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"Educating the Indians—a female pupil of the government school at Carlisle visits her home at Pine Ridge Agency." Wood engraving from a sketch by a corresponding artist, on the cover of Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, 15 March 1884, 49. Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, LC-USZ62-100543.

## Reading Lessons: Sentimental Literacy and Assimilation in *Stiya: A Carlisle Indian Girl at Home* and *Wynema: A Child of the Forest*

JANET DEAN

In "The School Days of an Indian Girl" (1900), Sioux writer Zitkala-Ša recalls the "four strange summers" after she returned to her reservation from an Eastern "Indian school" and confronted the effects of her assimilationist education. Caught between childhood and adulthood in "the unsatisfactory 'teenth' in a girl's years," Zitkala-Ša finds herself equally caught between the culture of her birth and the culture her schooling imposes upon her. Her literacy makes the pain of liminality particularly acute: "My mother had never gone inside of a schoolhouse," she laments, "and so she was not capable of comforting her daughter who could read and write." Her mother's offer of an "Indian Bible" makes matters worse: "My enraged spirit felt more like burning the book, which afforded me no help, and was a perfect delusion to my mother. I did not read it, but laid it unopened on the floor."<sup>1</sup> Assimilation—a project aimed, in keeping with the stated goal to "kill the Indian . . . and save the man," at separating Native Americans from their birth cultures—is marked by the assimilating subject's ability to engage with the written (English) word.<sup>2</sup> The daughter's literacy and the mother's experience of letters as "perfect delusion" define their separation. At the same time, Zitkala-Ša's refusal to read and her violent rage indicate the profound crisis produced by learning to read. If reading makes her a stranger in her own

home, "the white man's papers," as her mother calls them, provide no answering refuge.<sup>3</sup>

By describing the trauma of assimilation as a function of reading, Zitkala-Ša draws attention to the use of literacy training in the late nineteenth-century national effort to "civilize" Native Americans. Together with acclimating subjects to the English language, Christianity, private property, and Euro-American vocations, developing their literacy was a cornerstone of assimilation programs. Speaking to reformers at Lake Mohonk in 1895, the U.S. Commissioner of Education promised that learning to read would have transformative effects on Native American children: "We will give them letters and make them acquainted with the printed page. . . . With these comes the great emancipation, and the school shall give you that."<sup>4</sup> But such education did more than acquaint Native students with English texts; it also shaped their specific affective responses to what they read, through what Laura Wexler terms "sentimental reeducation."<sup>5</sup> Deployed in assimilationist schooling, this reeducation worked through the conventions of literary sentimentalism, not to effect a "great emancipation" for nonwhites, but to inculcate dominant cultural values and social structures.

Sentimental reeducation required sentimental literacy: students would need to know not only how to read but how to *feel* about their reading. Through reading white-authored texts, subjects of assimilation were to cultivate sympathies and antipathies in line with the elevation of white, middle-class, domestic culture.<sup>6</sup> In directing readers' feelings, sentimental reeducation operates like other kinds of sentimental culture. In *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, for instance, Harriet Beecher Stowe famously calls for her readers to "*feel right*," to be appropriately moved by her story and to work to put an end to the abuses of slavery she exposes.<sup>7</sup> Proper feeling depends on the "right" kind of reading; as Elizabeth Fekete Trubey notes, "by combining calls for reader-character identification with detailed metatextual instructions, Stowe schools her implied audience in the correct way to interpret the novel and to respond to its political exhortations."<sup>8</sup> Sentimental reeducation similarly pressures nonwhite readers to "feel right" by reading "right"—that is, to feel the sympathies and antipathies

that support the aims of assimilation through the sentimental reading of selected texts. There is an important difference in the intended political effects of "right" reading in these two cases, of course. In the potential abolitionists Stowe targeted, appropriate reading, reading with feeling, ideally resulted in progressive political action. For the subjects of sentimental reeducation, on the other hand, "right" reading meant acquiescence to existent social structures, because developing the proper admiration for the privileges of white culture by reading about it in no way guaranteed its rewards. The bait and switch of sentimental reeducation taught Native Americans to love a middle-class life that would remain, for most, well out of reach. Sentimental literacy thus enacts a double alienation, wrenching subjects from their birth cultures without necessarily granting them entrance into the dominant culture. Zitkala-Ša's passage reflects the imperialist power of "white man's papers."

Around the time Zitkala-Ša was suffering through her strange summers, two novels appeared that illuminate the significance of sentimental literacy to the assimilation project. Written by Marianna Burgess, a white Carlisle Indian School teacher, *Stiya: A Carlisle Indian Girl at Home* (1891) tells the story of a boarding-school student who returns to her Pueblo home determined to transform it into the kind of middle-class domestic retreat she has learned to value. The texts *Stiya* carries home are instrumental, as reading them reinforces and extends her reeducation and sustains her effort to assimilate her family. Published in the same year, the first novel by a Native American woman, S. Alice Callahan's *Wynema: A Child of the Forest*, also links reading to assimilation. The titular heroine learns to read and love English language texts, marries a white man, and herself becomes a teacher at a school for Native Americans. In its broadest outlines, *Wynema*'s life resembles *Stiya*'s assimilationist "success story"—as, too, did Callahan's own life as a woman of mixed white and Muscogee descent who was educated in white culture and became a teacher at mission schools.<sup>9</sup> Yet varied scenes of reading throughout Callahan's novel indicate a more critical assessment of sentimental reeducation than Burgess affords. Though it has been dismissed as too sentimental to be resistant,<sup>10</sup> *Wynema*, I will argue, highlights

a fundamental tension between sentimental reeducation and progressive politics for Native Americans faced with assimilation. As Susan Bernardin explains, the novel reflects "the literary and rhetorical crossings between Anglo sentimental culture and the sentimentally inflected productions of writers marked as racially 'other.'"<sup>11</sup> More important, in my view, it stages a critique of reading practices that exposes the dangers of purely affective and uncritical—that is to say, conventionally sentimental—reading.<sup>12</sup> Like Zitkala-Ša, Callahan registers the ways literacy can abet dominant cultural strategies for maintaining racial hierarchies, and her novel at once deploys and interrogates the conventions of sentimental reeducation to advocate a more politicized literacy for white and Native American readers.

In what follows I explore the relationship between reading and racial politics in the novels to illuminate Callahan's political and aesthetic interventions. My focus here is not so much on Callahan's sentimental writing but on sentimental reading—reading that calls out a response more affiliative than resistant. The novel juxtaposes such reading with critical reading, in which reflective distance allows for the kind of reasoned interpretation that engenders agency.<sup>13</sup> Recent meditations on "uncritical" and "critical" reading ask us to theorize the ways we encounter texts. Michael Warner notes that uncritical reading involves, among other things, identifying with characters and getting lost in books, both of which happen to Callahan's and Burgess's heroines as they read sentimentally.<sup>14</sup> Critical reading requires, in Rita Felski's formulation, "moving from attachment to detachment and indeed disenchantment"—experiences described in *Wynema* but not in *Stiya*. Though it is true, as Felski argues, that "affect cannot be separated from interpretation," representations of reading in *Stiya* and *Wynema* suggest how affect can undermine the kinds of interpretations that foster resistance.<sup>15</sup> Encouraging uncritical reading, sentimental reeducation promotes identification, affiliation, and absorption into the dominant society; its goal is the loss of the (Native American) self in books. Scenes of the assimilating student's uncritical, sentimental reading in Burgess's novel evince the threat that sentimental reeducation poses to Native American

selfhood. *Wynema* also reveals this trap, but for Callahan, there is a way out: in her sentimental novel, characters learn to read with critical detachment, to scrutinize contexts and subtexts, to apply judgment, and to recognize and deploy irony in a way that is politically empowering.

In emphasizing the different modes of reading in *Wynema*, I mean to intervene in critical debates about both sentimental literature and Native American literature. Since Jane Tompkins's promotion of sentimental literature's "cultural work," a simple question has animated critical discussions about the genre: does it do good work, or bad?<sup>16</sup> Many critics join Wexler in identifying the insidious effects of reading sentimental literature and culture, pointing to the ways sentimentalism promotes, for instance, "sentimental possession," "disciplinary intimacy," or "imperial domesticity" in support of hegemonic political and social structures.<sup>17</sup> My analysis of sentimental reading in *Stiya* follows such critiques and extends Wexler's analysis of sentimentalism's role in shoring up white, middle-class authority. However, I take seriously Cindy Weinstein's caution against monolithic accounts that fail to appreciate both the ideological variability and the aesthetic complexity of this body of texts. Weinstein's assertion that some sentimental texts "have the capacity to interrogate their generic foundations" widens the interpretive frame for examining a body of writing often homogenized as conservative, suggesting how writers could work both within and against the parameters of literary convention.<sup>18</sup> In Callahan, I see a self-conscious investigation of the political efficacy of reading and writing sentimental literature in the face of Native American social and political crises. At the same time, my reading of *Wynema* contests separatist or nativist interpretations of Native American literature that condemn hybridized literary forms (such as the sentimental Native American novel) as inescapably complicit in the processes of westward expansion. I find, to the contrary, that Callahan's unique mixture of conventional sentimentalism and ironic detachment upends the racial hierarchies imposed by late nineteenth-century sentimental reeducation. *Wynema* is thus a fascinating example of what postcolonial theorists identify as the subversive potential of mimicry.



