressional plenary power in Indian affairs in 1903 (meaning that Congress would not be held responsible to the judicial system), and approved the building of pipelines through reservations in 1904. By the early 1900s it was also clear that the federal government was caving in to pressure from state governments to open up Native American land for white settlement. Its removal of trust restrictions on allocated land in 1908 rapidly depleted reservation land holdings by opening the door to widespread graft.

stimulated liberal critiques of what Sedgwick describes as "the excesses of the gilded age and the rise of corporate America." However, the abuse enacted by land-hungry corporations and state governments against Native Americans did not surface as a scandal until the 1920s (when Zitkala-Sa's 1924 study of graft in Oklahoma was eagerly taken up by the media). White reformers, quieted by the legislation of the Dawes Act in 1887, would not push again for national policy change until this time. Similarly, the restructuring of Indian policy would not be on the federal government's agenda again until the 1930s. In addition to immigration concerns, foreign policy problems and black-white race relations, the major issues occupying the attention of white liberals in the Atlantic Monthly included the rise of socialism, labour abuse and violence, the degradation of children in slums and factories, and other problems stemming from industrialization and urbanization (Sedgwick 302-310). Perry himself understood the oppression of African Americans as violent and immoral, and argued that America's colonization of the Philippines was a "subjugation of a weaker people who are struggling . . . for that independence which we once claimed as an inalienable right for ourselves (Sedgwick 309).² Whites generally, however, were not

² The quotation is from Perry's editorial entitled "On Keeping the Fourth of July," (4 July 1902) and is cited by Sedgwick on page 306.

prepared to apply this cultural relativism to the situation Native Americans.

2. The "Imaginary Indian" in the Progressive Era

That the concerns of Native Americans were not taken up in spite of the progressive spirit of the age indicates the extent of public acquiescence to the notion that Native Americans, who were now confined to reservations and whose population had plummeted to an all-time low, were inevitably but regrettably giving way to the demands of industrial advancement. The progressive spirit looked toward the future, and Native Americans cultures, notes historian Hazel Hertzberg, were considered to be static, anachronistic artifacts of a pre-industrial past (4).³ These impressions were fostered by the wild west show, which historian Daniel Francis ranks as the most important purveyor of representations of Native Americans at the turn of the century. This medium reinforced the image of the plains Sioux as *the* authentic representation of Native American identity, and offered whites the spectacle of a living museum while chronicling and celebrating the conquest of

³ My understanding of the historical context of Native Americans at the turn of comes primarily from the following texts: Daniel Francis, The Imaginary Indian (Vancouver, B.C.: Arsenal Pulp Press, 1992); Christine Bolt, American Indian Policy and American Reform (London: Allen & Unwin, 1987); Reginald Horsemann, Race and Manifest Destiny, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1981); Hazel Hertzberg, The Search for an American Indian Identity (NY: Syracuse, 1971).

civilization over "savagery." The immensely popular Western romance (the greatest literary movement, in bulk, of the second half of the nineteenth century notes literary historian Daryl Jones), which dealt with the problems of life on the frontier in the trans-Mississippi West, was also an important source for representations of Native Americans (9). Jones observes that Native Americans in western romance often appeared as natural facts rather than human agents, functioning as obstacles in the white hero's quest for personal maturation and cultural progress and also as symbols of the heart of darkness lurking within whites (48). Although the character of the corrupt businessman usurped the antagonist role in the later nineteenth century, Native Americans were still presented as indiscriminately violent and void of self-reflexivity.

In addition to these forms, anthropologist narratives and the fabricated and as-told-to varieties of Indian biography and autobiography emerging from the last days of Native American resistance, accustomed whites to and created an appetite for a profoundly male-centred interpretation of aboriginal life. Jones observes that apart from occasional unrequited love figures and self-destructive mixed blood temptresses and villains, Native American women barely figure in dime novels (145). Even after the population of Native Americans began to increase in 1917 following its fifty year decline, the noble and barbaric conceptions of

Native American identity promoted by these forms persisted as the predominant convention in "salvage" films such as Nanook (1922) as well as in the new plethora of western films. During the rapid industrial transformation of the country following the civil war (at which point the "disappearance" of the wilderness was viewed with a mixture of regret and pride), Native Americans, associated with America's pre-industrial past, became objects of white nostalgia. The conservationist and boy scout movements of the early twentieth century would "go Native" using this supposed alternative value system. This resurgence of primitivism prompted a collecting frenzy on the part of museums at the turn of the century and nurtured a general fascination with the recorded stories of such famous Native American figures as Sitting Bull (Francis 184). It also inspired academics to, as anthropologist Paul Radin wrote in 1920, "throw more light on the workings of the mind and emotions of primitive man" with "personal reminiscences and impressions" before "his" supposed extinction.⁴

As the twentieth century progressed, this "Imaginary Indian," as the image is appropriately named by Francis, became a powerful marketing gimmick with the development of mass culture and manufacturing, and was adopted by the rapidly growing number of Indian fraternal societies and

⁴ The quote is from Paul Radin's introduction to the autobiography of Sam Blowsnake, Autobiography of a Winnebago Indian (1920), 2.

ladies auxiliaries. These groups often adopted "Indian" secret codes, costumes and executive titles such as Grand Sachem, Great Sacajawea and Keeper of the Wampum, and looked to "Indian" values as an antidote to the problems of urban America. Early twentieth century America had a powerful, self-interested system, largely predicated upon an inability to accept Native Americans as equals, firmly in place for appropriating and rewriting aboriginal identity.

3. Zitkala-Sa's Audience

Representational conventions had accustomed most whites to a particularly narrow understanding of Native American identity. These conventions interfaced so smoothly with the contemporary progressive impulse as to produce a general acquiescence toward the ongoing assault against Native American peoples. This history of representation would have also factored into the predominantly white reception of Zitkala-Sa's work, generating a number of self-interested expectations. As Perry predicted, missionaries and white reformers were offended by Zitkala-Sa's affirmation of her racial identity and by her criticism of contemporary Indian schools. Historian Deborah Welch notes that Richard Henry Pratt, Zitkala-Sa's employer at Carlisle Indian School, responded ambivalently to the first essay, for while it demonstrated the merits of Anglo-education and the sufferings of Native American peoples, it clearly conveyed

Zitkala-Sa's racial pride, a "concept totally alien to Pratt's vision of total assimilation"(19). However, Pratt became "thoroughly alarmed" following the publication of the second and third essays: "He had employed shy, young Gertrude Simmons; now he was forced to deal with Zitkala-Sa, who, bolstered by the popularity of her stories, was growing increasingly bold in establishing her identity as a Dakotah woman. . . ." (19-20). Zitkala-Sa's assertion of her racial identity and her resistance to acculturation thwarted what otherwise would have provided white reformers with an excellent example of the school system's success. Pratt printed a hostile review in the Carlisle newspaper of one of Zitkala-Sa's short stories entitled "The Soft Hearted Sioux Morally Bad," which he introduced as follows:⁵

The following from The Word Carrier takes a view of the story--"The Soft Hearted Sioux"--that many who know the author--Zitkalasa, and the exceptional advantages she has been pleased to seek for herself and enjoy among cultivated people, will feel inclined to accept. All that Zitkala-sa has in the way of literary ability and culture she owes to the good people, who, from time to time, have taken her into their homes and

⁵ "The Soft-Hearted Sioux" was published in 1901. In it Zitkala-Sa explores various hypocrisies of Christianity, the damage done by the intervention of whites in the lives of Native Americans, and the trauma experienced by an Anglo-educated and converted Sioux who returns to live with his band.

hearts and given her aid. Yet not a word of gratitude or allusion to such kindness on the part of her friends has ever escaped her in any line of anything she has written for the public. By this course she injures herself and harms the educational work in progress for the race from which she sprang. In a list of educated Indians we have in mind, some of whom have reached higher altitudes in literary and professional lines than Zitkalasa, we know of no other such case of morbidity. (Red Man and Helper 12 April 1901, n.p)

This deliberately personal attack portrays Zitkala-Sa as a self-seeker, thus maligning the integrity of her motives, and also insults her manners. Pratt even insinuates that Zitkala-Sa, out of her league with "cultivated people," had somehow improperly overstepped her bounds. There certainly was no love lost between the two; the animosity between Zitkala-Sa and Pratt, building for over a year, by this point had broken into open antagonism, Zitkala-Sa calling him "small-minded" and "bigoted" in her letters to Carlos Montezuma (March [n.d.] 1901). The indignation apparent in Pratt's comments suggests that the personal affront to missionaries and reformers in Zitkala-Sa's writing outweighed their need to seriously consider the constructive aspects of her criticism. Pratt looks to her writing for a

demonstration and confirmation of the usefulness and feasibility of the education system, despite her assertion of the contrary. In expecting "gratitude" he nonetheless continues to maintain that her successes are the result of reform and missionary efforts. The review, which reveals his particularly narrow conception of cross-cultural identity, is an attempt to pressure Zitkala-Sa into conforming with his image of the proper tame Indian.

Readers who were not missionaries may have had an entirely different response to Zitkala-Sa's work. In spite of Perry's liberal intentions, her essays may have also been attractive to the Atlantic Monthly for reasons to do less with principles than with finances. Zitkala-Sa held a certain spectacular appeal that instantly captured the attention of the public as well as the popular Harper's Bazaar, who included her in their who's who column, "Persons Who Interest Us":

A young Indian girl, who is attracting much attention in Eastern cities, on account of her beauty and many talents, is Zitkala-Sa, the violin soloist of the Carlisle Indian band, now on its way to the Paris Exposition. Zitkala-Sa is of the Sioux tribe of Dakota, and until her ninth year was a veritable little savage, running wild over the prairie and speaking no language but her own.
(April 14, 1900)

The article goes on to list an impressively long variety of accomplishments, and, in a surprised tone, states that her essays "display a rare command of English and much artistic feeling." The magazine's fascination with Zitkala-Sa is generated by the contrast between her "savage" heritage (presumably of the *tabula rasa* variety as here her Sioux tongue does not even fully qualify as a language) and her achievements in the Anglo world. Her success was the living proof that Native Americans could "make something," (from, apparently, nothing) of themselves with Anglo-education. Like Pauline Johnson, and the white fakes, Long Lance and Grey Owl, Zitkala-Sa provided a titillating primitivism--a remunerative attribute that the Atlantic Monthly could not afford to resist.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the Atlantic Monthly struggled with the demands of populist journalism and commercial publishing. Since the advent of mass-circulation magazines in the mid-1890s, the journal was under pressure to get rid of its highbrow image to attract the enormous mass market, whose preferred choice was historical romance (Sedgwick 286). Sedgwick notes that the potential remuneration of romance writing, which lured such writers as Sarah Orne Jewett, Henry Fuller, Joel Chandler Harris, and Charles Chesnutt, required Perry to reject manuscripts sent in by realists W.D. Howells, Henry James and Kate Chopin (285-287). The blockbuster serial hit of

1900 was To Have and To Hold, Mary Johnston's romance of colonial Virginia (the model for Margaret Mitchell's Gone with The Wind) which, after publication in the Atlantic Monthly, rapidly sold 240,000 copies in book form later that year (Sedgwick 284). Sedgwick notes that both the populist and traditionalist editors of the Atlantic Monthly believed that all readers, both "genteel and progressive" wanted "optimism, hope of moral salvation, and preferably a touch of humour." Closely related to this "desire for optimism was the genteel rejection of the 'unpleasant' or excessively graphic" (286). Romance, unlike the psychological realism of James, or the bleak naturalism of Stephen Crane and Frank Norris, may have offered readers an escape from the complex social problems and often foggy ethical territory of urbanization, industrialism, racial conflict, immigration and other pressing issues at the turn of the century. Her work may have also held romantic appeal by charting an ultimately optimistic quest of a sharp and courageous underdog's struggle against adversity. For this largely white, middle-class readership, Zitkala-Sa's writing caused the "gentle reader" no discomfort with sexual explicitness. In addition, Sedgwick notes that the popular redefinition of literature as the writing of "plain people with a vital experience to tell," and the growing middlebrow hostility toward literary criticism and "Literature with a Large L" fuelled an appetite for stories with a human interest

component (280, 308). (Zitkala-Sa would not have been perceived as preoccupied with aesthetics, an offense of which Henry James was accused.) Her discussion of the difficulty of cultural transition may have held an additional appeal in this regard; Francis observes that the pathos inherent in the belief that Native Americans were disappearing made them especially attractive to white artists and audiences, who "milked the confrontation between Indians and industrialism for all its symbolic possibilities" (23, 45). The primitivistic aspects of her essays would have held romantic appeal by providing an authoritative critique of the disadvantages of progress, a value long under suspicion in America, and also by offering the possibility of an American golden age in the face of a bleak present and intimidating future. Her depiction of a pre-industrial life may have reinforced the association whites made between an aboriginal lifestyle and freedom from the constraints of modern life, thus inspiring nostalgia for an intimate or pure connection with nature.

Part of Pratt's anxiety stems from his knowledge, perhaps intuitive, that Zitkala-Sa's essays would be taken as the testimony of an authentic Native American voice, her Sioux life showcased as an artifact to be preserved in the autobiography for posterity. With the insider's perspective on Yankton-Sioux culture her personal impressions allow her to claim, Zitkala-Sa also provided her audience with a

glimpse of the exotic "other" living right at home on American soil.⁶ Naive and "charming," (Marion Gridley's one-word description of the stories in her brief biography of Zitkala-Sa), and able to gratify the curiosity of whites, Zitkala-Sa's essays fit the bill for what writer Emma LaRocque describes as "soft sell literature" (Gridley 1974 84, LaRocque xvii). A political treatise from Zitkala-Sa concerning the problems of Indian administration and education may not have generated the same interest as the Atlantic Monthly's opinion pieces on issues deemed more pressing, and also would not have appealed to the

⁶ Zitkala-Sa's collection of oral tales were also marketed as juvenile literature. The 1921 publication of American Indian Stories includes a testimonial letter from Helen Keller appended to the end which functions as an advertisement for Old Indian Legends. Noteworthy in this letter is a response that may have characterized the reactions of many whites to her work. On August 25, 1919, Keller wrote to Zitkala-Sa:

Dear Zitkala-Sa:

I thank you for your book on Indian legends. I have read them with exquisite pleasure. Like all folk tales they mirror the child life of the world. There is in them a note of wild, strange music.

