

Anthropology, Allotment Policy, and the Autobiography of Charles Eastman

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*I*n the late nineteenth century a new generation of American Indian artists, intellectuals, and political leaders emerged from a century of radical transformation of their communities. In the wake of the Civil War, federal Indian policy was characterized by a continued colonial effort first to control and suppress indigenous peoples and later to assimilate them into the national body. The latter project was marked in 1887 by the General Allotment Act, also known as the Dawes Act. As the eponymous Henry Dawes, former Senator from Massachusetts, framed the policy, the legislation aimed to “fit the Indian for civilization and to absorb him into it” (281). Specifically, the policy moved to dissolve communal land-holding practices by allotting reservation plots to individual landowners: “one hundred sixty acres to heads of families” (283). In theory the law also provided citizenship so Native landowners would have legal representation to protect their newly allotted private property. In practice the legislation effectively worked to eliminate tribal sovereignty and indigenous life-ways. “The federal allotment policy,” as David Carlson notes, “fused long-standing paternalistic assumptions about Indians’ cultural inferiority with turn-of-the-century theories of human psychology, development and education. This conjunction produced the most potent mechanisms of colonial domination Native Americans living in the United States had ever experienced” (605).

The educational arm of this policy was off-reservation boarding schools, the most infamous example being the Carlisle Indian School. Founded by military man Richard Henry Pratt, his motto, “Kill the Indian, save the man,” bluntly captured the goal of the schools: Native children would have their hair shorn, learn English exclusively, develop a trade, and were ultimately encouraged to leave their communities to find work in the East.¹ Paradoxically, this colonial pedagogy enabled some tribes to imagine different sovereign futures than Pratt and Dawes anticipated. As Ojibwe scholar Gerald Vizenor notes, the English language, “learned under duress at mission and federal schools [...] carried the vision and shadow of the Ghost Dance, that religion of renewal, from tribe to tribe on the vast plains at the end of the nineteenth century” (105-6). English could nurture “literature of liberation” that enabled what Vizenor calls “tribal survivance.” For the new generation of American Indians who themselves experienced the boarding school educational system, writing would be one mechanism through which they worked to transform the future of their communities. Foremost among these figures, which included Zitkala-Sa, Luther Standing Bear, Arthur C. Parker, Dr. Carlos Montezuma, and Laura Cornelius, was Dr. Charles Alexander Eastman.

At the dawn of the twentieth century Eastman emerged as “the dean of progressive American Indians” and was widely respected as a leader, writer, and lecturer (Hertzberg 38). To realize such an esteemed position he followed a remarkable path. Raised traditionally before attending a boarding school, Eastman excelled in his studies, ultimately graduating from Dartmouth College and Boston University medical school. In 1890 he took his first job after medical school, working as physician at the Pine Ridge agency where he tended the Sioux injured at the Wounded Knee massacre (Eastman, *From the Deep Woods* 92-115). Eventually Eastman left his medical practice and achieved some influence and celebrity through his lecturing and publications (Wilson, *Ohiyesa* 150). Since his wife and editor Elaine Goodale Eastman first encouraged him to submit his stories to *St. Nicholas: An Illustrated Magazine for Young*

Folks around 1893, Eastman published widely, for both adults and children, in *Harper's Magazine*, *Sunset Magazine*, *Lippincott's Magazine*, and *Boy's Life* (Heflin 195-97). He also published several books, including *Indian Boyhood* (1902), *Wigwam Evenings* (1909), *Indian Child Life* (1913), and *Indian Scout Talks* (1914).

The decade beginning in 1910 proved to be most consequential for Eastman, particularly in relation to his work, his family life, and his own literary production. He was an important catalyst for the formation of the Society of American Indians (SAI) in 1911. As Lucy Maddox notes in *Citizen Indians: Native American Intellectuals, Race and Reform*, the SAI was a pan-Indian association governed exclusively by American Indians with the goal of shaping public opinion to facilitate "the uplift of Indian people" (4). His work in the SAI led to a relationship with Seneca Arthur C. Parker, perhaps the group's most dedicated member (Wilson, *Ohiyesa* 155). While Eastman had an ambivalent relationship with the SAI, Parker and the group's work exerted tremendous influence on Eastman and his literature in this era. Parker was the grandnephew of Ely S. Parker, a colleague of the influential evolutionary anthropologist Lewis Henry Morgan. In his book *Ancient Society* (1877), Morgan put forth a developmental schema that saw humankind progress from "savagery" to "civilization." While his theories were under attack in the early twentieth century thanks to Franz Boas, who criticized them for being both ethnocentric and naïve in their equation of change with progress, Arthur Parker's own work remained indebted to Morgan (Hertzberg 52). Indeed, the influence of evolutionary thinking on the SAI in general was evident at the group's first conference in Columbus, Ohio, in 1911. Social evolution, as Hertzberg notes, "was conceived to be a mighty and inexorable force, and it seems clear that the Indians at the conference viewed 'the race' as in the process of working itself up the evolutionary ladder [...] 'evolution' and 'progress' tended to be equated" (73-74). As an original member of the SAI, Charles Eastman was not only in attendance at this first conference, he was likely part of the larger consensus that equated progress with evolution. In other words, he was part of the larger Society

consensus that seemed to agree with the intent of the Dawes Act, if not the way the legislation was enacted: assimilation, and incorporation into the social, political, and economic destiny of the United States remained a largely unquestioned policy objective.