Carlisle Indian School ironing class, 1901.  
 Photograph by Frances Benjamin Johnston.  
 Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and  
 Photographs Division, LC-USZ62-26794.

Privileging unconscious affiliation and absorption in texts over critical evaluation, sentimental reeducation in the mode of *Stiya* calls for reading that obscures the political and social constructs shaping inequity. In opposition to such literacy, Callahan's characters, Native American and white, develop a reading practice in which affect does not cancel out the possibilities of critical resistance. Placing *Wynema* in the context of sentimental reeducation makes possible a reading of the novel as both politically and aesthetically progressive. Callahan cultivates a surprising critique of nineteenth-century reading and its relationship to resistance, and in doing so she anticipates the terms of current critical debates.



#### THE TRAP OF SENTIMENTAL LITERACY

In the period that saw the publication of *Stiya* and *Wynema*, teaching Native Americans to be more like whites was a national obsession. Schools within and outside of Indian Territory were deemed crucial to the project of "civilizing" Native Americans; the years between 1879 and 1894 saw the founding of twenty off-reservation government boarding schools, as well as dozens of day schools in or near Native American communities.<sup>19</sup> According to its advocates, "Indian Education" would integrate the Native American into white culture. Commissioner of Indian Affairs Thomas Jefferson Morgan declared in 1889, "Education is to be the medium through which the rising generation of Indians are to be brought into fraternal and harmonious relationship with their white fellow-citizens, and with them enjoy the sweets of refined homes, the delight of social intercourse, the emoluments of commerce and trade, the advantages of travel, together with the pleasures that come from literature, science and philosophy, and the solace and stimulus afforded by a true religion."<sup>20</sup> Of course, the project largely failed to deliver on those promises. Initiatives to educate for assimilation were designed to produce Native American subjects who adopted white middle-class values but remained subjugated within white society. Many schools for Native Americans followed a curriculum aimed at preparing students for manual

or domestic work in and around the homes of middle-class whites.<sup>21</sup> Native American girl students, for instance, learned sewing, cooking, and laundering that prepared them not for possession of "refined homes" but for servitude within the homes of middle-class families. Native American students were encouraged to adopt an approximation of white identity; assimilation was to produce marginalized subjects who were, to borrow from Homi Bhabha's description of colonial mimicry, "almost the same, but not white."<sup>22</sup>

Literacy was the primary instrument for inculcating the white middle-class values essential to assimilated subjectivity. In particular, sentimental literacy, training in "reading right" in order to "feel right," operated as a mechanism of assimilation. Even as sentimentalism faded from the literary scene in the last decades of the nineteenth century, Wexler argues, it dominated education movements aimed at acculturating blacks, Native Americans, and immigrants in the U.S. and elsewhere. Through sentimental ideology, these education programs devalued nonwhite lifestyles and romanticized the sacrifices assimilation demanded. The "double-edged, double jeopardy nature" of sentimentalism aligned with efforts to control marginalized people, imposing the ideologies of white, middle-class identity while withholding its privileges.<sup>23</sup>

Wexler most effectively links sentimental reeducation to literary sentimentalism in an analysis of two photographs displaying the "before and after" conditions of students at the Hampton Institute, a boarding school for African American and Native American students. In the first photograph, "On arrival at Hampton, Va.," three Native American girls in tribal dress and blankets sit glumly against a wall; in the second, "Fourteen months after," the same girls, now in prim Victorian dresses, stiffly pose with props of white, middle-class domestic life: a game of checkers, a doll, and a book. It is the last item, Wexler argues, that is "the most crucial symbol of enforced acculturation in the photograph."<sup>24</sup> Educators used the printed word to make "savage" students "civilized," bringing printing presses to boarding schools and producing newspapers that supported the assimilationist curriculum.<sup>25</sup> To be sure, English literacy helped protect Native Americans against exploitation

through such white-authored texts as treaties and contracts. But as Wexler sees it, the book in the photo indicates something less than empowerment.

[It] is a promise to the girls themselves that what they have come so far for and suffered so much to get will, with hard work, be theirs. Yet here is where the photograph lies. Fourteen months is not long enough for an illiterate, unintended reader to even begin to read such a book, much less manipulate the many cultural codes it embodies. And chances were that a lifetime of reading would not have been long enough to transform the social chances of a Native American in white society in the late nineteenth century.<sup>26</sup>

The photograph is doubly deceiving: it counterfeits both the Native American girls' ability to read and the Anglo-American middle-class lifestyle promised by even "a lifetime of reading."

Still, the book in the Hampton Institute photograph may be more than a prop, even if the girls had not been schooled long enough to learn to read it. Some texts, like the overtly propagandistic *Stiya*, were at least partly intended for nonwhite readers and served as crucial instruments of sentimental reeducation. Written under the pseudonym "Embe," *Stiya* tells the story of a Carlisle student returning to her New Mexico reservation home. The novel itself was "meant to be carried back to the reservation by returned students, and to be read and circulated locally and nationally as a . . . representation of the interior and exterior signs of evolution and 'right action' of 'good' Carlisle students."<sup>27</sup> The titular heroine is a poster child for the Carlisle education, but her experience underlines the hidden costs of assimilation.

Repulsed by her parents' traditional clothes and adobe home, *Stiya* at first longs to return to Carlisle. But she determines, "I can make this place better."<sup>28</sup> With an unswerving dedication to white domestic ideals and plenty of elbow grease, she scrubs, launders, cooks, and decorates until her Pueblo



Frontispiece to *Stiya, a Carlisle Indian Girl at Home*:  
Founded on the Author's Actual Observations, by  
Embe [Marianna Burgess] (Cambridge: Printed at the Riverside  
Press, 1891).

home resembles a white one. To prove wrong her mother's assertion that "they can't make you anything but Indian after all," Stiya strives to replicate the white middle-class lifestyle she has learned to value. Burgess links the transformation of the domestic space to Stiya's education for assimilation by having two visiting Carlisle teachers evaluate her progress. Stiya proudly notes, "My teachers praised the Carlisle pictures and others which adorned the wall, and spoke well of the appearance of our best room, with its centre-table and rocking-chair and other furniture." The items singled out by the teachers as evidence of Stiya's accomplishments reflect the "double jeopardy" nature of her education. If Stiya's mother learns to clean and order her home in the white style, Stiya must do the same chores outside her home, as the servant of a white trader, in order to buy the furniture in the room. Similarly, Stiya's father takes a job shoveling coal in order to buy the family a new house outside of the pueblo, where "there are so many who want to go in the old Indian way." The family's servitude calls attention to the near-unbridgeable distance between assimilation and idealized white middle-class personhood. Because Stiya and her parents must serve white society in order to afford the trappings of white middle-class identity, their success is always dependent on their underwriting a standard of living they have little chance of enjoying (S, 64, 114, 98).

The visiting teachers also admire pictures of Carlisle adorning the walls, which have counterparts in the photographs reproduced in the novel. Like the photographs Wexler analyzes, the pictures on the wall and the photographs in the text reflect the use of visual aids in the assimilation project; like the Hampton photographs, they indicate how the process permanently suspends the rewards of middle-class privilege. Because they represent the assimilating institution, the pictures in Stiya's "best room" serve as reminders that, even out of school, the heroine remains the object of reeducation rather than the author of her own personhood. Stiya's meticulously crafted domestic retreat, that is, signifies process, rather than end; the work of assimilation must be ongoing in the Pueblo home. As if to reiterate this point, the photographs reproduced in *Stiya* juxtapose not "savage" and "civilized" reservation homes,



*Indian School Carlisle, PA. From Stiya, a Carlisle Indian Girl at Home: Founded on the Author's Actual Observations, by Embe [Marianna Burgess] (Cambridge: Printed at the Riverside Press, 1891), 114-15.*

as one might expect, but the "savage" lifestyle and the process represented by the primary instrument of assimilation, the boarding school. All but two of the photographs in the book show unassimilated Pueblo people and their environs: bundled children, women washing clothes in a river, performers in a Sun Dance ceremony. These images memorialize an everyday existence being erased by the processes of assimilation. But the remaining two pictures, the first and the last in the book, withhold the ideal end of assimilation. The opening photograph advertises the transformations accomplished by the boarding school in its representation of a young Native American woman wearing a starched dress and a crucifix. At the same time, the caption, "Stiya, Carlisle Indian Girl," reminds readers that the subject of the photograph is suspended in the processes of assimilation, as both Carlisle student and "Indian Girl."<sup>29</sup> The final photograph, captioned "Indian School, Carlisle, PA," shows the stark wood-frame buildings of the boarding school bordering an empty courtyard, emphasizing the acculturating institution rather than its subjects. The composition of the photograph, centralizing a space of manicured lawn between buildings, calls to mind Zitkala-Ša's feelings of being caught between "savage" and "civilized" existence.<sup>30</sup> *Stiya* opens and closes, that is, with visual reminders that the privileges of white society remain deferred in the liminal conditions of assimilation. The novel's photographs thus present a twist on the before-and-after story told by the Hampton photographs: where the images of traditional Pueblo activity reflect life before assimilation, the opening image of a Carlisle student and the final image of the school buildings represent what comes after assimilation—pointedly, not an "after" at all, but a perpetual in-between, the kind of unfulfilled promise Wexler describes as characteristic of sentimental reeducation. *Stiya's* mother is right, suggest both the pictures on *Stiya's* wall and the photographs in the text: Carlisle does not make the girl anything but "Indian" (if an assimilating one), after all.



