

ABSTRACT

Mimetic Removal in Early National American Poetry

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Utilizing René Girard's concept of mimetic desire, and looking at the historical removal of Native Americans, provides insight into a concept called mimetic removal. Poetry by Josias Lyndon Arnold, Philip Freneau, and Royall Tyler is analyzed within the framework of mimetic removal. These Euro-American poets wrote about Native Americans in a way that allowed white Americans to simultaneously appropriate a sense of identity from Native Americans and metaphysically remove Indians from the presence of whites. Using mimetic removal allowed Arnold, Freneau, and Tyler to both appropriate Native American identity and distance Indians from their white readers.

Mimetic Removal in Early National American Poetry

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Mimetic Removal in Early National American Poetry

Here history is a kind of literature.
—Girard

As smoke from musket and cannon disappeared and the American flag rose waving in the breeze over the newly-freed colonies, Americans began to shape their sense of identity and nationhood. The new nation was faced with questions of who they were in relation to the rest of the world, as well as what qualified a person as an American. In the first few decades following the American Revolution, shifting currents of nationalism shaped an Euro-American desire for a unique and distinctly American identity. The melting pot of white colonists from different religious and cultural backgrounds, along with the presence of African slaves and Native Americans, meant that finding a definite sense of group identity would be difficult. American Indians, a culturally rich and diverse plethora of nations who were often seen by whites as a single Other, provided a crucial nexus for national identity that white Americans adapted to their own sense of cultural and national identity through a process I will call mimetic removal. This study will introduce and define the idea of “mimetic removal,” and show how early national poets utilized mimetic removal in their construction of an American national identity through their depictions of Native Americans. The first basis of mimetic removal is the historical precedent of removal, in which, in this study, Native Americans were forced to

relocate from their homelands. The second basis is René Girard's philosophy of mimetic desire. Mimetic desire is when a person desires an object because it is the possession or desire of another person. Occurring through literature, mimetic removal, a synthesis of these two foundations, allows for the presence of mimetic desire with simultaneous, representational, removal of what Girard would term the "mediator" of desire. Mimetic removal essentially provides a lens through which to read literature by one group about another group; an example would be a member of a colonizing society writing about a colonized people. More specifically, mimetic removal can be utilized critically to explore texts which use the cultural modes of the author's zeitgeist to better understand the construction of another group as an Other.

Throughout this study I mention that white Americans desired and appropriated a sense of Native American cultural and national identity in the construction of an American sense of identity. By this I mean that white authors utilize white imaginings of a Native American cultural and national identity. Clearly there was no such unified identity among Native Americans, but through Euro-American popular culture, including the poems of Arnold, Tyler, and Freneau, and, in part, use of the culturally constructed and factually inaccurate myth of the Noble Savage, white Americans imagined that there was such a unified Native American identity (Krupat 5). Carr comments that "[t]he idea that the American colonist was, like the Indian, natural and virtuous by contrast with the corrupt, over-civilised European court was a constant motif in independence rhetoric" (24). Perceiving Native Americans as "natural and virtuous" reinforced the construction of the Noble Savage trope. According to Robert Berkhofer, the Noble Savage depicted

Native Americans as if they “lived a life of liberty, simplicity, and innocence” (28).¹ Euro-Americans imagined that Native Americans possessed a unified cultural and national identity that not only included the Indians being closer to nature and more virtuous than Europeans, but were thereby closer to the seemingly allusive concept of liberty that became a catch phrase in the Revolutionary War.

Helen Carr observes in *Inventing the American Primitive* (1996) that, “the primary example and symbol of freedom-loving natural man was the American Indian, the image or mirror of the new Americans. But increasingly, as the frontier was pushed remorselessly back, the Native American became the defining Savage Other by which the Civilised American could be known” (8). As Carr pointed out, historically white Americans view Native Americans with admiration of the qualities that defined the Indian as culturally non-European, but that perspective changed and Euro-Americans viewed Indians as undesirable and as un-American. My work differs from Carr’s in that I argue that these views worked in concert rather than as a linear progression, from one view to the other, from the late eighteenth century to the mid-nineteenth century. An example of mimetic removal, which this study will focus on, is found in the depiction of Native Americans as a symbol of a non-European identity with which white Americans could associate; a depiction which also left Native Americans comfortably removed from the nascent national and cultural identity of the United States.

The removal of the Native American in Euro-American literature has been previously explored by several scholars, including Lucy Maddox in *Removals* (1991). Maddox writes, “[t]he question of whether Indians or whites could inhabit the same territory, physical or metaphysical, was unavoidable as long as the Indians continued to

¹ For a discussion of the idea of the Noble Savage, see Helen Carr’s *Inventing the American Primitive* (1996) p.31-33, and Roy Harvey Pearce’s *Savagism and Civilization A Study of the Indian and the American Mind* (1988). See also Robert Berkhofer’s *The White Man’s Indian* (1978) p.72-80.

defend their right to live” (6). Removal in literary texts addresses both historical and “metaphysical” forms of removal. Maddox first reviews “the context of the public’s debates on the question of the Indians’ place in the American nation and in the new American literature” (10). She focuses on texts from the 1830s to the 1850s, “in order to illustrate the ways in which they [the texts] were responsive to the political, philosophical, and aesthetic issues raised by the Indian debates” (10). Early national American poets were also “responsive” to the role of Indians in early American society.

Analogous to the historical removal of Indians from their land, literary removal is the exploration of historical removal in texts. Literary removal provided distance between the reader and the Indian subject. This can be accomplished actively through a cross-cultural appropriation of the voice of the Other (i.e., Philip Freneau’s “The Prophecy of King Tammany”), or passively through the published, static, word (the very existence of a poem). Mimetic removal provides an explanation for this literary removal by providing insight into the parallel perspectives commonly held by Euro-Americans toward Native Americans. Mimetic removal looks at the implications of metaphysical and physical removal, and it is essentially a form of literary removal. There is, however, nothing mimetic about the removal element of this lens.

René Girard introduced the concept of mimetic desire in his seminal text *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel Self and Other in Literary Structure* (1965). Drawing from the concept of mimesis, expanded on from Aristotle in *The Poetics* to Auerbach in *Mimesis*, Gerard recognized that human desire can be mimetic (imitative). At the most basic level there is the “subject,” which is the person who desires what he/she does not possess. That which the subject desires is the “object,” which can be either physical such as land, or intangible such as a sense of identity. Mimetic desire occurs when a “mediator” is

introduced into the equation, thus complicating, in Girard's words, the "simple straight line which joins subject and object" (2). A mediator is a person or group who possesses the object of desire. The subject can desire not only a possession of the mediator, but also the very desire of the mediator, so that a subject may also desire an object if it is initially the desire of the mediator. In this sense, desire is mimetic. The presence of a mediator, according to Girard, is "above that line, radiating toward both the subject and the object. The spatial metaphor which expresses this triple relationship is obviously the triangle" (2). This "triangular desire" (6) is mimetic desire. In this study Euro-Americans are the subjects, Native Americans the mediators, and Native Americans' land and sense of non-European national identity serve as the objects of desire. Because white Americans desired the Indians' sense of cultural identity in addition to their land, desire in the context of this study cannot be viewed as a "simple straight line" (2) of white desire for land regardless of Native Americans.

Girard writes "[e]verything that originates with this mediator is systematically belittled although still secretly desired" (11). This action of mimetic desire can be applied to the dual perspective held by white Americans toward Native Americans. The perspective of Euro-Americans, evidenced in the Noble Savage trope, was complicated and condescending: whites did not desire everything from the Indians. Euro-American desire was directed toward Native Americans' land and sense of national identity, though not toward Indian culture. Girard discusses external and internal mediation, which are functions of the distance between the subject and mediator. The mediation that occurs in the poems studied in this essay is that of "*external mediation* [which is] when the distance is sufficient to eliminate any contact between the two spheres of *possibilities* of which the mediator and the subject occupy the respective centers" (9, italics in original).

On this Girard observes, “[a]lthough geographical separation might be one factor, the *distance* between mediator and subject is primarily spiritual” (9, italics in original).

Paisley Livingston states that external mediation “involves a desiring agent’s relation to a mediator whose hierarchical difference is deemed to be permanent” (11), though this is seen by Livingston as “a relation that is essentially one of subordination” (10), referring to the idea that the “desiring subject” (Girard 73) is in a socially subordinate position to the mediator. In this study, I will tacitly differ from Livingston’s understanding of the roles of the desiring subject and mediator in that the roles are socially reversed: the desiring subject subordinates the mediator. Because mimetic removal does not focus on Girard’s distinction between internal and external mediation, this study will not directly emphasize this differentiation.

The distance between Euro-Americans and Native Americans was both geographical and cultural. In mimetic removal, the subject creates distance between himself and the mediator through the forced removal or elimination of the mediator. This occurs simultaneously with the subject’s desire for objects (of land and identity) possessed by that mediator, thereby creating removal concurrent to mimetic desire. Of course, mimetic desire can occur without removal as well. Euro-Americans created cultural distance between themselves and Native Americans through characterizing Indians as children in a binary that positioned whites as parental figures. This analogy created at once a connection between the subject and the mediator, allowing a metaphorical connection, and claim to ownership of, the objects possessed by the mediator: the perceived sense of national identity and land of Native Americans. While paternalism influenced white perceptions of Native Americans, the historical complexity of white-Indian relationships cannot be explained exclusively through paternalism.

Mimetic removal provides a holistic interpretative lens that seeks a historically-accurate understanding of the relationship between the two groups.

Mimetic removal occurred because Euro-Americans desired an American identity that was primarily concerned with having a separate political and geographical identity from their European mother states, and that excluded Indians. Native Americans were consistently mistreated and dispossessed of their land and culture because they did not fit in with the ideals of the young country. The genesis of this physical and cultural dispossession began first in the literary imagination of the United States by use of mimetic removal, and was perpetuated by the continued marginalization and persecution of Native Americans.

Mimetic removal provides insight into the expression of cultural hegemony in texts where the desiring subject (i.e., white America) appropriates objects of desire from the mediator, the Other. By gaining insight into this process of appropriation, an analysis of mimetic removal may allow for a better understanding of the complexities of the interactions between self-defined groups, such as nations and cultures. Mimetic removal seems most likely to be a potential lens in postcolonial studies, a kind of postcolonial perspective on the *modus operandi* of the colonizer.

CHAPTER TWO

Shadows of the Imagination: Mimetic Removal of the Imagined Other

George Washington famously wrote in 1783 that “[i]n a word there is nothing to be obtained by an Indian War but the Soil they live on and this can be had by purchase at less expense” (2). Washington’s interest in Native American land underscores Euro-American preoccupation with the acquisition of Indian lands. This concern was frequently expressed in early republican popular culture, including poetry that focused on Native Americans. The use of Native American death poetry had particular resonance with the reading public of the nascent American nation as the country expanded its territory and grappled with questions of self-definition. This chapter will focus on the role of mimetic removal in the appropriation of Native American cultural identity and land in the historical development of nationalism in Philip Freneau’s “The Dying Indian: Tomo-Chequi,” “The Indian Burying Ground,” and “The Prophecy of King Tammany.” Freneau’s popularity in the early days of the American Republic earned him, according to Lewis Leary, the title of “The Poet of the Revolution” (154-155), though Freneau’s reputation faded by the second decade of the nineteenth century.¹ The poems studied in this chapter utilized mimetic removal to appropriate Native American cultural identity for the Euro-American reader, and at the same time to remove Indians so that they did not pose a threat to the white reader’s understanding of citizenship.

By ignoring the historical reality of violence committed against Native Americans, Freneau introduces mimetic removal into the poem by removing Tomo-

¹ Leary later describes Freneau in the nineteenth century “[a]s a poet, however, [who] belonged to an era that was past” (346).

Chequi, a Native American chief, from the physical world and thereby leaving his land open to appropriation by Euro-Americans who desired that land. In the “The Dying Indian: Tomo-Chequi,” Philip Freneau imagines the death speech of Creek chief Tomo-Chequi who discusses the afterlife and wishes farewell to his people and land.² In the first stanza, the chief’s speech is symbolic of the plight of most Native Americans who lost much of their land to Europeans and white Americans: “ON yonder lake I spread the sail no more! / Vigour, and youth, and active days are past” (1-2). Representative of all Native Americans, Tomo-Chequi’s acquiescence to white demands for his territory is inevitable; in Freneau’s depiction, Tomo-Chequi will possess his land and lakes “no more.” Tomo-Chequi is “the image or mirror of the new Americans” (Carr 8), expressing the white desire for the disappearance of the Indian. Freneau attempts to, in the words of Joshua Bellin on American texts about Native Americans, “argue that violence can be compensated for by acts of . . . creative appropriation” (4). This poem represents a “creative appropriation” of Native American culture, and ignores the history of violence associated with white interactions with Indians. To write this poem is itself an act of removing Tomo-Chequi symbolically from his land, effectively giving it to the white readers.

