

A Children's History of (Native) America: *The Tales of Peter Parley, about America*

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I hope my little readers will learn this story,
so that they can tell it all without the book.
Peter Parley¹

In 1830 the Indian Removal Act passed the Jackson White House, forcing indigenous peoples of the Southeast into territories west, past the Mississippi River. The act came into being after years of legislative debates over Indian treaties, projecting onto the river all the significations of a political border—a physical division between nations and races. In one of many examples, James Barbour in a House debate in 1828 argues “that the plan of collecting the Indians on suitable lands West of the Mississippi, contains the elements of their preservation,” thus embedding the river in a legal codification of removal, exclusion, and oppression.² The legal adoption of this racial boundary concretized the building anxieties surrounding a definable American identity. Americanness in this moment is best understood by what it denies and pushes “far west over the mountains” or deep into the South.³ Jacqueline Rose points to this emphasis on territory in her seminal text, *The Case of Peter Pan: Or the Impossibility of Children's Fiction* (1984), when she aptly notes, “in the still ‘childlike’ state of American civilization, history could be read directly off the land (history *based* on geography), whereas if you were after the cultural origins of England, then you had to dig for them.”⁴ In this moment, Rose draws

out a connection between the “child” nation and a readable landscape, arguing that American historical narratives are written on the surface, in plain view. There is a way in which histories for children echo in this articulation of nation and narrative: boldly didactic, laboring over a naturalized representation.

This reliance on geographies of containment and exclusion are understood as a fantasy. Native peoples endured east of the Mississippi. The contact zones created by such ideological separations complicated an already paradoxical narrative of American experience.⁵ The narrative is paradoxical in that the desire to see immaterial ideologies of white supremacist, patriarchal, heteronormative Americanness physically constructed requires the embodied representation of what lies outside this figuration. Taking up this unsettled national territory and unstable national identity, this essay will look to a popular children’s history, uncovering a process of interpellation into a national body defined by the “material and metaphoric resonances” of racial borders.⁶ Indeed, the nuances of geographic borders and racialized identities are compounded in this study by childhood as a conceptually bordered space of extended leisure *and* constant development.

In 1827 Samuel G. Goodrich published the first of what was to be a wildly successful series, *The Tales of Peter Parley, about America*. Selling upwards of seven million copies, engaging canonical authors, and “exert[ing] immense influence over American audiences,” Goodrich’s *Parley* occupied a powerful place in the antebellum nineteenth century.⁷ In the space of twenty-seven years, he published seventy-eight books in this series, and many of them have multiple editions. By virtue of this incredible permeation in early America, these children’s books are a site of significant cultural work. Indeed, when Nathaniel Hawthorne and his sister, Elizabeth, were famously compelled to write under Goodrich’s name, they collaborated on *Peter Parley’s Universal History on the Basis of Geography* (1837). Taking the job for a meager profit, “evidently, Hawthorne accepted the assignment because he regarded the work as relatively easy. In explaining the project to Elizabeth, he observed, ‘It need not be superiour [sic], in profundity and polish, to the middling Magazine articles’ (XV: 245).”⁸ While Hawthorne considered it a trivial project at best, *Peter Parley’s Universal History* was quickly adopted by U.S. schools and sold over one million copies.⁹ Taken up in both schools and homes as an authority in children’s education, the *Peter Parley* series was a common companion for American youths. The historical records indicating *Peter Parley* sales and the common reference to this character in the antebellum nineteenth century, including an approval by Lydia Sigourney, affirms the ubiquitous presence of these texts in children’s culture.¹⁰

This essay considers the interpellation of children into white supremacist, patriarchal, heteronormative U.S. national identity by way of *The Tales of Peter Parley, about America*. In this reference to the interpellation of subjects into a government structure, I am following Mark Rifkin’s argument made in *When Did Indians Become Straight?* (2011) and Robin Bernstein in *Racial Innocence* (2011), where this process is described as a discursive coding of behavior and

identity. Interpellation, here, refers to the ways in which subjects are inscribed as inside or outside state models of citizenship.¹¹ Like many works intended for an adult audience, this series addresses itself to several tightly intertwined problems confronting antebellum U.S. culture. I recognize a paradox of national identity wherein Indianness is both required for constructing an exceptional national character and calls attention to the ongoing crimes of cultural extermination, reaffirming the ways in which America is a settler colonial state. While this tension between Indianness and Americanness has been explored in scholarship addressing adult culture, there is a curious absence in this conversation where children's culture is concerned. Centering my reading of *About America* on images and narratives of Indianness invites an understanding of this text as a contact zone negotiating Native American history and white Euro-American history. While the language of treaties and exclusion acts separates these histories, they are concomitantly conflated in abstract ideas of exceptionalism and the physical occupation of territories. By taking up the term "Indianness" I am drawing on Philip Deloria's usage as a way of referencing the representation and imagery of Indian bodies and cultural acts, detached from the lived realities of indigenous peoples in the nineteenth century, often referencing non-Native appropriation.¹² To draw out the representation of Indianness in this children's history uncovers what is made opaque by the taxonomy of children's culture and invisible by its quotidian representations and performances (what Mark Rifkin terms, settler common sense). This paradox of national character extends to the privileges of citizenship.