## "I . . . LOST MYSELF READING": STIYA'S LITERACY

Visual aids in *Stiya* reinforce the assimilationist lessons of Carlisle, but the propagandistic novel by definition invests most heavily in the power of words. Consequently, reading of the novel and scenes of reading in the novel reflect the importance of literacy to the processes of sentimental reeducation. While the photographs of traditional Pueblo life suggest Burgess addressed a white audience in part, the novel was directed particularly at Native American boarding school students. Leslie Marmon Silko, whose grandmother and aunt owned copies of the novel, reports that "all Carlisle Indian School graduates who returned to their home reservations received a copy of *Stiya* in an attempt to inoculate them against their 'uncivilized' families and communities."<sup>31</sup> The sentimental novel served as an extension of the assimilating institution represented in the pictures on Stiya's wall. Identifying with the properly assimilating heroine, reeducated Native American readers were to conform to Stiya's emotional responses and follow in her path toward assimilation. Scenes of reading in the novel provide lessons in reading "right" in order to feel "right" as assimilating subjects. The novel coaches readers to be sympathetic and antipathetic, to feel both admiration for Stiya's assimilation and repulsion for those who do not approximate white, middle-class, domestic identity.

In the imperial project, Wexler argues, sentimental literature establishes and reinforces boundaries, "encourag[ing] a large-scale, imaginative depersonalization of those outside its complex specifications."<sup>32</sup> What Stiya feels upon arrival at home is not just a nostalgic admiration for the white culture of Carlisle but a depersonalization of nonwhites, experienced as revulsion toward traditional Pueblo life. She attributes her antipathies to her sentimental reeducation at Carlisle.

"I never in the world would have learned to be disgusted at this way of living, had I not been taken clear away from it, where I could not see it, nor hear anything about it for years. . . .

"We must learn to feel disgust for these things. If we have no disgust for them we will never try to make them better.

"We MUST be disgusted, I say, and I *am* thoroughly disgusted this moment at the way the Indians live, if *this* is the way they live." (S, 19-20)

In addition to teaching her how to sew and cook, Carlisle has taught Stiya how and what to feel: adoration for white middle-class lifestyles, disgust for traditional indigenous lifestyles. In turn, the novel that tells her story aims to reinforce in its Native American student readers the "right feelings" essential for assimilation.

In striking symmetry, Stiya models the kind of reading Burgess hopes her own readers will practice when they return to their families with the book in hand. Stiya's trunk contains carefully preserved copies of the *Indian Helper*. The Carlisle newspapers function, significantly, as both material and emotional props of assimilation: they cover the table Stiya purchases to keep her parents from sitting on the floor to eat, and they serve as a diversion and a source of moral support when she becomes discouraged by the magnitude of her transformative project. When she refuses the tribal governor's commands that she attend ceremonial dances, bringing punishment on herself and her family, Stiya finds comfort reading these imported texts. "Talking to them as though they were a person," she remarks how happy she is to have them in her home. "I really believe I kissed the papers, I was so pleased to have them at that lonely hour of the night," she continues. "I sat down by the fire, and for an hour lost myself reading over what we had done at Carlisle in years gone by." The affection Stiya feels for the papers contrasts with her reactions to her family. Upon her return from school, she had found her parents so strange and unclean she was reluctant even to shake hands with them and retreated instead to the arms of the white "school-mother" who accompanied her (S, 108, 3; emphasis original). Once Stiya faces life on the reservation, the papers substitute for the sanctuary her departed "school-mother" had supplied; fittingly, just as

she had embraced the white woman, she kisses the papers. The newspapers become literal stand-ins for Stiya's white teachers, reinforcing her affiliation with white culture and her disgust for Native American life.

The scene illustrates the kind of reading promoted by sentimental reeducation: Stiya reads with feeling that at once separates her from her birth culture and precludes any critical thinking about her political and cultural position. She turns to the papers because she "[cannot] allow [her]self to think another moment" about the rift her reeducation has created between her tribe and her family (S, 108). This unthinking experience of the text dislocates Stiya. Conventionally, sentimental reading can transport readers from the materiality of their own lives to a realm in which they feel affinity with characters whose lives are far removed from their own; Stowe's urging her white readers to put themselves in the place of a fictional slave mother desperate to save her son is a well-known example. Burgess's description of the reading in sentimental reeducation takes such conveyance to the extreme, as it works not just to change the Native American reader's perspective but fully to separate her from her Native identity. If the repugnance Stiya has learned to feel for traditional lifeways disengages her from her culture, her uncritical reading finalizes the separation. The school papers that absorb Stiya embody the processes of assimilation that deny indigenous identity even as they permanently forestall selfhood. Stiya gets lost in her reading in more ways than one.



#### A REDIRECTION OF REEDUCATION

Stiya appeared in serial form in Carlisle's *Indian Helper*, which was distributed to other schools for Native American children—including, perhaps, the two schools where Callahan taught.<sup>33</sup> In fact, direct contrasts suggest Callahan not only read Stiya but wrote her own novel in response to Burgess's racist denigration of Native life. Whereas a central conflict of *Stiya* involves the main character's refusal to attend ceremonial dances she has come to consider barbaric, *Wynema* includes a chapter, titled "The Dance," in which the Muscogee heroine joyfully

describes the traditional Green Corn ceremony, or "busk," and encourages her white teacher to join in the dancing. Stiya busies herself making "Carlisle biscuit" to take the place of the tortilla her mother prepares; Wynema introduces her teacher to the taste of Muscogee blue dumplings.

Moreover, Callahan critiques the reeducation programs celebrated in Burgess's propagandist fiction. Like *Stiya*, *Wynema* is about assimilation, reading, and the putatively transformative powers of sentimental reeducation. The subject was personal: Callahan left home to be educated at the Wesleyan Female Institute and returned to Indian Territory to teach at the Harrell International Institute, a school for Native American and white children, and the Wealaka Mission School, where her father was superintendent. Her letters from this period reflect enthusiasm for assimilationist learning and teaching, but they also hint at a desire to take control over the processes of Native American education, as she writes of her plans to "build up a school of [her] own."<sup>34</sup> Her novel similarly suggests Native Americans' desire to "own" the education of their children. When Wynema Harjo asks her father to allow her to attend school at the mission, sixteen miles away from their home, he declines, but promises, "we can build you a school at home."<sup>35</sup> Choe Harjo's insistence on a local school counters the assimilationists' favored method of educating Native Americans in residential institutions.<sup>36</sup> The heroine's assimilationist schooling commences, then, with an assertion of a Native American's authority over his child's education. More specifically, the novel reconsiders the role of sentimental literacy in the processes of assimilationist education. Wynema's own absorption in English language texts links her to Stiya, but her evolution toward critical reading marks her difference from the other heroine. "Reading right," as it evolves in this novel, is not the absorptive reading of Burgess's propagandistic text. In moving away from such reading models, *Wynema* produces a far more complex picture of the interactions between texts and sociopolitical contexts than is available in *Stiya*. Callahan self-consciously works both within and against sentimentalism to interrogate the cultural work it purports to do. And she asks readers to come to a more progressive state of consciousness by reading differently.