Freneau’s utilization of a historical figure posits Tomo-Chequi as a Noble Savage, and adds to the sense of mimetic removal that occurs in this poem. The idea of the Noble Savage created an imaginary set of ideals and projected them on to a real people.

² Frank Edgar Farley commented that “Freneau changed the title to *The Dying Indian Tomo-Chequi* [from *The Dying Indian, or Last Words of Shalum*], perhaps because he had in the meantime given the name Shalum to his Indian Student (1788), and because, further, he was at that time engaged on ‘a series of papers entitled ‘Tomo Cheeki, the Creek Indian in Philadelphia,’ in which the manners and absurdities of the Americans are described from the standpoint of an observant savage’ ” (259). Farley is quoting Fred Lewis Pattee in his introduction to *The Poems of Philip Freneau Poet of the Revolution*, Volume 1, p.lxvi. Farley also remarks that “Tomochichi (the name is variously spelled) is an historical personage, a famous chief of the Creek Indians” (259). Freneau’s depiction of Tomo-Chequi was literary in nature, and not historically accurate.

Freneau adapts the ideals of “liberty, simplicity, and innocence” (Berkhofer 28) to a historical person, reinforcing the cultural weight of the image of the Noble Savage and incorporating the concept of mimetic removal to insure that his readers recognize the distance between Native Americans and white Americans. By using an Indian persona, Freneau utilized a Native American identity as a basis of Euro-American nationalism, which whites sought to appropriate into their own self-definition as Americans. Basing his character on a real person allows Freneau’s depiction of the Native American to take on a greater sense of authenticity with his readers, while the historical distance between Tomo-Chequi and Freneau’s readers kept Native American culture comfortably removed from whites.

The position of Tomo-Chequi near death suggests the impending disappearance of Indian presence from the land. Tomo-Chequi’s vision of the afterlife includes “[r]estless demons” (3) and “shades below” (6) to which he will go after his death, to the “black forests [where] all the dead are cast” (4). That Tomo-Chequi is not joining a white American afterlife is an implication of his inability to be spiritually equal with the whites. Euro-American knowledge of Native American religious traditions was limited. Richard Pointer observes that, “Euro-American cultural blindness and Indians’ preference for keeping sacred matters hidden left most settlers across colonial history remarkably ill-informed about Native faiths” (175). While Freneau demonstrates some knowledge of the religious beliefs of Native Americans, his utilization of this knowledge to reinforce the Euro-American cultural hegemony through his poetic appropriation of Native American religious ideas undercuts any implication of cultural appreciation that the demonstration of this knowledge implies.

This afterlife includes the “emptier groves below” (37) which the demons of line three are moving Tomo-Chequi towards. The mention of demons in an afterlife “below” implies a similarity between this imagined Native American afterlife and the common doctrines of Christianity’s hell, similarities that would have been noticed by most of Freneau’s readers who were familiar with such stories. There is no version of “hell” in Native American religions, though as David Leeming and Jack Page observe, “[w]here the Land of the Dead is depends very much on the group in question. For one tribe it might be underground; for another in the sky, or in the West” (117). That Native Americans had a concept of an afterlife does not merit Freneau’s transformation of the idea of a Native American afterlife into a Christianized idea of hell. As noted earlier, it is impossible to determine to what extent Freneau was acquainted with any accurate information about Native American religions. Tomo-Chequi is preparing to leave his “Huron shore” (36), leaving the land and lake vacant for his progeny and, more importantly, for Freneau’s readers to appropriate.³ Tomo-Chequi and his tribe possessed their tribal land prior to white American advancement, and his identity was connected to that land. Thus desiring the impending death of Tomo-Chequi is to desire the land he will vacate. Scott Bradfield, in his introduction to *Dreaming Revolution*, observes that Native Americans were “envisioned as spiritually isolated and self-sufficient ... [they] were robbed of their land in order to ... make both them and their land more valuable and productive” (xii). Tomo-Chequi’s death leaves his land open to possession by Euro-

³ Freneau is not paying detailed attention to the land where Tomo-Chequi is from. Utilizing the historical persona of Tomo-Chequi in a series of essays, Freneau identified Tomo-Chequi as a Creek. See Marsh’s *The Works of Philip Freneau: A Critical Study* p.101, and Freneau’s essay “TOMO CHEEKI, the CREEK INDIAN in Philadelphia” in the May 23, 1795 issue of *The Jersey Chronicle*. Freneau’s geographical amnesia ignores that the Creek were natives of the modern day area of Alabama and Georgia (see tribal territory map in Clark Wissler’s *Indians of the United States* (1966), p.72-73), while in the poem Tomo-Chequi mourns leaving the shore of Lake Huron, the dwelling place of several tribes other than the Creek.

Americans, thereby allowing whites the opportunity to make the Indians' land "more valuable and productive" without having to include Tomo-Chequi or his tribe in white society. Death also spiritually removes Tomo-Chequi to a Native American afterlife, and physical and metaphysical removals are conflated.

Tomo-Chequi's land is described in calm and endearing terms which might be alluring to land-hungry settlers. While Tomo-Chequi does not extend an invitation to whites to take his land, the description implies a land that is sprawling and, more importantly, empty of settlers. Tomo-Chequi describes the land of his dominion in terms of topography, using pastoral terminology to create a world of "charming solitudes" (38), "tall ascending woods" (39), "glassy lakes" (40), complimented with "prattling streams" (41). Though the potential space for further white settlement is implied, the presence of Tomo-Chequi's tribe on this land is not mentioned. Euro-American attitudes toward taking possession of Indian land followed that of their European predecessors, expressed by William Denevan in his remark that "European occupation of the Western Hemisphere was seldom a quiet expansion into relatively unsettled lands, but was instead an invasion and destruction of native societies whose populations were substantial" (292). Freneau intentionally ignores the potential of Tomo-Chequi's people maintaining possession of their ancestral land. Going even further, Tomo-Chequi gives his farewell to the places "where I strayed" (46), implying a lack of long-term possession of the land on which he lived, leaving the reader to assume that he, and his tribe, lacked the right to the land where they lived.⁴ At the very least, this line suggests that Tomo-Chequi's presence was the result of an accidental presence rather than intentional settlement of the land,

⁴ Euro-American views toward the rights of Indians to their own land will be discussed later. See also Wilcomb Washburn's *Red Man's Land / White Man's Law: A Study of the Past and Present Status of the American Indian* (1971).

something which white Americans were all too eager to do themselves. White Americans appropriated not only Tomo-Chequi's land, but also his sense of American identity which came from possession of that land.

Freneau's imagining of Tomo-Chequi's speech also presents the Indian chief as being familiar with European culture when, in lines 44 through 50, Tomo-Chequi says "adieu" four times. Use of a French word carries several implications, but at the very least it represents an inheritance and projection of Freneau's own French ancestry onto Tomo-Chequi.⁵ Another possible reason for the use of this French word in a white American poem about a Native American could be Freneau's attempt to make Tomo-Chequi seem culturally familiar to, and mimetic of, the poem's white readers. In addition, the historical alliances between the French and Native Americans could have influenced Freneau's use of adieu. This inclusion of French indicates the multicultural experience that was prevalent in the early republic, and suggests that Freneau was trying to show Tomo-Chequi as being similar to the white readers who would read this poem, by coding Tomo-Chequi as culturally European rather than culturally Indian. This effectively removes Tomo-Chequi from his cultural milieu by projecting his depiction into a white American cultural setting. The use of "adieu" implies the Euro-centricity of white American culture, and an unwillingness to incorporate genuine Native American language into the cultural dialogue of poetry. By inserting "adieu" into Tomo-Chequi's speech, Freneau expresses a desire of many white Americans to abolish or absorb Indian cultures, to convert Indians to a Euro-centric white American culture. Converting or abolishing Indian culture implies a desire to appropriate Native American identity by removing the Indian from his own culture. Mimetic removal occurs with Tomo-Chequi

⁵ See Leary, *That Rascal Freneau* (1964), p.4-5.

on his death bed, speaking in English and French, and preparing to leave his land. He is at once understandable by whites (he is not speaking his indigenous language) and is independent, like the newly established United States.

Freneau closes the poem with Tomo-Chequi dying, leaving his land and cultural identity open to white appropriation. The final two lines of the poem read “[h]e spoke, and bid the attending mourners weep, / Then closed his eyes, and sunk to endless sleep!” (68-69). Tomo-Chequi “closed his eyes” leaving him unable to see the coming white invasion, and then “sunk to endless sleep” releasing his worldly possessions for the taking. As Joshua Bellin observes concerning the Noble Savage trope, “the flight to Nature [by white Americans] had less to do with Indians ... than with white desires and distempers, wishes and worries over the shape the nation was taking” (53). Though this poem constructs Tomo-Chequi in the tradition of the Noble Savage, it also utilizes mimetic removal to make white readers aware of the sense of American identity that they could appropriate from Tomo-Chequi, whose death leaves not only his land but also his sense of (Native) American national identity open to possession. With the inevitable death of the Indian, Tomo-Chequi is not just representative of his own tribe, but of all Native Americans. Though a new chief could take his place, Freneau ignores this possibility. Tomo-Chequi’s death is represented as positive, with Tomo-Chequi’s spirit moving on, though the destination is uncertain. Regardless of where his spirit goes after death, one thing is made clear: while Tomo-Chequi is in his “endless sleep” (69), his former lands and identity are available for white appropriation. Though Tomo-Chequi’s speech is directed toward his tribe, his significance as representative of Native Americans in general precludes the potentiality of other Native Americans inheriting Tomo-Chequi’s land. Because Freneau provides no indication of a successor to Tomo-Chequi, the

implication is that the land will now be open to settlement by Euro-Americans.

Freneau's depiction of an Indian chief in an English-language poem provided the first sense of mimetic removal from the subject of the Native American Tomo-Chequi.

Freneau's use of the historical character of Tomo-Chequi further strengthens the presence of mimetic removal in this poem by suggesting that, not only are the Indians physically removed by death, they are historically removed from the new nation. Native Americans are too far gone in Freneau's eyes to be a part of the Republic.

"The Indian Burying Ground" continues Freneau's use of mimetic removal. This poem, which is still reprinted in anthologies, presents the reader with Freneau's impression of Native American death culture.⁶ Critic Albert Keiser describes Freneau's "The Indian Burying Ground" as "probably his finest short poem" (29). This poem consolidates all Indians into one culturally homogenous group. The first two stanzas set up Indian death culture in opposition to white American culture by asserting that "[i]n spite of all the learned have said" (1), implying that Indian culture is contrary to the ideas of the "learned," presumably Euro-Americans. Indians are referred to as "the ancients of these lands" (5), suggesting that their presence entitles them to a sense of cultural respect. Yet in the next line, "[t]he Indian" who is "from life released" (6), suggests that death, or erasure, of Native Americans is inevitable. It is only then that Indians are no longer a threat to white society.

The Indian is positioned in his burial chamber in a sitting position. Freneau describes the Indian being buried with "[h]is imaged birds, and painted bowl, / And venison, for a journey dressed" (9-10) suggesting that the departed soul is well prepared for the afterlife. The presence of a "painted bowl" suggests Freneau's acknowledgement

⁶ See *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*, Volume A, p. 801.

of the creative material production that Indian cultures manufactured that was often ignored by whites who sought to denigrate Native Americans with the construction of the image of the Noble Savage. Though burial in the earth allows for the Indian to literally become one with the earth, this is only accomplished in death. Freneau is removing the Indian from his native land and placing him in the earth, simultaneously separating the Indian from the land he once possessed and leaving him with an “imaged” identity rather than a real identity. The bird of line 9 holds symbolic value in Native American cultures: as Joel Martin observes, “[b]irds, because they move between earth and sky, symbolized the movement from flesh to spirit, from life to death, from this world to the next” (20). The bird, though “imaged,” represents the organic nature of Indian livelihood combined with the social construction implied in the presence of a bowl, together they are the products of a sophisticated culture. The presence of these items “[b]espeak[s] the nature of the soul, / Activity, that knows no rest” (11-12). Freneau imagines that the Indian has a soul which is deeply connected with both the land and a deeper spiritual purpose, the latter of which was also depicted in “The Dying Indian.” The Indian’s soul is prepared with the positioning of the corpse and the presence of the burial items “for a journey” (10). This journey is one that will take the Indian away from his present land into an undefined spiritual existence, or perhaps even into a constantly being constructed literary afterlife, an appropriation by the white-American poetic imagination. The Indian’s “[a]ctivity, that knows no rest” (12) suggests that this imagined spiritual and literary journey will be perpetual. In a sense it has been, since “The Indian Burying Ground” is still one of Freneau’s most popular poems.