In part due to his “firm” advocacy “for the goals of the Dawes Act” (Bayers 52), Eastman “would be reproached as romantic and censured as an assimilationist” by some early scholars in Native American Studies (Vizenor 51). However, more contemporary scholars, to borrow Vizenor’s formulation, have “honored his simulations of survivance.” As Penelope Myrtle Kelsey notes, while a number of earlier scholars “built the argument that Eastman typifies an assimilated Progressive Indian,” recent critics “increasingly are finding that early American Indian authors who sometimes advocated assimilation invariably also had tribally centered agendas that contradicted these arguments for acculturation” (31). In addition to the work of Malea Powell, the most compelling example of this scholarship emanates from Kevin Bruyneel’s concept of the “third space of sovereignty.” This is a space in which “Indigenous political actors work across American spatial and temporal boundaries, demanding rights and resources from the liberal democratic settler-state while also challenging the imposition of colonial rule on their lives” (xvii). For Bruyneel, Eastman exemplified such a political actor: “Eastman and the SAI sought to retain a strong connection to indigenous cultural and social norms while aiming to secure the political and institutional benefits of inclusion in U.S. political society” (121). Recent work by Christopher Pexa, primarily addressing Eastman’s *Indian Scout Talks* (1914) and *The Indian To-day* (1915), and Kiara Vigil, addressing the camp Eastman’s family ran (Camp Oahe), both draw on Bruyneel while foregrounding the way Dakota epistemologies, sensibilities, and cultural practices informed Eastman’s cultural work.

The following essay, resonant with this critical reappraisal of Eastman’s life and work, addresses his 1916 autobiography, *From the Deep Woods to Civilization*, in which Eastman, the model of successful assimilation for so many white reformers, voiced a profound skepticism

about the assumptions undergirding both evolutionary anthropology and the Dawes project he endorsed. Ironically, this skepticism grew, in part, from a time in 1910 when he worked as a "salvage ethnographer" amongst the Ojibwe, work discussed near the end of *From the Deep Woods*. Commissioned to collect artifacts, Eastman in fact became reacquainted with indigenous value systems and practices. This opportunity pushed him to question his own assumptions about the "progress" trumpeted originally by Northeastern reformers and ultimately by the SAI.

In this essay I demonstrate that Charles Eastman's *From the Deep Woods to Civilization* is in conversation with, and often questions a number of ethnographic discourses, both professional and popular, that shaped federal policy and public opinion toward Native Americans. Such discourses included the work of Frank Hamilton Cushing and James Mooney. Eastman clearly grasped the problematic way evolutionary ethnographers cast tribes as societies "from the deep woods" and far outside of "civilization." In his autobiography he uses his own "ethnographic" aesthetic to upend this suspect developmental narrative, which Lewis Henry Morgan helped popularize, while simultaneously asserting the value, even superiority, of Dakota and indigenous cultural practices. Eastman accomplishes this by juxtaposing the failings of American "modernity" with markedly more humane recollections of a Santee upbringing and experiences among other tribes in his later life. In addition to his work amongst the Ojibwe, Eastman served as the physician at Pine Ridge and, later, as a representative of the YMCA working with a variety of tribes. These experiences left an indelible mark on his thinking and reacquainted him with indigenous philosophies. As he came to write in his autobiography's final chapter, "The philosophy of the original American was demonstrably on a higher plane, his gift of eloquence, wit, humor and poetry is well established; his democracy and community life was much nearer the ideal than ours to-day; his standard of honor and friendship unsurpassed" (188). Such a conclusion fissured the evolutionary logic undergirding the Dawes project as well, which

located private property and democratic capitalism as the culmination of human development. Moreover, by elevating indigenous and Dakota culture and philosophy as he casts the United States as morally wanting, spiritually suspect, and troubled by inequality, Eastman plants the seed for a “third space of sovereignty” for Native communities.

I. Contemporary Anthropology and Ethnology

By the time *From the Deep Woods to Civilization* was published in 1916 there was already a well-established tradition of, and taste for, anthropological writing that targeted a general reading public. To understand Eastman’s autobiography it is important to situate it in relationship to the field of anthropology and the emergence of such writing. The late nineteenth century, as anthropological historian George Stocking Jr suggests, can be dubbed the field’s “Museum Era.” Lacking university recognition and attendant funding, anthropologists turned to wealthy patrons and museums, which were also supported through philanthropy, to sponsor their research (180). In the Museum Era, then, a number of forces worked as an ensemble to nurture a model of collection or “salvage” ethnography that looked to gather, catalog, and display material objects from “disappearing” cultures.

In a climate of knowledge production in the nineteenth century that understood knowledge as embodied in objects, museums proved as consequential as libraries. This general object orientation was articulated through a developmental paradigm that proved central to anthropology’s salvage mentality. Stocking notes that

As a discipline organized around the principle of change in time, and devoted primarily to groups that had left no written records, anthropology had a strong internal intellectual push toward the collection and study of material objects permanently embodying moments of past cultural or racial development. Within an evolutionist framework, human physical remains, archeological finds, and contemporary material culture

were the most ready means of graphically illustrating the development of mankind [...]. (181)

Perhaps the most influential proponent of this evolutionary schema in the United States was Lewis Henry Morgan. In 1877 Morgan published *Ancient Society; Or, Researches in the Lines of Human Progress from Savagery through Barbarism to Civilization*. The treatise espoused, as Morgan noted in the book's opening pages, "that mankind commenced their career at the bottom of the scale and worked their way up from savagery to civilization" and that, moreover, such different stages of development were "connected with each other in a natural as well as necessary sequence of progress" (3). According to Philip Deloria, Morgan's developmental schema took root, nearly thirty years prior to the publication of *Ancient Society*, in Northeastern literary fraternal orders. In an effort to nurture a distinctly American literary tradition Morgan and his friends developed an "Indian Society" (called the Cayuga Society) wherein they dressed as "Indians," took secret Indian names, and wrote nostalgic poetry (Deloria 73). What began as a romanticized model of Indian play predicated upon the nostalgia for vanishing Indians eventually turned into an effort to know the "Indian" past through rational and objective scientific methods. Although the field of inquiry may have shifted, Morgan's turn to proto-anthropology still relied on locating or constructing an "authentic" indigenous Other outside the realm of the contemporary world.