Certainly Goodrich has been recognized as a force in the nineteenth century book market. As early as 1865, Samuel Osgood commented on the eternal life of Peter Parley, the character and familiar storyteller, in *The Atlantic Monthly*. His nostalgic, "Peter himself lives, and will live, in the graphic histories, anecdotes, sketches of life and Nature, and the rich treasures of pictorial illustration, that have blessed the eyes and ears, the hearts and imaginations of our children," points to the kind of cultural permanence projected onto the *Peter Parley* series, even after Goodrich himself had died.¹³ Indeed, the mention of "life and Nature" assumes the formative ways in which Parley's narratives have shaped how readers see what is normal and natural. More recently, Pat Pflieger draws Goodrich and Peter Parley into discussions of popularity, iconicity, and brand development. In "Samuel Goodrich and the Branding of American Children's Books," Pflieger argues that "what Goodrich did—consciously or not—was to create probably the earliest brand name in American culture and to pave the way for later brands in children's literature."¹⁴ As a brand, the *Parley* books operate in popular culture beyond the bounds of the text, indicating a common understanding and trust in Parley's historical accuracy without, perhaps, referencing any one text specifically. Yet, while Goodrich and his *Parley* series are frequently brought into discussions of nineteenth century children's culture, the content of these popular books are frequently denied exploration in favor of a focus on publishing practices, market success, and Goodrich himself. Short mentions of didactic practices and desires

for fact over fantasy give way to the ways in which these objects have circulated in the long nineteenth-century book market.

The first in the series, *The Tales of Peter Parley, about America*, negotiates complex nationalist ideologies in a form digestible to young children, containing the contemporary unease of Indian removal in an extended historical story. Written from a moment in U.S. history invested completely in resolving the contention over what was to become of America, Goodrich created the model for many authors of children's books to come by balancing the didactic desires of an adult consumer with the playfulness attractive to a child listener/reader. Structurally, *The Tales of Peter Parley, about America* is temporally split between the narrative frame (Goodrich's contemporary moment) and the narrative tale (beginning just prior to the Revolutionary War). The story begins with an elderly Peter Parley inviting the young reader to join the children in the narrative frame as he recalls from memory his own lived history, which, significantly, coincides with the Revolutionary War and the newly formed autonomous American nation. Through a series of adventures and close calls, Parley not only witnesses the unfolding of American history, but also acts as an agent of the revolution by fighting in the war and retelling his story.

The early American imperative to define proper citizenship implies that this position of recognition and agency in the nation cannot be taken for granted. Indeed, who had the potential to be a citizen was a process of flux. The subject positions of American youths are always already negotiating the borders of minor citizenship and mature subjectivity in naturalized narratives of belonging. By implicating the American youth as both readers (subjects) and characters (objects), Goodrich's children's history positions actual (male) children as agents of nationalism. Precisely because *About America* is addressed to children, the impossibility of resolving this paradox is drawn into a narrative negotiation where the tensions are made visible. Because this paradox of national character and the problems of citizenship were in fact so intertwined, we should not be surprised to find these issues weaved together in this history. My aim is not to identify how a specific child read and understood the *Peter Parley* histories but rather how the naturalization and normalization of Parley's narrative of U.S. history scripts the interpellation of white American children into the hegemonic structures defining proper citizenship—that is, to understand this *Peter Parley* tale as an object that white children willfully looked to as a way of modeling and provoking proper citizenship.

“Did you ever see an Indian?”

The basic plot of Parley's first tale follows the coming-of-age of a white American boy while America itself is in a state of becoming. Young Peter Parley is drawn out of his domestic haven and into the paradox of American identity. Under the protection of an Indian guide, Wampum, Parley is introduced to, and tries on, the joys of Indian boyhood. During this experience, Parley propels into

a series of events that unfold across New England. His path is a wide circle beginning in Boston then moving to Northampton, Massachusetts; Brattleboro, Vermont; Hartford, Connecticut; New York City; Newport, Rhode Island; New Hampshire; and back to Boston. Geographically, then, Parley's movement through the narrative mirrors that of early settler colonials: Contact with Indians ignites the plot, which then moves rapidly outward.