Though the Indian is dead, his culture still exists, albeit in a tomb where his bow and arrows can no longer be fired at white settlers and where the weapons cannot be used

to stop the invasion of his homeland. Even in the grave the anonymous Indian is prepared for battle or the hunt with his bow and arrows, present “for action ready bent” (13). Leaving the Native American armed, even in death, suggests that Freneau is paying tribute to the effectiveness of Indian warfare. Yet this depiction is also indicative of the white-American belief in the inferiority of Native American culture: the Indian is using the relatively antiquated weaponry of bow and arrow rather than a more “developed,” though not necessarily more effective, weapon like a musket. According to Freneau it “[c]an only mean that only life is spent, / And not the old ideas gone” (15-16). Death comes to the Indian, but the memories of the Indians have not disappeared; they are preserved in the earthen tombs of the dead and appropriated by Freneau for the white population that took the place of the Indian. As Reginald Horsman observes, “while the literary view of the Indian was mixed, there was a common assumption that the Indian was doomed to inevitable extinction” (191). This view is evident in Freneau’s poem. This poem is itself a tomb that preserves Freneau’s imagining of Native American culture and that limits the reality of Indian culture to the English language. The limits of the poem, and ultimately the white pages of the book that included it, read primarily in its time by white readers, serves as a cultural appropriation by Freneau of Native American identity.

Freneau recognized the inevitability of westward expansion when he directed an injunction to visitors, that “[t]hou, stranger, that shalt come this way, / No fraud upon the dead commit” (17-18). Freneau recognized that his readers, the white Americans who perpetuated the invasion of Native American lands, were not the rightful heirs of this land, that they were indeed little more than “stranger[s].” These strangers were the ones who, ironically given Freneau’s command to respect the tombs of the dead Indians,

perpetuated the death of many Native Americans.⁷ It is also ironic that Freneau would command “[n]o fraud upon the dead commit,” suggesting a grave respect for the deceased, but ignore the immorality of committing fraud upon the living, an issue of less importance to the young, growing country. Freneau instructs the viewers of the grave to “[o]bserve the swelling turf, and say / They do not *lie*, but here they *sit*” (19-20, author’s italics). The “swelling turf,” a reference to Indian burial mounds, has become part of the landscape, marked not by a wooden religious symbol or gravestone as the tomb of a typical white American might be marked.⁸ Joel Martin comments that Indian burial “mounds should be understood as religious objects. They were icons, the embodiment of mythological forces in matter artfully shaped and publicly presented” (89). The burial ground that Freneau represents is a testimony from the cultural history of the Native Americans who lived here; it is their story, a reminder of not only the dead, but of those who built the burial mound. The absence of living Native Americans from the scene illustrates Freneau’s use of mimetic removal to insure that the land is open for white appropriation. Here the Indian does “not lie” (20), a possible pun given the ironic treatment of Indians by whites, which included many lies and false promises. Instead the dead man sits with his fellow corpses, decaying underneath the earth he and his people once possessed, now occupied by white settlers who will one day rest in the same earth as their predecessors. That the corpses are in a sitting position is evidence of two things. First, that Freneau was aware of the cultural burial practices of some Native American tribes. Cyrus Thomas notes that “[i]t was a very common practice among the mound builders to bury their dead in a sitting or squatting posture” (21). Freneau’s familiarity

⁷ For a discussion on the decline of Native American populations, see Russell Thornton’s *American Indian Holocaust and Survival A Population History Since 1492* (1987).

⁸ Wissler, *Indians of the United States* (1966) p.51-52, 57-58.

with this practice indicates that he is attempting to be historically accurate in his depiction of the burial ground. Second, the positioning of the corpse in a sitting position provides a contrast with the typically supine placement of corpses utilized in white American burial rituals, which Freneau refers to in line three of the poem. This strengthens the sense of removal between Native Americans and Euro-Americans by providing a contrast between cultures. The removal is mimetic because it takes place on the land desired by whites. This burying ground has become a memorial to the deceased, a remembrance of the dead Indians and their dying culture, and a testimony to the infringement of whites on Indian land since the only visitors now are implied to be non-Native Americans, including Freneau.

Like the Indian culture that this graveyard represents, the stone that marks it is old and worn down by the weather, suggesting the antiquity of the burial ground. Freneau then comments that on this burial ground “a lofty rock remains” (21), a symbol of permanence amidst the surrounding decay, an organic memorial to the past. It is on this rock “which the curious eye may trace / (Now wasted, half, by wearing rains) / The fancies of a ruder race” (22-24). The sense of vacated space left by the tribe whose ancestors fill this graveyard implies that the land is open to possession by whites, a point which Freneau makes later in the poem with the presence of a shepherd. In keeping with the development of the image of the Noble Savage, this stone is said to represent “[t]he fancies of a ruder race.” Wilcomb Washburn comments that Europeans and white Americans held the belief that “the Indians’ mental capacity, culture, or sins against nature rendered them naturally subject to European control, the possibility of peaceful relations between the two races on the basis of reason and respect was not to be expected” (23). Though Freneau does not state whom the Indians are “ruder” than, it is

implied that they are less civilized than the white-Americans who are appropriating over their homeland, thereby reflecting the general white attitude that Native Americans were inferior to whites.

Native Americans provided a sense of identity to white Americans that remained culturally and geographically non-European. This Native American sense of identity, and the land of the Indians, became objects of desire for white Americans. Mimetic removal occurs within the context of this poem by positioning the Indians in the tomb, the mediator of desire is no longer between the desiring subject and the desired objects because the Indians have been removed from the objects of desire: the land and sense of American identity. The dead Indians become the cultural ancestors of the whites who demonstrate respect for the burying ground of the Indians, even though the actions of the whites could have contributed to the death of those buried there.

Freneau conflates the death and burial of Native Americans and their culture with the expansion of white culture as a duality of historical necessity. This is done without ever imagining the potential for the peaceful coexistence of the two cultures. “Here still an aged elm aspires” (25) writes Freneau, in acknowledgement that amidst the onslaught of white settlers and the disappearance of the Indians, the land remains the only constant. As Richard Slotkin observes, “[t]he one constant in the American environment has been the wilderness” (26). Native Americans’ non-European sense of national identity, also an object of white desire, was derived in part from possession of this same land.⁹ Some Euro-Americans, according to Robert Williams, recognized that Native Americans “possessed the rights to America under the natural law and the Law of Nations by their

⁹ In a sense this identification with the land continues today, with places that are named after Indian tribes, such as Illinois, Lake Huron, and Waco (Hueco).

undisputed occupancy” (303). Despite this philosophical position, in practice, “American legal theory directly confront[ed] the question of whether Indians had natural rights in lands that they *refused* to sell to whites . . . the answer of course was that they did not” (Williams 288, author’s italics). In other words, despite Native Americans’ presence on the land, whites would not consider any possibility that allowed Indians to keep land which whites desired. In addition, that Native American culture was heavily influenced, as all cultures inevitably are, by the land where they lived, further complicates white desire for the Indians’ land. For white Americans, possession of the same land formerly held by Native Americans also offered the whites the possibility of creating their sense of national identity not just from the idea of the Noble Savage conflated with a sense of non-European national identity, but also the opportunity to draw a white American national identity from the geographical possession of Native American lands. In short, possession of Indian lands was a means of appropriating a distinct sense of American national identity, not just a means of expanding territorial possession. And throughout this shift in land possession, by forceful presence and not by rightful inheritance, the land remains constant.¹⁰

Freneau’s borrowing of the shepherd image reflects the influence of European poetic traditions on American verse and the Euro-centric focus of much of American culture. “Beneath [the elm’s] far-projecting shade / (And which the shepherd still admires) / The children of the forest played!” (26-28), continues Freneau. The land which was once home to the Indians now buried here has already been possessed by

¹⁰ That the elm is aged suggests a presence immemorial, that it still “aspires” (25) suggests a sense of intention within nature itself. Though the scope of this thesis limits the potential for digression on the ecological perspective of early national America, the continuing presence of the aspiring tree suggests a potential for a common ground between Indians and whites. This common ground is not found in the conversion of Indians to white culture, but in the peaceful sharing of natural resources, including land.

whites, and turned into grazing land populated by pastoral shepherds who quietly admire the beauty of nature. Painting a bucolic scene with this stanza, the line “[t]he children of the forest played” (28), is unapologetically in the past tense. Though “children of the forest played” here, they are now buried in this graveyard and replaced with white shepherds. Freneau is also foreshadowing “the image that dominated late nineteenth-century relations between whites and Indians – parent and child” (Carr 166), with the Indians shown as children and whites taking the role of parental shepherd. White appropriation of the land is expressed through the presence of a shepherd, a person utilizing the natural resources of the land for profit, as contrasted with the Indians who are condescendingly imagined as children. There are two contrasts that occur in lines 27-28. First, the shepherd is presumably an adult in that he is fulfilling an adult occupation, whereas the Indians are called “children.” That the Indians are referred to as “[t]he children of the forest” (28) necessarily links them to an organic sense of origin, a Native American nationalism not possessed by the white shepherd. Yet the shepherd’s presence in the forest and graveyard suggests that he, and thereby other whites, is now in possession of this land and the sense of (geographical) national identity the land provides. Second is the contrast between the shepherd’s work in husbandry contrasted with the Indians’ supposed use of the forest as a playground. Here Freneau is echoing a long-held sentiment among whites about which Wilcomb Washburn remarked: “[a]nother common charge against the Indians, which became the basis for the most popular eighteenth- and nineteenth-century justification for dispossessing them, was that they were wandering hunters with no settled habitations . . . their livelihood, it was charged, was too wasteful” (38). The exclamation point at the end of line 28 suggests Freneau’s desire to emphasize this final contrast between the land’s prior inhabitants and the new, economically

productive, white inhabitants. This lends support to Washburn's further observation on white attitudes toward Native Americans, that "hunters might justly be forced to alter their economy by a pastoral or agricultural people" (38). Replacing the Indians with a shepherd allows Freneau to reinforce this sentiment against Indians that Europeans and Euro-Americans used to rationalize their taking of Native American lands. By doing this, Freneau's poem becomes a part of the national discourse of mimetic removal that sought to justify white American appropriation of Indian lands.

The final three stanzas of "The Indian Burying Ground" introduce the potential for a spiritual presence on the land by the deceased Indians that will remain even in the face of white occupation of the land. This Native American presence has been explored by many scholars, and as Renée Bergland comments, "the ghosting of Indians is a technique of removal" (4). Freneau's "ghosting" of a Native American presence serves both the purpose of removing Indians from the physical presence of the newly-arrived whites, and reaffirming the sense of white-American identity attached to the land that the whites are possessing, thereby strengthening national identity. The Native American spirit(ual) presence includes "a restless Indian queen" (29), a remnant of the supposed Indian royalty that once ruled this land, now replaced with a more democratic group of white settlers. With this queen "many a barbarous form is seen / To chide the man that lingers there" (31-32). In keeping with the contrast that Freneau is building throughout "The Indian Burying Ground," the other Indian spirits are described as "barbarous" as opposed to the "civilized" readers, as those who were advancing onto Indian land would have considered themselves. Freneau recognized that this incursion would lead to a continuation of conflict between Native Americans and whites, though line 32 supposes

the potential for Indian self-defense to be minimal, reducing the ability of Native Americans from being able to seek justice to only being able to “chide” white settlers.

The presence of these spirits underlies the weight on the generational white American conscience; the ghosts are symbolic of the barbarous treatment of Indians by whites, and the burial ground is not just an earthen prison for the decaying bodies, but also a place from which the Indians’ spirits will roam in the afterlife. Freneau is foreshadowing D.H. Lawrence’s description of Native Americans as the “demons of America” (74). Weaving a haunting image into the landscape, Freneau writes, “[i]n habit for the chase arrayed, / The hunter still the deer pursues, / The hunter and the deer, a shade!” (34-36). Building on the sense of contrast that he has crafted throughout this poem between Indians and whites, Freneau further minimizes the Indian claim to this land to shadows and shades, the play of light and darkness rather than the presence of solid human form. Freneau reduces the Indians to figments of the imagination and implies that Euro-Americans have unquestionable possession of the land.