Like *Stiya*, *Wynema* correlates assimilation and reading. Early in the novel, white mission teacher Genevieve Weir praises *Wynema* for her advances in literacy:

"She learns faster and retains more of what she learns, than any child of whatever hue it has been my fortune to know. She is a constant reader and greets a new book with the warmth of a friend. I have directed her course of reading, and I venture to say, there is not a child in Mobile or anywhere else who has read less spurious matter than she. It is amusing to see her curl up over Dickens or Scott, and grow animated over Shakespeare, whose plays she lives out; and it is interesting to watch the different emotions, in sympathy with the various characters, chase each other over her face." (W, 23)

Here reading, in particular the kind of reading that produces affiliative feeling, serves fantasies of equality through assimilation even as it helps regulate and preserve hierarchies among races, cultures, and classes.<sup>37</sup> While *Wynema*'s reading material is not strictly sentimental (the selection here probably reflects Callahan's own reading), she is characterized by her teacher as a reader who identifies with characters and becomes absorbed in texts.<sup>38</sup> Like the school newspapers *Stiya* kisses, *Wynema*'s books are embraced as friends. More importantly, the books elicit sympathy for the white characters that populate them. Genevieve celebrates this kind of emotional connection to fictions and fictional characters because it marks *Wynema*'s progress in sentimental reeducation.

Reading is putatively democratic; *Wynema*'s literacy makes her equal, in Genevieve's characterization, to children "of whatever hue." However, reading also anchors an education in which the white teacher encourages the nonwhite student's positive responses to white cultural norms. *Wynema*'s reading is not autonomous but "directed" by the invisible hand of the teacher. Reading at once solidifies *Wynema*'s attachment to white culture and depersonalizes and subjugates her within

white culture. Fittingly, reading objectifies *Wynema* in relation to her teacher: the well-read girl becomes Genevieve's "*vade mecum*" (W, 23). The Latin term suggests both *Wynema*'s progress along the road toward acculturation (the literal translation is "go with me") and her position as an object (a portable reference book) that Genevieve can use in her mission on the reservation. As a successfully assimilating reader, *Wynema* resembles *Stiya*, the character; as an object in the service of Genevieve's larger project of assimilating the Muscogee people, she might be considered the embodiment of *Stiya*, the book.

Uncritical, affective reading, then, contributes specifically to *Wynema*'s subjection to a white authority figure and leads generally to the control of Native Americans. At least at the outset, reading in *Wynema* serves the same purpose it did in *Stiya*, reinforcing a standardized racial hierarchy that keeps fictional and real Native Americans in their places on the reservation. As much as Genevieve asserts her Muscogee student's equality with whites, her reactions reflect a fundamentally racist perspective. *Stiya*'s learned disgust for Pueblo life finds a parallel in Genevieve's horrified responses to the Muscogees' "tough and tasteless" food, "weird" clothing, "strange, weird" rituals, and "barbaric" customs (W, 10, 13, 20, 21). The white teacher's overt racism exemplifies what Wexler describes as "the fierce devaluation of the extra-domestic life," "raw intolerance... packaged as education."<sup>39</sup> Genevieve's negative reactions contradict her assumptions about the powers of sentimental reeducation to grant Native Americans equal social standing with whites. So long as Genevieve continues to "read" Native American identity as so intractably other, she cannot consistently hold that *Wynema*'s literal reading makes her equal to children "of whatever hue."

Like *Wynema*'s literal reading of English texts, Genevieve's figurative reading of Muscogee culture produces emotional reactions in line with the dominant paradigms of a racial hierarchy. Callahan addresses non-Native readers in—and by extension, of—the novel. At the outset, stereotyped descriptions of "happy, peaceable Indians" who "dream of the happy hunting-grounds" and live in "tepees" seem to cater to an audience whose perspective would be closely aligned with the

ethnocentric Genevieve.<sup>40</sup> A description of ceremonial dances directly connects Genevieve's point of view to readers': "In the middle of the plain sat the medicine man, who seemed to be master of ceremonies, and all around him, in single file, danced first the men then the women. Danced? Well, not as you understand the word, my reader, but in a kind of hop, up and down—a motion not in the least graceful or rhythmic" (W, 1–2, 20). Such expressions, most prominent in the first several chapters of the novel, have led critics to charge Callahan with ambivalence, at best, toward her Muscogee heritage. Craig Womack most vehemently indicts Callahan's "intentional misrepresentation" of Muscogee life as a reflection of an assimilationist and Christian supremacist orientation.<sup>41</sup> But we might see stereotype and misrepresentation, as Melissa Ryan does, as concessions calculated to draw in white readers in order to challenge the ways they interpret Native American culture.<sup>42</sup> For the novel becomes concerned with the teacher's evolving perspective as she undergoes her own learning process to become a more effective advocate for the people she wishes to help. Since Genevieve, in white missionary Gerald Kiethly's words, "[takes] the same view of the case that many others of our race have taken," she can be seen as functioning in parallel with Callahan's white readers, and both must undergo reeducation (W, 28). As Ryan points out, "what seems to be a story of Indian education is really about the (re)education of white women reformers."<sup>43</sup> Wynema redirects its lessons toward white readers, whose automatic, emotive response to indigenous life supports the subjugation of those others with whom they ostensibly sympathize.

The text makes concessions to white racist perspectives, but it simultaneously challenges the essentialist antipathies on which that perspective depends. In response to Genevieve's disgust, Gerald argues against "depriv[ing] these people of all their customs and ceremonies." Wynema, too, works to broaden Genevieve's view, introducing her white teacher to cherished Muscogee customs. With guidance, Genevieve recognizes her tendency to misread Muscogee culture: "It seems I can never see things as they are, in the true light," she concedes (W, 28). Indeed, Siobhan Senier makes the crucial point that Wynema

presents subject positions of all kinds as candidates for revision.<sup>44</sup> Thus a scandal concerning misappropriated tribal annuities serves as an eye-opener for all involved: "the Indians learned a lesson therefrom, and *they were not the only learners*" (W, 33, emphasis added). In the redirection of the educational processes in Muscogee territory, Genevieve the teacher becomes Genevieve the student, learning to evolve beyond her feelings of disgust. While *Stiya* reeducates Native American readers, *Wynema* reeducates white readers, as they experience through the example of the white heroine the difficult process of beginning to move outside a subject position of cultural superiority. The lessons here are not simply ethnographic, though Wynema works to teach her teacher (and Callahan, her readers) about some of her tribe's customs. They also call attention to the racism of feelings like disgust in order to promote a more reflective and progressive politics. To do right, Genevieve and Callahan's readers must learn to guard against feeling wrong.

Genevieve's reeducation allows her to be a voice for Native American political resistance in the text, a role Callahan undoubtedly hoped her readers would take on, as well. A discussion in which the teacher argues against allotment reveals the political ramifications of this reeducation. Under the Dawes Act of 1887, tribal properties were redistributed in individual allotments, ultimately resulting in a large-scale depletion of Native American natural and cultural resources. Because Wynema initially supports allotment, Womack argues that the conversation elides the Muscogees' history of resistance and denies Native Americans a voice of protest.<sup>45</sup> To be sure, Genevieve's domination of the discussion, along with her patronizing attitude toward "the poor, ignorant savage," suggests an anti-allotment position that is firmly rooted in racist ideologies (W, 28). But her revised perspective, making possible an alignment with progressive Muscogee political stances, sets an important example for readers. Once Genevieve begins to appreciate the integrity and value of racial and cultural differences, she becomes the voice in favor of tribal self-governance that she could not have been at the outset of the novel. Like Genevieve, readers of the novel might learn to "read" the unfamiliar culture in ways that foster progressive political action.

There are more literal reading lessons in the novel. Beginning with the allotment discussion, Wynema weaves into its sentimental plot paraphrases and direct quotations from journalistic, historical, and political sources, resulting in a text that reimagines the generic possibilities of the sentimental novel. Genevieve references pro-allotment editorials and the report of the Secretary of the Interior, as well as Alexander Pope's "Essay on Man" and the history of the Greek struggle for independence from the Turks. On the scandal of appropriated annuities Gerald quotes at length the oral history presented by a tribal elder outraged at past betrayals. Gerald, Genevieve, Wynema, and others read about growing tensions at Wounded Knee in the *Muskogee Daily Phoenix* and learn of the slaughter of Native American men, women, and children in the *Saint Louis Republic*, the *Cherokee Telephone*, and a Sioux woman's eyewitness account (W, 51-52, 58, 31-32, 72-73, 97-98). The range of sources gathered here—embracing the mainstream white press and Western literature and history but also Muskogee and Cherokee journalism and oral narrative—models a wider reaching, more autonomous reading practice than is demonstrated in Wynema's earlier reading of canonical English fiction and drama.