Paralleling this spatial progression, Parley journeys toward citizenship and the critical terms of this subject position by way of the diverse historical narratives told along the way. Stories of North America, Columbus, Mexico, Peru, and the Revolutionary War are just a few of the narratives offered by this children's history that disappear under the all-encompassing title, *About America*. This movement through diverse histories offers the young audience a comparative perspective, representing a wide range of national identities. But, eventually, we find Parley right where he belongs: armed and fighting for American independence in the Revolutionary War.

Even before the plot begins, however, old Peter Parley addresses the child reader and introduces the complexities of Indian representation. Through the narrative frame, the storyteller asks, "And do you know that the very place, where Boston stands, was once covered with woods, and that in those woods lived many Indians? Did you ever see an Indian? Here is a picture of some Indians."¹⁵ What follows is an image of two Indian figures: one smokes a pipe and is wearing a headdress, and the other in full paint brandishes a weapon. Both figures pictured are male and constructed with visible signifiers that make these Indians both familiar and strange to their white audience [Figure 1]¹⁶ Parley extends the image on the page with this description: "The Indians used to go nearly naked, except in winter. Their skin is not white, like ours, but reddish, or the color of copper. When I was a boy, there were a great many Indians, that lived at no great distance from Boston."¹⁷

Here we see that dimensions of difference and disappearance reaffirm what has already been normalized and taken as self-evident in the nineteenth century. Readers are asked to think about Native Americans as long gone and hauntingly familiar, spatially close and temporally far away. White children are invited to consider Indians living in the Boston area, and yet that familiar geography is made strange by Parley's historical perspective. The elderly storyteller inextricably links an Indian presence with a forest environment, or an environment without the infrastructure of a modern city. Even in the city's colonial beginning, Parley positions Indians close by, yet decidedly outside Boston proper. This geographic maneuver reinforces the essentialized connection between Indians and the wilderness. For Goodrich's audience, the impossibility of seeing an Indian living in a city is naturalized through the shifting landscape, mined for resources in a rapidly industrializing mid-nineteenth century Boston; however, the notion of Boston as a common space that connects white American children to Indian bodies suggests an intimate, overlapping spatial history. Indeed, by beginning his story of America with this historicization of territory, Parley

6. And do you know that the very place, where Boston stands, was once covered with woods, and that in those woods lived many Indians? Did you ever see an Indian? Here is a picture of some Indians.



Who once lived in the woods where Boston now stands!

Figure 1: *The Tales of Peter Parley about America. With Engravings.* Third Edition. (Boston: Carter & Hendee, 1830)

conflates Native American and white settler colonial space. The implication is then that old Parley's narrative *About America* cannot be separated from narratives of Indianness. In other words, Boston is foregrounded through the narrative frame to be both familiar and strange, forest and city, and a contact zone that reifies the constant colonialist project at play throughout the temporal shifts in *About America*. Old Parley describes the disappearance of Indian bodies in conjunction with a modernizing Boston metropolis, framing the appropriation of indigenous lands as a normative, progressive evolution. While this version of American history dominates popular understanding today, I am pointing to the ways in which the language of white supremacy is embedded into geography for children: in other words, how children reading this text were encouraged to see identity written into environment.

An extended reading of the cultural landscape offered in this discussion of Boston and the accompanying image points to the ways in which representations of Americanness depend upon Indianness. To "go nearly naked" assumes a lack

of clothing that, for a white Euro-American audience, racializes the need for bodily protection. This generalized characterization of Indian cultures infers the ability to be physically vulnerable to the environment without harm, naturalizing embodied differences in this racial construction. Indeed, the most important lack is whiteness itself. Parley's concern for skin color separates Indians from Americans as he explicitly acknowledges his white audience. What is "ours" in this moment reflects a national promise based on exclusion.¹⁸ Robin Bernstein points to this discursive attachment of innocence to whiteness, arguing that whiteness is inherent in the conception of childhood itself.¹⁹ Thereby, Goodrich's audience is interpellated into a world where whiteness signifies American and makes possible the privilege of childhood that naturalizes the invisibility of all nonwhite young people.

When Parley addresses the reader, questioning "And do you know . . . that in those woods lived many Indians? Did you ever see an Indian?", he affirms a narrative of Indian invisibility by emphasizing the inability to physically *see* Indian bodies. Parley assumes this of his audience, thus inviting them to participate in the rhetoric of Native American disappearance. Within the logic of old Parley's narrative and the accompanying image, if Goodrich's audience is unable to identify Indian bodies, children are to understand that the empirical evidence points to extinction. However, this inscription into white America's settler colonial origins does not render Native American histories as categorically separate from the early national period of U.S. history.²⁰ Rather, Goodrich's narrative implies that the representation of Native American history is essential and recognizable to his white audience. A tale about America is also a tale about Native Americans, and it is this complication that Parley can neither untangle, nor render invisible.