Framing Native American culture within the lines of this poem isolates Indians from their land and lives, and away from the whites who took possession of the lands, including this burial ground. These shades persist, for “long shall timorous fancy see / The painted chief, and pointed spear” (37-38), indicating that not only will the spirit presence of the Indians persist, perhaps for generations, but it will be the presence of an armed warrior, a political leader of the Native Americans. His presence, however, will only be at the whim of “timorous fancy,” suggesting that Native American presence will continue only as long as white Americans allow it to be a part of their fancy, their imagination, their poetry. At the same time, this poem expresses white appropriation of the land and the sense of American identity that possession of the land includes. This

twofold purpose will persist as long as “Reason’s self shall bow the knee / To shadows and delusions here” (39-40). White presence is personified with “Reason’s self” while Native American presence has been reduced to “shadows and delusions” that hold the white imagination in subjection. Elizabeth Hanson observes in her study of the Indian in Euro-American novels, that it was “[t]hrough a strategy of image making they [white authors] attempt[ed] to make the Indian’s presence defined on ‘white’ terms” (8). These “terms” are found throughout early national American poetry concerning Native Americans, and are expressed through the ideas and desires of white Americans concerning Indian culture and land. Paradoxically, the value of the Native American spiritual presence in this poem adds to the non-European cultural value and national identity linked to the possession of this land. As Helen Carr reminds us, “revolutionary Americans needed first and foremost to define themselves against Europeans” (37). The irony of “The Indian Burying Ground” is that, while white imagination is held captive to the spectral idea of Native Americans, the Indians are dead, removed from land and life. The fate of their spirit(ual) presence is ultimately held by the “timorous fancy” (37) of Freneau and his white readers.

Like Tomo-Chequi in “The Dying Indian,” King Tammany in Freneau’s “The Prophecy of King Tammany,” was a historical person appropriated from history. Tammany provided a nexus for white identification with a sense of non-European, American, national identity. Carr observes that, “the Indian became in the revolutionary period a potent symbol for the Americans themselves” (37). Prior to Freneau’s use of Tammany, white American society had already appropriated Native American identity as a means of forming a sense of national identity. Richard Slotkin remarks in *Regeneration Through Violence* (1973) that the Indian served “as the occasional symbol of [political]

parties,” which included “the Jeffersonian Tammany Club (named for the legendary Iroquois chief)” (347). The use of King Tammany in this poem continues this sense of cultural appropriation. Freneau’s decision to entitle the poem “The Prophecy of King Tammany” contains two implications that bear discussion. First, by calling the poem a prophecy, Freneau empowers Tammany with spiritual perspicuity not otherwise associated with European and white American cultures throughout the poem. Second, by respecting Tammany’s position as a political leader, Freneau acknowledges the political and social structures of Native American culture. These two implications are minimized in importance by the historical actions against Indians which are mentioned in the poem. Imagining Tammany’s viewing of the approaching European invasion of North America, Freneau writes that King Tammany “[l]ooked, sorrowing to the crowded shore, / And sighing dropt a tear” (3-4), suggesting that the influx of Europeans created overpopulation and implying that the arrival of Europeans made the land uninhabitable for Native Americans. More specifically, this poem is a white American imagining that westward expansion by Euro-Americans will make that land uninhabitable for Native Americans. The expansion of the new country is predicated, at least in Freneau’s eyes, on the white appropriation of Indian lands and on the inability of coexistence between Indian and white societies.

Freneau shifts responsibility for the decline of Native Americans onto the initial European settlers. King Tammany observes the whites “half his world explore, / He saw them draw the shining blade” (5-6), linking exploration with conquest. This mindset was not abandoned by the young American republic after its independence, with the ever-expanding westward frontier becoming the land to be possessed and exploited. European presence necessarily means war, the absence of which Freneau supposes to have been the

status quo prior to the European invasion. Historian Francis Jennings remarks that in North America, “European motives and objectives of war multiplied war’s occasions and causalities” (168). Jennings then describes different scenarios of war, remarking that “[i]n all of them the influence of European political or economic institutions is apparent. Many of the Indian versus Indian combats were really European wars in which the Indians unconsciously played the role of expendable surrogates” (168). Freneau perpetuates this idea of peace prior to the European invasion, keeping with the trope of the Noble Savage, “[w]here only peace was known before” (9) suggesting that the Indians were generally peaceful. While this may be initially perceived as complimentary, it implies that the Indians will be easy to conquer because of their unfamiliarity with European martial tactics and that they are ill-equipped with inadequate weapons to face the roaring cannonades of the Europeans. As E.W. Pitcher states, “constantly depicting Indians resignedly suffering the passing of their world ... was a means to imply the inevitability of the outcome” (42). The militaristic disadvantages of his people do not escape the eyes of King Tammany, who laments, “Ah, what unequal arms!” (10), a retrospective appropriation that places the demise of Native Americans in a perspective of inevitability that attempts to exculpate the United States’ responsibility for wrongs committed against the Indians. This occurs by placing the blame for the demise of Native Americans on the initial arrival of Europeans and not on the continuous advancements of white Americans onto Indian lands.

Freneau suggests that Tammany and his people will go west towards the frontier, and away from white settlements. King Tammany signals that he and his tribe will abandon their land, “[f]ar from our pleasing shores to go / “To western rivers, winding slow / “Is this the boon the gods bestow ! ” (13-15). In this case, mimetic removal is

accomplished through martial possession of the land desired by whites coupled with forced migration of the Indians into the undefined west. Within a few generations the West would be redefined as progressively inland in an effort to, in the words of Richard Drinnon, “push the American empire into the setting sun” (xiv). King Tammany’s recognition of the inevitability of white possession and Indian dispossession, presented to Freneau’s readers a model Indian who acquiesced to the mimetic removal that Euro-Americans projected onto Native Americans.

The incomprehensibility of the manner in which the whites treat the Indians is merited given the often contradictory way in which initial international relationships went after first contact. Europeans, and afterward Euro-Americans, gave the Indians no reason to trust whites. The marital superiority of the whites leads King Tammany to wonder “[w]hat have we done ... / “That strangers seize our woods away, / “ And drive us naked from our native plain?” (16-18). These statements illustrate the nature of the persecution perpetuated on Native Americans, the forced removal of Indians from their lands by violence. This white aggression was not without consequence, inspiring the next lines as Freneau implies that Indian attacks on whites were really the fault of violence committed against Indians, rather than the result of Indian aggression. “Rage and revenge inspire my soul / “And passion burns without control” (19-20), King Tammany asserts, suggesting that the anger and desire for revenge on the part of Indians is the natural reaction to persecution by whites. This anger leads to the lack of “control” that characterizes the Indians’ revenge, in contrast to the “hostile ranks” (7) of the whites. Freneau characterizes both sides with a state of mutual dislike and war, but his initial depiction of the whites as the initializing aggressor is factually accurate. But as Louise Barnett remarks, “nineteenth-century writers often admitted that the Indians had just

cause [in conflicts with whites], but approved the ultimate white victory nonetheless” (6). Despite the historical European responsibility for martial tensions with Native Americans, Freneau does not blame the aggressive actions of the nascent American republic. A contemporary of Freneau took a similar stance, as critic William Dowling observes on Timothy Dwight’s book-length poem *Greenfield Hill* (1794), “Dwight ... imagine[s] the Europe that has extinguished Indian culture as the same corrupt Europe from which the American colonies have themselves now won a moral as well as a political independence” (79). Like the Indians, white Americans fought against British power in the colonies and even invading British troops during the Revolutionary War. Freneau’s effort to remove guilt from the poetic imagination of the early republic for the atrocities committed towards Native Americans positions white Americans in a role of reacting to Native American aggression. Doing so validated, to Freneau’s readers, white America’s tendency to act aggressively against Indians with the excuse of self-defense. It also ironically allows for white Americans to utilize mimetic removal to identify with Native Americans.

Euro-Americans identified with Tammany’s situation. Positioning Native Americans as bowing to whites and elevating the whites to “gods” (35) who will determine the fate of the Indians, King Tammany states, “I see our nation bends; / “The gods no longer are our friends” (34-35). Though they were “friends,” because of the elevation of the whites to a position of divine power, there can no longer be fellowship between whites and Indians. King Tammany expresses the desire of the white author and audience that the Indians will give up their current land and vacate it for the possession of the whites: “[b]ut why these weak complaints and sighs / “Are there not gardens in the west, / “Where all our far-famed Sachems rest?” (36-38). The Indians had their heroes,

just as the early republic had with its Revolutionary War veterans and martyrs. Much like the “far-famed Sachems,” this allows for cultural identification with the Indians by the white readers, while also removing the Indians from the land desired by the whites. Though the whites referred to in this poem are settlers who were historically earlier than the nascent country, and King Tammany was also historically removed from the birth of the new country, the analogy stands in for the struggles between the whites and Indians in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. That “The Prophecy of King Tammany” is included in the collection entitled *Poems Written and Published During the American Revolutionary War* (1809) links the subject of the included poems, including “The Dying Indian” and “The Indian Burying Ground,” to the nationally formative experiences of the white, reading and non-reading, republic during the War for Independence. This confirms the connection between the Indian subjects and this poem’s readership.

Though Euro-Americans desired Indian land and their own sense of national identity, they also wanted distance between themselves and the Indians because of cultural and racial differences. King Tammany states, “[b]ut mark me, Christians, ere I go— / “Thou, too, shalt have thy share of woe” (43-44). This allows for a conflation of whiteness with Christianity, and an implication that Indians are thereby not white because they are not Christian. This sets up the next lines which predict the American Revolution and other early American wars, suggesting that the bloodshed committed against Native Americans prior to the Revolution will lead to eventual death and destruction for Euro-Americans. “When hostile squadrons for your blood shall come, / “And ravage all your shore!” (46-47) remarks Tammany, implying that the violence against the American “shore” will be much like the first invasion of Europeans who invaded the Indian shore

that King Tammany just witnessed. In the Revolution and the impending War of 1812, those who perpetuated violence on the whites were often other Europeans, re-attacking the American shore. In a twist of irony, this statement by King Tammany allows white Americans to identify with the Indians by virtue of a shared experience, that of being attacked by Europeans. King Tammany also refers to both Indian and Barbary captivities which captured the attention of the early American public with the line “[a]nd some in dungeons lay, / “Or lead them captive far away / “To climes unknown, through seas untried before” (49-51).¹¹ This suggests that these troubles were the result of the negative treatment of Native Americans. Indian captivity narratives had been a popular form of literature and Barbary captivity narratives were also popular due to the relatively recent difficulties in dealing with the Barbary pirates. Mimetic removal allows for the white audience to identify with the struggles of the Indians through mention of these conflicts, creating an inversion of the power struggle mentioned at the beginning of the poem.

Freneau strengthens the connections between Tammany and Revolutionary America. The final part of King Tammany’s speech directly refers to the American Revolution: “[w]hen struggling long, at last with pain / “You break a cruel tyrant’s chain, / “That never shall be joined again” (52-54). King Tammany projects the “struggling” and “pain” that his people experience (because of the Europeans) onto white Americans who will also experience these challenges at the hands of “a cruel tyrant.” The only difference is that white Americans were freed from their tyrant while Native Americans were continuing to experience cultural persecution from whites. The Indians were never allowed to “break [their] cruel tyrant’s chain.” King Tammany continues, “[w]hen half

¹¹ See the introduction to *White Slaves, African Masters* (1999), edited by Paul Baepler, and “Cups of Common Calamity: Puritan Captivity Narratives as Literature and History” in *Puritans Among the Indians Accounts of Captivity and Redemption 1676-1724* (1981), edited by Alden Vaughan and Edward Clark.

your foes are homeward fled, / “And hosts on hosts in triumph led, / “And hundreds maimed and thousands dead” (55-57) predicting a victory, albeit one that will cost the lives and health of many, a prediction that would remind Freneau’s readers of the recent Revolution. The “hundreds maimed and thousands dead” was also reminiscent of Native American experiences. As anthropologist Russell Thornton observes in his study of the decline of Native American populations in *American Indian Holocaust and Survival* (1978), there were “various reasons for the increased American Indian death rates All of the reasons stemmed from European contact and colonization: introduced disease ... warfare and genocide; geographical removal and relocation” (43-44). King Tammany’s prediction of Euro-American losses creates a sense of commonality in bloodshed between white Americans and Indians, albeit an uneasy commonality given the perpetuation of bloodshed in the Native American community by white Americans.