You have translated them into our language in a way that will keep them alive in the hearts of men. They are so young, so fresh, so full of the odors of the virgin forest untrod by the foot of white man! The thoughts of your people seem dipped in the colors of rainbow, palpitant with the play of winds, eerie with the thrill of a spirit-world unseen but felt and feared.

Your tales of birds, beast, tree and spirit can not but hold captive the hearts of all children. They will kindle in their young minds that eternal wonder which creates poetry and keeps life fresh and eager. I wish you and your little book of Indian tales all success.

This letter, not included in the 1976 reprint, remains in the 1985 reprint of American Indian Stories.

particularly large audience pleased by the genre of "gentle stories."

This assortment of possible responses to Zitkala-Sa's work testifies to the existence of a multitude of ways by which whites could comfortably interpellate her criticism. The sheer diversity of responses complicates the question of whether Zitkala-Sa's work, in its time, presented a challenge to whites, for the conflicting demands of readers were politically divergent. Her writing may have been understood as an allegory of white American history, or considered to be a symbol of the country's past innocence, or even reduced to its spectacle value. Many in her audience may have incorporated her work without hesitation into the conventional repertoire of Native American images. Many in her audience may have been incapable of hearing the challenge she offered, as were reformers, who insisted that Zitkala-Sa conform to their notion of a tame Indian.

4. Zitkala-Sa's Revival

That these responses to her work persist through the twentieth century attests to the tenacity of stereotypes of Native Americans, which filter into and figure automatically in the reading processes of Zitkala-Sa's critics. The reprint of American Indian Stories in 1976 includes a patronizing preface by publisher Robert M. McCoy which opens as follows:

This is a book of gentle stories, laced here and there with the natural resentment of the Redman against his Whiteman cousins. One can read these stories and weep for what was, and what never was. The Whiteman of yesterday did and said what his times and his milieu required of him; so did the Redman. Today, both the Whiteman and the Redman do and say what our times and milieus require. The times and the milieus, generations apart, are not the same; to compare yesterday to today, or today to yesterday--or today's Whiteman with yesterday's Whiteman, or today's Redman with yesterday's Redman, is to distort out of all proportion the events of those times and the events of today. It is like a man from Mars face to face with a man from Venus--there is no comparison possible. What has happened, has happened, and *nothing* can change the past. [n.p.]

After this brief and veiled discussion of the text, he goes on to discuss "The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam," Stanza 71 of which is inserted as a frontispiece to the reprint. Its interpretation of the immutability of the past is filled with pathos: ". . .Not all your piety / nor wit . . . / Nor all your tears wash / out a word of it." With this McCoy seems to offer a reproof to Zitkala-Sa in the grave, as well as a warning to readers who may potentially be inspired or

disturbed by her anger. For McCoy, its message is clear: "Those who would try to rewrite or change what never was, to what was, or what was to what never was, should ponder the simple words of this ancient poet." That he goes to the lengths of inserting a frontispiece advising readers to interpret the writing as a nostalgic, futile appeal to the past indicates a remarkable urgency on his part to dismiss Zitkala-Sa's hostility toward whites. The formal, emotional rhetoric of the preface places the writing in a non-political framework in which her anger becomes "natural." In this movement he shelves and polishes the brutality of Anglo-America's dealings with Native Americans. He is thus enabled to promote the text as soft-sell literature, a label enforced by his assertion that Zitkala-Sa romanticized her past, encouraging her readers to "weep for what never was." With such distinctions as "Mars" and "Venus" that suggest the contexts of 1900 and 1976 to be worlds apart, he insists that Zitkala-Sa's critique is irrelevant to current Native and Anglo-American relations.

Later criticism of the essays, while less eager to diffuse Zitkala-Sa's anti-white hostility, also displays some anxiety about her construction of her past. This unease is revealed in the fact that critics often offer brief excuses or apologies on her behalf when discussing the political efficacy of her writing. Literary historian Mary Stout writes that "[a]llthough somewhat sentimentalized, her

narratives give us the first insight into the inner life of the transitional Native American"(74). Similarly uncomfortable with these sentimental qualities, Dexter Fisher writes that "[despite] its sentimentality, the story raises the fundamental question of survival that was to confront all Indians educated off the reservation"(1979 1 231). In her doctoral dissertation, Fisher refers to Zitkala-Sa's description of her childhood as "idyllic," and concludes that "[h]er depiction of various scenes is over romanticized and sometimes even maudlin" (38, 40). The label sentimental becomes a obstacle past which critics do not explore. This discomfort arises from a sense that Zitkala-Sa's political efficacy is compromised by her adoption of white rhetoric concerning aboriginal peoples. Her failure to challenge racist discourse conventions in today's standards somehow renders her a tame Indian--a figure thoroughly inculcated in and supposedly reconciled to the dominant discourses of whites. She is thus perceived as a less valuable and less relevant figure in the chronicling of a history of Native American literary and political resistance. This anxiety, however, prevents a close investigation of the particular ways in which Zitkala-Sa configured her self and her people. Like Pratt, critics restrict the terms of cultural enunciation in order enforce conformity to a particular definition of proper Native American identity. Zitkala-Sa's reiteration of sentimental

discourse is hardly unproblematic. However, she could not be discredited even if an examination of her terms were to reveal a sincere and deep adherence to this discourse, for the terms by which to configure respect for Native Americans were clearly limited at the turn of the century. As well, Zitkala-Sa's writing reflects the changing and contradictory politics of the era, and the often conflicting identification of Native American reformers themselves with a racial identity.

Recent criticism has also developed categories for appraisal which tend to dismiss Zitkala-Sa's writing. Of the handful of scholars who have considered Zitkala-Sa, the majority are grounded in a historical discipline and are concerned primarily with Zitkala-Sa's important contribution to Native American policy reform.⁷ Her autobiographical work, useful in this context for its informational value, is

⁷ There are a number of essays which examine Zitkala-Sa's political contribution to national policy reform following WWI. These include William Willard's three essays, "Gertrude Bonnin and Indian Policy Reform, 1911-1938," Indian Leader, ed. Walter Williams, "Zitkala-Sa: A Woman Who Would Be Heard," Wicazo-Sa Review 1(1985):11-16, and "The First Amendment, Anglo-Conformity and American Indian Religious Freedom," Wicazo-Sa Review 7.1(1991)25-41; Raymond Wilson and David L. Johnston, "Gertrude Simmons Bonnin: Americanize the First American," American Indian Quarterly 12.1(1988):27-40; and Alison Bernstein, "A Mixed Record: The Political Enfranchisement of American Indian Women During the Indian New Deal," Journal of the West 23.3(1984):13-20. Zitkala-Sa is also a significant figure in Hazel Hertzberg's The Search for An American Indian Identity (Syracuse University Press, 1971) and Peter Iverson's Carlos Montezuma: The Changing World of American Indians (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1982.)

used as a source by which to interpret her psychology. From this perspective her writing is also understood as an early manifestation of her later social and political commitment. However, highlighting only the biographical significance of the texts effaces the deliberate, self-conscious crafting of race and identity involved in a text. Noteworthily, the representation and negotiation of contemporary discourses of race and identity was an issue critical to the generation of young Native Americans emerging at the turn of the century with secondary and post-secondary education in Anglo-American institutions.

Consideration of Zitkala-Sa from the perspective of literary criticism tends to reach an impasse at the issue of genre, thus also overlooking what current autobiography theory informed by postcolonial and feminist discourses recognizes as a modification of genre conventions and a reconfiguration of personal identity.⁸ Bataille and Sands'

⁸ Publications other than the dissertations of Fisher and Lukens which discuss Zitkala-Sa's writing from a literary perspective include Gretchen M. Bataille and Kathleen Sands, American Indian Women: Telling Their Lives (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), David H. Brumble's American Indian Autobiography (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), and Mary Stout's "Zitkala-Sa: The Literature of Politics," in Coyote Was Here: Essays on Contemporary Native American Literary and Political Mobilization, ed. Bo Scholer, (Aarhus, Denmark: Seklos, Dept. of English, University of Aarhus, 1984.) Stout's essay is biographical in focus and emphasizes the relationship between Zitkala-Sa's writing and her political activism, noting that she is much more overtly critical of white Americans than her contemporary, Charles Eastman. Dexter Fisher has published revised biographical excerpts of her dissertation (completed for a doctorate in English). These include "The Transformation of Tradition: A Study of Zitkala-Sa and Mourning Dove, Two

ground-breaking study of Native American women's autobiography, American Indian Women: Telling Their Lives, discusses Zitkala-Sa's work only briefly, describing it as "representative of women who were active in efforts to gain redress from the government for hardships imposed on their people" (13). However true, for Bataille and Sands this sociological intent apparently foreclosed the possibility of further study of the writing as an *autobiography*. They subsequently dismiss her work as only "secondarily" a personal life story and do not mention her again. David Brumble's American Indian Autobiography was the second book-length study of Native American autobiographical writing to emerge in the 1980s. He names Charles Eastman as "the first Indian author who tried self-consciously to write autobiography after the modern, Western fashion" (147).⁹ Brumble refers to Zitkala-Sa only briefly, citing her work as notable for its emotive force and harsh criticism of Anglo-American culture (165). Eastman is by no means the

Transitional American Indian Writers," in Critical Essays on American Literature, ed. Andrew Wiget (Boston: Hall, 1985) and "Zitkala-Sa: The Evolution of a Writer," American Indian Quarterly 5.3 (1989): 229-238. A revised version of this essay by Fisher appears as the introduction to the 1985 reprint of American Indian Stories.

⁹ Eastman's Indian Boyhood was published in 1902. A second autobiography, From the Deep Woods to Civilization, was published in 1916. Zitkala-Sa and Eastman may have met while Zitkala-Sa taught at Carlisle, for he was the school's Outing Agent in 1899, the year Zitkala-Sa assumed her position at Carlisle. It is also possible that their publications influenced one another. (Raymond Wilson, "Dr. Charles A. Eastman, Early Twentieth-Century Reformer", Indian Leader, ed. Walter Williams, 7).

first Native American to engage in a European form of autobiography. In addition to the spiritual autobiographies of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, there were literally hundreds of Native Americans writing at the turn of the century whose work often considers what may be perceived as autobiographical. They wrote about national politics, sociology, ethnology, anthropology, art, and as journalists, teachers, administrators, scholars or in other professional, and sometimes non-professional, capacities. As well, many Native Americans at this time were engaged specifically in life-writing: Brumble himself notes the existence of "a number of autobiographical narratives that were published in Indian school magazines in order to show what Indians had achieved by virtue of their own Indian school education" (226). From what I have been able to determine, Zitkala-Sa holds the distinction of being the first Native American woman to publish autobiography without the formal assistance of a white editor or collaborator, and to subsequently be taken up as a celebrity by Anglo-America. In Brumble's work, the establishment of what constitutes autobiography, for example, the distinction between what is considered literary and sociological, and between what is modern, western and what is not, prevents Zitkala-Sa from receiving the recognition and study she deserves. Although long acknowledged by historians as a central figure in early

twentieth century Native American political activism¹⁰, recognition of her literary importance has been slower in coming. While not as popular among critics as John Neihardt and Black Elk, Eastman remains one of the better known early autobiographers and has engaged far more critical attention than Zitkala-Sa. Certainly gender factors somehow into Brumble's preference of Eastman as a writer who warrants a "prominent position in any historical treatment of American Indian autobiography" (147). The subtle and not so subtle forms of discrimination in the publishing industry may have posed problems for Zitkala-Sa that prevent her validation as the "first" autobiographer in the "modern" and "western" tradition. Sarah Winnemucca Hopkins and Pauline Johnson, Zitkala-Sa's precedents, achieved fame as performers and orators *before* publishing a book.¹¹ As Zitkala-Sa was only beginning to establish a reputation among Boston literary

¹⁰ Hazel Hertzberg, whose book The Search for an American Indian Identity (1971) remains an authoritative source on this subject, describes Zitkala-Sa as "the most important figure in reform pan-Indianism during the twenties" (303).

¹¹ Hopkins published Life Among the Piutes: Their Wrongs and Claims (Boston: G.P. Putnam's Sons) in 1883. The text was edited for "orthography and punctuation" by the philanthropist, Mary Peabody Mann. Lecturing on behalf her Piute nation, Hopkins was well known by 1879. William Strange describes Hopkins as a "lecturer who staged herself as Princess Sarah in fringed buckskins and beads with a golden crown on her head and at her waist a velvet wampum bag with a cupid worked on it," and notes that "she had to dress up in order to draw the crowds and the dollars she needed to support her cause. . ." (184). Pauline Johnson, who wrote short stories and verse in obscurity before her rigorous performance career (which featured a clothing change from a buckskin fringed robe to a satin ballgown) published her first book, a volume of verse entitled The White Wampum, in 1895.

circles, publishers may have been reluctant to accept a book proposal. Publishing in serial form was less risky for Zitkala-Sa, who would not have paid part of her publication costs, as did Hopkins for Life Among the Piutes, and also for a journal's editor, who would have paid Zitkala-Sa the less costly non-fiction writers' fee.

At some level, the inability to appreciate Zitkala-Sa's work as a self-consciously crafted production of life-writing reiterates the old notion of the Indian as incapable of self-reflection. This is a derogatory racial stereotype to which George Gusdorf's often cited assignation of autobiography as "peculiar to Western man" subscribes (28).¹² According to Gusdorf, "others" who engage this genre have been "annexed by a sort of intellectual colonizing" (28). Echoes of the conditions and limits he establishes resonate in criticism which reads Zitkala-Sa's writing mainly as a product of internalized colonialism and dismisses her political usefulness. In order to move past these obstacles in criticism, it is necessary to explore issues of self-representation which arise in Zitkala-Sa's particular historical juncture, such as the development of a strategic subjectivity, as well as the adoption and

¹² In her book Sending My Heart Back Across the Years: Tradition and Innovation - Native American Autobiography (NY: Oxford UP, 1992), Hertha D. Wong expands the definition of what has traditionally been considered autobiographical by incorporating non-literate forms. She explores autobiographical forms engaged in by Native Americans before European influence.

modification of contemporary political, racial and economic discourses for the purposes of self-validation.