Because of this narrative paradox, Parley takes control of Native American representations through images as well as through language. Negotiating these identity politics early in the text, Parley contains the Indian figure by controlling how his audience reads the Indian body through a narrow image of dress, gender, and race. In other words, alongside narrative representations of Indians as "naked," "reddish," and essentially bound to the woods, Goodrich offers a picture. This image pins down the possibilities for Native American identities to a definable representation of authentic Indianness. In her article "Indians and Images," Cathy Rex argues that representations of Indian bodies imagined by white settler colonials "produced the Natives as a visual, social reality, which was at once utterly othered and simultaneously knowable and visible."²¹ This image speaks to the ways in which Euro-Americans desired an accessible Indian body. Rex points to the paradoxical ways in which the Indian body was taken up as both a figure too different to acknowledge as human and familiar enough to render visually and through narrative. The two figures brought together in the image above are a compilation of Indianness crafted through the colonial gaze. An image like this ensures that Goodrich's young audience had indeed not identified an Indian population living and working in

Boston. Indianness is, in this text, detached from the living, self-identifying subjecthood of Native American peoples in antebellum New England. For a subject to recognizably embody Indian identity, *he* must look the part.

Indeed, the image itself expresses the concomitant desire for and repulsion from Native Americans. The figure in a full headdress smokes a pipe, wearing a heart-shaped pendant around his neck, and long pants with no shoes. While the figure's gaze is decentered, both of his eyes are visible to the reader. This is the "good Indian." His relaxed stance with legs wide, the visible offering of the wampum belt, and the heart around his neck all imply readable emotions and a benign character, open to the white reader. In opposition, the Indian on the right looks squarely at his counterpart so the viewer only has access to his profile. He raises his arm and his weapon to the Indian on the left (although the direction of the blade is unclear) while clutching a scalp in his other hand. With moccasins on his feet and a fully painted body, this figure threatens with the possibility of physical violence. Coupling these figures in the same frame provides two modes of seduction to white settler colonials: the benevolent Indian that offers his history willingly and the malevolent Indian that resists settler intrusions. The image of this duality at the beginning of Parley's tale suggests that for white Americans, Native Americans "simultaneously posed the possibility of violence and resistance as well as an opportunity for colonial instruction and civilization."²² As Rex persuasively argues, the simultaneous embodiment of contradicting characteristics lies just under this image, and yet the separation of good and bad through nuanced physical details implies an inability to reduce the Indian figure to one body. The Indian body, from this early moment in white childhood, becomes a repository for the anxieties surrounding their own in-process national identities as settler colonists.

Parley bookends his preface and Native American existence by noting: "There are no Indians near Boston now; they are nearly all dead, or gone far west over the mountains. But, as I said before, when I was a boy, there were a good many in New England, and they used often to come to Boston to sell the skins of wild beasts, which they had killed."²³ Native Americans are carefully contained as dead or far away, "over the mountains." Qualifying the ambivalent connections between Euro-American origins and Native American territory, old Parley reminds his audience of the spatial distance maintained throughout his narrative. Indeed, Parley carefully clarifies that Indian contact was made through trade, not through shared living space. At this point in the narrative, old Parley anxiously attempts to craft a narrative of Native American history that can disappear, be grieved but also forgiven, and ultimately and most importantly can be confined to the past. The mountains themselves mask the artifice of the border as natural topography. The nostalgic "when I was a boy" reinforces the temporal space between white children and Indians that was represented physically in the "nearly naked" and "reddish" bodies repeatedly confined to a long-ago history.

***“He had been a chief, or some great man
among the Indians once . . .”***

This children's history was published in 1827, three years before the *Indian Removal Act* (1830) was passed by Congress. The *Indian Removal Act* provided the following rights:

- 1) The right of the president to “exchange” land with Native Americans,
- 2) The right of the president to “extinguish” Native American land rights, and
- 3) The rights of the exchanged lands to the Native American tribes for the life of the tribe.