Implying that a future generation will see history differently than his contemporaries, Freneau shows his prescience that the way that Indians were being treated would eventually be viewed as immoral. King Tammany recognizes the shifting nature of public opinion when a further prediction is made, “[a] sordid race will then succeed, / “To slight the virtues of the firmer race, / “That brought your tyrant to disgrace” (58-60). This part of King Tammany’s speech is ambiguous, and he continues to talk of this future generation who will “... give your honours to an odious train, / “Who shunned all conflicts on the main / “And dared no battles on the bloody plain” (61-63), suggesting that the merits of the generation that fought the Revolutionary War will be viewed differently in the future for their oppression of minorities while claiming to fight for liberty. Suggesting that this future generation will be weaker than the Revolutionary War generation, King Tammany predicts that one day even white America

will experience the challenges that he himself is experiencing. As Freneau biographer and critic Mary Bowden remarks, this poem is partially a “complaint about the evil of modern times” (77), while Tammany’s prediction represents a function of Freneau’s “own political purposes” (160). Bowden’s comments contextualize the moral aspects of King Tammany’s prediction as an expression of Freneau’s political views, rather than his perspective on the historical immorality of the mistreatment of Native Americans. King Tammany links warfare with virtue when he states that “VIRTUE ONLY could support the fray” (65), suggesting that a lack of virtue will lead to defeat. Taking into consideration that this is a white American’s appropriation of a Native American historical persona’s voice, mimetic removal is used in this statement as a means of suggesting that, given the sense of the inevitability of defeat of Native Americans in this poem, the Indians lack the “virtue” that is necessary for victory. This serves to justify the continuation of forceful possession of Native American lands, thereby keeping Indians at a literal and cultural distance from white America.

Freneau writes of Tammany on his pyre, that “[h]e smiled amid the fervours of the fire / To think his troubles were so near their end” (69-70). Linking the “troubles” of the Indians to the invasion of the Europeans, Freneau suggests that the only way for these troubles to end is through the death of the Native Americans. As Barnett comments, “[f]rom the beginning of the American experience there must have been little doubt in the collective white mind that its superiority – conceived of as moral and religious but tangibly exhibited to the Indian in the form of firearms and numbers – must eventually triumph over the aborigines” (3). Freneau perpetuates this sense of the inevitability of the death of Native Americans in this poem through use of mimetic removal, providing a genesis to the myth of the Vanishing Indian. Like in “The Indian Burying Ground,”

Freneau suggests that there is an afterlife for King Tammany's soul, that it will "[seek] the world unknown, and dark oblivion's / shade" (73-74). The ending of this poem allows for Freneau to remove the threat of Indian retaliation against white oppression of Native Americans by projecting his voice onto King Tammany. Mimetic removal allows for the historical displacement of King Tammany's experiences with the Europeans, and allows for Euro-Americans to associate with these Native American experiences through their own recent martial encounters with Europeans. White cultural identification with Indian culture is permitted through the shared experience of the potential for the loss of land that came with war with Europeans. At the same time, the Indians are removed by both historical distance and the death of the Indian speaker in the poem. Ultimately, mimetic removal allows for white cultural appropriation of Indian identity and land to help construct a sense of American national identity that is simultaneously distinctly non-European, though white, and non-Indian.

CHAPTER THREE

The Dead Are Forever Dying: Further Selected Native American Death Poems

Though using Native Americans as a source of American nationalist identity, white Americans also sought the physical removal of Indians. White Americans desired land and cultural identity but had no room for living Native Americans. This chapter focuses on how poets mimetically removed Native Americans with the purpose of erasing them from American society by looking at Royal Tyler's "The Death Song of Alknomook," Josias Lyndon Arnold's "The Warrior's Death Song," and Freneau's "The Indian Student: Or, Force of Nature." The presence of mimetic removal in these poems works against Arnold Krupat's observation that "historical indigenusness is not the same as mythical autochthony: there is no *essence* of America that Native people automatically incarnate" (5, author's italics). The cultural milieu that Arnold, Freneau, and Tyler represent indicates that white Americans believed that there was such an "essence" to appropriate. This supports Robert Lawson-Peebles's assertion that, "[b]efore America existed on the map, it existed in the imagination" (7). The first two poems represent a continuation of the theme of mimetic removal from two of Freneau's contemporaries, from the prolific and contemporarily popular Tyler to the lesser known Arnold, while Freneau makes another appearance in this study with "The Indian Student." Though this poem is not directly a death song like the other poems analyzed in this chapter, it deals with death, both literal and cultural, and is illustrative of the presence of mimetic removal in other Indian-subject poems that are not explicitly death poems. Together, these poems suggest the incompatibility of Native American and white

American societies, and hence a necessity for the physical erasure of Indians in the early republic.

A short poem, Tyler's "The Death Song of Alknomook" offers a concise poetical expression of mimetic removal.¹ Ada Carson and Herbert Carson comment that "Tyler's poetry ... reflects the life of his times ... and extols the values of a native American literature" (99). Speaking of its appearance as a preface to Tyler's play *The Contrast*, G. Thomas Tanselle suggests that "The Death Song of Alknomook" is "the best surviving example of what is almost a genre itself, the Indian death song" (58).² Utilizing the concept of mimetic removal allowed Tyler to appropriate Indian identity in an attempt to construct an American literature that was "native" to the desires of his white readership. Though the title of this poem is the "Death Song of Alknomook," the speaker is "the son of Alknomook" (4), suggesting a generational continuity with the person mentioned in the title; in other words, the description of Alknomook is also applicable to his son and thereby all other Native Americans.

Though Tyler is alert to the injustices committed against Native Americans, he reinforces the idea of their social inferiority. Defiant in the face of the military advantages of white America, the Son of Alknomook declares, "Begin, ye tormentors!

¹ In the past, a great deal of scholarship was exerted in attempting to determine the authorship of "The Death Song of Alknomook." The poem is now regarded as being authored by Royall Tyler. Complicating the assignation of authorship was that, as Ada Carson and Herbert Carson note in their biography, *Royall Tyler* (1979), "[t]hroughout much of his life, Royall Tyler insisted on anonymity as an author" (123). For a further discussion on the question of authorship see Carson and Carson p. 38-39 and 136n58, as well as editor Marius B. Péladeau's comments in *The Verse of Royall Tyler* (1968), p.9, see also the accompanying footnote.

² As Tanselle notes, the depiction of the dying Indian was "almost a genre itself" (58). Criticizing Philip Freneau's Indian poems and observing the motif of the dying Indian, Mary Bowden remarks in her biography *Philip Freneau* (1976), that "[t]he American Indian figured in drama, poetry, and prose during most of the eighteenth century; the poetry corners of newspapers often included poems on dying Indians, warriors' laments, and Indian prophecies" (159).

your threats are in vain” (3). Similar to Freneau’s “The Prophecy of King Tammany,” Tyler’s Indian faces insurmountable odds, this time from the newly formed United States. Marius B. Péladeau’s assessment that Tyler was aware “of the white man’s unjust treatment of the Indian” is belied by this objectification (9). As in Freneau’s poem, Alknomook’s son’s struggle becomes symbolic of white America’s recent revolution where whites felt threatened by their English “tormentors.”

The Indian speaker is placed within a generational hierarchy, which allows for the historical reality of the Indian-white antagonism to be projected onto the white American-English conflict of the Revolutionary War. Tyler removes the Indian speaker from his audience of white readers and silences him: “[f]or the son of Alknomook shall never complain.” Tyler complicates his sympathetic intentions with the silence, acquiescence, and death of the Indian speaker. Significantly, the reader never knows the name of the Indian narrator, he is only known as the “son of Alknomook” and never allowed to possess a personal identity (4). Symbolic of white treatment of Native American subjects and voices, the son of Alknomook is given a voice, albeit through a white author. Despite this voice, the son of Alknomook, and symbolically all Native Americans, is erased from the poem through his namelessness and death. The namelessness is itself a form of silence, a way to generalize the Indian subject as a metaphor for all Indians. Even into the nineteenth century, Americans identified Native Americans through representative individuals. Susan Scheckel comments that, in the 1830s, whites viewed the Native American leader Black Hawk “as representative of a “once powerful” but now “fast-fading” people” (109).³ Identifying a group of people by a single individual

³ Susan Scheckel is quoting from a nineteenth-century periodical. For the full quote, and for Scheckel’s analysis, see *The Insistence of the Indian Race and Nationalism In Nineteenth-Century American Culture* (1998) pp. 108-109.

dehumanizes and devalues Indian culture by reducing a large number of unique cultures and complex societies into the lump-sum word “Indian,” “Savage,” or even “Native American,” allowing for an easier cultural construction of a cultural Other.

The Son of Alknomook’s defiant speech reminds his readers of the military feats of his deceased father: “[r]emember your chiefs by his hatchet laid low” (6). Tyler’s use of the word “chiefs” presents the possibility that this poem is addressed to other Indian tribes, but that the author is a white American necessarily precludes this as being the only way in which to understand this speech. The context of early international relationships between Native Americans and whites, of almost constant conflict centered around white incursion, disallows the potential for reading this poem as being exclusively about inter-tribal relationships. The history of conflict between whites and Indians serve as a secondary interpretation that cannot be discounted simply because of the inclusion of the words “chiefs.” The narrator’s use of a word commonly associated with Indian political hierarchies could be Tyler’s attempt to fully adapt to white expectations about Native American culture by having his narrator describe white political leaders with the moniker of “chief.” At the same time, this allows for white American cultural identification with Native American culture by conflating the two, much like Freneau did in “The Prophecy of King Tammany,” whereby whites are allowed to see themselves as adopting Native American cultural identity. Cheryl Walker’s insightful analysis of William Apes is applicable to this cross-cultural identification, which she refers to as “transpositional discourse in which an Indian and a white man mirror one another” (176).⁴ This

⁴ On her idea of transpositional discourse, in *Indian Nation Native American Literature and Nineteenth-Century Nationalisms* (1997), Walker comments that, “[i]t is important to underscore that transpositional discourse, in its horizontal referentiality moving between self and other, need not be seen as implying that cultures are basically the *same* or that one cannot be disadvantageously compared to the other on particular grounds” (73 author’s italics).

strengthens the historical projection of the white-Indian conflict onto the American-British conflict of the Revolution, which at once makes the nameless Son of Alknomook an ironic, and perhaps unwilling, American patriot. This identification is mimetic in two ways. First, on the historical level the conflict of the British and Americans is conflated with that of white Americans and Indians. Second, the text allows white Americans to identify culturally with the Native American narrator. Mimetic removal occurs with the imminent death of the speaker, the Son of Alknomook.

The Son of Alknomook is not afraid to challenge the cultural and martial dominance of white society because he feels empowered by the persecution that results from such an unequal power structure. Though he accepts this inequality, his acceptance is not submission; it is resistance tempered with recognition that fighting against the white man is a battle where no one wins, neither the Indians nor the whites. Continuing his defiant speech, the Son of Alknomook asks, “[w]hy so slow? — do you wait till I shrink from the pain? / No — the son of Alknomook will never complain” (7-8). This last refrain, found in varying form at the end of each stanza, implies two things. First, that no matter what difficulties and challenges that Indians are faced with, they will accept their situation. Second, though his father effectively fought against white aggression, the Son of Alknomook has been disarmed of everything except his voice, but even this voice is that of the white poet. There is no way for the Son of Alknomook to express his grievances against white aggression, or even to defend himself. The Indian has effectively been disarmed, removed from being a serious threat to white society by Tyler’s use of mimetic removal.

The Indian’s verbal defiance reminds white Americans of the effectiveness of his father’s war efforts. “Remember the wood where in ambush we lay; / And the scalps

which we bore from your nation away” (9-10), the Son of Alknomook remarks, including himself in the war against the whites. These scalps are all that the Indians have been able to bear away from white society, while whites bear away the Indians through mimetic removal. Lines 9-10 also remind white readers of a time when the Indians held a tactical superiority over whites, a past erased by a growing white population and military superiority. The next lines represent a change in the direction of the Son of Alknomook’s speech; he now turns his attention to himself and his father. “Now the flames rise fast, you exult in my pain” (11), Alknomook’s son is being burned alive and his death is imminent. While the poem is unclear if he is being executed or committing suicide, the earlier command of “[b]egin, ye tormentors” (3) suggests an execution, as does his statement in line 11. Whether by execution or immolation, the death of the son of Alknomook removes the Indian’s presence from society. Though the son of Alknomook’s people have defended themselves effectively in the past, the final removal is about to occur, perhaps as an act of white revenge for the Indians’ self-defense.