Both salvage ethnography and Morgan's ideas left their impress on one of the more popular writers of ethnographies in the period: Frank Hamilton Cushing, an anthropologist whose stories documenting his time as a participant-observer amongst the Zuni reached enthusiastic Northeastern audiences in 1882 and 1883. Cushing published in a variety of popular magazines in this period, including the *Atlantic Monthly*, *Harpers*, and *Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine*.² Cushing himself was a prime example of a cultural worker being driven by the salvage imperative. During his time at Zuni he acquired more than 12,600 artifacts for the Smithsonian, amassing over 21,000 pounds of materials

in 1881 alone (Evans 725). Cushing's magazine pieces made it difficult for many Americans to grasp how indigenous ways of living could persist in a modern industrial age (Eliot 93). His work was ensconced within the "logic of cultural evolution. [...] [he] could not resist characterizing the Zunis as simply belonging to an earlier stage of cultural development than those who read about them in the *Century*." For many Northeasterners, the allure of a figure like Cushing, who actually toured the Northeast with six Zuni men in the months leading up to his popular publications, may have related to a deep cultural ambivalence about American society and continental expansion. As Curtis Hinsley argues in "Zunis and Brahmins: Cultural Ambivalence in the Gilded Age," the museum process itself aimed to resolve the Northeasterner's conflicted emotions regarding Indians, industrial society, and the growth of American empire:

The resolution was achieved by announcing and then demonstrating the end of Indian history. The museum process constructed a meaning of Indian demise within the teleology of manifest destiny; it indirectly addressed the insistent doubts of Gilded Age Americans over the import of industrial capitalism; and it did so by encasing, in time and space, the American Indian. Dehistoricization was the essence of the process [...] which took many forms: World's Fairs, Wild West shows, anthropology museums and publications, on-site tourist attractions, curio shops and Indian markets. All provided public spaces for the safe consumption of a newly dehistoricized Indian; in most of them, there was an element of theatre.
(170)

While Cushing's East Coast tour with the Zuni was clearly part of this theatre, his writing also provided safe consumption of the "dehistoricized Indian" to interested readers. Moreover, Cushing's work tapped a popular obsession with the American Southwest that emerged in the nineteenth century, an obsession that looked to the region as a salve for

Americans seeking "integration and balance between their own divided selves—North and South, pastoral and urban, nostalgic and progressive" (Hinsley 172).³ Ethnographers and travel writers who described the landscapes and peoples of Arizona territory found eager readers in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

In the wake of the Civil War, interest in narratives like Cushing's also reflected the Northeastern middle-class's sense of self, citizenship, and mission to reconceptualize a more diverse national identity, a project that regionalist and realist fiction were supposed to facilitate. As Amy Kaplan writes in the *Social Construction of American Realism*, William Dean Howells, editor of the *Atlantic Monthly* from 1871-1881, championed literary realism as a model of writing particularly suited to provide cohesion to a fractured nation struggling to recover from the Civil War. Howells characterized realist writing as "democracy in literature" as it "extend[ed] literary representation to ordinary people whom artists have either neglected or idealized" (15). But literary realism and regionalism were not the only ways for readers to understand previously neglected communities. On this point Brad Evans suggests an important link between Cushing's ethnography and the coeval popular regionalist or "local color" fiction published by writers like Sarah Orne Jewett and Hamlin Garland, writers who also found audiences through the *Atlantic*. Both modes of writing "marked not only a kind of detached and voyeuristic observational practice [...] but an incorporation of that otherness into the very construction of what it meant to be an 'American elite' (724-25). Regional and realist writing also seemed to share similar goals as social scientific ethnography: the literature valued accurate descriptions of language, dress, and customs that gave communities their unique identities (Elliot xiii-xiv). In the same period, then, that the Allotment Act (1887) endeavored to assimilate Native communities into the national body, salvage ethnographers and regionalist writers were moving to "preserve" local cultures in museums and texts. As Michael Elliott notes,

At a time when many believed the leveling forces of
modernity would eliminate local and regional distinctions,

texts were seen as preserving such distinctions to be consumed by cosmopolitan readers as well as studied by social scientists. The ultimate purpose of the salvage imperative that united local color writing, folkloric writing, and scientific ethnography was not to reverse or forestall the process of cultural unification. (xv)

Salvage ethnography came to play a paradoxically transformative role for Charles Eastman himself. His introduction to the occupation of salvage ethnographer occurred in 1910 during a transitional period in his life. Now over fifty, Eastman had spent the previous ten years working in a variety of positions, including an extended stint for the Bureau of Indian Affairs renaming Sioux individuals, a project undertaken to facilitate land allotment (Wilson, *Ohiyesa* 120). In this period his writing career also began to flourish as he published several books, such as *Indian Boyhood* (1902) and a number of essays and short stories that appeared in magazines like *Harpers*, *The Craftsman*, *Sunset*, and *Ladies Home Journal* (Heflin 196). While he pursued a variety of occupations over the following decade, 1910 proved to be an important year for his work, philosophical outlook, and writing: in the summer of that year he undertook a remarkable expedition amongst the Ojibwe to collect items for the University of Pennsylvania Museum (Wilson, *Ohiyesa* 150-51).