CHAPTER TWO

"I must write the lessons I see":

Resisting Racism and Assimilation

1. The Power of Self-Representation

From the beginning of her adult life, and for the duration of her career as a political lobbyist, Zitkala-Sa worked closely with powerful Anglo-American literary, political and cultural institutions. The Atlantic Monthly and the popular media, elite literary circles in eastern America, the federal Republican party during the peyote crisis, the General Federation of Women's Clubs, and the federal Democrat party and American Indian Defense Association under John Collier were among the larger institutions she associated with. Zitkala-Sa formed part of the small group of urban, Anglo-educated, middle-class Native American professionals--lawyers, doctors, scholars, clergy-- in the early twentieth century which engaged in cultural, academic or political work on behalf of its race. Hazel Hertzberg observes that those organizing politically in the progressive era felt "they were creating a movement of historical importance, marking a new day in Indian affairs" (75). For these activists, the Society of American Indians "was not the last stand of an embattled people but the first great forward thrust of a significant new force in American life" (Hertzberg 58). Many saw the first decade of

the twentieth century as a critical turning point in the history of Anglo and Native American relations; they were determined to ensure that when the inevitable shift in national policy occurred, their voices influenced, if not directed, it.

In a letter to Carlos Montezuma, Zitkala-Sa expresses a similar sense of her own importance as an agent of broad change in her age: "We want to realize that it is a bigger place than the whole United States which our existence must affect Let us offer a universal understanding of life" (June 12, 1901). This excerpt is suggestive of Zitkala-Sa's strong belief that not only her country but also the broader world would benefit from the alternative perspective she and others offered on race relations, aboriginal peoples, spirituality, pedagogy, and epistemology. Her enthusiasm is characteristic of Native Americans in the progressive era, who, writes Hertzberg, "[w]ith an exuberance based on faith in the inevitability of progress, . . . translated ideas into organizations and organizations into action. Problems existed to be solved, and the democratic promise existed to be fulfilled" (31). The liberal-humanist faith in the power of language and of representation to be a source of values and of truth, in the artist's capacity to affirm national ideals, and in the ability of high American culture to be a source of national values accorded literature a special purpose and power. It

is not surprising then that Zitkala-Sa believed "her stories would have true impact in bridging the misunderstanding between Anglo and Indian worlds" (Welch 168).

The liberal optimism of this period encouraged many Anglo-educated Native Americans, who cared deeply about the fate of their race in this difficult transition time, to consider themselves as missionaries to the Anglo world. They saw themselves as examples of what Native Americans could achieve in white society if given opportunities for advanced education. Carlos Montezuma writes that it was his mission to "prove to the white people that there is the same stuff in the Indians as there is in the white people" (Iverson 24). Zitkala-Sa accepted a teaching position at Carlisle not only to be closer to America's publishing centre, but also because she intended to act in this liberal capacity as a spokesperson on behalf of her race. Welch argues that Zitkala-Sa believed she could reach "the hearts and minds" of easterners who created national policy and "convince them that Indian people possessed abilities equal to those of Whites" (17). That Zitkala-Sa welcomed this burden of representation indicates the extent to which access to power, to a public voice and to opportunities for claiming control over the circulation of representations of aboriginal identity were restricted even in this supposedly progressive era. Zitkala-Sa was motivated by the contemporary belief that the persecution of Native Americans

would end once America recognized the shared humanity of the two races: "With her pen Zitkala-Sa was determined to reach a broad spectrum of Anglo society, showing them that Indian peoples were human beings, with fears, hopes, and dreams for their children, much like themselves" (Welch 18).

3. Responding to Racism in the Progressive Era

In Zitkala-Sa's later writing, there are suggestions of a disillusionment with the optimistic liberal impulse that guided her earlier work: "The learning I hoped in you to imbue / Turns bitterly vain to meet both our needs, / No sun for the flowers,--vain planting seeds" ("The Indian's Awakening"). In 1900, however, her strategic emphasis on the shared humanity of Native and Anglo-Americans responded to a popular and threatening belief in the inferiority and expendability of aboriginal peoples. Race theory historian Reginald Horseman observes that by 1850, it was held as common understanding that Native Americans had a limited capacity for "improvement" regardless of environment (144, 193).¹ Combined with a growing sense of manifest destiny, romantic interest in national and racial origins and the development and subsequent popularity of sciences of racial classification contributed to the belief that the white race alone was capable of advancing world progress. Other races

¹ Horseman notes that the natural inequality of the races was a "fact" included in school textbooks by 1850. (156).

were doomed to subordination or extinction. The very physical makeup of Native Americans was thought to place them "chiefly under the dominion of the animal nature of man, and render them little susceptible of becoming civilized, humanized and educated."² In addition, Native Americans were assumed to be "naturally disinclined to hard work," as wrote George Ingalls, Carlos Montezuma's Baptist missionary guardian (Iverson 7). Both genetically and culturally, Native Americans were an affront to the integral individualistic American principle of self-reliance. By 1850, notes Horseman, "only a minority of Americans believed that transformed Indians would eventually assume a permanent, equal place within American society" (207).

Native American reformers disagreed vehemently with the tenets of scientific and pragmatic racism so evident in both literature as well as national policy. Zitkala-Sa and her contemporaries, along with Pratt and other Christian missionaries, adhered firmly to the notion that the Anglo-Saxon and Native American races were inherently equal.³ In a letter to Carlos Montezuma Zitkala-Sa wrote angrily

²The source is Orson S. Fowler and Lorenzo N. Fowler, Phrenology Proved, Illustrated, and Applied, 35th ed. (New York, 1846). Cited in Horseman 144-145.

³ Arthur Parker, Seneca anthropologist and executive member of the SAI, wrote in 1912 that "the relative position of any race as a higher or lower human group is not measured by their present cultural attainment, but by their capacity for advancement when placed in a favourable environment" (cited on Hertzberg 62).

about unilateral practices and agency corruption on her reservation:

It is heart rending to see a government try experiments upon a real race--if like physicians they would first try by vivisection their wonderful theories on lower creatures like cats or dogs--then the Indian--I might not feel it so keenly at times. Say--try starving out life by feeding insufficient--unfit--food to cats--then having found the best death rate--try in earnest upon the old Indians on those Reserves. (April 12, 1901)

Here Zitkala-Sa's parody of the situation faced by her band highlights the injustice her people suffer in all its gravity. Zitkala-Sa clearly resents being treated as a "lower creature." Without hesitation she links the government's unscrupulous dealings with her people (the genocidal impulse of which is clear to her) to its failure to consider Native Americans a "real race." White America's denial of this shared humanity provided a basis for irony that Zitkala-Sa would draw upon strategically throughout her performance career. In "Side by Side," the oration for which Zitkala-Sa was awarded second place in an 1896 state-wide college oratorical contest, she writes that "America entered upon her career of freedom and prosperity with the declaration that 'all men are born free and equal.'" She

invokes the promises of constitutional rhetoric to impress upon whites their ethical responsibility to provide Native Americans the rights that should automatically have been accorded them as an American people: ". . .can you as consistent Americans deny equal opportunities with yourselves to an American people in their struggle to rise from ignorance and degradation?" (179). To encourage a recognition of this shared humanity was a goal of Old Indian Legends, her compilation of oral tales, where she argues that "the study of Indian folklore. . . strongly suggests our near kinship with the rest of humanity and points a steady finger toward the great brotherhood of mankind" (vi). Although often critical of Christianity's hypocrisies, the rhetoric of brotherhood remained nonetheless compelling for Zitkala-Sa in her attempt to foster cross-cultural dialogue. Significantly, these passages from her letters, her prefatory self-analysis, and her oratory display an understanding of the discourses of individualism, Christianity and primitivism, of how they work in Anglo-America and of how to manipulate them to her advantage. It is apparent that Zitkala-Sa gave serious, critical attention to the question of her people in white society, to their status in white discourses, and to the problem of how to draw the attention and interest of whites to these injustices.

3. Reversing the Gaze

Zitkala-Sa brings to her autobiographical essays a detailed knowledge of the socio-political problems of Native Americans and well-developed set of responses to them. The need to affirm the status of Native Americans as equal members of the human community also infuses the essays. Her use of a narration shared by Zitkala-Sa's retrospective voice and the constructed voice of a younger self is the crucial ingredient in her practical demonstration of this shared humanity. Zitkala-Sa's first essay, "Impressions of an Indian Childhood," tells of her youth spent in her Yankton village. In it she carefully demarcates a distance between the young Zitkala-Sa and her retrospective self with references to "iron horse" instead of "train," and "paleface" instead of the more common "white." She also makes other modifications in tropes and grammar: "Mother, when I am tall as my cousin Warca-Ziwin, you shall not have to come for water. I will do it for you" (9). In this sentence Zitkala-Sa substitutes the perceptual metaphor of age for height, her choice conveying the impression that the young Zitkala-Sa's very epistemological and ontological processes are different. Readers may have recognized the young Zitkala-Sa as a figure of essentialized difference, a pure Other whose processes of consciousness are untouched. As such, the portrayal of her young self's interaction with whites enables Zitkala-Sa to reconstruct

the mythical moment of first contact. Here, however, it is the Other who occupies the position of perceiving subject. The young Zitkala-Sa sees with the perspective of an outside observer strongly grounded and centred in an alternative tradition, and through her gaze whites are rendered strange. The young Zitkala-Sa, in effect, takes on an essentialized *centrality* as she sees in whites the taint of Otherness, for they appear to her as unnatural, unknowable and beyond the reach of language.

Although Zitkala-Sa does provide details about her Yankton culture, the principal purpose of this young self is to present whites as aberrant and undesirable and not to offer whites information and knowledge. Zitkala-Sa emphasizes the importance of this alternate persona by using direct character dialogue and dramatic commentary, devices that invite readers to live through the tension of the action play by play. These conventions of realist narrative downplay the role of the author and the constructedness of the text in order to foreground the voices of characters and the responsibility of readers for making meaning. By creating herself as a character in the text--a strategy rooted in the impulse to "show" and not "tell"--she works to portray herself seemingly more objectively, or truthfully, while also engaging readers closely in the unfolding of plot and character tension.

The construction of a younger, specifically cultured self affords Zitkala-Sa a number of rhetorical advantages which reinforce her own authority. Her choice of childhood (a longstanding trope in European and American autobiography) as a starting and focal point for her life-writing may have invoked processes of retrospection and self-analysis familiar to her readership. To reflect upon this conventionally formative, enchanted period of life with irony, amusement or pain was to invite white readers to comprehend an aboriginal childhood in the same framework they would use to interpret their own. The liberal idealist impulse of realist narrative that summoned readers to appreciate the inviolable subjectivity and equality of all individual perspectives, and, through a text, to recognize their own humanity and come to terms with it, would certainly have worked in Zitkala-Sa's favour. But particularly, the outsider perspective offered by her young self enables Zitkala-Sa to assume a powerful observer position from which to describe and interpret Anglo-Americans. This was a privileged site increasingly unavailable to the discursive "other" or foreign observer of eighteenth century European letters. In fact, the popularity of this stance diminished in the early nineteenth century with the rise of Anglo-Saxon superiority theories

that decreed no race to be as capable of representing whites as whites themselves.⁴

In the first two essays, Anglo-Americans are described most frequently as "palefaces," a term which, in identifying whites by what appears as a sickly skin colour, suggests abnormality. Whites are presented, for the most part, as an opaque collective of pale faces, for Zitkala-Sa does not differentiate, using names or descriptions, between the white teachers at the school, but instead refers equally dismissively to each as a paleface woman. Her first encounter with whites occurs on her reservation (significantly, the only incident set in the wintertime in the first essay). Two missionaries have given her a bag of marbles as a gift, and when the young girl and her mother walk near the river one winter day, she sees in the ice the same colours as those in her marbles. She tries to pick out the colours, but freezes her fingers and has "to bite them hard to keep from crying." From that day, she writes, she "believed that glass marbles had river ice inside of them" (37-38). The image of ice at the heart of the marbles, reminiscent of the "glassy blue eyes" of the white men on the train, prefigures the cruelty she experiences at the

⁴ My sources for this understanding include Michael Harbsmeir, "Early Travels to Europe: Some Remarks on the Magic of Writing," Europe and Its Others, ed. Francis Barker et. al., vol. 1 (Colchester: University of Essex, 1985), Reginald Horsemann, Race and Manifest Destiny, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1981) and Peter J. Weston, "Images of the Primitive Before 1800," History of European Ideas, 1.3(1981): 215-236.

hands of whites, who, through the course of the essays, are described as frozen, cold-hearted or unfeeling. Here Zitkala-Sa deliberately rejects the missionaries' sense of themselves as men who "carried large hearts" (39). In an aggressive reversal, Zitkala-Sa encourages her white audience to recognize the reality of its own undesirability:

"Mother, who is this bad paleface?" I asked.

"My little daughter, he is a sham,--a sickly sham! The bronzed Dakota is the only real man."

I looked up into my mother's face while she spoke; and seeing her bite her lips, I knew she was unhappy. This aroused revenge in my small soul. Stamping my foot on the earth, I cried aloud, "I hate the paleface that makes my mother cry!" [. . . .]

"We were once very happy. But the paleface has stolen our lands and driven us hither. Having defrauded us of our land, the paleface forced us away We travelled many days and nights; not in the grand, happy way that we moved camp when I was a little girl, but we were driven, my child, driven like a herd of buffalo" (9-10).