Specifically aimed at the removal of Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Muscogee-Creek, and Seminole tribes from the boundaries of newly defined southern states (Georgia, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Missouri, Mississippi, Alabama), the act nonetheless had powerful implications for Northeastern tribes. The popular rhetoric surrounding Indian Removal was rarely defined regionally; rather, a ubiquitous presence was conjured by an increasingly racialized signifier. Northeastern tribes were not pressured to leave because they had already been made politically invisible and powerless:

Surrounded by the whites with their arts of civilization, which by destroying the resources of the savage doom him to weakness and decay, the fate of the Mohegan, the Narragansett, and the Delaware is fast over-taking the Choctaw, the Cherokee, and the Creek. That this fate surely awaits them if they remain within the limits of the States does not admit of a doubt.²⁴

This moment in Andrew Jackson's 1829 State of the Union speech explicitly asserts the already completed extinction of Mohegan, Narragansett, and Delaware tribes, erasing their contemporary presence for a national audience. “Fate,” it seems, had already pronounced a deadly blow to Northern tribes and here threatens those in the South. Jackson renders invisible the national, state, and quotidian structures working to eradicate Native American tribes from within newly formed state borders—fate, it seems is a force akin to (manifest) destiny.

Regional specificity is never incorporated into the Indian Removal Act itself, although the boundary line is clearly “west of the river Mississippi.” The rhetorical work leading up to this law is triumphantly claimed by Andrew Jackson in his presidential message to the 21st Congress: “It gives me pleasure to announce to Congress that the benevolent policy of the Government, steadily pursued for nearly thirty years, in relation to the removal of the Indians beyond

the white settlements, is approaching to [sic] a happy consummation.”²⁵ Indeed, the narrative of the Indian Removal Act had been in a constant state of becoming since the territorial space of North America became a contact zone for colonial powers and Native American nations.

And, as the language defining America shifts by way of the occlusion of peoples and inclusion of metaphorical and material borders, there is a way in which children have a central role. Like the 36°30' parallel, the Indian Removal Act was the product of a national narrative that institutionalized white supremacy. As Jackson announced to the Union, the language necessary to define a national argument on Indian removal had been circulating, building, and integrating into the cultural consciousness of those living within the United States for thirty years. Goodrich's *The Tales of Peter Parley, about America* puts children at the center of this discussion of national origins: a legacy of “benevolence.” The fantasy of benevolence and the reality of structural violence are negotiated within the space of the child. The language with which future citizens come to understand their own national identity is entwined with Native American representations.

As old Peter Parley lets slip through an inability to omit Indians from his history, northeastern Indian invisibility within legal discourse did not render their social and cultural presence obsolete. The concomitant visibility/invisibility projected onto the figure of the Indian is taken up in this critical moment to create a stable narrative of America. After all, Goodrich's most desired success is pedagogical: a readership that “will learn this story, so that they can tell it all without the book.”²⁶ In this way, the production of knowledge in *About America* positions the child reader as an already active agent of nationalism, priming him for full civic engagement through the naturalization of racial difference.

But even as the narrative frame removes Indians to a place “over the mountains,” or more poignantly, under the ground, Parley's tale is still dependent on the representation of Indian characters. Through the framework of storytelling, Parley remembers and retells a narrative of his days as an adolescent in colonial America. He begins with,

When I was about twelve years old, an Indian, by the name of Wampum, came to my father's house in Boston. He had been a chief, or great man among the Indians once, but he was now poor. . . . He asked my father to let me go home with him. He told me of the excellent sport they had in shooting squirrels and deer where he lived; so I begged my father to let me go, and he at length consented.²⁷

In this moment we learn that Wampum had been a chief (which implies cultural capital), but now is economically (and culturally) poor. It is significant that the Indian figure is named Wampum because this signifier is a reference to trade and an essential commodification of Native American culture appropriated by white settler colonialists. Wampum beads, within the context of northeastern

Native American communities, are used as a means for communication and commemoration. This cultural value was misunderstood by colonists and reimagined to be a form of currency between tribes.²⁸ Wampum, the character, is then imbued with a double consciousness: He is both a commodity used by white settler colonials (the Parley family) as a way to access Indianness, an object of Native American history, and as an Indian subject, refuting the invisibility of northeastern Indians with his position as an agential character in this history of America.

Wampum's status as a "good Indian" hinges on his relationship with Parley's father. Later in the story, Parley relays a moment outside of his narrative when Wampum was "attacked by some sailors in the streets of Boston" and Parley's father saved his life.²⁹ This debt makes Wampum available to young Parley, and it becomes clear at the end of the lengthy quote above that Wampum is Parley's key to autonomy. It is through this character that young Parley is drawn out of his domestic nest and into the frontier where he is separated physically and culturally from his family and city. He "begged" his father to allow for his removal to Northampton, and it is precisely this desire to follow an Indian into the woods that becomes a naturalized American narrative. While young Parley's need to leave home in order to achieve masculine maturity is an old trope evinced in a wide literary and storytelling tradition, the use of the Indian figure here entwines Indianness with the male child's progression toward white American adulthood.