Until recently scholars had little information to illuminate Eastman's summer employment amongst the Ojibwe, which he later described in the penultimate chapter of *From the Deep Woods to Civilization* titled "Back to the Woods." But David Martinez's research has cast a tremendous amount of light on this consequential period in Eastman's life. In "Out of the Woods and into the Museum: Charles A. Eastman's 1910 Collecting Expedition Across Ojibwe Country," Martinez offers a nuanced and sympathetic explication of Eastman's work amongst the Ojibwe, even as he acknowledges the problematic salvage imperative motivating the work (68). Indeed, Eastman practiced what seems to be quintessential museum salvage ethnography: he gathered indigenous artifacts for the wealthy philanthropist and graduate of the

Columbia University School of Mines, George Gustav Heye. Heye was a famous collector whose artifacts were installed at the University of Pennsylvania Museum in 1909, an installation soon recognized as one of the most valuable collections of American ethnology. Motivated by an obsessive desire to collect and own Native artifacts, he amassed roughly three million items from across the Western hemisphere over the course of his life, while he apparently cared little for the social and political problems of American Indians in contemporary society (71). Eastman, in marked contrast, was sharply attuned to the challenges confronting Native peoples in the early twentieth century. Martinez frames his expedition amongst the Ojibwe not in relation to the ethnographic collection he procured for Heye, but in relation to the lessons Eastman himself learned on his expedition and how these lessons shaped his understanding of both ethnography and indigenous worldviews:

Unlike Heye, there is not so much as a hint that Eastman desired for himself any of the items he collected. [...] What Eastman values most are the memories of having met such individuals, who typically regaled him with traditional stories. Though the Ojibwe were the Dakotas' "fiercest enemy," the journey through the northern woodlands set off nostalgia for his boyhood days in Manitoba that was almost irresistible. ("Out of the Woods" 73-74)

Ultimately, as much as Eastman's work with the Ojibwe should be scrutinized for its complicity in salvage ideology, Martinez underscores the way the experience pushed Eastman to grapple with ethnographic models of knowing the world and to reconsider indigenous spirituality and philosophy. By "indigenizing the collecting process" Eastman anticipated an era when Indian writers and activists would transform the way indigenous cultures and artifacts were treated (81-82).

Eastman began to think through his own representations of Indian life in relationship to anthropology, which is made clear in his "Foreword" to *The Soul of the Indian*, a book that offered insight into Native philosophy and spirituality. Published only a year after his collecting trip to Ojibwe

country, Eastman immediately positions *The Soul of the Indian* in relation to the purported “truth” of ethnographic discourse:

My little book does not pretend to be a scientific treatise. It is as true as I can make it to my childhood teaching and ancestral ideals, but from the human, not the ethnological standpoint. I have not cared to pile up more dry bones, but to clothe them with flesh and blood. So much as has been written by strangers of our ancient faith and worship treats it chiefly as matter of curiosity. I should like to emphasize its universal quality, its personal appeal! (xii)

Beyond his awareness of the way ethnographic discourse might shape the reception of his book, Eastman’s “Foreword” demonstrates a degree of skepticism about the accuracy and, indeed, the effects of anthropological study. Confronting vanishing Indian mythology, Eastman scorns the collection of Native artifacts, or the piling “up [of] more dry bones,” as simple “matter[s] of curiosity,” coming from dead civilizations. He acknowledges Native philosophy as a living “flesh and blood” entity, a belief system with “personal appeal” and relevant to the lived experiences of contemporary readers. In fact, much of *The Soul of the Indian*’s foreword scorns the failure of previous scholarship to “seriously, adequately, and sincerely” represent “the religious life of the American Indian” (ix-x). Indigenous religion was, Eastman suggested, “the last thing about him that a man of another race” could ever understand even though there had been “a great deal of material collected in recent years” (x-xi).

It is worth emphasizing that the publication of *The Soul of the Indian* was contemporaneous with the first meeting of the Society of American Indians in 1911, a meeting in which both Eastman and Arthur C. Parker featured prominently. If Eastman and Parker were not entirely familiar with one another prior to this meeting, they certainly developed a relationship in its wake. This relationship actually may have resulted more from Eastman’s disillusionment with the organization than his

early involvement with it. As Eastman distanced himself from the SAI, Parker, elected to the SAI executive committee and keenly aware of Eastman's importance, consistently wrote Eastman and kept him abreast of SAI affairs.⁴ From 1912 to 1917, although he remained a member, Eastman did not attend SAI meetings. Nevertheless, Parker continually courted Eastman's advice and encouraged him to seek a leadership role in the organization. In the Society's publication, the *Quarterly Journal of the Society of American Indians*, which Parker edited, he frequently included quotations from Eastman and reports on his activities. In 1915 Eastman began contributing articles to the society's journal (Wilson, *Ohiyesa* 159).

By the time Eastman published *From the Deep Woods to Civilization* in 1916, then, he had not only helped found the twentieth century's first Pan-Indian political organization, he had also, through this organization, developed a professional relationship with Parker, the twentieth century's most esteemed American Indian ethnographer. Although ethnographic writing was a popular discourse at least since Cushing's publications in the late nineteenth century, it seems likely that Eastman's relationship with Arthur Parker pushed him to take seriously the work of anthropology as a social science endeavoring to represent Native communities to a broad audience. This, coupled with Eastman's employment amongst the Ojibwe, helps us understand Eastman's self-conscious address at the beginning of *The Soul of the Indian*, his text that, as he noted, did "not pretend to be a scientific treatise" (xii). That is, it was a text written "from the human, not the ethnological standpoint."