Unlike Wynema's earlier reading of English literature and Genevieve's initial reading of Muskogee culture, the reading of these texts is critical. Genevieve, for example, turns an analytical eye on the Secretary of the Interior's report on allotment. The secretary, Genevieve quotes from a newspaper, "'suggests that the period now allowed a tribe to determine whether it will receive allotment be placed under the control of the President, so that it may be shortened if tribes give no attention to the subject or cause unreasonable delays; and discountenances the employment of attorneys by the Indians to aid in negotiations with, or to prosecute claims against, the government.' This sounds like the lands will be allotted whether Indians like or no" (W, 51-52; emphasis original). Genevieve's close reading belies the notion that assimilation programs like the Dawes Act were ever intended to promote Native American autonomy, as the law actually affords the federal government fuller control over the distribution of properties. Moreover, this reading

demonstrates for Wynema how *not* to become lost in texts. Wynema's initial view of allotment, like Genevieve's initial response to Muskogee culture, seems a programmed echo of the racist rhetoric of the day: "so long as our land remains as a whole, in common, these lazy Indians will never make a move toward cultivating it." But reconsidering the matter in light of Genevieve's interpretation of the report, Wynema determines she has been "a superficial thinker" on the subject (W, 51, 52). As Jaime Osterman Alves contends, "Wynema learns that she must read between the lines that are written by others . . . to understand with increasing acuity that the newspaper reports and school lessons she receives are not *the* truth so much as someone's *version* of the truth."<sup>46</sup>

The episode itself reflects the racism of Callahan's cultural moment: Genevieve remains patronizing, instructing Wynema in the proper critical stance, and Wynema begs forgiveness for her mistake. And yet in crucial ways the scene demands a revised understanding of what Callahan believes reading should produce in both white and Native American readers. Whereas the reading in and of *Stiya* encourages unthinking admiration for white culture, reading in and of *Wynema* involves carefully thinking through the racist motivations and tragic repercussions of white texts.



#### "YOU ARE NOT POCAHONTAS": WYNEMA'S LITERACY

Reading critically, Callahan suggests, supports progressive politics because it questions the intentions behind putatively reform-oriented texts. But if Wynema learns to read a government report critically, might she also learn to read literary texts with an eye to the racial conflicts within which she is situated as a nonwhite reader? And if Wynema can learn to read literature critically, might the white readers of *Wynema*, who confront a finale in which the conventionally sentimental ending shares space with a story of the massacre at Wounded Knee, do the same? To answer these questions we might look to the reading entangled with Wynema's own sentimentally charged love story. Wynema falls in love with and marries Genevieve's brother,

Robin. The romance parallels that of Genevieve and Gerald; however, for Wynema and Robin miscegenation calls attention to those inequities that the conventions of sentimentalism will not absorb. Because the miscegenation plot unfolds in the context of the heroine's sentimental reading, it tests the efficacy of different reading practices to meliorate racism.

The romance blossoms when Wynema accompanies Genevieve on a visit to her home in the East, and it is sealed over a conversation that touches on romance stories hinging on self-sacrifice. Robin finds Wynema sitting in a tree reading Tennyson's "Lancelot and Elaine," a text she later carries with her back to Indian Territory, where Genevieve will tease, "Elaine? How sentimental!" At first glance, Wynema's reading of the English text seems to signal her suitability for marriage to a white man. She is "totally absorbed" by the idyll, a state of being that suggests both her comfort with white culture and her apparently easy incorporation into it (W, 67, 61). Like his sister Genevieve, Robin appreciates Wynema's affective response to her reading, which he interprets as evidence of her attachment to him. When she cries over Lancelot's separation from Elaine, Robin believes she connects it to her imminent parting from him when she returns home. The presumed overlap of affect here—Wynema's emotional response to characters in a literary text reconfigured as an emotional response to Robin—reflects the ways sentimental reeducation encourages a transfer of affection for white figures in the text to white culture outside of it. In a circle of affect that begins with the text, reading about (white) romance produces Wynema's tears, the currency of sentimentality, and the tears move Robin to propose. Reading, that is to say, figuratively and literally marries Wynema to white culture.

And yet this scene emphasizes the difference between reading about white romance and entering into a mixed-race romance in the nineteenth-century United States. Robin can idealize their romance as analogous to Lancelot's and Elaine's, but Wynema notes the unavoidable distinction of their races. Of the proposed marriage, she asks: "Robin what would our parents say? Would your mother accept a little black Indian for a daughter?" (W, 62). The question starkly registers an

otherness too incontrovertible, in the eyes of white society, to be resolved through sentiment, and as such it points to the inability of sentimental reeducation to move the two lovers beyond the limitations of a fundamentally racist society. Wynema's cultural orientation poses no obstacles to the union, for surely a Muscogee girl who reads Tennyson shows sufficient acculturation. Rather, the heroine's darker skin color, her "blackness," determines her fixed difference and thus her incompatibility with the idealized domesticity presented in literary sentimentalism.<sup>47</sup> Wynema's hesitation demonstrates that while "totally absorbed," she is not "lost" in the text like Stiya; she retains a critical perspective on her own situation in a racist society, demonstrating a sophisticated understanding of the relationship between text and context. Robin quickly dismisses Wynema's qualms: "My sweetheart must not call herself names." Nor does the novel dwell extensively on the problem of integrating Wynema into the white Weir family; the story subsequently skips ahead "some years" to a domestic scene in which the elder Mrs. Weir joins a happy, multiracial family featuring Robin, Wynema, and their infant daughter (W, 62, 71). However, Robin's scolding intimates that for him racial reconciliation will be accomplished by an imaginative sacrifice of an indigenous identity, a "name" too shameful to be spoken aloud. Wynema's hesitation and Robin's response both obliquely register the artificiality of sentimental reconciliation. Sentimental ideals of multiracial unity aside, racialized hierarchies remain very much in play in this particular attempt to erase a troublesome racial difference.

As if to press the point that the sentimentally inflected romance will *not* place white and Native American lovers on an equal footing, Robin seals the engagement by throwing his arms around Wynema and, against her will, kissing her repeatedly. His physical domination subtly underlines Wynema's sense that she will be subordinated as "a little black Indian" in marriage. Robin's apology for this transgression comes, naturally, in the form of a sentimental text, a letter that begs forgiveness but expresses no regret: "I'll promise never, *no never* to be guilty of the same offense again—if I can help it." Wynema "reperuse[s] and kisse[s] the billet"; the letter becomes a stand-in, like Stiya's

newspapers, for the white authority figure (W, 64; emphasis original). But Wynema reads white-authored texts decidedly more self-consciously than Stiya, for once again she raises and leaves lingering questions about the ability of sentimental texts to overcome racism. When she returns home, Wynema receives another letter from Robin, and Genevieve, remarking on the "sentimental sighs and pale cheeks" its reading elicits, guesses that her brother and student are engaged. When she asks why Wynema has not told her of the engagement, Wynema's reply returns to the incontrovertible difference society imposes: "Oh, because—because, I feared you might not like it—that the engagement might not please you" (W, 68). Even as she responds emotionally to white-authored texts like "Lancelot and Elaine" and Robin's letter, Wynema retains a critical understanding of the cultural context of her own romance and the residual impediments to a true sympathetic union of racial others. The texts produce the tears of sentimental affiliation, but they cannot erase the reality of racial division.

In placing white-authored texts at the center of this interracial love affair, then, Callahan lays bare the false promises embedded in the reading promoted by sentimental reeducation. Robin's substitution of "my sweetheart" for the racially identifying name Wynema gives herself attempts to elide the differences of race, the culturally determined "blackness" she senses will extend beyond their declarations of love and shadow the otherwise idealized multiracial family scene. The possessive pronoun registers Robin's assumption that Wynema will sacrifice herself for him. In fact, the conversation references two sentimental models for such womanly sacrifice: not just Tennyson's lily maid of Astolat, who dies unrequited in her love for Lancelot, but also Pocahontas, who risks her life for John Smith.<sup>48</sup> When Robin begs Wynema to descend from the tree, she asks, "Did you never read that Pocahontas could leap from one tree to another like a squirrel?" (W, 61). Yet Callahan invokes these stories only to reject the plot of womanly self-sacrifice they contain. As Charlotte J. Rich notes, when Wynema compares herself to Pocahontas, she does so by calling up the heroine's independence, signified by her ability to leap from tree to tree, rather than her willingness to give her life

for the white man.<sup>49</sup> More pointedly, even as Robin focuses on Pocahontas's sacrifice, he recognizes the difference between Wynema and the mythic American heroine: "Yes, but you are not Pocahontas, and I am not John Smith, though I wish I were. . . . For then you would jump down and save me—from toiling up this tree" (W, 61). Despite the broader cultural appeal of such myths, the quick admission that Wynema's story is not Pocahontas's story amounts to a refusal to graft conventional sentimental plots onto nineteenth-century contexts of racial conflict.

Conversations about allotment and women's rights frame the couple's romantic exchanges, drawing further attention to the real-life inequities sentimental stories can obscure. Before her tree-top flirtation, Wynema lectures Robin on the importance of women's suffrage, insisting "one day, the 'inferior of man,' the 'weaker vessel' shall stand grandly by the side of that 'noble lord of creation,' his equal in every respect," her ironic use of common figures of speech reflecting her ability to read conventional expressions critically (W, 45; emphasis original). Irony countermands the conventional sentimentalism of the heroine's romance and repudiates the idealization of female sacrifice in conventional myth and literature. Callahan's reading lesson should be clear: reading sentimental literature produces feeling, but feeling alone does not translate into personal, political, or social progress.