Both Alknomook and his son will join the Indian ghosts haunting the white literary imagination. Beginning the final stanza with a reference to his father, the son of Alknomook remarks, “I go to the land where my father is gone; / His ghost shall rejoice in the fame of his son” (13-14). Harkening to Freneau’s “The Dying Indian” and “The Indian Burying Ground,” Royall Tyler removes the Son of Alknomook from the land that is occupied by the whites and places him in an Indian afterlife where he will never again threaten white America. This afterlife is characterized as a “land,” but it is a spiritual land, not a place further west such as a reservation. The son of Alknomook’s death is another victory for whites who have already eliminated his father. And yet “[h]is ghost will rejoice in the fame of his son,” which suggests that, as noted earlier, the Son of

Alknomook has indeed become associated with the warlike actions of his father. The Son of Alknomook must have accomplished notable feats against the whites since his father's "ghost shall rejoice in the fame of his son." Death removes them from the land they once possessed and their containment within white poetry limits and even dictates their ability to speak. This implies that their defiance is not a Native American defiance as much as it is a symptom of white guilt at the mistreatment of the Indians.

Reminding his white readers of the generational resistance that he is a part of, the son of Alknomook utilizes the last line to reiterate his defiance by "scorning to complain" of white oppression. "Death comes like a friend, he relieves me from pain; / And thy son, Oh Alknomook! has scorn'd to complain" (15-16) are the Indian's final words. Death, the son of Alknomook suggests, is better than life under white oppression. T.J.C. Brasser's observation on early Indian-white relations contradicts Tyler's image of the persecuted Native American. Brasser states, "[i]n the face of European advance the Indians became resistive and complained of the settlers' activities. The contrasting views of Indians and whites created tensions that inevitably resulted in open warfare" (72). Diverging from reality for Tyler is less than an exercise of poetic license as much as a Euro-American appropriation of, and rewriting of, history. This appropriation is inherent with a white American hegemony that poetically removes the Indian from white society. The ability of white readers to associate their own defiance of British rule with the Indian resistance to white aggression is coupled with white desire for the Indian lands which are now vacated by the deaths of Alknomook and his son. Mimetic removal of the Native American constructs American identity through a white mimetic association with American Indian identity, while simultaneously removing those Indians from their land.

Following the final moments of the Indian Kalack, Josias Lyndon Arnold's poem feels formulaic and recalls distinctly familiar lines from Tyler's "The Death Song of Alknomook" and Freneau's Indian death poems. Dying at 29, Arnold authored only one collection of poems that was published posthumously in 1797. Arnold's poem represents a continuation of the Indian death trope, emphasizing the contemporary popularity of the Native American subject in early national American literature. More importantly, mimetic removal reinforces the separation of Native Americans from white American society.

Envisioning an America without Indians, Arnold's poem opens by bringing to the reader's immediate attention the desirable "west" (1) and the image of the setting sun, symbolizing the imminent death of the Indian subject. Westward expansion is unavoidable for Arnold, since whites, according to Celia Barnes, "still considered their claim to the land superior, as they were colonizing and civilizing the country" (50). Of course, white incursion met Indian resistance. The image of the sunset is countered with the reminder of sunrise, "[b]ut soon his beams again shall rise" (3), suggesting a cultural defiance and resurrection in spite of the trials faced by "Kalack" (30), who is the generic Indian subject of the poem. Kalack is said to be the "Eliac's son" (24), introducing the possibility that the name "Eliac" is a pun on the word "elegiac." Drawing on the fire imagery used by Freneau in "The Prophecy of King Tammany" and Tyler in "The Death Song of Alknomook," Arnold writes "tho' the raging flame destroy / This mortal frame, to scenes of joy / The soul shall fly" (5-7). Suggesting an afterlife to which he can escape, the narrator recognizes that his present life under white persecution will allow him access to an afterlife that is free from the presence of whites. After death, his "[s]oul shall fly, where PODAR reigns / O'er pleasant woods and fertile plains" (7-8),

introducing a Native American deity to whom the Indian looks for salvation. There are very few references to a deity named “Podar,” and in fact the only known reference published prior to Arnold’s poem seems to have been in a poem entitled “The Incantation” by W. P. Carey. In a footnote on this poem, Carey describes Podar as “the god of the winds, and ruler of deceased spirits” (383).⁵ In the afterlife that Arnold invents for Kalack, the Native American can find peace in a land free from whites. This promise of a “pleasant” and “fertile” land, which is only available to the ghosts of the Indians, represents the white author’s desire to remove the Indians. Ironically, this land is a nonexistent creation of the white imagination that is offered as compensation for the real land that the dying Indians will not be able to use.

In Arnold’s poetic afterlife, “nations shall no more be foes / Nor warriors tribe to tribe oppose” (9-10), suggesting that the only way for there to be peace between Indians and whites is for them to be in the afterlife together. More specifically, since the poem does not suggest the necessity of the death of any whites, Arnold suggests that the possibility of a white-Indian peace is only available through the death of the Indians and the opening of their land for white possession. White identification with Native Americans, discussed earlier, allows white America to become one of the tribes mentioned in line 10. Peace in the afterlife only occurs with the death of the Indians. Here “[n]o hideous war-song shall be heard, / But peace inspire the ravish’d bard” (11-12). Death silences the Indians’ “war-song,” and this silence creates a cultural void which allows for the white voice to be heard. Arnold, as poet, assumes himself the bard, “[b]ut peace inspire[s] the ravish’d bard.” The death and ensuing silence of the Indians allows for “peace” and for inspiration finally to come to Arnold, relegating this reference

⁵ Podar makes another appearance in American literature in J. L.E.W. Shecut’s novel *Ish-Noo-Ju-Lut-Sche: Or, the Eagle of the Mohawks. a Tale of the Seventeenth Century ...* (1841).

of a “bard” to white culture and not Native American culture while also suggesting that the only reason the poet was “ravish’d” was because of the “war-song” of the Indians. Not only is there a white desire for Indian land, whites also perceive a necessity to possess the cultural space created by the absence of Native Americans, replacing Indian lyrical culture with their own attempts at poetry, of which this poem and the other Indian death poems of the early national period are a part. Whites develop an American culture with cultural appropriation of Native American culture, but only in the absence of Native Americans.

The promise of peace in the afterlife is predicated not only on the death of the Indians, but also the absence of traditional Native American weapons, an assurance of the erasure of Indian culture. Continuing the dying Indian’s speech, Arnold writes that there will be “[n]o arrows tipt with polish’d bone, / Nor tomahawk shall there be known” (13-14). It is only with the death of the Indians and the erasure of Indian culture that “all, till time itself shall cease, / Shall live in harmony and peace” (15-16). Arnold’s message is the same as his contemporaries, Tyler and Freneau: peace comes not with a compromise or treaty (the American government would certainly have agreed) but with the death and removal of Native Americans. Peace arrives with the death of the Indian, and harmony comes only in a culturally homogenous environment where Indians are mimetically removed from whites by cultural appropriation through poetry.

The previous lines contrast with the next part of Kalack’s speech, “[u]rge then the torments, haughty foes; / Thus death the sooner shall disclose / The land where every torment flies” (17-19). Arnold’s positioning of the Indian as a compliant victim of white oppression further emphasizes the perceived necessity of the erasure of the Indians by whites. As Arnold Krupat observed in his *The Voice in the Margin* (1989), “[f]rom the

first days of settlement, Americans sought to establish their own sense of American ‘civilization’ in opposition to some centrally significant Other, most particularly to the Indian” (3). Erasure, then, is a form of “opposition” to the Other, but this erasure is conflated with a desire to adopt a sense of identity from the Other. This poem expresses the mimetic removal of Native Americans in its appropriation of an Indian voice. The “harmony and peace” promised in line 16 is seconded by the claim that “[t]hus death the sooner shall disclose / The land ... / Where endless joys and pleasures rise” (18-20). Stating that there will be “endless joys and pleasures” in the afterlife of the Indian implies that there will also be the same positive emotions for whites in the absence of Native Americans.

Arnold suggests to the reader that the Indian speaker is being burned alive, “[b]id fiercer flames around him roll, / And try to bend his stubborn soul” (21-22). Writing that the Indian possesses a “stubborn soul,” suggests that he is unregenerate to the white man’s Christianity and incapable of change. Gordon Wood observes that whites “expected the Indians to become farmers, that is, to become civilized, or to get out of the way of the settlers” (118). Unable to change, the Indian is incapable of becoming “civilized.” This eliminates the only way for Native Americans to be integrated into white society, which necessitates, at least in the eyes of white America, the need for the physical and cultural removal of Native Americans. The inevitability of erasure of Native Americans is further emphasized by the next lines: “[y]et vain the hope, the trial vain, / To make great Eliac’s son complain” (23-24). The Indian warrior is under a “trial” to make him submit to white America, and it is the “hope” of the whites that he will submit to their demands. Efforts to make the warrior “complain” have failed, though it is unclear of what he would complain, perhaps the status of his culture in comparison to

that of white culture. Like in Tyler's "The Death Song of Alknomook," the prior generation of the Indian subject is considered "great" (24) and is even named as "Eliac" (24), while his son is unqualified of being identified as culturally American by the white reader whose newly found nationhood disallowed the inclusion of the new generation of Indians and only paid attention to the idea of the Indians established by previous generations of white settlers, namely the images constructed of the violent "savage who deserved his fate" (DeRosier, Jr. 4). This cultural stereotype perpetuated the generalization of Indians into a singular Other. Positioning the dying Indian in a place of anonymity is an attempt to relieve the white reader's conscience and to make the image of the dying Indian less than human. This stanza stands in contrast to the naming of the Indian subject later in the poem.

Of the suffering Indian, Arnold writes "[n]o sting of woe, nor pain severe, / Shall from his eyelids draw a tear" (25-26). The Indian is stoic, able to endure pain; he is masculinized in that he is incapable of crying and thereby disallowed the ability of expression. He is prevented by Arnold, under the pretense of his own instinctual strength, to even experience the "sting of woe" and "pain severe" that his white antagonists inflict on his body. Despite the torture, his spirit is strong and "e'en his foes themselves shall say, / A noble Chief has fallen to-day" (27-28). Positioning the whites as "foes" allows Arnold to noticeably place whites in opposition to the Indian subject of the poem, which intimates a potential for sympathy in Arnold by placing the Indian as victim of white oppression. However, this sympathy is not clear in the poem, though the poet describes Kalack as a "noble Chief." Continuing the white tradition of the construction of the Indian as the Noble Savage, Arnold respects Kalack as a chief, a noble possessor of political / martial power within his own culture. However, the chief's

execution belies this respect. Kalack's nobility is conflated with his inability to express himself through acknowledgement of the pain. This complicates Arnold's depiction of the Indian, a complication that can be explained through the concept of mimetic removal. Kalack's nobility reflects the white American ideal of successful resistance to the "sting of woe" faced by Americans in the Revolutionary War, which also, eventually, earned the young republic the respect of its foes, admittedly after 1812. Robert L Berner states that, "[i]n American culture the Indian has been first an abstraction and only later, if at all, a person ... the Indian has represented something our [white American] culture has valued" (41). Arnold represents Kalack as possessing traits desired by whites, using a fictional "abstraction" to appropriate Native American cultural identity in the construction of a (white) American national identity that erased Indian presence.

Kalack's nobility, found in his strength and demonstrated by his resistance to pain, is ironically also the source of his inability to express himself. His mute acceptance of the persecution of his "foes" merits the appellation of "noble Chief." This indicates that Kalack has secured the respect of his white contemporaries by demonstrating the ability to mimic Patrick Henry by accepting death, since liberty under white rule is not possible. Kalack is at once symbolic of the nobility of resistance to oppression, thereby gaining white admiration, and held at a distance for his lack of whiteness. Separated by culture and the rising flames of his executioners, Kalack will not be allowed by Arnold to join American society because Kalack's Native American selfhood did not fit in with the cultural ideals held by the white majority of the new country. His lack of Christianity, coupled with his status as an Other, disallowed white acceptance of an Indian who was proud of his own culture. Kalack is executed because mimetic removal of the Indian necessitates the physical absence of Native Americans from white America.