Five years after the appearance of *The Soul of the Indian*, Eastman published *From the Deep Woods to Civilization*. This was his second autobiographic work, as his first, *Indian Boyhood* (1902), addressed his Dakota youth. In contrast to this earlier work, *From the Deep Woods* tracks Eastman's emergence from adolescence at the age of fifteen, when he left his life amongst the Santee, through his education, professionalization, and adulthood in Northeastern "civilization." Notably, Eastman wrote the autobiography in a period when he remained at a distance from SAI

meetings, yet began to publish in the Society's journal under the editorial review of Parker. On the one hand, this distance serves as a useful framework for understanding the political thrust of *From the Deep Woods*, which pushed against assumptions about civilization that both drove the Dawes Act and shaped the thinking of many SAI reformers. On the other, Eastman's proximity to Parker serves as a useful point of reference for his autobiography's narrative approach, as his story is clearly conversant with the discipline of ethnography and the evolutionary anthropological paradigm popularized by Lewis Henry Morgan.

By 1916 Morgan's influence had extended beyond the field of anthropology for decades. His proposal that private property was an index of modernity resonated with politicians who felt Indians could become "civilized" via the imposition of Dawes' legislation, which facilitated the dissolution of communally held land. As Michael Elliott writes in *The Culture Concept: Writing and Difference in the Age of Realism*,

reformers believed that individual land ownership could teach Indians to be "civilized" Americans, and they took this as an article of faith. Morgan's *Ancient Society* had focused on the evolution of ideas surrounding property and inheritance as crucial to the development of modern society. "It is impossible to overestimate the influence of property in the civilization of mankind," he wrote. Reservations, conversely, were believed by Indian reformers to perpetuate "the ancient social organization of the Indian tribes [...]" and to prevent "the establishment of the family, with its legal rights over property." (93, 96-97)

In addition to landholding practices, reformers were also influenced by Morgan's analysis of labor. In 1876 Morgan suggested in an article for *The Nation* that the establishment of industries on the reservation could nurture "civilized" labor practices as well (Hertzberg 34).⁵

As they are for Morgan and Dawes Act proponents, property, individual material possession, and the capitalist mode of production are central concerns for Eastman in his autobiography. However, they concern him precisely because he associates them not with progress but with inequality and moral vacancy. While Eastman's journey, detailed in *From the Deep Woods*, ostensibly charts a path from an Indian boyhood in which he was raised "traditionally" to an adulthood marked by success within American society, in actuality he turns the logic of Morgan's social development model on its head. To this end, he uses an ethnographic aesthetic to elevate Dakota life-ways while highlighting the limitations at the heart of the U.S. social order. This is accomplished by frequently juxtaposing Northeastern society with his recollections of a Santee upbringing, a hallmark seen on the autobiography's very first page. Eastman opens his work recalling that he was first raised "not to care for money or possessions, but to be in the broadest sense a public servant" (1).

II. *From the Deep Woods to Civilization*

From the Deep Woods to Civilization begins with Eastman, at the age of fifteen, on the cusp of a dramatic change in his life. Eastman's birth name was Hakadah, but he earned the name Ohiyesa or "the winner" as a young boy after his band's victory in a lacrosse game. A member of a Santee band that escaped to Canada after the so-called "Sioux Uprising" of 1862, Eastman was raised by his uncle and grandmother, who thought the boy's father, Many Lightning, had been killed in the wake of the conflict (Wilson, "Introduction" vi-vii). His extended family raised Eastman traditionally and nurtured his development as a skilled hunter and warrior. But in September of 1872 his father, alive and a recent convert to Christianity, came for him. Eastman recounts this shocking experience, as Many Lightning convinced him to return to the United States, in a foreboding passage early in *From the Deep Woods*:

It was, perhaps, because he was my honored father that I lent my bewildered ear to his eloquent exposition of the

so-called civilized life, or the way of the white man. I could not doubt my father, so mysteriously come back to us, as it were, from the spirit land; yet there was a voice within saying to me, 'A false life! A treacherous life!' (6-7)

But Ohiyesa did indeed return with his father, who took the Christian name Jacob Eastman, had a 160-acre allotment in Flandreau, Dakota Territory, and was "anxious to have his boys learn the English language and something about books" (16).

Thus, Eastman eventually set out in the fall of 1874 for the Santee Normal Training School in Nebraska. The account of this journey, described in the chapter "On the White Man's Trail," provides the earliest example in *From the Deep Woods* of Eastman's characteristic "ethnographic aesthetic" coupled to Dakota cultural practices. Indeed, even his initial journey to school was framed in relation to Dakota values. Eastman recalls his father noting, "Remember, my boy, it is the same as if I sent you on your first war-path. I shall expect you to conquer" (31-32). In "Rhetorics of Survivance: How American Indians Use Writing," Malea Powell demonstrates how these "early equivalencies especially reinforce Eastman's representation of himself as a 'real' Indian, for even as he undergoes the 'civilizing' process, he does so to remain Indian, to carry out the duty of a warrior, to obey his father" (420). Penelope Myrtle Kelsey, elaborating on this idea, notes how the concept of the "war-path" and "trail" becomes "a leitmotif throughout the autobiography, resonating with a powerful Dakota trope: *canku*, a road, path, or trail" (44).