The mother's hatred of whites connects their greed, cruelty and deceitfulness in land dealings to their physical form. Their crimes as proof, the white body, a "sham," becomes both symptom and confirmation of inferiority, the "sickly"

pale bodies a disclosure of weakness. The basis for comparison is the properly coloured body of the "bronzed Dakotah," in whose physical form is evident the strength and integrity of finely tempered metal. The young Zitkala-Sa's emotional appeal and the pain etched into her mother's body lay bare an appraisal of whites disturbing in its material consequences. "Stolen" and "defrauded," the terms used in her mother's analysis to describe the acts of white settlers and soldiers, are explicitly criminal and locate the injustices in a legal framework which emphasizes the infringed rights of Native Americans. Her mother is outraged at being treated like an animal; her overtly political discourse indicates that she in no way perceives the institutionalized theft and genocide conducted by whites to be inevitable or necessary.

With careful attention paid to how the young Zitkala-Sa experiences the various new sights and sounds she encounters, her role as perceiving subject becomes increasingly important in "The School Days of an Indian Girl." In this second essay Zitkala-Sa writes of her experiences in boarding school and college. The young Zitkala-Sa's disorientation functions as a way to defamiliarize readers with what may have been perceived as normal in their own experiences. For her, the tightly fitting dresses worn by students are extremely immodest, and she is shocked during her first morning at the school to see

girls wearing this inappropriate clothing without embarrassment. Christian practices appear similarly meaningless or repulsive. The young Zitkala-Sa is puzzled by morning grace, which is described with deliberate irreverence as "mutterings." She responds with disgust and horror at her first sight of a picture of the Christian devil, and is angered by her teachers' attempts to inculcate students with such "superstitious ideas" (53, 67). The Anglo-American integration of the notion of evil appears crude and horrific to Zitkala-Sa, whose "easy, natural flow" of life involves a more moderate and sophisticated approach: "Among the legends the old warriors used to tell me were many stories of evil spirits. But I was taught to fear them no more than those who stalked about in material guise" (62). These instances accentuate the subjectivity of the young Zitkala-Sa, whose perspective is grounded in a firm belief that her ways, rather than the norms and values of Anglo-American civilization, comprise the seemingly proper and normal order of things. The carefully cultivated representation Zitkala-Sa constructs for her young self inflects her autobiographical subject position polemically, as the subjectivity created for this persona occupies a rhetorical position of opposition in relation to a dominant, white perspective, and functions to distance her audience from the white people represented in the texts.

4. "Civilizing" the "Primitive"

Zitkala-Sa wrote during what is known as the era of "assimilation and allotment," the assumptions of which would not be challenged by whites until the mid 1920s. The notion of the melting pot, an idea born of optimism in the progressive era which held that the contributions of various groups would combine to form a new product partaking of all, assured that the rapidly growing immigrant population would assimilate into the American whole. However, the contributions of Native Americans were not expected nor welcome, as Hertzberg observes: "The Indian alone was to be melted and was to come out white, in culture if not in color" (22). Reformers had pushed for the Dawes Act, which they referred to as "the vanishing policy," to expedite this process (Hertzberg 22).⁵ Native Americans were to achieve self-sufficiency through terms dictated by white reformers, many of whom supported the elimination of tribal landholdings, political organizations, and communal customs. Colonel Pratt, who in fact campaigned against Native Americans in the military aggression of the 1860s and 1870s, founded the first off-reservation boarding school in an effort to speed up the process of total integration. He hoped to "kill the Indian and save the man," or to shear

⁵ The Dawes Act, by which Native Americans lost over two thirds of their land holdings, was, of course, also agreeable to state and federal governments because it would provide land with which to accommodate the tremendous pressure for agricultural, industrial and residential development.

pupils at Carlisle of their culture and customs in order to prepare them for a new life in industrial America (Hertzberg 18). Missionaries, as well as the members of Christian defense organizations founded in the 1880s, such as the Women's National Indian Association and the Indian Rights Association, were the only whites committed to reforming national policies.

Although these Anglo-Americans believed in the inherent equality of the races, they had no appreciation for contemporary Native American tribal institutions-- particularly those concerning family life and religion: "In these areas so critical in the formation of individual and social morale, it was all or nothing to the reformers" (Hertzberg 22). Their goals were based on a desire to transform Native Americans into whites, so that they would "live and think like other church-going Americans." In addition, Hertzberg notes that "civilizing and Christianizing the Indian" were perceived as "not only right in themselves. . . but also absolutely necessary if Indians were to learn to cope with the larger society" (22). The reservation system, intended originally after the civil war to be a place where Native Americans could be made over into the image of the dominant society, was soon thought, by many white and also Native American reformers, to be an obstacle to self-reliance. Reservations imprisoned Native Americans in the unfavourable state of dependency on government

handouts, and liberation was possible only through assimilation.

Zitkala-Sa was extremely hostile to the tenets of assimilationist doctrine; she believed "in education too, but also that Anglo America must recognize what was good and deserving of preservation in Indian culture" (Welch 33). She considered Native American cultures to be in many ways ahead of other races, as she writes to Montezuma:

I consider the Indian spiritually superior to any race of savages white or black--I call the Indian's simplicity of dress and freedom of outdoor life--wisdom which is more powerful than that of the hot-house flower of which your large city can boast!

I believe his own self-respect and honor to keep unwritten laws--so that a man's house was safe if a stick was crossed over the tent flap--of far more worth intrinsically than written laws and compliances by inspiring fear of physical punishment. Morally the Indian in his own state is cleaner than those city-dwellers! (June 1901)

Here Zitkala-Sa generalizes about "the Indian" and frames her validation of Native American cultures as a response to the criticism found in Anglo-American discourses. The pride, however, she feels in the morality, propriety and utility of her people's ways is unmistakeable, and these

terms of evaluation surface again in the essays. She disagreed strongly with the popular belief that Native Americans had no innate potential to learn, as she writes to Montezuma: ". . . if the character was not in you--savage or otherwise--Education could not make you the man you are today. . . . Education has developed the possibilities in me--were they not there--no school could put them in" (April 12, 1901).⁶

Zitkala-Sa's understanding of assimilation also included a probing material analysis, for she writes to Montezuma that Anglo-American civilization could offer few benefits to Native Americans:

The majority of men and women are hopelessly treading drudgery mills and that is civilization? To be compelled to work when you do not wish it is drudgery--not civilization! That is about what Carlisle would gain in the end--success in making drudges. I prefer to be stone-dead rather than living-dead . . .

The intellectual class of the so called civilized is a small minority! The majority are drudges. After so many centuries--if the Anglo Saxon can produce so small a flower--by what magic

⁶ Her sense of a unique, integral and valuable inner kernel of self is rooted in her own personal creed, which combines Emersonian liberalism with her culturally-rooted faith in the inherent and equal value of all life forms. She explores these beliefs in "Why I Am a Pagan."

do you expect a primitive Indian race to become civilized--and not drudges!? I do not wish to see them drudges for that is worse than their own condition. I would rather have them all intellectual artistic men and women--but if I place them as primitives as you do--I would have no right to expect so much--save the right of being disappointed.

If the Indian race adapts itself to the commodity of the times in one century it won't be because Carlisle! but because the Indian was not a degenerate in the first place! I will never speak of the whites as elevating the Indian! I am willing to say higher conceptions of life elevate the whole human family--but not the Indian more than any other. Until Col. Pratt actively interests himself in giving college education to Indians I cannot say his making them slaves to the plow is anything other than drudgery! (June 1901)

The terms Zitkala-Sa uses to invoke despair--"hopeless treading," "drudgery," "living dead,"--are reminiscent of the desperation she gives voice to in the autobiographical essays: "But alive, in my tomb, I was destitute" (97). Zitkala-Sa's assumption that working class life is comprised of "drudgery" to the exclusion of all intellectual and creative activity exposes her class position and bias.

However, the intense pathos of the language suggests some sympathy and insight on her part into class issues. Her analysis of Anglo-America's desire to incorporate Native Americans into a position of lesser power in civilization is both biting and insightful. Zitkala-Sa was extremely critical of the education programmes provided for Native American students, which offered primarily manual labour training. Such training was intended to prepare students for an occupation deemed racially suitable by Anglo-American standards. Horseman notes that these standards derived from the desire to allow each race to learn "according to its measure;" missionaries and reformers worked to elevate students "to the limit of their potential even while condemning them as inferior" (151). Zitkala-Sa rejected in principle the Christian reformer's notion of the white man's burden, and also exposed this particular form of "elevation" to be detrimental to Native Americans. By transforming them into "slaves" to the "plow," civilization, she recognized that civilization could offer only further subjugation and restriction. Providing education which prevented access to positions of public power and influence infuriated Zitkala-Sa, for she realized that this was the means by which whites institutionally enforced the supposed inferiority of Native Americans. She also problematized the notions of "primitive" and "civilized" in calling attention to the irony of Anglo-America's desire to force civilization on

Native Americans as an unconditional benefit, while expecting them to accept a subordinate position in this structure. The letter continues:

If Carlisle expects the Indian to adapt himself perfectly to "civilized" life in a century--she must admit that the Indian has powers which entitle him to a better name than Primitive! And by virtue of this development he can compete with all so called civilized peoples in a short time. On the other hand if she declares the Indian a superstitious savage she must allow him centuries--as the other savages have required--to mature to the prevailing customs. You know how Carlisle scoffs at all Indian-isms--she believes the latter statement. . . . If you have faith in the Indian becoming "civilized" --it is not because you agree with Carlisle! Nor Hampton--but being Indian you know the material which warrants your faith. And the material is not Primitive--nor can be represented by a small band like the Apache! (June 1901)

The need to negotiate with a language whose ability to communicate respect for Native Americans was inherently limited undoubtedly influenced Zitkala-Sa's adoption of such descriptives as primitive, savage, wild, backward or ignorant; the immense network of concepts generated

instantly by the use of these terms must have allowed for an immediate connection with Montezuma that had no parallel in anti-racist discourse. However, the layers of meaning explored in her alternation between non-ironic and sarcastic reiterations of the terms "civilized" and "primitive" provide a basis for irony. By exposing the ethnocentrism and ensuing contradictions of a term loaded with notions of social propriety and cultural refinement that purports to be an objective social descriptive, Zitkala-Sa questions the status of "civilization" as an absolute value. Her use of quotation marks around "civilization" and "civilized" indicates a resistance to the ranking of Anglo-American civilization as the ideal paradigm against which others cannot be but pejoratively defined. The long-standing opposition between the terms "primitive" and "civilized" appears absurd when discussed in conjunction with the labour unrest and class concerns of the civilized to which Zitkala-Sa alludes when she aptly observes that Anglo-American civilization, the supposed pinnacle and end-point of human evolution, in fact offers limited or little satisfaction to the majority of whites. In playing through the logical incompatibility of Carlisle's assumption that Native Americans were savages and less developed, and yet also capable of a quicker transformation from this state than were Anglo-Saxons, she also demonstrates an ability to tap into and expose the contradictions of such official

discourses as social evolutionism--a skill she makes use of in the essays.

5. Anti-Assimilation in the Essays

Zitkala-Sa brings her sensitive racial analysis to the essays, where she challenges various tenets of assimilationist doctrine, particularly concerning the tribal institutions of family, religion and education. She contends that many aspects of her upbringing in her Yankton village, such as pedagogy, discipline, and hospitality, were in fact superior to the practices of Anglo-Americans. Zitkala-Sa compares the merits and disadvantages of her Yankton upbringing and boarding school experience from the perspective of her younger self.⁷ She characterizes her young self with nature imagery in the first episode, calling herself a "wild little girl of seven" who was "as free as the wind that blew [her] hair and no less spirited than a bounding deer." She writes that her mother, proud of her "wild freedom and overflowing spirits" taught her "no fear save that of intruding [her]self upon others" (8). Although supposedly wild, Zitkala-Sa here asserts that she was in fact well educated by her family. Through the course of the

⁷ Zitkala-Sa writes that "[t]o stir up views and earnest comparison of theories was one of the ways in which I hoped it would work a benefit to my people" (Red Man and Helper, April [n.d.] 1900). A comparative strategy is also used in the autobiographical discussions of Anglo-education by Zitkala-Sa's contemporaries, Eastman and Angel DeCora, as well as by such Native Americans today as Vicki English-Currie.

first essay, she reveals her culture to be extremely sensitive and complex; the fear of intruding herself on others is shown to be a general principle of non-interference upon which her people's laws of propriety and ethical sensibility are based. The incongruity of being "wild" and simultaneously well-disciplined becomes irony as the greed and cruelty of white "civilization" betray its lack of precisely this structuring principle: "'We were once very happy. But the paleface has stolen our lands and driven us hither" (10).

Zitkala-Sa's description of her younger self here works strategically to problematize such terms as wild and civilized, producing a rupture in the discourse of the primitive which she widens into parody as the contradictions explored in each story accumulate and resonate throughout the essays. In the subsequent episode, readers immediately see the young Zitkala-Sa putting her mother's aversion to intrusion into practice. Her mother advises her as she eagerly hurries to ask neighbouring elders over for dinner, to "[w]ait a moment before you invite anyone. If other plans are being discussed, do not interfere, but go elsewhere" (14). The episode emphasizes the young Zitkala-Sa's need to moderate her behaviour in order to remain properly tactful and courteous: "Sometimes I stood long moments without saying a word. . . . it was all I could do to observe this very proper silence a sensing of the atmosphere, to

assure myself that I should not hinder other plans"(14). In this instance her mother instructs Zitkala-Sa in the discreet laws of propriety characteristic of village life. The village is shown to be comprised of people who delight in the refined potential of human interaction and who adhere to strict codes of conduct to ensure that individuals are given proper consideration and respect.

In addition to this informal but careful instruction provided by her mother, "The Beadwork" demonstrates that the young Zitkala-Sa also engages in formal lessons. In this episode Zitkala-Sa accentuates the rigour and discipline required to master the skill: "It took many trials before I learned how to knot my sinew thread on the point of my finger, as I saw her do" (19). Just as in Anglo schools, lessons in her village demand hard work, determination, and regular practice. Zitkala-Sa provides a detailed reconstruction of her mother's actions--the "double sheet of soft white buckskin" is smoothed over her lapboard, the leather is trimmed with a knife kept inside the beaded case she wears, the buckskin is pierced and each bead is strung "one by one." Here she emphasizes the dexterity and delicacy required to master the craft, which Zitkala-Sa situates as a high art form when she compares it to the western genre of painting: "Untying the long tassled strings that bound a small brown buckskin bag, my mother spread upon a mat beside her bunches of colored beads, just

as an artist arranges the paints upon his palette" (18). Zitkala-Sa creates a picture of an aesthetically cultivated society with a profound appreciation of subtlety, refinement and delicacy.