#### "MERE SENTIMENTALISM" VS. "THE INDIAN'S STORY"

Initiating decades of critical attention to American literary sentimentalism, Ann Douglas famously criticized the form for its "failed political consciousness."<sup>50</sup> A related condemnation can be found in nativist theories of Native American literature that see culturally hybrid or "cosmopolitan" texts, those that adapt such Euro-American literary forms as sentimentalism, as lacking in political force. Thus Womack indicts Wynema for its "rigidly formulaic" writing as well as its "'un-Creek'" orientation, flaws that, he argues, foreclose the possibility of articulating a Native American politics of resistance. Seeking a

Native literature and literary criticism rooted in Native culture, Womack finds a fatal flaw in the absence of tribal sensibility in the novel. Yet the fact that *Wynema* aims to reeducate white readers complicates the call for Native American literary separatism as a strategy of resistance. Womack's reading disallows the possibility that a Native woman could analyze her own situation as an assimilated writer working in a white literary tradition—or that she could use this position as a platform to reverse the direction of sentimental reeducation and thereby challenge political and social structures that threaten Native identity and lives. Juxtaposing *Wynema* with a propagandistic work like *Stiya* reveals the complexity of Callahan's political project. While *Stiya* promotes the assimilating subject's uncritical responses to sentimental texts as an instrument of assimilation, *Wynema* represents critical reading by and of both white and Native American characters as a means of resistance. In this sense, Callahan's work can indeed be seen as the nineteenth-century Native American "act of nation building" Womack seeks.<sup>51</sup>

Womack's separatism runs counter to postcolonial theory, but the latter offers an important model for understanding Callahan's complex strategy for reversing colonizing processes.<sup>52</sup> In redirecting sentimental reeducation, *Wynema* exemplifies Bhabha's notion of colonial mimicry as a menacing "displacing gaze." Bhabha points to the ambivalence inherent in the mimicry demanded by colonial authority, the requirement, for instance, that assimilating subjects remain liminally "*almost the same, but not white*," and argues that this difference destabilizes colonial authority. As a sentimental novel, *Wynema* mimics white literary modes, but its differences—its shifting perspectives and revised subject positions, its incorporation of multiple rhetorical forms—calls attention to the constructed nature of "colonial" reading. The novel produces the destabilizing "double vision" Bhabha conceptualizes, where "the observer becomes the observed and 'partial' representation rearticulates the whole notion of identity and alienates it from essence."<sup>53</sup> More specifically, we might say that in *Wynema* the teacher-observer becomes the observed student—with Genevieve standing in for Callahan's white readers as the object of the assimilated subject's tutelage and disciplinary gaze. Callahan's mimicry is indeed

a menace: its canny use of the sentimental form reverses the direction of sentimental reeducation. At the end of the novel, Callahan's treatment of the Wounded Knee massacre repeats and reemphasizes this process.

Since the massacre occurred near the time of the novel's publication, Callahan likely included these chapters as a way of educating her readers about what had happened, and she does so in a way that calls for critical reading of accounts of the event. The chapters about Wounded Knee require readers to respond with both sympathy and critical detachment, asking them to feel for victims but also to analyze representations for what they conceal or expose about the nation's ugliest realities. Information about Wounded Knee comes to Wynema and her friends, and so to Callahan's readers, through a variety of white- and Native American-authored texts. Much discussion surrounds these texts, as Wynema and others sift through them to find, in the words of a Native American-authored editorial, "facts and figures and not mere sentimentalism" (W, 98). With the extended family gathered, Gerald reads aloud a newspaper account of the starvation on the Sisseton and Wahpeton reservations as tribe members wait for promised government aid. He then quotes an editorial attacking the Ghost Dance religion and advocating a U.S. military assault. As critics have pointed out, the Native-authored letter that Gerald next quotes shifts narrative authority from white to Native American voices as it presents a radical critique of Christian hypocrisy and a defense of the Ghost Dance as "a better religion—a religion that is all good and no bad" (W, 73).<sup>54</sup> The range of positions Gerald presents requires that Callahan's characters and readers read widely and critically to construct a response to the events at Wounded Knee. Carl Peterson, the white missionary friend of the Weir and Keithly families, articulates the conclusion this kind of reading produces: the Sioux are the victims of a government determined "to starve and slaughter this defenseless people" (W, 74).

Readers also learn about Wounded Knee through a tragic subplot about two victims, the warrior Wildfire and his wife Miscona. Wildfire determines to die with honor rather than submit to the U.S. military, and Miscona refuses to leave her



husband's side; they are killed, and their orphaned infant is adopted by missionaries.<sup>55</sup> The narrator presents the story with flourishes aimed at bringing the reader to tears, describing the lovers dying side by side, "free at last, and the little papoose sweetly sleeping between them" (W, 90). If the tragedy calls for an emotional response, however, it also supplies crucial lessons in reading with detachment. Traveling to the plains, Carl tells Wildfire that if he submits to U.S. military forces he will be protected. Wildfire reacts to the government's promise as a story that must be read with a critical eye. How can he be sure, he asks, that acts of treachery against his tribe will not be repeated, especially in light of a recent attack, in which a contingent of whites killed Chief Few Tails and his followers? The chief's wife, wounded in the attack, could barely express what happened, but Wildfire and his friend "saw the bodies of the slaughtered braves . . . and they told their own story."<sup>56</sup> This story, "far more eloquent than human lips could have uttered," records immense suffering, calls for revenge, and dictates a critical wariness toward white narratives.

Like *Stiya*, *Wynema* deploys the power of the visual but with a wholly different purpose. The pictures on the walls of *Stiya's* home and the photographs in the novel itself promote an unthinking capitulation to white authority. The dead bodies in *Wynema*, in contrast, become visual texts that serve the cause of resistance. Wildfire reads a moral in the slaughter: "Never, NEVER listen to a tale of peace, even if told by a friend. Peace! Let those talk of peace who live in quiet homes, who are surrounded by friends and loved-ones, happiness and affection; but peace is not the watchword of the oppressed." The "tale of peace" told by the privileged and powerful cannot cover over the reality of racial conflict written in the dead. Again, in arguing for a more critical reading practice, Callahan revises structures of authority; Wildfire instructs his white friend on the disingenuousness of white claims, and an enlightened Carl admits, "it was all so, yea, and more."<sup>57</sup> That the moment is sentimentally inflected—praying with Carl, "Wildfire's eyes were moist with feeling"—suggests how Callahan attempts to construct a hybrid reading mode, at once affective and interrogative. Wildfire's story evokes tears, but he and his followers

remain "not in the least shaken in their purpose" of resistance (W, 81–82, 84, 85, 86).

Wildfire's juxtaposition of two very different kinds of reading reflects the self-consciousness with which Callahan approaches her own narration of a national tragedy in the novel. Like Wildfire, the narrator places a Native American version of the massacre in opposition to the story produced by the dominant culture.

"But," you ask, my reader, "did not the white people undergo any privations? Did not the United States army lose two brave commanders and a number of privates?" Oh, yes. So the papers tell us; but I am not relating the brave (?) deeds of the white soldier. They are already flashed over the world by electricity; great writers have burned the midnight oil telling their story to the world. It is not my province to show how brave it was for a great, strong nation to quell a riot caused by the dancing of a few 'bucks'—for civilized soldiers to slaughter indiscriminately, Indian women and children. Doubtless it was brave, for so public opinion tells us, and it cannot err. But what will the annals of history handed down to future generations disclose to them? Will history term the treatment of the Indian by the United States Government, right and honorable? Ah, but that does not affect my story! It is the Indian's story—his chapter of wrongs and oppression. (W, 92–93)

Callahan registers awareness of the clash between her representation and stories "the papers tell us" and "the annals of history" will hand down. Such official narratives require the cooperation and consent of an unthinking "public opinion." A critical reading, on the other hand, penetrates the racism underlying words like "brave" and "civilized" deployed in the context of such indiscriminate killing. The biting irony here

models a more sophisticated reading of widespread reports and more careful attention to "the Indian's story."