Parley's recollection of this early encounter with Wampum establishes Indianness as a cultural value when combined with white racial privilege. Wampum's Indianness appeals to young Parley; there is an "excellent sport" in playing Indian. Philip Deloria uncovers the American cultural value of appropriating Indianness when he argues, "At the Boston Tea Party and elsewhere, Indianness provided impetus and precondition for the creative assembling of an ultimately unassemblable American identity. From the colonial period to the present, the Indian has skulked in and out of the most important stories various Americans have told about themselves."³⁰ Deloria here historicizes the ways in which the Indian figure has been used by white American men as a means of constructing a narrative of unity, even before a nation had been declared. Indianness, when performed by white American men, allows, and in *About America* encourages, an alterity from the Euro-American character caged in by a long historical past tied to stratified social structures and strict proprieties. Young Peter Parley is "begging" for the performative flexibility Indianness provides. Appropriating this representation of Native American identity makes tangible the fantasy of authenticity and autonomy embedded in colonial representations of the noble savage, contributes to the exceptionalism desired for American identity, and legitimizes settler colonial land holdings.

Granted permission to follow Wampum to Northampton, young Parley first hears the story of America through his Indian guide, quoted here at length:

But a little more than a hundred years ago, there were no white men in this country. There were none but red men or Indians. They owned all the lands, they hunted, and fished, and rambled where they pleased. The woods were then full of deer and other game, and in the rivers, there were a great many salmon and shad. At length, the white men came in their ships from across the sea. The red men saw them, and told them they were welcome. They came ashore. The red men received them kindly. The white men built houses, and they grew strong, and drove the red men back into the woods. They killed the children of the red men, they shot their wives, they burned their wigwams, and they took away their lands. The white men had guns, the Indians had only bows and arrows. The red men fought and killed many white men, but the white men killed more of the red men. The red men were beaten. They ran away into the woods. They were broken hearted, and they died. They are all dead or gone far over the mountains, except a few, and we are poor and wretched.³¹

While the speaker here is racially and temporally placed in a pre-America moment, this history is already familiar to the American child reader. This tightly contained narrative of Native existence begins with the essential connection between Indians and the woods, then white men built houses made of those woods, which then extends into an increase in colonial violence and indigenous resistance. The narrative finally cumulates in the most explicit echo from the narrative frame: “They are all dead or gone far over the mountains, except a few, and we are poor and wretched.” Indeed, the sentence just prior, “They were broken hearted, and they died,” fits into a narrative of sentimental progressivism implying that the feeling of sympathy is a de-colonial, anti-racist emotion, absolving the white reader of personal participation in the structures of power that continue to oppress and suppress nonwhite people. Karen Sanchez-Eppler has argued for the inherent connection between sentimental fictions and imperialist capitalism in *Dependent States* (2005). She notes, “Sentimentality is, among other things, the genre that accompanied American expansion and industrialization. The literary preference for producing tears, for voicing what we often describe as ‘excessive,’ repetitive emotion coincided with the advent of mass production and its way of making surplus.”³² Therefore, the repetition of sentimental rhetoric not only evokes a liberal fantasy but also fits into the logics of an expanding capitalist society where emotion is devalued precisely because it is in excess. The last sentence of this Native American history is, strikingly, the very same language old Parley used earlier in the narrative. This repetition reinscribed white supremacy by reinforcing old Parley’s authority with Wampum’s identical remark, naturalizing settler colonial dominance.

The children's history *About America* is the framework through which the inherent paradoxes of racialized, nationalized identities and representations of American exceptionalism are negotiated through repetitive vanishing and carefully constructed memories. Mark Rifkin reflects on the banality of the constant "vanishing" of the material and immaterial Indian body throughout American history, and, indeed, the paradox of "always vanishing" and yet "always present" is strongly embedded in this children's history.³³ Repetition is used as a mnemonic device that constantly works to naturalize narratives of national identity. The banality of this didactic practice in *About America* works to naturalize and historicize the national narratives that are, below the surface, always active and in-process settler colonial ideologies.

Young Parley responds to Wampum's story by reflecting, "I did not understand his story very well, but when I go back to Boston, thought I, I will ask my grandfather all about it."³⁴ His inability to understand this narrative of racialized violence lets slip the constant work necessary to conceal how a story of American origins disappears the existence of Native Americans. Through the logic of old Parley and Wampum, Indians are dead, far away, poor, and wretched; however, the Indian speaking must then be confined to one of these subject positions. While Wampum describes himself as poor, he has also described the freedom and "excellent sport" of his life as an Indian male. So much so, that young Parley was seduced by his proximity to white American conceptions of noble savagery and left Boston with the desire to access this identity. It is young Parley's inability to place Wampum in the narrative that closes off Native existence that subverts the language of natural extinction and Darwinian conceptions of survival. The deference to his grandfather is a motion to confirm the authority of white male patriarchs. This is a position old Peter Parley, through the narrative frame, and Samuel Goodrich, from outside the text, are deeply invested in maintaining. Ultimately, this reflection scripts for the child reader a critical methodology for knowledge accumulation that privileges white men.