Pedagogy (a topic of general concern among eastern liberals in the progressive era with the rise of public education) is also a subject which receives considerable attention in the essays. Zitkala-Sa asserts that her Yankton environment provides an atmosphere extremely conducive to learning. She describes with pride the "cool morning breezes" and the "perfume of sweet grasses" that "freely swept" through the canvas dwelling, which has been opened so that the "bright, clear" light of day may enter (18). The pleasurable tactility of this description would have imbued this classroom setting with value to her audience, many of whom were enthusiastic about the revitalising potential of "nature." Near the turn of the century educational reforms which fostered an improved understanding and appreciation of the value and sensitivity of children were promoted by such figures as John Dewey and Jane Addams. Liberals in Zitkala-Sa's audience may have been enthusiastic about the respectful disciplinary methods used by Zitkala-Sa's mother. She requires original beadwork designs from her daughter, but also insists that she finish whatever she begins. As a result, the young Zitkala-Sa learns from "self-inflicted punishment" to discern which

patterns are more suitable for her young fingers (19). Zitkala-Sa writes that her mother's understated discipline and supervision made her feel "strongly responsible and dependent" upon her own judgement (20). As suggested by her intense experience of shame after her mother's gentle but pointed reprovals for her impatience and lack of generosity toward Wiyaka-Napbina and Chanyu's sick mother-in-law, Zitkala-Sa grows to become extremely sensitive to her mother's subtlety: "[H]ow humiliated I was," she writes, "when some boldness of mine drew forth a rebuke from her!" (20)

The less favourable instances presented in "The School Days of an Indian Girl," (which, notably, all take place in the winter) resonate discordantly against the examples of life set in Zitkala-Sa's village. The accumulation of confused first impressions of the school distinguishes this environment sharply from the "easy, natural flow" she is accustomed to. Upon arriving at the school, she huddles near a wall, utterly disoriented by the assault of offensive sights and sounds on her senses: "The strong glaring light in the large whitewashed room dazzled my eyes. The noisy hurrying of hard shoes upon a bare wooden floor increased the whirring in my ears. My only safety seemed to be in keeping next to the wall" (50). The excessive lighting and jarring sounds create an atmosphere far less comfortable than that provided by the clarity of the open sky and

refreshing scent of "perfumed breezes" in her village classroom.

For the young Zitkala-Sa, the angularity and symmetry of the school is similarly strange: "Many narrow beds were in one straight line down the entire length of the wall. In them lay sleeping brown faces, which peeped just out of the coverings (50-51). To her dismay she is expected to assume this rigidity the following morning, when forced to eat breakfast "by formula" (54). Upon arrival in the dining hall, each movement of the students is regulated by the tapping of a bell; the first ring signals the students to pull forth their chairs, in which they cannot be seated until the second bell is tapped. The students pick up their knives and forks following the third bell, but Zitkala-Sa, overwhelmed by the highly regulated, impersonal procedure, and embarrassed by her inability to fit in, cannot eat: "I began crying instead, for by this time I was afraid to venture anything more" (54). "Eating by formula" desecrates an experience which in her village invoked a delicate, enjoyable interpersonal protocol and nourished her community's need both for food and companionship. Like the candy tossed to the students by missionaries, of which Zitkala-Sa grabs more than her fair share and becomes ill, and the turnips, the smell of which revolts her, "paleface" food and meals stand out for their capacity to sicken rather than to nourish.

On the east bound train, where the blatantly rude stares of whites insult and embarrass her, the young Zitkala-Sa first becomes aware of the lack of sensitivity and deference in Anglo-American codes of conduct. When arriving at the school, the privacy and dignity she is accustomed to is further intruded upon by the white woman who, attempting to comfort Zitkala-Sa, tosses her into the air. The young Zitkala-Sa is offended and further disoriented by the woman's inappropriate behaviour: "I stared into her eyes, wishing her to let me stand on my own feet, but she jumped me up and down with increasing enthusiasm. My mother had never made a plaything of her wee daughter" (50). She soon learns that bodily interference is the basis for discipline in the school, for on her first morning her hair is forcefully cut against her will: "I remember being dragged out, though I resisted by kicking and scratching wildly. . . I was carried downstairs and tied fast in a chair. I cried, shaking my head all the while. . ." (55-56). Here, just as her mother predicted, she weeps, utterly despondent, disgraced at the hands of whites:

Since the day I was taken from my mother I had suffered extreme indignities. People had stared at me. I had been tossed about in the air like a wooden puppet. And now my long hair was shingled like a coward's! In my anguish I moaned for my mother, but no one came to comfort me. Not a soul

reasoned quietly with me, as my own mother used to do. . . (56)

Notably here, it is whites who, unable to "reason" with Zitkala-Sa, are barbaric. Unlike her teachers, her mother never resorts to "brute force" in order to exact obedience from her daughter. The young Zitkala-Sa's interaction with authority figures in her village is predicated upon their respect for her as a "dignified little individual," as demonstrated in "The Coffee Making." In her childish nescience, she prepares a pot of coffee for her guest without replacing the used grinds or lighting a fire on which to boil the water; the elder politely accepts the coffee she offers. Zitkala-Sa's mother does not chastise her when she returns home and discovers her daughter's error: "But neither she nor the warrior, whom the law of our custom had compelled to partake of my insipid hospitality, said anything to embarrass me. They treated my best judgment, poor as it was, with the utmost respect" (29).

The cultural institutions in her village also foster principles of individualism more effectively than those of the boarding school. In addition to offering her daughter respect, Zitkala-Sa's mother, as during the beadwork lessons, nurtures her creativity and trains her to be self-reliant. She also encourages her daughter to develop and explore her physical power: "'Now let me see how fast you can run today.' Whereupon I tore away at my highest possible

speed, with my long black hair blowing in the breeze" (9). Even while playing the young Zitkala-Sa is free to investigate her body and her environment:

Faster and faster I ran, setting my teeth and clenching my fists, determined to overtake my own fleet shadow. . . . Slackening my speed, I was greatly vexed that my shadow could check its pace also. Daring it to the utmost, as I thought, I sat down upon a rock imbedded in the hillside.

So! my shadow had the impudence to sit down beside me!

Now my comrades caught up with me, and began to ask why I was running away so fast. . . .

They planted their moccassined feet firmly upon my shadow to stay it, and I arose. Again my shadow slipped away, and moved as often as I did.

(23-24)

Her shadow, the physical link between the young girl and the world surrounding her, is explored and celebrated in this incident; her spirit, body, and environment and the way they merge is a phenomenon to be discovered and engaged in wholeheartedly.

The episode provides a marked contrast to Zitkala-Sa's boarding school experience, where the freedom to express and explore her body, her environment, and her sense of her own individuality, is suppressed. When she arrives, the strange

environment, chaotic in its distortions, inhibits her spontaneous vivacity, for she clings to the walls "to escape from all this confusion" (50). During the "first day in the land of red apples," the young Zitkala-Sa feels restrictively bound: "The constant clash of harsh noises, with an undercurrent of many voices murmuring an unknown tongue, made a bedlam within which I was securely tied. And though my spirit tore itself in struggling for its lost freedom, all was useless" (52). However, once her shyness wears off and she is accustomed to her surroundings, the situation does not improve. Zitkala-Sa describes her sense of confinement as a living death: "Within a week I was again actively testing the chains which tightly bound my individuality like a mummy for burial" (67). The constraints, of course, are not merely figurative, which the violent cutting of her hair attests to. The boarding school, in fact, aims to crush the individuality of students with psychological as well as physical restrictions. As with "eating by formula," the many confining (and, to Zitkala-Sa and her friends, puzzling) rules attempt to regulate the self-directed and exploratory energy of the students. Unaccustomed to such limitation, the girls do not understand why they are forbidden to fall into the snow to see their own impressions; the school mistresses expend considerable energy enforcing these dictates with beatings.

This alien culture of physical violence, where brute force gives power, reinforces the subordination of students to authority figures by suppressing their physical energy. It is not surprising, then, that this buried power surfaces as a mode of resistance when Zitkala-Sa is punished for breaking a rule she deemed to be "needlessly binding." She is sent to the kitchen to mash turnips: "With fire in my heart I . . . bent in hot rage over the turnips. I worked my vengeance upon them" (60). Although she realizes she should stop when the turnips are clearly in a pulpy state, she does not: ". . . but the order was, 'Mash these turnips,' and mash them I would! I renewed my energy; and as I sent the masher into the bottom of the jar, I felt a satisfying sensation that the weight of my body had gone into it (60). In this instance, the expectation of whites for total, passive submission is the route for Zitkala-Sa's rebellion. She follows the order in a deliberately obtuse manner, purposefully ignoring her judgement which tells her that "further beating could not improve them."

Zitkala-Sa describes the episode as an example of her growing insight into the power for resistance available to her through language: "As soon as I comprehended a part of what was said and done, a mischievous spirit of revenge possessed me" (59). In this incident she effectively manipulates language across cultures, intentionally choosing not to understand the command contextually, and thus

deliberately acting like the ignorant brute she is presumed to be by her guardians. She shows herself here to be extremely perceptive to the intricacies of communication. This sensitivity is fostered by her Yankton community, which is portrayed as better suited for cross-cultural interaction. The members of her community are responsive to silence, understatement, humour, irony and body language. The elders Zitkala-Sa invites to dinner are able read the meaning of the young Zitkala-Sa's pauses; the young Zitkala-Sa herself only requires a reproving look from her mother to interrupt whatever childish transgression she is up to. Comfortable with harsh sounds, glaring lights, and brute force, whites are configured generally as a people of overstatement, indelicacy, and insensitivity to their surroundings.

The young Zitkala-Sa's encounters with whites reveal them to be particularly obtuse; their automatic interpretation of difference as inferiority prevents them from imagining the possibility of and engaging with an interiority different from their own. The mothers and children rudely staring at Zitkala-Sa and her travel companions on the train do not take the hint she gives, her downcast eyes signalling to them the impropriety of their behaviour. In contrast, Zitkala-Sa, Judéwin and Thowin attempt to sort through the nuances of cross-cultural communication in order to appropriately accommodate their

angry instructor in "The Snow Episode." Judéwin advises her comrades: "If she looks straight into your eyes and talks loudly, you must wait until she stops. Then, after a tiny pause, say, 'No.'" The rest of the way we practiced upon the little word 'no'" (57). Zitkala-Sa is careful in this episode to note the receptiveness of the girls to body language, tone and inflection. When Thowin is summoned for judgement, Zitkala-Sa and Judéwin listen at the keyhole; Zitkala-Sa, while unable to understand the words, comprehends the angry nuances of the teacher's voice clearly: "Her words fell from her lips like crackling embers, and her inflection ran up like the small end of a switch. I understood her voice better than the things she was saying. I was certain we had made her impatient with us" (58). The instructor, however, does not respond to nuance, silence, or even the articulate cries and body language of Thowin's fear: "Just then I heard Thowin's tremulous answer, 'No.'" This time the woman meant her blows to smart, for the poor frightened girl shrieked at the top of her voice" (57-58). The instructor requires Thowin meet her on her terms, in a language which she knows the girl does not understand or speak.

The instructor's obtuseness, as Zitkala-Sa was well aware, is deliberate, for subordination, and not communication, was the goal of the interchange. The cutting of Zitkala-Sa's hair demonstrates that what she feels and

desires, as well as the knowledge and values she brings with her to the school, are totally irrelevant to her white teachers. Accustomed to a delicate and eloquent interaction with her community, she is prepared to engage with them in a similar manner. However, the brutality of their authority over her prevents any meaningful exchange; Zitkala-Sa is reduced to suffering "in silence rather than appeal[ing] to the ears of one whose open eyes could not see [her] pain" (66).

The need for students to be rendered utterly subordinate to authority is rooted in the disrespectful pedagogy practiced at the school, which reductively transforms students into a collective of "brown faces" (51). Zitkala-Sa describes this assimilation process with mechanical imagery, (a motif that would have seemed as unflattering at the turn of the century as it does now): "It was next to impossible to leave the iron routine after the civilizing machine had once begun its days buzzing" (66). The impersonal automation of the civilizing process is totally inappropriate for the highly individualized protagonist that the young Zitkala-Sa is shown to be. Similarly, it makes no allowances for the needs and desires of students: "Relentlessly her pencil black-marked our daily records if we were not present to respond to our names, and no chum of ours had done it successfully for us" (66). The school treats the deaths of students with the same

inflexibility and disinterest as it does their lives: "No matter if a dull headache or the painful cough of slow consumption had delayed the absentee, there was only time enough to mark the tardiness" (66). Caught up in the unyielding pressure of the iron civilizing routine, Zitkala-Sa's vibrancy and exuberance is drained away.

5. Writing Resistance

Throughout the essays, Zitkala-Sa invests her representation of her Yankton community with values pertaining to contemporary discourses of individualism and anti-industrialism. This choice may stem from a combination of her faith in these ideas, as well as her need to convince her white audience, using terms they could appreciate, of the intrinsic worth of her Yankton culture. Also a factor was her belief that, within the general concern about America's future, Native American cultures had much to teach whites about respecting individuals and nature. For the young Zitkala-Sa, village life is characterized by an "easy natural flow," its methods based on a logical compatibility with the surrounding world. The integrity of the school, in contrast, is degraded by its distance from the natural world. In her cultural comparisons Zitkala-Sa makes use of these well established value hierarchies in order to rank her Yankton society as superior. She asserts that her people, with their sensitive codes of propriety and refined

sensibilities, know more about "civilization" than is commonly presumed. Although she occasionally draws explicit parallels, more often Zitkala-Sa inserts and leaves notices in the texts, which accumulate and resonate ironically through the course of the essays. This realist mode of presentation increases the sense of a text's objectivity by engaging readers closely in the making of a meaning that thus appears all the more truthful as the naivete of Zitkala-Sa's outsider's perspective surfaces as a compelling accuracy.