Similarly, the novel encourages a more nuanced reading of sentimentalism, even the sentimentalism of its own idealized ending. The final chapter describes a bustling western town named for Wynema, home to whites and Native Americans in "happy families nestling . . . near together" amid the churches, railroads, and telegraphs that signify assimilation. Wynema herself resides at the center of a multiracial domestic circle that includes one of the orphans of Wounded Knee, who will grow up to become "a famous musician and wise woman." But two dark prophecies temper this happy ending and vision for the future. Old Chikena, witness to the slaughter of the Sioux, advises Wynema: "Make haste and seek with me the happy hunting-grounds of our fathers, for not many years of oppression can your people stand. Not many years will elapse until the Indian will be a people of the past." This warning recites a sentimental Vanishing American narrative, with the difference that it holds whites accountable in ways conventional recitations do not: it is the suffocating weight of oppression, rather than the inevitable tide of "progress," that will precipitate the disappearance of Native Americans. Meanwhile, Carl predicts "terrible retribution in store for our Government on account of its treachery and cruelty to the Indians": "Wrong is always punished. . . . There will be wars and pestilence, anarchies and open rebellions. The subjects of the Government will rise up in defiance of the 'authorities that be'" (W, 104, 102). The jeremiadic rhetoric breaks into the conventionally sentimental mode at the end of the novel and makes Native Americans potential agents of resistance rather than passive victims. While some read such ruptures as evidence of a mixed-race, assimilated writer's conflicted sensibility,<sup>58</sup> the emphasis on reading practices throughout the novel suggests we should give Callahan more credit. Here, she conveys her sense of the dangers of "mere sentimentalism" without political awareness. Conventionally, stories of "Vanishing Americans," such as Lydia Maria Child's *Hobomok* and James Fenimore Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans*, ask that readers feel for the victims of colonization and expansion but not necessarily think about the social and political condi-

tions that have caused Native American suffering. Callahan's story, "the Indian's story," asks instead for reading that interrogates representations in the context of real-world tragedies.

*Wynema* offers strikingly metatextual insights into the implications of texts and reading in the context of United States racial relations. To be sure, Callahan's novel bears the imprint of the pro-assimilationist thinking that produces *Stiya* in its sometimes patronizing attitude toward Native Americans and its elevation of white, middle-class subjectivity. But rather than simply making readers "feel right," Callahan's novel attends to the discursive practices that operate in the racial conflicts of her day. It reveals the limitations of sentimental reading as an answer to the "Indian question" and endorses different, more effective models of reading for political resistance. Callahan's text demonstrates how texts categorized as sentimental may in fact turn the form inside out, offering a critique from within that questions the intentions of sentimental literature and the implications of sentimental reading. In this way *Wynema* educates us about the ways texts intervene in racial crises and the ways writers and their readers can effectively mediate the conflicts of their times:

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#### NOTES

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1. Zitkala-Ša, "The School Days of an Indian Girl," in *American Indian Stories, Legends, and Other Writings*, ed. Cathy N. Davidson and Ada Norris (New York: Penguin, 2003), 97, 99.
2. See Richard Henry Pratt, *Proceedings and Addresses of the National Education Association* (1895), quoted in David Wallace Adams, *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875-1928* (Lawrence: Univ. Press of Kansas, 1995), 52. Pratt founded the Carlisle Indian Industrial School, where Zitkala-Ša later taught.
3. Zitkala-Ša, "School Days," 99.
4. W. T. Harris, "The Relation of School Education to the Work of Civi-

- lizing Other Races," in *Annual Report of the U.S. Commissioner of Indian Affairs* (1896), 1016; quoted in Frederick E. Hoxie, *A Final Promise: The Campaign to Assimilate the Indians, 1880-1920* (1984; Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 2001), 190.
5. Laura Wexler, *Tender Violence: Domestic Visions in an Age of U.S. Imperialism* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 2000), 10.
  6. Myriam Vučković, for example, notes that Native American students at Haskell Institute were given Alcott's *Little Women*. See *Voices from Haskell: Indian Students between Two Worlds, 1884-1928* (Lawrence: Univ. Press of Kansas, 2008), 103.
  7. Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin; or, Life among the Lowly*, in *Three Novels* (1852; New York: Library of America, 1982), 515; emphasis original.
  8. Elizabeth Fekete Trubey, "'Success is Sympathy': *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and the Woman Reader," in *Reading Women: Literary Figures and Cultural Icons from the Victorian Age to the Present*, ed. Janet Badia and Jennifer Phegley (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 2005), 55. While Stowe's work makes a useful point of comparison, I do not wish to imply that it categorically defines sentimental writing and reading in the nineteenth century. To the contrary, I hope my argument points to the diversity and complexity of texts we define as "sentimental literature" and of those who produced and read them. Native American women authors who used sentimental conventions for varied political purposes include not only Zitkala-Ša and S. Alice Callahan but also Jane Johnston Schoolcraft (Ojibwe), E. Pauline Johnson (Mohawk), Sarah Winnemucca (Paiute), and Ora V. Eddleman Reed (Cherokee). An analysis of sentimentalism in writing by Callahan, Johnson, and Winnemucca is available in Cari M. Carpenter, *Seeing Red: Anger, Sentimentality, and American Indians* (Columbus: Ohio State Univ. Press, 2008). A wealth of recent scholarship has examined how nineteenth-century African American writers adapted literary sentimentalism and domesticity. Significant to my project is Sarah Robbins's chapter "Frances Harper's Literacy Program for Racial Uplift," in *Managing Literacy, Mothering America: Women's Narratives on Reading and Writing in the Nineteenth Century* (Pittsburgh: Univ. of Pittsburgh Press, 2004), 157-93.
  9. "Muskogee," "Muscogee," and "Creek" refer to the people officially known as the Muskogee (Creek) Nation. For consistency with Callahan, I use "Muscogee" throughout this essay.
  10. Though he does not condemn her sentimentalism specifically, Craig Womack finds that Callahan's formulaic "bad writing" cannot accommodate a Creek political subjectivity (*Red on Red: Native American Literary Separatism* [Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1999], 114, 120). Melissa Ryan sees sentimentalism in the novel as supporting, not Native American political resistance, but white women's suffrage, an agenda that marginalizes Native Americans ("The Indian Problem as a Woman's Question: S. Alice Callahan's *Wynema: A Child of the Forest*," *American Transcendental Quarterly* 21, no. 1 [2007]: 23-45). Carpenter's *Seeing Red* usefully examines anger as an underappreciated component of Native American women writers' sentimentalism, but Carpenter sees *Wynema* as legitimating white anger through the cause of Native American reform while largely denying Native Americans a voice.
  11. Susan Bernardin, "On the Meeting Grounds of Sentiment: S. Alice Callahan's *Wynema: A Child of the Forest*," *American Transcendental Quarterly* 15, no. 3 (2001): 209-24, 209. Also see Kara Mollis, "Teaching 'dear Mihia': Sentimentalism and Cross-Cultural Education in S. Alice Callahan's *Wynema: A Child of the Forest*," *MELUS* 33 (Fall 2008): 111-29. I interpret the novel as not just adapting literary sentimentalism but critiquing its application in assimilationist education programs. While not focused on the novel's sentimentalism, Siobhan Senier's "Allotment Protest and Tribal Discourse: Reading *Wynema's* Successes and Shortcomings" (*American Indian Quarterly* 24 [Summer 2000]: 420-40) foregrounds the resistance politics of the novel; her assertion that the novel scrutinizes "the conditions of power that structure Indian-white relations" provides another foundation for my analysis (424).
  12. James H. Cox and Jaime Osterman Alves similarly point to the possibilities that *Wynema* offers a politicized critique of reading practices; ultimately, however, they see the novel as complicit with the dominant culture. In his brief treatment in *Muting White Noise: Native American and European American Novel Traditions* (Norman: Univ. of Oklahoma Press, 2006), Cox argues critical reading in the text is "a part of, rather than a challenge to, colonial literary traditions" (35-36). I discovered Alves's work as I was revising this essay. Her chapter "Reading, Writing, and Re-Presenting: The Newspaper and the Schoolgirl in *The Wreath of Cherokee Rosebuds* and S. Alice Callahan's *Wynema: A Child of the Forest*," in *Fictions of Female Education in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 68-108, places the novel in the context of Native American press and school-newspaper writing to demonstrate how Callahan

encourages a critical reading of both newspaper reports and school lessons. However, even as reading critically makes Native Americans more politically astute, she suggests, discussions about texts in the mixed community encourage interracial marriage "that will ease the full-blood into extinction" (97). While Alves and I both focus on the development of Wynema's critical reading skills, my interpretation of interracial romance in the novel, and thus my general conclusion, differs substantially.