Arnold writes, “[t]ell then your sons, ye warriors, tell / Without complaint how Kalack fell” (29-30). Kalack will be remembered, but like all writing by members of one cultural group on another culture, he will be remembered in the terms of the victor, with the language and biases of white authors, including those of Arnold. Kalack will be forever silent, “[w]ithout complaint.” The “warriors” appear to be a part of other Indian tribes, perhaps those referenced in lines 9-10. But like this earlier reference, it also can be seen as referring to the white Americans who identify with Native American identity. Frank Shuffelton’s comment on Thomas Jefferson’s notoriously complicated views of Native Americans is applicable to Arnold’s poem, “cultural objects prized as evidence of native capacity and civility are ultimately his own cultural objects replicated in an ethnic frame” (268). Kalack is objectified as a “cultural object” and represents Arnold’s ideals “replicated in an ethnic frame.” The projection by the white poet onto a Native American identity represents a cultural appropriation of Indian identity, which not incidentally, projects the white identity on the “warriors” who are in a place of power over Kalack. Arnold suggests a generational remembrance of Kalack, a necessity for the continuation of Indian survival in the eyes of the white audience, since they have initiated the physical death of Kalack. Speaking of the dying Indian motif, Kate Flint remarks that “[t]he repeated trope performs a kind of cultural genocide. The more often a poetic Indian dies—and the more frequently, as is invariably the case ... the more inevitable the fate of the race as a whole appears to be” (65). However, the white audience will remember the man they killed. In this way, the Indian subject will be memorialized in the English language, available for perpetual identification with the white audience. Though dead, Kalack will be forever dying.

Appearing approximately twenty years after the Revolution began, and before the next war with Britain, Arnold's poem suggests the Indian subject as a source of patriotic and cultural identity for his white readers. Kalck will be remembered for "[h]ow his firm breast no fear appall'd, / To die whene'er his nation call'd" (31-32). Kalack's patriotism becomes a place of white identification with the Indian subject, he is seemingly fearless and ready to sacrifice his life for the undefinable cause of his country. More specifically, Arnold is implying the necessity for a patriotic culture that believes in sacrificing one's life "whene'er his nation called," and that, by virtue of the execution of Kalack, a racial homogeneity that includes the erasure of Native Americans. In Kalack the audience finds a silent and dying Indian who is simultaneously on the verge of being removed from the land and who possesses his own defined sense of national identity.

This poem perpetuates an image of Kalack and of Native Americans with which white America was comfortable. Tyler perpetuates the idea that, in the words of Arthur DeRosier Jr., "Americans were civilizing and Christianizing Native Americans by systematically depriving them of their heritage and their land" (4). The limits of Indian interaction with white American culture are here defined by four-line stanzas of poetry, with no potential for the long-term viability of Indian culture. Speaking of the "sons" mentioned in line 29, Arnold writes "[t]hus shall their manly bosoms glow, / With souls invincible to woe" (33-34). Telling the story of Kalack, enshrined in an Euro-American poem, could inspire patriotic fervor. White Americans have shown their invincibility in the Revolution and must continue to endure the "woe" of a developing country, dealing with Indians. Arnold suggests a way of enduring this challenge: erasure through execution of the Indians and appropriation of Native American culture. This cultural

appropriation began the moment Arnold started “The Warrior’s Death-Song,” and continued with the posthumous publication.

The penultimate stanza concludes with “[e]xult like Eliac’s son to die, / And to the realms of PODAR fly” (35-36, author’s capitalization). The defiant, silent acceptance of his death at the hands of the white man’s torture is the product of Arnold’s imagination and represents the white desire to erase the Indian. Though utilizing Kalack as a source of patriotic inspiration, and white American national identity, Arnold further suggests the white desire for Indian removal even in death. Kalack must be removed physically by death, and even in death he must be removed from the heaven and the white man’s Christian god by sending him to an invented Native American deity.

First called “Eliac’s son” (24), then “noble Chief” (28), and finally receiving a proper name of “Kalack”(30), the final appellation of Arnold’s Indian subject is subject to the white author’s whim. At the conclusion of the poem, Kalack is the “Hero of the shore” (37). On the shore of his territory, and on the shore of life, the Indian is about to cross the river of death, leaving his land and culture open to appropriation by the author and audience of this poem. Colin Wells comments that poets of the early Republic “used poems to exert their influence on the series of public debates waged at the time over the meaning of the American Revolution and the future course the new Republic should follow” (505). Though virtually unknown today, Arnold’s poem contributed to the social dialogue among whites on the role, or the absence of a role, of Native Americans. “The Warrior’s Death-Song” positions a willingly dying Indian whose submission to his execution suggests a white desire to believe that the Indians were complicit with their forced (literal and cultural) removal from white America. Through writing about the execution of Kalack, Arnold suggests both the necessity and inevitability of the physical

erasure of Native Americans. For the young republic to construct its sense of nationalism from Native Americans was acceptable, as long as whites killed off the Indians. While the “broad Kanhawa’s waters roar” (38), Kalack is silent. The land speaks but the owner of the land does not, leaving ownership of the land open to those who will speak, or write. The ability to communicate is essential to the possession of power; the spoken, and written, word is the medium of this poem, and is itself an expression of the ability for white Americans to reflect on and to express their possession of power, both over the Indians and their land. Thus the land becomes open to white possession because the white voice in this poem is the poem itself, Arnold speaks for the white settlers who are encroaching on the land of Kalack’s tribe.

Describing Kalack’s last breath, Arnold writes, “[t]hen clos’d his eyes, untaught to weep, / And sunk in glory’s arms to sleep” (39-40). Closing his tearless eyes, Kalack’s passing is spoken of in terms of Christian spirituality, his body is resting in “glory’s arms” and he will be asleep, a Christian image of death that implies a resurrection.⁶ In this case, the only resurrection that is available for Kalack is the limited immortality that the printed word offers. But even this is subject to the white author and audience. Kalack is “untaught to weep,” but only because he is uncivilized by Arnold’s standards, he lacks all forms of self-expression, except that which is dictated by the white poet. In Arnold’s vision of Native Americans, the only possibility for Indian existence in relationship with white America is for the Indian to die and vacate both his land and culture for white appropriation.

Though America recently threw off the chains of political oppression, Arnold failed to see the perverse irony in persecuting the politically disadvantaged Native

⁶ See 1 Thessalonians 4:13-16.

Americans. White identification with the Indian subject with the simultaneous desire for the removal of the Indian is the result of mimetic removal. Arnold accomplishes this by positioning within this death-song references to other Indian entities, with which white identification occurs by virtue of not just the white authorship of the poem, but also through the historical context within which the poem was composed. This historical context positioned white civilization in cultural and militaristic opposition to Native Americans and their cultures. Arnold is, to quote David Murray's observation on Euro-Americans' view of Native Americans, "reinforcing that sense of cultural superiority on the part of the whites which they saw as justifying them as forcing the Indians to change" (6). Contextualizing the poem within the milieu of the late eighteenth century, Arnold reinforces the presence of white identification with the Indians referred to in this poem: the white poet and audience become the Indians who are torturing and killing another Indian, Kalack. Like Tyler, Arnold envisions a country only for whites.

Philip Freneau's "The Indian Student" perpetuated a similar message, that white and Native American societies were incompatible. Despite Mary Bowden's claim that "The Indian Student" is "partly a celebration of life lived in harmony with nature" (161), Freneau's belief that Indian and white societies are irreconcilable is the end message of this poem. The premise of "The Indian Student" is that an Indian youth leaves his people to attend a white university. Finding the atmosphere of academia unbearable, the young man returns once again to the world beyond school and readopts his native culture. Freneau is reinforcing Benjamin Franklin's satirical comments in his "Remarks Concerning the Savages of North America," where the fictional Indian speaker comments on the reason why his people will no longer seek a white education: "you, who are wise, must know that different nations have different conceptions of things; and you will

therefore not take it amiss, if our ideas of this kind of education happen not to be the same with yours” (454). For Franklin and Freneau, the possibility of Native Americans adapting to white culture is doomed to failure. The second part of the title, “Force of Nature,” implies that the events of the poem, the decisions made by the Indian subject, are the result of nature rather than society. The separation and removal that occurs in the poem is also implicatively the result of this “Force of Nature.”

Discussing Freneau’s poetry, Joseph Harrington comments that “Freneau’s poetry is a world of subjects and objects, actors and acted upon. Speculators and missionaries ... will bring about changes to the Indians and the land” (271). This observation is applicable to “The Indian Student” in the priest’s interaction with the Indians. Freneau goes into the backstory of the student’s journey and writes that “a wandering priest ... / ... with visage sad” (5-6) suggested that the boy attend school since, “[a]h, why (he cried) in Satan’s waste, / Ah, why detain so fine a lad?” (7-8). The priest’s question, despite its condescending racism in seeing the land of the Indians as “Satan’s waste,” also contains recognition (admittedly a rare opinion at the time) that the Indian had the potential to achieve intellectual equality with whites. But to acquire this education the Indian must go to the “white-man’s land,” removing himself from Indian culture and adopting white culture. This is suggested by the requirement that the Indian “[e]xchange his blanket for a gown” (11), a prerequisite mentioned not by necessity but rather by the white priest.

Freneau lists the only qualification for Shalum to attend university as his “tricks” (14). Freneau also includes a reference to Shalum as “the copper-coloured boy” (16) to foreshadow that he will not fit in at the university, because he is not white. Commenting on maternal and paternal white American perspectives toward Native Americans, Susan

Scheckel remarks that, “according to the logic of this metaphor, childhood, which is a temporary stage, must be left behind by all who continue to live and grow. To grow up, according to the symbolic system nineteenth-century Americans employed, is to become white” (94). For Freneau, this perspective on white-Indian relationships serves as a foundational reality in “The Indian Student,” a reality that eventually necessitates the incompatibility of white and Indian cultures, and the removal of Native Americans.

The Indian subject is removed from his own people, wandering in the wilderness: “[o]’er barren hills alone, alone ! / His guide a star, he wandered far, / His pillow every night a stone” (22-24). In all of this, the white reader is expected to perceive that Shalum is already so distant from white civilization that he will never be able to conform to it. Though Shalum is moving toward white civilization, clearly Freneau does not expect him to stay or fully become a part of white society. Shalum is “alone,” guided by “a star,” like a sailor crossing the empty of uncivilized wilderness, sleeping “every night [on] a stone,” much like the Biblical character of Jacob.⁷ Shalum’s isolation reflects his separation from white culture and his wandering a lack of claim to the land because he is not settled on the land.

Furthering the contrast between Native American culture and the Indian student, Freneau at once establishes a sense of white cultural superiority for the reader. This is accomplished by describing the people of the university as both removed from the Indian, by means of education, and removed from the land. The university is described as a place “[w]here learned men talk heathen Greek, / And Hebrew lore is gabbled o’er, / To please the Muses, —twice a week” (26-28). The educated are more concerned with ancient languages with the goal “to please the Muses.” Not only are the whites more

⁷ See Genesis 28:11.

educated than their new Indian student, their disconnection with both the land on which they live, and their concern with elements of European culture, evidence their inability to relate to Shalum, or any part of Native American culture. Malini Schueller's observation on Melville's *Clarel* (1876) reflects this paradox: "[t]he identities of Western settlers ... were formed through an exclusion of (and thus intimately bound with) the Native Americans they attempted to suppress" (132). Given the propensity of early Americans to associate with Native Americans and Indian culture as a means of appropriating a sense of non-European American identity, Freneau's willingness to depict the educated elite as primarily concerned with Euro-centric studies indicates perhaps not a lack of white desire to appropriate Native American identity as much as a desire to accommodate their European heritage within a paradigm that exercises mimetic removal to identify with Indian culture. This is accomplished through having Shalum take part in this part of white cultural identity, attending the university, while also keeping Native American culture at a comfortable distance through removing the Indian from *his* cultural milieu and placing him within a white cultural setting, the university.

Not only is Shalum removed from his culture, and positioned in a place dominated by Euro-American culture, he is removed from the reader by virtue of his story being told in an English-language poem: removal not only occurs in the narration of the poem but also through the printing of the poem for white readers. In this way, mimetic removal becomes a part of the poetic imagination of the early republic, and a part of the nascent American print culture. Using Shalum allows Freneau to participate in the construction of what Cathy Davidson has called "the propagandistic functions of the literary tropes of the heroic Indian, the noble savage" (40). The Indian that the white man writes is the Indian Euro-Americans want to read. Mimetic removal occurs in the

poem, isolating the Indian subject in the Euro-American imagination by constructing the Indian through white appropriation of (often imagined) Native American culture. The Indian could be removed from being a threat to white Americans as well as shaped by the desires of the author. Writing a poem about Indians, constructing a white-desired image of Native Americans, is a product of mimetic removal that, despite the distance created between historically-accurate Native American cultures and experiences, of forced removals and genocide, serves as a continuation of Euro-American appropriation of Native American identity. For example in “The Indian Student,” the distance between Shalum and white American culture, with its Euro-centric studies, implies a disregard and denigration of Native American culture, while the very depiction of Indians represents an appropriation of their sense of non-European cultural identity. Mimetic removal becomes the cohesive factor that allows this dual, implicatively contradictory, Euro-American perspective of Native Americans.