In this way, the comparisons initiate an often carefully precise dialectical movement throughout the text between such established and problematic terms as "civilized" and "wild." At the beginning of the essays, "wild" is associated with the young Zitkala-Sa's freedom from white influence; during the episode in which her hair is shingled, the term is used again in association with the young Zitkala-Sa's struggles to prevent white cultural and physical domination. In both instances the barbaric and noble savage variations of primitivist discourse are invoked yet modified, for Zitkala-Sa takes pains to convey the complex operation of social institutions in her village and to justify the reasons for her young self's resistance. When applied to her experience, the significance of the animal imagery necessarily expands beyond the capability of its conventional meaning, and the gap between the discourse

and its practical translation becomes a source for the irony that pervades the essays. The transformation of students from wild and savage to tame was thought to bring to them the superior form of subjectivity possible through civilization and individualism. The actual practice of civilizing in Zitkala-Sa's school, however, is a brutal domestication of students into a state of utter subordination which grinds the intense vitality and sensibility of the "wild little girl of seven" into miserable numbness. While intending to steep Native Americans in the values of civilization, in particular individualism, Zitkala-Sa's school suppresses her individual rights violently, revoking freedoms available to her in her village. Self-reliance and respect for individuals--cornerstones of Anglo-American ideals--are shown to be fundamental to family life in the village but broken down and disregarded by the young Zitkala-Sa's teachers as well as white students in college. This was a criticism some whites would have been open to-- but, certainly, not reformers, for whom it was a slap in the face.

A reversal which exposed whites to be barbaric and only superficially supportive of official national rhetoric was a somewhat fashionable critique in some circles at the turn of the century. In addition to this reversal, Zitkala-Sa's critique also probes deeper, exploring the impact of systemic discrimination so that the contradiction between

official rhetoric and its subtext of cross-cultural intolerance emerges as a second source of irony in the texts. With the insight of a person further removed from the privileges afforded by the status quo, she offers an analysis that even anti-industrial and liberal white critics may have been unwilling or incapable of hearing. Zitkala-Sa shows that ethnocentrism, in conjunction with Anglo-America's material and political power, was a destructive combination that locked students into a no-win situation. She suggests that the profound inability of whites to conceive in culturally relativistic terms rendered them incapable of accepting and respecting aboriginal peoples as equals. Her portrayal of the school, where teachers enforce a passive conformity in order to remake students into the image of whites, reveals how whites consider Native American cultures to be fundamentally *improper*. However, the civilizing processes of the school require students to behave like the animals whites took them for. The teachers, possibly ignorant of and deliberately insensitive to the cultural significance of the young Zitkala-Sa's hair, presume it unnecessary to "quietly reason" with her, thus provoking Zitkala-Sa into behaving savagely for the first time, "kicking and scratching wildly" when dragged from her hiding place (55). In the manner of a self-fulfilling prophecy, the treatment she endures forces her to live out the white stereotype in order to survive: ". . . and as it

was inbred in me to suffer in silence rather than to appeal to the ears of one whose open eyes could not see my pain, I have many times trudged in the day's harness heavy footed, like a dumb sick brute" (66). Zitkala-Sa shows how civilization can only offer drudgery to Native Americans if the site of the cross-cultural encounter is one where interaction is determined by the degrading terms of whites.

CHAPTER THREE

"Neither a wild Indian nor a tame one":

Performing and Writing Racial Identity

1. Performing Race on the Frontier

On February 17, 1918, the Washington Times printed an interview with Mrs. Gertrude Bonnin, the name by which Zitkala-Sa was known after her marriage. The interview concerned her forthcoming testimony in favour the Republican anti-peyote Hayden Bill hearings. On February 19, pro-peyote ethnologist James Mooney took the stand before the Senate subcommittee on Indian Affairs and attacked the credibility of Mrs. Bonnin, who was his opposition's key witness. He discussed her failure to sample peyote or to even attend a peyote meeting, asserting that more useful testimony would come from the tribes concerned and not from delegates of a "sectarian body" or "alleged uplift organization" (Hertzberg 262). He also examined the full-body photograph of Bonnin which accompanied the Washington Times article, observing that this apparently Sioux woman wore an eclectic combination of clothing from other nations and in fact inadvertently carried a peyote man's fan. Bonnin gave her testimony the following day, wearing the controversial outfit, and received a cool reception from the Subcommittee. To parry Mooney's attack, she insisted that her knowledge of peyote's hazards gained during her fourteen

year residence at the Uintah reservation should carry more weight than the observations of an occasional visitor like Mooney. She also stressed the fact of her race, in contrast to the white Mooney, as a source of her authority.¹

Zitkala-Sa went by the name of Mrs. Gertrude Bonnin in the American national political scene, where she became an increasingly important figure after 1914; she apparently used her Sioux name only for performances, lectures and the occasional poem.² The expansion of identity made possible by moving between names must have worked to her advantage within the context of Native and Anglo-American cultural, social and political relations. These conditions, however, also enabled whites to exploit the terms of her identity for their own benefit, as demonstrated in the incident described above, where the media, the ethnologist and the bill's supporters attempt to delimit Zitkala-Sa's racial identity. The manipulation in which they engage exemplifies how conceptions of "the Indian" are produced and circulated by whites to serve their interests. Whether implicit or overt,

¹ For descriptions of this incident see Hertzberg 174 and Welch 133-144. Zitkala-Sa's testimony during the peyote hearings can be found in United States House of Representatives, Hearings on Resolution 2614, 123-131. For Mooney's contribution see pages 60-79, 88-94, 107-13, 145-47 of the same document.

² She signs her letters to Carlos Montezuma [1901-1902] as Zitkala-Sa and often affectionately as "Z," indicating that the name was in fact more than a pseudonym for her. It is not known whether she was called Zitkala-Sa by close friends, although Welch notes that Zitkala-Sa is remembered on her reservation as "Gertie" (viii).

conscious or not, the parties involved, including Zitkala-Sa, share an understanding of how representations of Native Americans are circulated in the current economy of representation. The bill's supporters emphasize the importance of Zitkala-Sa's testimony with advance publicity because, with her combination of Anglo-American education and Yankton Sioux traditionalism, she will be received as an authentic and authoritative representative of and for Native American peoples--the voice of Native Americans. Her image is appropriated as a token in order to gain leverage in a paternalistic debate among white politicians and administrators; the peyote hearings were a forum which had little interest in producing a policy sensitive to the actual diversity of Native American opinions concerning peyote. The headline of the Washington Times article³ inaccurately describes Zitkala-sa as a relative of Sitting Bull and a graduate of Carlisle Indian School, errors which qualify her racial identity in very specific ways: the association with Sitting Bull, the most famous Native American figure of this era, links her to America's formerly untamed West while the Carlisle diploma renders her a tame Indian, able to communicate with Anglo-America in its language and using its epistemological and ontological frameworks. The intriguing incongruity suggested by the

³ "Indian Woman in Capital to Fight Growing Use of Peyote Drugs by Indians - Mrs. Gertrude Bonnin, Carlisle Graduate, Relative of Sitting Bull, Describes the Effects of Mind Poison."

headline promotes Zitkala-Sa as an object of fascination; the description configures her authority as a speaker and her authenticity as an "Indian" in highly "visible" language--that is, in terms comprehensible to the newspaper's predominantly white readership. The photo is the finishing touch to this spectacular presentation, for it embodies the wild west Indian, and functions, for readers, to substitute for Zitkala-Sa's actual conditions of existence the fantasy of the "Imaginary Indian." James Mooney's response to the photograph indicates the extent to which even liberal progressives within Anglo-America rigidly policed Native American identity. Despite the influence of technological advances, increased intercultural contact and trade, and a growing sense of pan-Indian identity in the early decades of the twentieth century, he argues that a Sioux woman who wears an eclectic ensemble is not an authentic Sioux, and therefore not a credible, authoritative representative of Native Americans. His reasoning offers a narrow conception of Sioux identity as uninfluenced by whites or by other First Nations. By adhering to the prevalent theory of the vanishing race that Zitkala-Sa resisted, Mooney defines and limits the possibilities for what can be considered "authentic" Native American identity.

Zitkala-Sa's performance of her identity began at a young age, for the ideological marking of her body by whites with clothing (a powerful signifier of political, class and

cultural allegiance) dates back to her childhood. What was known as "sober citizen dress" was first forced upon Zitkala-Sa at White's Manual Labour Institute. This loaded term reinforced the notion that unacculturated Native Americans--busy playing dress-up or getting drunk--were incapable of a weightier role than their current situation as government wards permitted them. As an adult, Zitkala-Sa's mode of dress, like her choice of names, depended upon her audience, purpose and forum of presentation. She was known as Gertrude Simmons at Earlham College, the Boston Conservatory of Music, and at Carlisle, during which period she apparently wore Anglo-American clothes (anything else would surely have been unacceptable to Pratt). There is no record of how she dressed during her fourteen years in Utah, where, argues Welch, being a teacher of Anglo-American crafts, culinary and sanitation practices, she had more in common with the white Mormon missionaries than the Ute people (71). Pictures taken with her musical collaborator, William F. Hanson, during the production of their opera, SunDance (1911), show a maturing, stately woman in a fringed buckskin dress and a heavily beaded necklace with thick braids hanging nearly to her knees.⁴ When she moved her family back to the east in 1916 to assume her new position as secretary to the Society of American Indians, an

⁴ I have included various photographs of Zitkala-Sa in Appendix C.

announcement in the American Indian Magazine welcoming her to the executive includes a photo of Zitkala-sa in a fitted white blouse, with a black ribbon tied in a bow at her neck, her hair held back in a loose chignon. While the white Hanson wished to promote the racial authenticity of the opera by showcasing Zitkala-Sa as visibly Indian, to politicized Native Americans, middle-class Anglo-American clothes signalled an ability to successfully adapt to and operate in urbanized, industrialized, and in other ways modernized twentieth century life. However, throughout her life, when performing for whites, Zitkala-Sa wore clothing that marked her as a Native American woman.

The notion of the frontier in American history and literature, while referring to the westward movement of Anglo-American civilization across the continent, also evokes many complexities of North American interracial and intercultural contact. In his book Being and Becoming Indian, ethnologist James Clifton highlights this sociopolitical aspect of the term, reinterpreting it as a "social setting . . . a culturally defined place where peoples with different cultural expressions of identity meet and deal with each other" (24). Unlike its geopolitical equivalent--the frontier line--which by 1890 had closed upon reaching the Pacific Ocean, Clifton's frontier suggests a shifting, unmapped space of cross-cultural interaction which continues to endure. That the terms of cross-cultural

dialogue then (like now) were dominated by white interests is symptomatic of this frontier, where Native American cultures intersected with an economically more powerful and ethnocentric Anglo-American culture. Negotiating for power, in the form of authority and credibility, within the terms of Anglo-American representational conventions of race and gender in order to promote her racial interests was a fact of life for Zitkala-Sa.

Although redefining aboriginal peoples in terms visible to whites was not out of the ordinary, Welch suggests that Zitkala-Sa herself fabricated the credentials of racial identity highlighted by the Washington Times article in order to enhance her profile. For Welch, as for Mooney, this is a self-interested act that discredits her integrity as a political activist (138). However, she can hardly be faulted for embracing these signifiers of authenticity to self-advertise, to gain an otherwise inaccessible public platform, as well as to inspire the respect and admiration of a white audience. The peyote conflict suggests that Zitkala-Sa did indeed manipulate her public image but could not, in fact, determine how this identity was produced and circulated in America, where visibility, not accuracy, had currency. Indeed, "authentic" Sioux clothing was not required for Zitkala-Sa to mark herself as an Indian, for most whites then (as now) could not distinguish between nations. It is an ironic hazard of

visibility that a white man could discredit Zitkala-Sa for investing in an economy of representation predicated upon a general disregard and disinterest in the actual diversity of Native Americans. Her performance of her body as visibly Indian does not degrade the validity or integrity of her reform efforts, or indicate that her political struggles were coopted by the racist economy of representation which characterized the frontier. To argue so would be to ignore the specifics of her reiteration of these conventions within her context, to underestimate the frontier's ability to sustain a variety of contradictions, and to overlook the personal value to Zitkala-Sa of wearing clothing that would label her a Native American woman. Zitkala-Sa may have experienced personal crises of identity stemming from her sincere admiration of her Sioux heritage and traditions, her position as an insider-outsider to both cultures, her conflict with her mother, or her own sense of herself as a mixed-blood woman; marking her body with difference may have provided a way for Zitkala-Sa to cope with these complex issues of identity.

A similarly visible ensemble was worn by other Native North American women who performed for whites in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries--Sarah Winnemucca Hopkins, Pauline Johnson, and Ruth Muskrat Bronson.⁵

⁵ All of the Native Americans, as well as the white fakes, who achieved celebrity partook in some way of this white standard of authenticity. Buffalo Child Long Lance, Grey Owl, the wild

Opportunities for Native Americans to have a public voice were so restricted that it would have been impossible for these women to achieve a public platform without appearing visibly Indian to their primarily white audiences. Arthur Parker, the Seneca anthropologist who presided over the Society of American Indians during the majority of Zitkala-Sa's term as secretary, aptly sums up the economy of representation Native Americans faced in the early twentieth century: "Indians to be recognized as such must 'play' Indian" (Hertzberg 57).

With her movement between names and clothing styles, Zitkala-Sa demonstrates not only an awareness of but also a careful response to the marking of her body with white expectations--an effort to strategize in order to take advantage of the restricted terms of her visibility in Anglo-America. In doing so she acts as both a reader and writer of her own body--a necessity given that her very specifically racialized, culturated and gendered public image was paramount in the reception of her written work as well as her performance art and lectures. In considering Zitkala-Sa's self-representation and construction of a racial identity, it is crucial to remember that the essays were composed by a young woman accustomed to negotiating

west show Indians and the leaders of Indian fraternal societies embodied this "Imaginary Indian" to whites, while Johnson, Hopkins, Zitkala-Sa and Bronson personified Pochahontas, the Indian princess, to their white audiences.

intuitively and shrewdly with the history of representation of aboriginal peoples in order to gain leverage from her compromised position.