13. Important work in book history examines the construction of the reader in cultural representations; see, for example, Kate Flint, *The Woman Reader, 1837–1914* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1993); James Raven, Helen Small, and Naomi Tadmor, eds., *The Practice and Representation of Reading in England* (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1996); and Badia and Phegley, eds., *Reading Women*. While the analysis of broader constructs of reading and readers lies beyond the scope of the present essay, I wish to contribute to efforts to understand "the way literary texts construct the reader's role through strategies necessitated and even produced by particular historical conditions" (see James L. Machor, "Introduction: Readers/Texts/Context," in *Readers in History: Nineteenth-Century American Literature and the Contexts of Response*, ed. Machor [Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1993], xi).
14. Michael Warner, "Uncritical Reading," in *Polemic: Critical or Uncritical?* ed. Jane Gallop (New York: Routledge, 2004), 13–38, esp. 13.
15. Rita Felski, "After Suspicion," *Profession* (2009): 28–35, 30, 32.
16. Jane Tompkins, *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction, 1790–1860* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1986).
17. Gillian Brown, *Domestic Individualism: Imagining Self in Nineteenth-Century America* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1990), 39–60; Richard Brodhead, *Cultures of Letters: Scenes of Reading and Writing in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1993), 18; Amy Kaplan, *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 2002), 29.
18. Cindy Weinstein, *Family, Kinship, and Sympathy in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2004), 7.
19. Hoxie, *Final Promise*, 53.
20. T. J. Morgan, "Supplemental Report on Indian Education" (1889), quoted in Hoxie, *Final Promise*, 64.
21. See Michael C. Coleman, *American Indian Children at School, 1850–1930* (Jackson: Univ. Press of Mississippi, 1993), 112–15. Ruth Spack also comments on the disjunction between the middle-class refinement promised by English literacy and the manual training curriculum of schools like Hampton (*America's Second Tongue: American Indian Education and the Ownership of English, 1860–1900* [Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 2002], 69–70).
22. Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (1994; New York: Routledge, 2005), 128, emphasis original. Critics have registered discomfort with the application of postcolonial theories like Bhabha's to Native American literature and culture; Arnold Krupat reminds us, for example, that there is no "post" in the colonial status of Native Americans (*Turn to the Native: Studies in Criticism and Culture* [1996; Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1998], 30). Yet Elvira Pulitano justly argues that "Native American theory and postcolonial strategies speak to one another despite ideological, historical, and geopolitical differences" (*Toward a Native American Critical Theory* [Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 2003], 11). Callahan's adoption of a conventionally white, middle-class idiom makes particularly useful Bhabha's concept of mimicry as "at once resemblance and menace" (123).
23. Wexler, *Tender Violence*, 105.
24. Wexler, *Tender Violence*, 112.
25. Amelia V. Katanski, *Learning to Write "Indian": The Boarding-School Experience and American Indian Literature* (Norman: Univ. of Oklahoma Press, 2005), 48, 85–89.
26. Wexler, *Tender Violence*, 113.
27. Katanski, *Learning to Write "Indian,"* 64–65. See also Janice Gould, "Telling Stories to the Seventh Generation: Resisting the Assimilationist Narrative of *Stiya*," in *Reading Native American Women: Critical/Creative Representations*, ed. Inéz Hernández-Avila (Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2005), 9–20.
28. Embe [Marianna Burgess], *Stiya: A Carlisle Indian Girl at Home* (Cambridge, MA: Riverside Press, 1891), 20; hereafter cited parenthetically as *S*.
29. Photograph and caption notwithstanding, "*Stiya*" is a fictional character. See Jacqueline Fear-Segal, "Eyes in the Text: Marianna Burgess and *The Indian Helper*," in *Blue Pencils and Hidden Hands: Women Editing Periodicals, 1830–1910*, ed. Sharon M. Harris with a foreword by Ellen Gruber Garvey (Boston: Northeastern Univ. Press, 2004), 123–43, esp. 136; and Gould, "Telling Stories," 19 n. 3.
30. Jane E. Simonsen reads this photograph as an illustration of the industry and order required of the assimilated subject, but this does

- not explain Burgess's choice of an image of an institutional rather than domestic space. See *Making Home Work: Domesticity and Native American Assimilation in the American West, 1860-1919* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 2006), 91.
31. Leslie Marmon Silko, quoted in Katanski, *Learning to Write "Indian,"* 67.
  32. Wexler, *Tender Violence*, 105.
  33. Katanski, *Learning to Write*, 48; A. LaVonne Brown Ruoff, "Editor's Introduction," in *Wynema: A Child of the Forest*, by S. Alice Callahan, ed. Ruoff (1891; Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1997), xvi-xvii.
  34. S. Alice Callahan, quoted in Carolyn Thomas Foreman, "S. Alice Callahan: Author of *Wynema A Child of the Forest*," *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 33 (Autumn 1955): 306-15, 312, [digital.library.okstate.edu/Chronicles/v033/v033p306.pdf](http://digital.library.okstate.edu/Chronicles/v033/v033p306.pdf).
  35. S. Alice Callahan, *Wynema: A Child of the Forest*, ed. A. Lavonne Ruoff (1891; Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1997), 3; hereafter cited parenthetically as *W*.
  36. One agent's blunt remarks reflect the racism behind white administrators' preference for distant boarding schools over local day schools: "It must be manifest to all practical minds that to place these wild children under a teacher's care but four or five hours a day, and permit them to spend the other nineteen in the filth and degradation of the village, makes the attempt to educate and civilize them a mere farce." See *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs* (1878), quoted in Adams, *Education for Extinction*, 29. On other ways *Wynema* supports alternative educational initiatives for Native Americans, see Mollis, "Teaching 'dear Mihia,'" 123-24.
  37. Alves offers a similar reading of this passage (*Fictions of Female Education*, 99-100).
  38. Ruoff, "Editor's Introduction," xxviii.
  39. Wexler, *Tender Violence*, 104, 105.
  40. As Ruoff and several others note, the reference to "tepees" seems particularly calculated to evoke whites' romanticized images of Native Americans, as these dwellings were not used by the Muscogee ("Editor's Introduction," xxxiv). See also Womack, *Red on Red*, 115; and Lisa Tatonetti, "Behind the Shadows of Wounded Knee: The Slippage of Imagination in *Wynema: A Child of the Forest*," *Studies in American Indian Literature* 16, no. 1 (2004): 1-31, 3.
  41. Womack, *Red on Red*, 115.
  42. Ryan, "Indian Problem," 27.
  43. Ryan, "Indian Problem," 30-31. See also Mollis, "Teaching 'dear Mihia,'" 121.
  44. My reading here builds on Senier's conviction that the novel "calls for a different reading process, one that is not linear and passively accepting of narrative authority but willing to revisit and rethink earlier parts in light of later moments, and vice versa" ("Allotment Protest," 432).
  45. Womack, *Red on Red*, 108-9.
  46. Alves, *Fictions of Female Education*, 96; emphasis original.
  47. Bernardin argues, alternatively, that *Wynema's* question reminds us of the text's refusal to engage the complex history of Muscogee-African American interactions, which includes Muscogee slaveholding, postbellum immigration of blacks into Indian Territory, and a negative shift in Creek attitudes toward tribally enrolled blacks ("On the Meeting Grounds," 217).
  48. These narratives of female sacrifice are overlaid with reference to a third tale of sacrifice. Callahan's title and her heroine's name recall the history of the Modoc woman Toby (or Tobey) Riddle, also known as Winema, who risked her life to protect Indian Commissioner Alfred B. Meacham during the Modoc War of 1873. Meacham dramatized the story of this nineteenth-century Pocahontas figure in a popular lecture tour (Ruoff, "Editor's Introduction," xlv n. 1).
  49. Charlotte J. Rich, *Transcending the New Woman: Multiethnic Narratives in the Progressive Era* (Columbia: Univ. of Missouri Press, 2009), 49.
  50. Ann Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture* (1977; New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1998), 254.
  51. Womack, *Red on Red*, 114, 111, 118. Even as he acknowledges "there are many Creeks with many different perspectives," Womack finds that Callahan's position as a mixed-race, middle-class, assimilated woman precludes the possibility that she could be politically resistant (*Red on Red*, 118).
  52. Womack, *Red on Red*, 13.
  53. Bhabha, *Location of Culture*, 126, 127; emphasis original.
  54. Tatonetti, "Behind the Shadows," 10; Senier, "Allotment Protest," 434.
  55. Callahan's depiction of events is historically inaccurate, especially where she characterizes the victims of the massacre as rebels "on the war path" (*W*, 74). But as Tatonetti points out, this representation reflects inaccuracies circulating in the popular press when Callahan was writing ("Behind the Shadows," 13).

56. While the story of Wildfire and Miscona is fictional, the account of Few Tails is historically based, although the ambush took place after the massacre at Wounded Knee. N. Scott Momaday describes the incident in *The Man Made of Words: Essays, Stories, and Passages* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 100.
57. This lesson carries over to another white character, Robin, who sees in the slaughter at Wounded Knee evidence of the United States government's murderous intentions (*W*, 101).
58. See, for example, Tatonetti's conclusion that the end of the novel "evinces a personal struggle to balance the injustice of the massacre with the romance of her original story and the privileged narrative of her life, which, like Wynema's, was a picture of 'successful' assimilation" ("Behind the Shadows," 26).