Ironically, Shalum was not incapable of conforming to white American literary culture. Freneau depicts Shalum adopting the English language, even participating in American literary culture, effectively making him equal with Freneau’s readers. Michael Warner comments on white perceptions of Native Americans: “[b]y means of print discourse we have come to imagine a community simultaneous but not proximate to ourselves” (112). Freneau’s depiction of Shalum suggests to Euro-American readers that Native Americans can, and perhaps should, adopt white American culture, that Indians should be “simultaneous but not proximate” to whites. Conversely, this also implies that Indians should leave their cultural identity. This would allow for a conflation of white and Indian societies while also erasing Indian culture, which would be subsumed through white education. To subsume and appropriate Native American culture would mean an

elimination of the threat of Indian attacks because Indians would become culturally white. This idea is expressed in the final lines of this stanza, “(An Indian savage so well bred / Great credit promised to the schools)” (31-32). Only because he is “so well bred” is it possible for Shalum to bring “credit” to an Euro-American cultural institution. This is the main concern for Freneau’s readers, that white culture assimilates the Indian, for the benefit of white Americans. Removing Shalum from his culture and placing him in an Euro-American cultural institution implies that whites wanted to assimilate Native Americans. This placement of Shalum allows for white American readers fully to appropriate Shalum’s Indian identity into the melting pot of early American white identity by making him culturally white.

Euro-American desire to appropriate Shalum’s Native American identity is expressed in projections about what career he should pursue. Whether Shalum will be a lawyer, doctor, or theologian, all of these professions required an Euro-American education that would have allowed Shalum to be a part of white society. More importantly, Shalum’s ability to be a part of the new American society required him not only to give up his Native American cultural identity, but to leave the wilderness as well. This would have made symbolic room for whites to take possession of Indian land while also appropriating Shalum’s established Native American cultural identity into the construction of an Euro-American sense of nationalism. But ultimately, while Freneau appropriates a sense of American identity from his Native American subject, no place in white American society is found for Indians who maintain their own cultural identity. This is because Freneau saw Indians, in the words of A. Owen Aldridge, “on an inferior intellectual and spiritual level” (272). This incongruity is left to those with a “discerning eye” to notice (Freneau 37). However, Freneau suggests that this inability for Native

Americans to be a part of the same country as Euro-Americans is not the fault of whites, but rather the decision of the Indian subject.

Native American identity not assimilated into white American cultural identity necessitates, in Freneau's perspective, the removal of the Indian from society. Leaving his copy of Virgil behind, Shalum decides to "wander with his dearer *bow*" (40 author's italics). Abandoning the Euro-centric culture of white America, Shalum endangers the white ability to appropriate his Native American identity; he refuses to be a "[g]reat credit" (32) to white society. Enforcing Native American stereotypes, Freneau depicts Shalum as armed with a bow and as a wanderer, a person with no fixed location. Consequently, Shalum's rejection of Euro-American cultural identity also serves as forfeiture of his ability to, in the perspective of Freneau's white readers, claim his people's land for himself, leaving the land open to white possession. Referring to the "Indian Student" and another of Freneau's poems, Albert Keiser observed that, "[e]ven under the most favorable conditions of white domination, nature alone remained as the native's peculiar realm, and this he preferred to the learning and civilization of the newcomer" (23). For Shalum to reject white American culture is to be rejected by Euro-Americans. While Americans had no problem appropriating the land and sense of non-European national identity that Native Americans possessed, there was no room in white society, according to Freneau, for Native Americans to express their own culture.

Not only is Shalum removing himself physically from white society, he is also isolating himself intellectually. Exchanging "tedious hours of study" (41) and "heavy-moulded lecture[s]" (42) for "woods" (43) and "lonely wastes" (44), Shalum leaves white American society for a veritable intellectual wilderness. But this is only the product of Freneau's biased perspective, reinforcing the stereotype of the Native American as the

intellectual inferior of Euro-Americans. Because “[n]o mystic wonders fired his mind” (45), Shalum possesses “only sense enough to find / The squirrel in the hollow tree” (47-48). Replacing the Euro-centric “mystic wonders,” presumably the product of white American education, Shalum demonstrates his connection with the land. Shalum recognizes that, in the words of Edward Countryman, “building and using their own [Indian] institutions presented much better possibilities for survival and self-defense than war” (514). While Shalum never intimates the possibility of war, Freneau depicts him as recognizing the need to return to his own cultural institutions due to a seeming incompatibility with white American culture. Physically and intellectually distant from white society, Shalum is depicted as self-removed to ease white guilt for the forceful and violent actions that historically removed Native Americans from white society. Like in “The Prophecy of King Tammany,” Freneau utilizes the concept of mimetic removal to ignore the social and historical reality of white American mistreatment of Native Americans by implying that the distance between Indians and whites is one that is self-imposed by Native Americans. Doing this allows Freneau to appropriate Shalum’s Native American identity in an “American” literature. Shalum disappears into the forest, into the West, into the pages of “The Indian Student” as a “Force of Nature.” Shalum and nature become one, the Indian and the land inseparable, and both are open for white appropriation.

No longer a part of Euro-American society, Shalum is also no longer able to take possession of the land where he and his people live. Shalum’s possession of the land that he went to after leaving the Euro-American school is reduced to a metaphysical possession: “[t]he woody wild his heart possessed, / The dewy lawn, his morning dream” (50-51). This metaphysical removal from the land is the result of the presumably self-

imposed removal from white society, and if Shalum only has metaphysical possession of the land, then the physical land is now open for white possession. Americans already have Shalum's Native American culture and identity, appropriated by Freneau's authorship of this poem, as an act of "creative appropriation" (Bellin 4), and Freneau now signals to his readership that Shalum's land is open for settlement.

The Indian, according to Freneau, is a part of American literary culture, but not a part of American society. Lamenting that he exchanged his "native wood" for "gloomy walls" (54), Shalum contrasts "silver stream" and "limpid lake" (55) with "musty books and college halls" (56). Freneau reinforces the dichotomy between Native American and Euro-American cultures. While white society is confined to "books and college halls," the Indian is connected to the land, with no sense of civilized culture and no potential for knowledge beyond knowledge of his land. Mimetic removal forces this division by reassuring Euro-Americans of their self-perceived cultural superiority by showing that the Indian has no place in white culture. While Americans may put Native Americans in their "musty books," the Indian will not physically stay in the "halls" of white society. The Native American mediator is no longer a physical reality, but a written simulacrum limited to the page and whims of the American author. In effect, this implies that the most powerful form of mimetic removal is that which is expressed through literature, for literature gives the desiring subject an unregulated opportunity to write the mediator away into the confines of a page. Written in the tongue of the desiring subject, at the expense of ignoring historical reality while also constructing a future that ignores the mediator, literature metaphysically removes the object of desire from the mediator. The desiring subject's mimesis of the mediator is thus conflated with the removal of the mediator to allow for an expression of mimetic removal.

Reinforcing the divide between white and Native American cultures, Shalum asks “will the sylvan god deny” (59) his desire to return to Native American society. In spite of the “seraphs” (61) and “heaven’s sublimest mansions” (62) of the culturally dominant Christianity, Shalum asserts that he will “only bow to NATURE’S GOD” (63, author’s capitalization). Leaving white society for the Indian wilderness, Shalum states that “[t]he land of shades will do for me” (64). The play of light and shadow that Freneau depicted in “The Indian Burying Ground” comes to mind; the land that Shalum is going to is insubstantial, a place where there are only “shades” and no reality. But Shalum chooses to go here, chooses to leave the distinct buildings of white culture, embracing nature and its god, and the absence of white culture.

Freneau implies that Native Americans are incapable of participating in white culture and of understanding the knowledge for which white culture apparently serves as the guardian. On learning astronomy, Shalum remarks, “[t]hese dreadful secrets of the sky / “Alarm my soul with chilling fear” (65-66). Shalum’s fear of knowledge implies that he is intellectually inferior to whites and therefore not qualified to be a part of American society. Disallowing Shalum the ability to participate in American society allows Freneau to have Shalum remove himself from American society. Commenting of Freneau’s personal view of Native Americans, Richard C. Vitzthum comments that “[t]here is some evidence that Freneau shared the antipathy toward Indians felt by most white Americans of his age” (102).⁸ While whites seek to appropriate Native American identity and land, Shalum is shown to recognize his incompatibility with white America. By positing Shalum as recognizing a supposed inferiority of Indian civilization to white American culture, Freneau ignores the white cultural and militaristic hegemony that

⁸ Vitzthum discusses this evidence for Freneau’s anti-Indian views. See Vitzthum’s *Land and Sea: The Lyric Poetry of Philip Freneau* (1978) pp.185-186 n12.

perpetuated the mistreatment of Native Americans by suggesting that Shalum and Indian cultures were inherently inferior to white American culture.

Freneau's inability to reconcile Native American culture with white America is the impetus for mimetic removal in this poem. Emphasizing his difference from white America, Shalum remarks on "planets" (69) and "comets" (70) and then asserts that "[i]n HIM my faithful friend I view, / The image of my God –the SUN" (71-72, author's capitalization). Whereas white America offered Shalum knowledge of astronomy, Shalum's assertion that his god is the sun implies his religious and cultural differences with white America. As Joshua Bellin observes, "in the nineteenth century, it seemed that what Indians had feared all along had come to pass: Euro-Americans had invented stories with the power to wipe them out of the land" (272). The Indians are "wipe[d] ... out of the land" by Freneau's verse. The inability of Indians to be a part of American society is inferred to be the fault of the Indians, but since this is shown by a white author, the implied cultural differences are the product of white America's hegemonic cultural position.

Unable to find a place in white society, incapable of adopting American culture, Shalum has no alternative but to leave white society and die. Resolved about his inability to be a part of the America which Freneau constructs, Shalum asserts that "[w]here Nature's forests grow ... / ...I must go / "To die among my native shades" (73-76). Freneau's refusal to acknowledge the possibility of cultural coexistence between whites and Indians reflects the dominant white perspective in the early republic. Mimetic removal allows Freneau to appropriate Shalum's Native American identity in a distinctly American literature, which creates a greater sense of white American nationalism. Gregory Evans Dowd's observation on the potential options for Native Americans in

conflict with whites are concurrent with Freneau's implications: "[b]oth neutrality and cooperation with the United States had been and would continue to be ruled out, in most instances, by the intensity of hatred and the conflict over land along the frontier" (247). In the end, the Indian is incompatible with white society, and so he separates himself and goes into nature to "die among my native shades" (76). Once again recalling the image of the Indian as connected with nature, Freneau's last line shows Shalum as "[t]he shepherd of the forest" (80), going away into the West, presumably to die. After his death, white America will continue to appropriate his name and sense of non-European national identity as they take over the land that once belonged to Shalum and his people. Assimilation is shown to be impossible and coexistence is not an option. Shalum, like his people, must live and die in a "land of shades" (64), prevented from ever being a part of the new American democracy.

CHAPTER FOUR

Conclusion

When the dust of battle settled and the roar of the cannons faded, Americans were left with the same questions of self-definition with which they began the Revolution. Native Americans were increasingly marginalized even as white Americans continued to appropriate a sense of identity in part from Indians, while Native lands were constantly trespassed upon. In the end, Euro-Americans felt the only way for the coexistence of Native and white societies was for the removal of the Native Americans, the sequestering of their peoples in ever-smaller reservations and territories always somewhere to the west of white civilization. Poets such as Arnold, Freneau, and Tyler contributed to defining the ideals of their country through contributions to the development of American culture and literature. The ideas reflected in their poetry both reflected white society at large, while also perpetuating their prejudices against Native Americans. Utilizing mimetic removal to simultaneously appropriate Native American cultural identity and as a means of metaphysical removal, early American poets such as Arnold, Freneau, and Tyler created Indians that their white reading public desired, Indians that were not necessarily historically accurate. Though use of mimetic removal did not accomplish physical removal, the depiction of the metaphysical removal of Indians in the poems of Arnold, Freneau, and Tyler contributed to the decisions made by Euro-Americans to engage in the physical removal of Native Americans.

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