2. Representing Self on the Frontier

The conditions of the frontier complicate Zitkala-Sa's assumption of an autobiographical subject position, which implicitly would have promised readers a truth about her "real" life. This is not to say that Zitkala-Sa did not share truths about herself with her audience, that the voice of the young Zitkala-Sa in the text was merely a character constructed for polemical purposes from which she maintained an ironic distance, or that the Anglo-American discourses used to articulate racial identity--individualism, primitivism, social evolutionism--were not pertinent to how she personally conceived of herself. Her autobiography may have been perceived in her time as a reaffirmation of faith in the ability and right of each individual to control and share his or her life story (a profoundly democratic front on which to inscribe herself in the American tradition as unique, integral, autonomous). However, the circulation of racial identity on the frontier prevents her work from fitting smoothly into this liberalist framework. The processes of production and reception involved in Zitkala-Sa's writing cannot be adequately described by this paradigm, where an individual bourgeois subject exchanges a

clearly defined product with an audience of similarly free and equal agents. The fact of unequal power relations between Native and Anglo-Americans complicates these relationships, bringing into consideration issues of production and consumption arising from her location as an racially oppressed woman on a cultural frontier. Her assumption of an autobiographical subject position is accompanied, implicitly, by an agreement shared with her publisher and audience that requires her to satisfy her audience's curiosity and fill its demand for knowledge of the "other." The privileges and powers that making meaning of her life in autobiographical form open up to her are compromised and complicated by the need to prevent her own textual commodification. This is a constant danger in her texts, for she mediates between cultures and assumes a burden of representation to speak *for* Native Americans and not *from* her experience as a Native American. This frontier context in which Zitkala-Sa operated inflected her construction of a textual identity in her autobiography in very particular ways.

Despite the power Zitkala-Sa is able to claim from an autobiographical subjectivity, the conditions of the frontier require her to negotiate for authority using this history of representation, whose models are often silent, passive, degraded, and generally not considered to possess the "stuff" of autobiography. Two impulses evident in her

writing are the need to perform a visibly Indian identity, and the need to challenge this history of representation. She works to configure an identity which fits within representational conventions recognizable by whites and simultaneously to articulate what it means for her to be a product of two cultures. Her incorporation of animal imagery, a motif familiar to whites for representing aboriginal peoples, is integral to her textual performance of identity. The modification of this trope takes on a specifically polemical function in the essays--to persuade her audience of the merits of her Yankton-Sioux culture. Thus, her reiteration of the animal imagery with which her race was often characterized works to control the implications of the discourse of the primitive, which would have impacted her white audience's reading of her self-representation regardless of whether she wished it to or not. Her particularly defiant reiteration of these conventional terms also demonstrates their inadequacy as a means of articulating the complexities of racial and intercultural identity.

Similarly, in order to distinguish her young self linguistically, Zitkala-Sa uses terms conventionally employed in white literature to distinguish an "Indian" subjectivity, such as paleface and iron horse. The accuracy of this strategy is not as relevant as its rhetorical purpose, which is to signify difference to whites--in fact,

it succeeds precisely because it is comfortable to whites. The conventional terminology provides a way to demonstrate the young Zitkala-Sa's changing understanding of herself in relation to Anglo-America, for in the second essay she begins to relinquish the distinctive epistemological perspective so clearly marked earlier on. Near the end of "The School Days of an Indian Girl" she begins to label her home as the "West" and the "land of red apples" as the "East," naming herself for the first time as "an Indian," and expressing a sense of pan-Indian identity with phrases like "my people" (78). Whites, no longer as strange to her as they once were, are referred to as palefaces only when Zitkala-Sa experiences racial harassment. After she sees the racist banner displayed by an opposing school at the debate meet, she states that she "gleamed fiercely upon the throngs of palefaces" (79). In her cynical analysis of white reformers and missionaries at the end of "An Indian Teacher Among Indians" she notes that "[b]oth sorts of these Christian palefaces were alike astounded at seeing the children of savage warriors so docile and industrious" (98). In both settings, she responds to this racist objectification she experiences by reasserting her previous centrality. Zitkala-Sa's demonstration of an ability to view whites as "others" despite her acculturation is an insight into cross-cultural subjectivity which her missionary audience clearly did not appreciate or accept.

3. Defining a Native American Identity

Contrary to the expectations and intentions of the white Christian reformer groups who initiated the era of assimilation and allotment in the 1880s, the members of the first generation of Native Americans to attend or be raised in off-reservation boarding schools grew to maturity with a desire to remain connected to their heritage.⁶ In addition to performing a racial identity in terms visible to whites, Native American reformers searched for ways to move past the limitations of these discourses in order to express the current realities of their frontier situation. In their responses to what was described as "America's Indian problem"--that is, the apparent incongruity and irreconcilability of Native American cultures with the manifest destiny of America--Native American reformers frequently adopted the discourses of social evolutionism and individualism. Inspired by the rhetoric of and promise of endless progress, these discourses were useful for theorizing a racial identity which emphasized their sense of uniqueness and potential within a broader national context. Zitkala-Sa, who studied in Boston, the home of Emersonian

⁶ The issue of a double or divided sense of self was a difficulty pertaining to African-Americans as well at the turn of the century, with W.E.B. DuBois questioning how "to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American, without having the doors of Opportunity closed roughly in his face" in The Souls of Black Folk (4).

liberal individualism, was particularly influenced by this optimism.⁷

These discourses, however, promoted a narrow view of aboriginal identity that frequently hindered the attempts of Native Americans to articulate an interracial, intercultural self-hood. This discursive predicament is apparent in the first provisional constitution of the Society of American Indians, which expresses a desire for closer ties to reservations and a belief in the possibility of merging elements of Native and Anglo-American cultures. The constitution motioned to "establish a legal department to investigate Indian problems," to "present in a just light a true history of the race, to preserve its records and emulate its distinguishing virtues" and to "promote citizenship among Indians and to obtain the rights thereof" (cited on Hertzberg 80). Simultaneously, however, the statement of goals argues that Native American cultures are

⁷ She writes to Montezuma: "Individuals make up the vast army of citizens in our country--Individuals make up by their myriad the great God's universe. How best to bring out the best traits in God's Creatures than to consider individuals" (April 19, 1901). Other activists took on its more pragmatic forms, welcoming only national policy that strove to develop "self-help, self-reliance, and initiative" in Native Americans (Hertzberg 74). The early Society of American Indians, non-partisan and non-lobbyist, also reflects this liberalistic spirit with its belief in the power of open forums and dialogue as a means of achieving social and political change. In the case of Zitkala-Sa, the rapidly decreasing land base of Native Americans and the deteriorating status of living on reservations later propelled her toward political lobbying as the most effective way to push for national policy change.

not viable in twentieth century America: "[A]ny condition of living, habit or thought or racial characteristic that unfits the Indian for modern environment is detrimental and conducive only of individual and racial incompetence."⁸

The statement of goals subscribes to the evolutionary notion of a seemingly irreconcilable split between traditional aboriginal cultures and industrialized white America, thus working against its own impulse toward an identity capable of sustaining both.

Not surprisingly, given their diverse backgrounds and concerns, these limited possibilities for racial identity served to divide and pit Native Americans against each other. Reformers were frustrated with the desire of whites for the fantasy wild west figure, who, to them, represented the "blanket Indian" (a derogatory term referring to an unacculturated Native American) of a past that could not be returned to. Many were critical of the invocation of this past found in fraternal Indian societies and also in Zitkala-Sa's opera--neither of which, it was perceived, sought a way for Native Americans to situate themselves as equal, fully contributing members to modern American society (Welch 64). Urbanized Native Americans, who, frequently alienated from their bands, looked to reform and fraternal pan-Indianism as a means of defining and claiming a racial

⁸ Cited on Welch 244, from the "Statement of Goals," Second Annual Conference of the Society of American Indians, Arthur C. Parker Papers, State Museum of New York.

identity, were often not considered "real" Indians by those who lived on reservations.

After reading about Zitkala-Sa's 1918 peyote testimony in a newspaper, Cleaver Warden, an Arapaho, former Carlisle student, and leader in the peyote church, came to Washington from Oklahoma for the hearings to protest her position. He writes angrily to James Mooney about her:

That Indian lady is not right but is instigated by wrong advice. . . . We only ask a fair and impartial trial by reasonable white people, not half breeds who do not know a lot of their ancestors or kindred. A true Indian is one who helps for a race and not that secretary of the Society of American Indians. Our intentions are good but obstructed by such persons.⁹

To Warden, Zitkala-Sa was an imposter rather than a "true Indian"; he has more confidence in the possibility of engaging liberal whites as his allies, whom he considers to be more capable of being "fair and impartial." Warden's insults may have hit closer to home than he realized, for Zitkala-Sa, although identifying as a full-blood Sioux, was of mixed blood, her estranged father a white man. While the

⁹ Cleaver Warden to James Mooney, February 25, 1918, in Hearings on Resolution 2614, 106-107. Cited on Hertzberg 269. Warden however, is not correct in his assumption of Zitkala-Sa's alienation from her heritage, for she was in fact very strongly attached to her people, had strong ties to her reservation in comparison to many members of the SAI, and identified firmly and specifically as a Sioux.

specifics of her sensitivity toward the issue of her mixed-race heritage are unknown, the general attitude toward "half-breeds" on the part of whites and Native Americans at this time was far from affirmative. In Anglo-America, knowledge of her mixed racial heritage would have reduced her credibility as a representative of Native Americans. The person of mixed race was similarly maligned in western romance, for Daryl Jones observes that characters of mixed racial heritage combined the worst qualities commonly attributed to each race (142). For many Native Americans, white blood was considered a taint, the name "half-breed" a derogatory slur used by Warden to insinuate that Zitkala-Sa was a fake Indian.¹⁰

Rather than initiating a compromise to account for the diversity of Native American interests, or allowing

¹⁰ Hertzberg observes that the claims of Charles Eastman and Zitkala-Sa to full-blood reflect "the respect tinged with envy in which this state was held by educated Indians, if it was combined with education and demonstrated ability to get along in the white man's world" (39). Mooney's slur against her authority in the Hearings on House Resolution 2614, apparently was successful, for the senate subcommittee appears inordinately preoccupied with the fact of Zitkala-Sa's blood percentage and with the closeness of her ties to the reservation on which she was born. What follows is a brief clip:

Mr. Tillman. Are you a full blood?

Mrs. Bonnin. I am part Sioux and part French

Mr. Hastings. How much Sioux?

Mrs. Bonnin. Half.

Mr. Tillman. Are you on good terms with your tribe? (130)

Welch also suggests that Zitkala-Sa's full-blood half-brother Peter St. Pierre "used the issue of race to persuade their mother to disown all of her children by the Anglo Simmons"; even Daw  , who unlike Zitkala-Sa did not move away from the reservation, was excluded from his mother's will (61).

individual bands to legislate their own views, the approach to policy making demonstrated by the peyote hearings is an example of less-than-knowledgable government representatives looking for one true Native American voice upon which to base a decision. That Native Americans were pitted against each other indicates the extent to which possibilities for cultural enunciation were restricted. The attitudes of white reformers, liberals and government representatives were obstacles blocking Native American attempts to define an intercultural identity. These groups continued to assert the incompatibility of aboriginal societies with modern American and the necessity of total assimilation even after it became glaringly apparent, as the twentieth century progressed, that reservation conditions had deteriorated substantially in consequence and that whites were not willing to accept Anglo-educated Native Americans as equals no matter their qualifications. Hertzberg observes that white reformers continued to demand an "unconditional surrender of everything Indian" well into the twentieth century, arguing that the blindness of the reformers to the viability of anything short of this "led them to ignore or oppose some of the efforts made by Indians themselves to develop a synthesis of white and Indian values, some accommodation to white society on terms partially Indian" (22). In this capacity reformers, who "were the Indians'

chief friends in court in the white world," undermined the efforts of Native Americans (Hertzberg 22).

The inflexibility of Anglo-Americans as well as the inadequacy of such Anglo-American discourses of validation as individualism at the very least made it difficult and at worst threatened to smother the efforts of politicized Native Americans to theorize a cross-cultural identity that took into account the specific material consequences and psychological pressures of colonization and acculturation. The all-or-nothing framework provided by whites for integration into Anglo-America required Native Americans to suppress and overlook the violence in their experiences of culture contact. Whether consciously or not, whites wished to ignore or erase the brutality by which politicized Native Americans came to act as bridges between cultures. Assimilationist policies and strategies, however, did not produce such smooth transitions between cultures. The difficulty of living between cultures, observes Hertzberg, was a central shaping experience for many Native Americans: "Some adjusted fairly well either at home or off the reservation and were pointed to with pride in Carlisle and Hampton publications. Some went utterly to pieces. An appallingly large number died prematurely" (Hertzberg 18).¹¹

¹¹ Hertzberg notes that only one in eight Carlisle students graduated (18).

4. Zitkala-Sa's Experience of Cultural Dislocation

In the face of so many failed or aborted cultural transitions, it is not surprising that, initially, Zitkala attracted the attention of Pratt (Welch 16). To him, her skill in oratory, composition and in the Anglo-feminine arts signified a successful "pass" into the white world. In her he saw proof that Native Americans could succeed in white civilization if they were willing to pull themselves up "by the boot straps" from their supposedly primitive, backward cultures.