The repetition already visible in this narrative of Native American disappearance is addressed twice more as Parley's story continues to unfold. These recurring short echoes of the same narrative revive the rhetoric of Indian invisibility, but do so only through the repeated reappearance of Indian bodies and histories. Toward the end of Parley's adventure, he arrives home once more and makes the appeal to his grandfather mentioned previously:

I need not say that I had become very much interested in the Indians. Wampum had told me that once there were none but Indians in all America; that then they owned the lands, and were powerful and happy; but that the white men had got away their lands, and reduced the Indians to weakness and misery. I was therefore anxious to hear the history of the Indians. . . . So I asked my old grandfather, who knew all

about it, to tell me the story of America. Accordingly, he told it to me and I found it very interesting.³⁵

Demonstrating his competence as an audience, and modeling behavior for the child reader, Parley repeats back what has been told to him. The historical narrative desired in *About America* is clarified here: It is “the history of the Indians” that Parley desires, holding Indian people as objects that become visible only in relation to his own subject position. When he asks for “the story of America,” Parley is not referencing U.S. history. Indeed, the Revolutionary War has not yet begun. Instead, young Parley is asking for access to a narrative of white supremacy that ensures his own racial privilege. The story of America, here, is the history and demise of Native Americans.

The last iteration is during the Revolutionary War by an Indian voice (later revealed to be Wampum):

White man, said he, listen to me. Once the red man was King over these woods and waters. The mountains and rivers were his. Then he was rich and happy. At length the white men, thy fathers, came. The red man bade them welcome. But they were ungrateful and treacherous. When they grew strong, they drove the red men over the mountains, and took their lands.³⁶

In this final story of first contact, Wampum’s narrative interestingly shifts. He directly implicates young Parley in the destruction of Native peoples described over and over in *About America* by making visible the legacy of settler colonial violence reinscribed through each new generation. While this moment continues to script the performance of Americanness by crafting an origins narrative that naturalizes the fall of Indians and the rise of white settlers, Wampum does not leave young Parley unscathed.

The persistent retelling of Native American displacement and disenfranchisement, by the end of this history, emphasizes how dependent narratives of America are on Indian visibility. Indeed, this text is concerned with origins (the history ends with Independence) and the formation of an American character, and both call upon the Indian as a source of conflict and resolution. Representations of Indianness and white, middle-class boyhood dominate this narrative precisely because models of nineteenth century American citizenship depend upon the continued performance of these ideals. The white, American, male child reader is both the impetus for the publication of *About America* and the ideal outcome. The threat to American boyhood building through young and old Parley throughout the narrative becomes apparent in this final history lesson as Wampum addresses the young man he knows well by his race and gender rather than his name. Young Parley, in this moment, has moved from a position of minor citizenship to mature subjectivity. His character is confronted with the ephemerality of childhood and cannot remain innocent when recognized within

the logic of settler colonial violence. Parley is now recognized as an active agent of settler colonial violence, no longer privileged as an observer.

“I was therefore anxious to hear the history of the Indians”

While the title of this history, *About America*, may claim national specificity, the narrative itself is constantly accessing stories and making space for bodies outside the explicit domain of the mid-nineteenth century United States. For the white male child, *The Tales of Peter Parley, about America* invites a connection to the privileges of white racial identity and a powerful national history. The instructive and playful characteristics of this children's history give slight coverage to the constant and insidious settler colonial violence enacted on indigenous bodies and land. Moving through time, from the narrative frame to the story within, Peter Parley participates in the quotidian reinscribing of Indians as invisible through the reconstitution of white Americans as the only Americans. However, this discursive violence can be enacted only through the repetitive revival of Indian bodies, voices, and histories throughout the text.

The significance of this children's history lies with its audience. Native American stories dominate this space in *About America*, as do the visual representations of Indian bodies. There is an essential connection, illustrated in this children's history, between conceptions of Indians, children, and citizenship. Minor subjects are the fulcrum of this contact zone where antebellum nineteenth century political unease surrounding national futurity was exacerbated by the desire for a unified and exceptional historical narrative that is teachable, performable, and framed with the language of nature and fate so as to mask the labor of didactic texts and embodied performance. Anna Mae Duane has argued that the marginalized position of child subjects has historically masked the essentialized and romanticized notions of childhood, naturalized in the humanities and sciences.³⁷ By denaturalizing childhood as a space existing firmly outside national and political desires, this essay contributes to an ongoing conversation about the ways in which Indian identities are constructed and represented for white children in the nineteenth century, that is, the ways in which settler colonial ideologies are reproduced in children's culture and embedded within narratives of national identity and embodied citizenship. The precarity of American futurity is extended by an understanding of Americanness that is reliant on nonwhite narratives of origins, and children, as always, already implicated in the systemic disenfranchisement of Indian nations. The appropriation of Native American history serves as both the foundation and the earthquake constantly threatening to undo a coherent and progressive narrative of America.