As the young Ohiyesa journeys farther from his own family, the chapter reads increasingly like a type of participant-observer ethnography, a bit like Frank Cushing at Zuni, as the lone ethnographer ostensibly ventures into an unknown world to learn something about it, and then to represent through writing its culture and value systems. But Eastman inverts the usual paradigm, turning the ethnographer's gaze on Euro-American civilization at a pivotal moment in his travels. Although

he began his journey to Nebraska conflicted and contemplating a return to the Dakota in Canada, Eastman recalls an encounter with a farmer and his family that convinced him to, as the chapter title has it, follow the "white man's trail." This brief yet profound encounter is narrated in a remarkably distilled, two-page ethnography. The farmer offered the young Dakota, who happened upon the family during his trip to Nebraska, food and lodging for an evening. Eastman described a night spent decoding an alien race: before dinner the farmer "struck the table with the butt of his knife" in a frighteningly forceful gesture that turned out "merely to be a signal for quiet before saying grace"; after dinner Eastman retired to meditate when he heard "a peculiar, weird music and the words of a strange song. It was the music of a melodeon, but I did not then know what it was" (37-38). Still later he observed the farmer at work with his son "earnestly hammering something with all their might in the midst of glowing fire and sparks. He had an old breaking-plow which he was putting into shape on his rude forge. [...] [The farmer's] powerful muscles and manly way in which he handled the iron impressed me." Describing these scenes that occurred over the course of an evening, Eastman offers a succinct ethnography of American farm life that accounts for an impressive variety of cultural practices. Readers not only have a glimpse of family life, eating, and spiritual rituals (dinner is inaugurated by a powerful patriarch insisting on prayer), they also have an account of leisure and musical activities ("weird music"), labor and economic practices ("an old breaking plow") and, ultimately, etiquette.

It is this final category that proves most compelling to Eastman, indeed moving him to love "civilization":

After supper I got up and held out to the farmer nearly all the money I had. I did not care whether he took it all or not. I was grateful for the food, and money had no such hold on my mind as it has gained since. To my astonishment, he simply smiled, shook his head, and stroked his beard. [...] [The next day] I got up and came to the house. Breakfast was nearly ready, and every

member of the family was on hand. After breakfast I once more offered my money, but was refused. I was glad. Then and there I loved civilization and renounced my wild life. (38-39)

The description of such a liminal experience as the young Ohiyesa chooses between “civilization” and a “wild life” seems to symbolize the promise of the Allotment Act: here is a nuclear patriarchal family, with a homestead and a farm, peacefully “forging” their own existence in the country. And yet, while Eastman expresses an appreciation for this lifestyle, he does not position it within an evolutionary hierarchy above his previous mode of existence. He is not compelled to join this purportedly new “civilization” because he recognizes it as technologically or morally superior. Rather, what compelled the young Ohiyesa’s love for this new lifestyle was in fact the farmer’s rejection of a capitalist model of exchange, as he consistently refused money for his hospitality. In so doing, the farmer actually acted ethically within the Dakota value system previously described in *From the Deep Woods*: as a young man Eastman learned that “a true Indian always shares whatever he may possess” (2). Hence the farmer’s civility exemplified the altruism characteristic of a Dakota upbringing. From the opening chapters, then, *From the Deep Woods to Civilization* questions the dichotomy between “civilization” and “savagery” characteristic of evolutionary anthropology. Eastman’s location of this event as pivotal in his path to “civilization,” and renunciation of a “wild life,” is ironic, as the aspect of American “civilization” he found most admirable was already central to his “wild” Dakota philosophy. Eastman eventually arrived at Santee Normal Training School, where he became well versed both in the language of English and economics. “Aside from repeating and spelling words,” he recalled, “we had to count and add imaginary amounts. [...] Why, [previously] we valued nothing except honor; that cannot be purchased! It seemed now that everything must be measured in time or money and distance” (47). In spite of this markedly different educational and value system, which also included Christian theology, Eastman applied himself

with rigor and eventually was accepted to study at Beloit College. Success at Beloit, in turn, led to admission into Dartmouth College in New Hampshire.

If Eastman's initial trip to school in Nebraska was marked by an "ethnographic aesthetic" that framed a compelling journey across terrain readers likely understood as the American frontier, his trip to Dartmouth, which moved through the industrialized heart of urban America, told a different story. In this instance, Eastman seems to invert the evolutionary paradigm as he questions American modernity from the heart of one of its greatest industrial cities: Chicago. When he left for Dartmouth in 1882, Eastman writes:

I had very little practical knowledge of the world. [...] Therefore, while somewhat prepared, I was not yet conscious of the seriousness and terrific power of modern civilization.

It was a crisp winter morning when the train pulled into Chicago. [...] I realized vividly that the day of the Indian had passed forever. [...] I saw a perfect stream of humanity rushing madly along, and noticed with some surprise that the faces of the people were not happy at all. They wore an intensely serious look that to me was appalling.

I was cautioned against trusting strangers, and told that I must look out for pickpockets. Evidently there were some disadvantages connected with this mighty civilization, for we Indians seldom found it necessary to guard our possessions. (62)

Here again the question of private property is central to Eastman's concern with, in a phrase readers may now register as sarcastic, this "mighty civilization." While people rushed about with countenances appallingly serious and sad, the young traveler considered the reality of material inequity in the heart of the United States, in this instance represented by the threat of pickpockets. To emphasize this implicit

critique of the “superiority” of industrial civilization, Eastman again juxtaposes it with his Dakota upbringing, where the guarding of possessions was unnecessary.