However, in many ways Zitkala-Sa's lived reality may have been very different from her public image as perceived by white people. She certainly did not move fluidly between her Anglo-American and Yankton cultures. Although publishing may have helped to alleviate the anxiety she experienced while living in the East, she knew that her successes in Anglo-America were of little consequence to her people. Welch notes that her mother's rejection of her and her own growing belief that "only in the lessons of the previous generations could the Sioux identity be passed on to the young" may have prompted her to return to the Yankton reservation in 1901 (24). Her Yankton and Anglo-American worlds were not as exclusive as her white audience believed, for white influences had, often adversely, permanently changed life for her band. On her reservation, buffalo had been scarce near the Missouri River since the 1820s, and in

1858 the Yanktons were marched to a reservation by the U.S. army. By the turn of the century, when Zitkala-Sa returned to her village, the Dawes Act had severely diminished the land holdings and material wealth of her band.¹² Her mother was impoverished, her brother Dawée, a farmer, could not support his family, and both siblings, unable to obtain paid employment on the reservation, were prevented from putting their Anglo education to use. Zitkala-Sa's desire to study and work as a cultural and political link with whites opened a rift between her and her mother which was never resolved. The inability of mother and daughter to reconcile their differences was apparently extremely traumatic for Zitkala-Sa following her mother's death in 1907 (Welch 13, 60-68). The strain of bridging cultures took its physical toll on Zitkala-Sa: she was often anxious and exhausted during her four years at Earlham College, and a serious illness forced her to withdraw from school six weeks before the end of her last term, so that she never obtained her degree. Her health remained unstable during her term as secretary to the Society of American Indians, and she writes of the difficulty of working with whites in a letter three years before her death: "It is even a most

¹² My sources for Yankton-Sioux history include Welch's doctoral dissertation and the four-volume study in the Garland American Indian Ethnohistory series (which compiles original documents researched for the Indian Claims actions of the 1950s and 1960s): David Agee, ed., Sioux Indians. (NY: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1974.)

strenuous effort to stand still and hold fast the small grounds that have been gained" (Welch 229).¹³

5. Representing a Mixed Self

Autobiography, writes theorist Kateryna Longley, "has the authority of a primary historical record while enjoying the freedom of an unashamedly personal vision" (371). The authority available to Zitkala-Sa in this form may have provided a way to counteract the discursive and political resistance she faced when theorizing an intercultural identity. She certainly took full advantage of autobiography's authorization of the self to shield herself against the criticism of Pratt. She responded to his hostility, "I give outright the varying moods of my own evolution; those growing pains which knew not reason while active. . . . No one can dispute my own impressions and bitterness" (Red Man and Helper, April [n.d.] 1900). Zitkala-Sa's assumption of an autobiographical subject position provided a way for her to relocate authority from Anglo-American notions of cultural integration and discourses of self-validation to her own selfhood. In autobiography, the terms established to vocalize the unspeakable and suppressed--the unstable boundaries and

¹³ Zitkala-Sa died on January 26, 1938 at the age of sixty-one years, from heart and kidney failure. Her husband died four years later, and both were predeceased by their only child, who apparently died when he was a teenager, the circumstances behind which I have not been able to discover.

political inequalities of the frontier, as well as the ways it marks people living in its borderlands--become a function of her personal experience. In taking up an autobiographical subject position, and from it expressing the specifics of her experience of acculturation, Zitkala-Sa challenges the widespread denial of the violence of culture contact and overcomes the discursive impasse that frustrated the articulation of an intercultural identity. Far from being a testament to a colonized consciousness, writing autobiography was a means by which to articulate the problems of straddling two worlds (74).¹⁴

In the essays, she expresses an overwhelming sense of alienation and isolation, a result of her need to negotiate cultures and races from a position of lesser power. The young Zitkala-Sa's first experience outside of her village with whites occurs on the train bound for the boarding school-- a trip she eagerly anticipates. However, the rude behaviour of the "throngs of staring palefaces" yield an unpleasant surprise. The young Zitkala-Sa has no understanding of the regard in which her race is held by whites, and uncomfortably finds herself to be an object of curiosity: "Sometimes they took their forefingers out of

¹⁴ Significantly, Zitkala-Sa's choice of writing as a profession was based upon her need to find some kind of balance between the worlds which compelled her: "I am going to try to combine the two! I am going to my mother because she cannot come to me. I can write stories and have them published in the East for the so-called civilized peoples. This is combining the two" (April 19, 1901).

their mouths and pointed at my moccasined feet. Their mothers, instead of reproving such rude curiosity, looked closely at me, and attracted their children's further notice to my blanket" (47). Totally unaccustomed to this object position, the young Zitkala-Sa becomes extremely distressed, her excitement drained away by the humiliation she is forced to endure: "I sank deeper into the corner of my seat, for I resented being watched. . . . This embarrassed me, and kept me constantly on the verge of tears." Her eyes downcast, she is afraid to move, or to speak, and casts surreptitious glances around only occasionally. When "chancing to turn to the window" at her side, her sense of relief at seeing a familiar object is overwhelming, and she chooses to focus on it intently:

It was the telegraph pole which strode by at short paces. Very near my mother's dwelling, along the edge of a road thickly bordered with wild sunflowers, some poles like these had been planted by white men. Often I had stopped, on my way down the road, to hold my ear against the pole, and hearing its low moaning, I used to wonder what the paleface had done to hurt it. Now I sat watching for each pole that glided by to be the last one.

In this way I had forgotten my uncomfortable surroundings. . . . (47-49).

The young Zitkala-Sa rejects the position of "other" which the rudeness of whites imposes on her, and retreats into the comfort of her own subjectivity, to which readers are privy as she privately engages with her perceptions, recollections and reflections. Her eyes are drawn to the telegraph pole, an emblem of white presence, which, significantly, triggers a memory of white intrusion and cruelty, with which she herself can now empathize.

At the conclusion of three years of school, however, this inner sanctum has eroded into an unbearable confusion and uncertainty. During her four year return to her reservation she seems "to hang in the heart of chaos, beyond the touch or voice of human aid," the "bedlam" she confronted upon her arrival at the school now an integral part of her. Her mother, whose arms she previously yearned for, is now no longer able to console her: "My mother had never gone inside of a schoolhouse, and so she was not capable of comforting her daughter who could read and write." Her mother's understanding of literacy as an affliction from which the young Zitkala-Sa requires solace signals the growing distance between the two. Zitkala-Sa's mother, troubled by her daughter's unhappiness but helpless to assuage it, gives her the only printed matter in their home--an Indian Bible. She tries to console her daughter: "'Here, my child, are the white man's papers. Read a little from them,' she said most piously" (73). Previously a

confidante and a comforter, she offers her daughter the bible to substitute for consolation she can no longer provide. Her mother's difference from her young daughter is configured as an innocence from white culture that her daughter no longer possesses; Zitkala-Sa, unlike her mother, is now able to recognize the "white man's papers" as a bible. The young Zitkala-Sa is helpless to resolve the irony of this situation, for her mother is unaware that the Christian significance of the papers antagonizes her daughter. Cut off from her mother, and similarly alienated from the one emblem of her eastern education, she accepts the book to put her mother at ease: "I took it from her hand, for her sake; but my enraged spirit felt more like burning the book, which afforded me no help, and was a perfect delusion to my mother" (73). Anglo-education, which gives the young Zitkala-Sa a separate existence to which her mother has no access, places a barrier between the two that neither can lift.

Zitkala-Sa configures this mixed place with conventional animal imagery: "Even nature seemed to have no place for me. I was neither a wee girl nor a tall one; neither a wild Indian nor a tame one" (69). After leaving the confines of the school, she "roamed again in the Western country," but, depressed and despondent, the happiness and energy that characterizes the "wild little girl of seven" is gone. Yet neither is she "tame," or reconciled to white

culture, as her hostility to the bible suggests. The animal terms invoke an epistemological framework for describing acculturation that the young Zitkala-Sa ever so painfully does not fit into.

Her experience so profoundly disrupts her sense of self that she leaves the reservation in despair to return to school. However, here she also lives in isolation, without companions or compassion: "As I hid myself in my little room in the college dormitory, away from the scornful and yet curious eyes of the students, I pined for sympathy" (76). When in her village, she looked forward to developing friendships in the east to sustain her, yet these do not materialize in college; rather, here her initial impression of the cruelty of whites on her first east-bound train is confirmed: "Often I wept in secret, wishing I had gone west, to be nourished by my mother's love, instead of remaining among a cold race whose hearts were frozen hard with prejudice. (76). In turn, while at college, she is homesick, yet at home her mother is no longer able to provide her with the sustenance she needs. While tormented by guilt at having left her village, Zitkala-Sa continues to ache desperately for her mother's love. Emotionally malnourished, her unhappiness is a vicious cycle she cannot seem to escape, for the grudge held by her mother prevents the young Zitkala-Sa from enjoying or taking comfort in her successes and victories in college.

A profound sense of split selfhood is the cross-cultural subjectivity which emerges from her experiences, as suggested in her nightmare about the devil:

Then in rushed the devil! He was tall! He looked exactly like the picture I had seen of him in the white man's papers. He did not speak to my mother, because he did not know the Indian language, but his glittering yellow eyes were fastened upon me. He took long strides around the stove, passing behind the woman's chair. I threw down my spools and ran to my mother. He did not fear her, but followed closely after me. Then I ran round and round the stove, crying aloud for help. But my mother and the woman seemed not to know my danger. (63-64)

The young Zitkala-Sa is the only link between the two worlds . superimposed in this nightmare. That the devil and Zitkala-Sa's mother are impervious to each other suggests the depth of the chasm separating Zitkala-Sa's two lives. Her attempts to make her mother understand this alternate existence are futile, for the devil's threat is relevant only to her. Not only is Zitkala-Sa's mother unable to provide comfort, she has no access to her daughter's sense of terror. The young Zitkala-Sa's inability to cope with her own intuitive knowledge of cultural relativism, whereby she understands that the devil, as a "paleface legend," will

mean nothing to her mother, leaves her vulnerable and traumatized. Acting as a cross-cultural bridge places her in a precarious position, for her experience of another culture and her knowledge of its language opens her up to its dangers while cutting her off from her people. She recognizes herself as both an insider and outsider to Anglo-American culture as well as to her people. In her nightmare she is trapped in a terrifying vicious cycle; she runs in circles with the devil breathing down her dress, never gaining any distance away from it or toward her mother. The hazardous job of bridging cultures produces a similarly desperate negotiation on the part of Zitkala-Sa and her friends in order to placate their angry teacher. Using limited resources, Thowin struggles to reach across this cultural and linguistic rift but her "bad password" prevents access; significantly, it is not her disobedience but her lack of access to the English language that results in her punishment.

From this position of lesser power, Zitkala-Sa seeks, in college, acceptance into the Anglo world that white students, "frozen hard with prejudice," repeatedly deny her. Her anxious attempts to "pass" exhaust her: "By daylight and lamplight, I spun with reeds and thistles, until my hands were tired from their weaving, the magic design which promised me the white man's respect" (76). The strain of negotiating cultures ruins Zitkala-Sa's health and drains

her energy. Friendless and alienated among whites, she remains unable to return to her Yankton village where she is similarly isolated. It seems that the young Zitkala-Sa never fully regains the spirit she loses after her hair is cut; the frail, small woman, her face etched with "lines of pain," who arrives at Carlisle to teach is unrecognizable in the exuberant, vibrant youth she once was: "But as I tossed my hat off a leaden weakness came over me, and I felt as if years of weariness lay like water-soaked logs upon me" (84). The final essay contains many images, such as this one, which convey a sense of being trapped, often fatally. It seems that "long-lasting death" is what lies "beneath this semblance of civilization" (99), for the restrictive metaphors of binding used by Zitkala-Sa to convey the suppression of her individuality in school have become metaphors of living death upon reaching adulthood: "Alone in my room, I sat like the petrified Indian woman of whom my mother used to tell me. I wished my heart's burdens would turn me to unfeeling stone. But alive, in my tomb, I was destitute!" (98). Unlike the palefaces, whose hearts are "frozen hard," Zitkala-Sa is intensely sensitive and delicate--"a slender tree," as she describes herself, who is "uprooted" from her "mother, nature, and God (97)." Buried alive, uprooted and stripped of bark, Zitkala-Sa's destitution evokes the poles, also casualties of white

influence, she once observed sympathetically on her first east-bound train ride (48).

Zitkala-Sa's sense of divided selfhood is perhaps most apparent in the two voices, sometimes distinct and sometimes merged, which narrate the stories. To encourage her audience to understand its values and norms as historically situated and relative, rather than absolute, Zitkala-Sa invites her audience to see itself through the gaze of her young self. In doing so, she takes on the role of a cross-cultural bridge, the retrospective voice mediating between the young Zitkala-Sa and readers to explain or justify her confusion and hostility toward some aspect of civilization, which frequently appears inexplicably strange and unreasonable. Zitkala-Sa in fact often situates violent anger toward and scathing analyses of whites in the dialogue and thoughts of her young self, and also in her mother, who is a figure of anti-white resentment throughout the essays. This choice suggests that she may have been reluctant, or may have found it difficult, to vocalize such a vehement position from the narrative voice most readily associated with her. Writing for a white audience was an implicit gesture toward cross-cultural alliance; however, Zitkala-Sa by no means had relinquished her anger toward whites, nor was reconciled to Anglo-American culture, as the bleak, sceptical ending of the third essay indicates: "But few there are who have paused to question whether real life or

long-lasting death lies beneath this semblance of civilization" (99). She does not express a sense of belonging with Anglo-Americans, yet neither can she fit any longer with her people. An insider and outsider to both cultures she adhered to, Zitkala-Sa's narrative choices reflect the uneasy balance she struggled for throughout her life.

Appendix A: List of Zitkala-Sa's Known Works

(Arranged in Chronological Order of Publication)

"Side by Side." The Earlhamite 16 March 1896. 2.12(1896):
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274-276.

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Sun Dance. 1913. With William Hanson. Stored in the
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4(October-December 1916): 307-310.

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5(January-March 1917): 64.

"Chipeta, Widow of Chief Ouray: With a Word about a Deal in
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"The Coronation of Chief Powhatan Retold". American Indian Magazine. 6 (Winter 1919): 179-80.

"Letter to the Chiefs and Headmen of the Tribes." American Indian Magazine. 6 (Winter 1919): 196-197.

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Appendix C: Photos

1.





1. Zitkala-Sa in 1921. Taken from the biographical excerpt in Native North American Literature.

2. Zitkala-Sa in 1911. Taken from William Hanson's Sundance Land.

3. The offending portrait from the Washington Times.



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