Notes

1. Samuel G. Goodrich, *The Tales of Peter Parley, about America* (Boston: S.G. Goodrich, 1827), 133.

2. James Barbour, *Register of Debates*, House of Representatives, 20th Cong. 1st Sess. (1828).

3. Goodrich, *About America*, 14.
4. Jacqueline Rose, *The Case of Peter Pan: Or the Impossibility of Children's Fiction* (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1984), 55.
5. Mary L. Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992), 8.
6. Mary Pat Brady, "Border," in *Keywords for American Cultural Studies*, ed. Bruce Burgett and Glenn Hendler (New York: New York University Press, 2007), 32.
7. Caroline F. Levander, *Cradle of Liberty: Race, the Child, and National Belonging from Thomas Jefferson to W.E.B. Du Boise* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 48.
8. Sarah A. Wadsworth, "Nathaniel Hawthorne, Samuel Goodrich, and the Transformation of the Juvenile Literature Market," *The Nathaniel Hawthorne Review* 26, no. 1 (2000): 4.
9. Wadsworth, "Transformation of the Juvenile Literature Market," 4–5.
10. Daniel Roselle, *Samuel Griswold Goodrich, Creator of Peter Parley; A Study of His Life and Work* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1968), 79.
11. Robin Bernstein, *Racial Innocence: Performing American Childhood from Slavery to Civil Rights* (New York: New York University Press, 2011); Mark Rifkin, *When Did Indians Become Straight?*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 37. As an example of the ways in which interpellation has been employed in scholarship that has influenced this project, Robin Bernstein describes this process as an enscription "that combines narrative with materiality to structure behavior." (76–77). Similarly, Mark Rifkin takes up this process to describe the ways in which "state institutions and allied nongovernmental discourses, like late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century anthropology, interpellate forms of indigenous sociality, spatiality, and governance that do not fit within liberal frameworks as *kinship*, coding them as aberrant or anomalous modes of (failed) domesticity when measured against the natural and self-evident model of nuclear conjugality" (37).
12. Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1998).
13. Samuel Osgood, "Books for Our Children," *The Atlantic Monthly* 16, no. 98 (1865): 725.
14. Pat Pflieger, "Samuel Goodrich and the Branding of American Children's Books," *Dime Novel Round-Up* 77, no. 1 (2008): 4.
15. Goodrich, *About America*, 11.
16. *The Tales of Peter Parley about America*. With Engravings. Third Edition. Boston: Published by Carter & Hendee 1830.
17. Goodrich, *About America*, 12.
18. Lauren Gail Berlant, *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City: Essays on Sex and Citizenship* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997), 18–19.
19. Bernstein, *Racial Innocence*, 33.
20. Bernstein, *Racial Innocence*, 76–77.
21. Cathy Rex, "Indians and Images: The Massachusetts Bay Colony Seal, James Printer, and the Anxiety of Colonial Identity," *American Quarterly*, 63, no. 1 (2011): 65.
22. Cathy Rex, "Indians and Images", 70.
23. Goodrich, *About America*, 14.
24. Andrew Jackson, *State of the Union Address* (<http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/document/state-of-the-union-address-39/>, 1829).
25. Andrew Jackson, *Second Annual Message to Congress*. 21st Cong. 2nd Sess. (<http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=llrd&fileName=010/llrd010.db&recNum=438>, 1830).
26. Goodrich, *About America*, 133.
27. Goodrich, *About America*, 14–15.
28. From Alice Nash's September 24 lecture in her course titled, "Indigenous Peoples of North America" at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, 2013.
29. Goodrich, *About America*, 15.
30. Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 5.
31. Goodrich, *About America*, 18–20.
32. Karen Sanchez-Eppler, *Dependent States: The Child's Part in Nineteenth-Century American Culture* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), 146.
33. Rifkin, Mark, "Settler Common Sense," *Settler Colonial Studies*, 3,3-4 (2013): 324.
34. Goodrich, *About America*, 20–21.
35. Goodrich, *About America*, 56–57.
36. Goodrich, *About America*, 125–126.
37. Anna Mae Duane, ed., *The Children's Table: Childhood Studies and the Humanities* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2013), 6.