Eastman’s account of his journey into “modern [American] civilization,” and his experiences in college, detailed in the fourth and fifth chapters of *From the Deep Woods*, is consistently marked by an ambivalence that points to the author’s deep connections, and partial identification with the Northeastern middle class that helped facilitate his own education at Dartmouth and, still later, Boston University, where he earned his medical degree. Indeed, *From the Deep Woods* frequently finds Eastman’s writing resonant with the same “progressive” ideology that shaped the way Northeastern reformers grappled with the “Indian problem.” In contrast to his experience of Chicago, Eastman’s first journey into the Northeast offers a fairly rosy description of an industrious people in a pastoral setting. The “site of rocky farms and little villages” reminded him “of the presence of a persistent people”:

Even the deserted farmhouse, the ruined mill, had an air of saying, “I have done my part in the progress of civilization. Now I can rest.” [...]. What is the great difference between these people and my own? I asked myself. Is it not that one keeps the old things and continually adds to them new improvements, while the other is too well contented with the old, and will not change his ways nor seek to improve them? (64)

Such passages seem dissonant with Eastman’s committed effort to elevate indigenous value systems in *From the Deep Woods*. They measure “progress” and “improvement” in relationship to Euro-American civilization, which is the hallmark of the evolutionary paradigm. Consider, for instance, Eastman’s subsequent description of the Kimball Union Academy, where he prepared for entrance to Dartmouth:

I observed that the students of the academy and their parents were very frugal and saving. Nothing could have

been more instructive to me, as we Indians are inclined to be improvident. I had been accustomed to broad, fertile prairies, and liberal ways. Here they seemed to count their barrels of potatoes and apples before they were grown. Every little brooklet was forced to do a river's work in their mills and factories. (67)

Here, Eastman's previous celebration of the "true Indian [who] always shares whatever he may possess" seems to be undercut by his categorization of such customs as "improvident."

These moments suggest an unresolved contradiction in Eastman's thinking, but also the challenging rhetorical situation he found himself in. He was himself a product of years spent in Northeastern universities and hence was ensconced within reformist ideology. At the same time, the praise of such industriousness may have been an attempt to reconcile the overarching critique leveled by *From the Deep Woods* with an interest in appeasing his friends and benefactors in the Northeastern bourgeoisie, many of whom likely read Eastman's work with a keen interest. Eastman's fawning descriptions of the Boston area speak to this point:

I had learned to reverence New England, and especially its metropolis, as the home of culture and art, or morality and Christianity. [...] Somehow I supposed that Boston must be the home of the nation's elect and not far from the millennium. I was very happy when [...] it was made possible for me to study medicine at Boston University. The friends who generously assisted me to realize my great ambition were of the type I had dreamed of, and my home influences in their family all that I could have wished for. (71-72)

This lavish praise, beyond an effort to avoid sounding ungrateful to a community that supported Eastman in the years he studied medicine at Boston University, may have served a practical purpose: when *From the Deep Woods* went to press in 1916, Eastman continued to rely on the influence of this community to secure political and other work-related

appointments. Only four years earlier, for instance, he had been considered for the position of Commissioner of Indian Affairs. While he was not awarded the post, his major support for the position came from Professor Warren K. Moorehead, a prominent Indian reformer and later director of the Department of Archeology at Phillips Academy in Andover, Massachusetts. Moorehead was also a member of the Board of Indian Commissioners from 1908 until 1933 (Wilson, *Ohiyesa* 158).

Upon completing his medical degree at Boston University in 1890, Eastman began his professional career with an appointment as Government physician at the Pine Ridge Agency in South Dakota, an experience he describes in the pivotal chapters “A Doctor Among the Indians” and “The Ghost Dance War.” While Eastman’s account of life in the Northeast was effusive, these chapters signal a profound disenchantment with the beneficence of the U.S. Government, U.S. Indian Policy, and the limitations of Christianity. The circumstances surrounding his first year on the job demonstrate why: Eastman’s appointment at Pine Ridge coincided with the Massacre at Wounded Knee, where he tended the dying and mutilated Lakota victims. Eastman’s account of the events leading to Wounded Knee shows a deep sympathy with Lakota spiritual practices, and he attempts to debunk sensationalized media reports of the events while expressing a palpable exasperation over the fraudulent acts perpetrated by Americans that precipitated the massacre.

One striking aspect of Eastman’s description of his experiences at Pine Ridge, in particular his account of the Ghost Dance, is the way he echoes one of the most widely read texts published by the Bureau of American Ethnology in the nineteenth century: James Mooney’s *The Ghost-Dance Religion and the Sioux Outbreak of 1890* (1896). This connection matters not only as it speaks to Eastman’s kindred “ethnographic” writing practice, but because Eastman, like Mooney, signals deep sympathy for a pan-tribal, syncretic faith. This in and of itself, as noted below, was transgressive in the face of reformers who wed Christianity to “civilization” and the possibilities of the Dawes Act.

Perhaps even more radical, by the end of his chapter on "The Ghost Dance War," which recalls the Wounded Knee massacre, Eastman would question "Christian love and [the] lofty ideals of the white man" (114). Published twenty years before *From the Deep Woods*, James Mooney's text was a remarkable contribution to nineteenth-century ethnography and, according to renowned anthropologist Sydney Mintz, one of the greatest studies of an American Indian religion ever written (Elliott 104). Mooney's fairly cosmopolitan, universalist description of the Ghost Dance anticipated the more culturally relativistic work of Franz Boas and seemed to shape Eastman's own account of the phenomenon. Mooney's ethnography works against the evolutionary assumptions structuring Indian policy in this period. His first chapter, for instance, suggests that the Ghost Dance was "essentially the same" as the Hindu avatar, the Hebrew Messiah, and the Christian millennium, all of which "have their origin in a hope and longing common to all humanity" (qtd Elliott 106). Such an assertion not only countered Lewis Henry Morgan's evolutionary model, it likely shocked progressive reformers. During the 1890s, as Elliott writes,

Equating the Ghost Dance with early Christianity (or *any* Christianity) was sure to spark controversy. The so-called 'Friends of the Indian' advocating the Americanization of Native peoples would have never hazarded such comparisons. In 1891, reformer Merrill Gates said "the Dakota disaster shows that we shall not need to have taught us again the lesson of difference between savagery and civilization" [...]. For Gates, the Ghost Dance dramatizes an inferior alterity that necessitates the project of assimilation and embodies its ultimate challenges. (107)

By associating the Ghost Dance with Christianity, Mooney upturned the notion of a less developed spiritual practice connected to a community "outside" modernity. In fact, the circular narrative structure of *The Ghost-Dance Religion* revealed a "careful strategy on Mooney's part to

resist the evolutionary version of human history put forward by Lewis Henry Morgan and [then head of the Bureau of American Ethnology] John Wesley Powell” (105).

Eastman’s own analysis of the Ghost Dance in *From the Deep Woods* seems indebted to Mooney’s in several notable aspects. The primary source Eastman quotes at length in his account is George Sword, who was one of a handful of “Indian informants” Mooney acknowledged from Pine Ridge in the introduction to *The Ghost-Dance Religion* (Mooney 655). Sword featured prominently in Mooney’s book: when he first discusses the spiritual awakening in the chapter, “The Ghost Dance Among the Sioux,” Mooney begins with a written account from George Sword (796). In like manner, the first time Eastman discusses the religious revival in *From the Deep Woods* he writes:

Captain Sword, the dignified and intelligent head of the Indian police force [...] soon found time to give me a great deal of information about the place and people. He said. [...] “I must tell you that a new religion has been proclaimed by some Indians in the Rocky Mountain region. [...] We hear that they have come back, saying that they saw the prophet, or Messiah. [...] He told them that he had waited nearly two thousand years for the white teachings, but instead they had destroyed helpless small nations to satisfy their own greed. Therefore he had come again, this time as a Savior to the red people. (83)

Beyond grounding his analysis in Sword’s testimony, Eastman seems to follow Mooney’s argument that the Ghost Dance was an anti-colonial struggle with historic precedent. In *The Ghost-Dance Religion and the Sioux Outbreak of 1890*, Mooney begins his explanation of the religion by offering several historic instances of indigenous spiritual responses to colonialism, including a number of pan-Indian alliances. His early chapters, such as “The Delaware Prophet and Pontiac” and “Tecumtha [sic] and Tippecanoe,” show examples of Native communities struggling to reclaim a former way of life. “What tribe or people,” Mooney wrote,

"has not had its Golden age. [...] And when the race lies crushed and groaning beneath an alien yoke, how natural is the dream of a redeemer [...] who shall return from exile or awake from some long sleep to drive out the usurper and win back for his people what they have lost" (657). Thus Eastman begins his chapter "The Ghost Dance War":

A religious craze such as that of 1880-91 was a thing [...] foreign to the Indian philosophy. I recalled that a hundred years before, on the overthrow of the Algonquin nations, a somewhat similar faith was evolved by the astute *Delaware prophet, brother to Tecumseh*. It meant the last hope of race entity had departed, and my people were groping blindly after spiritual relief in their bewilderment and misery. I believe that the first prophets of the "Red Christ" were innocent enough and that the people were generally sincere. (Eastman, *From the Deep Woods* 92; emphasis added)

Moreover, as with Mooney, Eastman situated the religious revival in relationship to the material conditions at Pine Ridge. In the immediate years preceding the Ghost Dance the Sioux were pushed to cede millions of acres of land, their rations were cut in half, and they were facing starvation (Mooney 845; Wilson, *Ohiyesa* 54-55). Sickness and an alarming death rate, especially among infants, provided even further trying conditions for the Sioux (Eastman, *From the Deep Woods* 99). "Never was more ruthless fraud and graft practiced on a defenseless people," Eastman wrote, "than upon those poor natives by politicians! Never were there more worthless 'scraps of paper' anywhere in the world than many of the Indian treaties and Government documents! [...] [Yet trouble] might have been checked by humane and conciliatory measures. The 'Messiah craze' in itself was scarcely a source of danger."

A humane approach, of course, was not the path the Indian agent at Pine Ridge, or the U.S. military, chose. American soldiers were called in, including Custer's former detachment, the Seventh Cavalry, who, on the morning of 29 December 1890, opened fire on men, women, and children

associated with Bigfoot's Band encamped at Wounded Knee, killing hundreds and wounding scores. As the primary physician on location, Eastman attended to the victims of the assault, the majority of whom were women and children. "In spite of all our efforts," Eastman wrote, "we lost the greater part of them" (110). Fearing that some of the wounded had been abandoned at the site of the massacre, Eastman rode with a contingent to Wounded Knee and witnessed the horrors of the massacre himself: a woman buried in a blanket of snow three miles from the attack, Lakota scattered "along as they had been relentlessly hunted down and slaughtered," and burnt tents and "frozen bodies lying close together or piled one upon another" (112). To be sure, witnessing such horrific violence would have shocked most people. But for Eastman, who arrived at Pine Ridge only a month prior, the violence against the Sioux rocked his belief in the promise of American "civilization." Experiencing the Massacre at Wounded Knee, as he put it, "was a severe ordeal for one who had so lately put all his faith in the Christian love and lofty ideals of the white man" (114). Eastman may have personally been nurtured by a Northeastern elite, but he soon understood that the broader treatment of Lakota, Dakota, and Nakota peoples was radically different than his own experience. Little surprise, then, that this juncture in the autobiography commences a turn toward a more direct examination of, as the title of a subsequent chapter has it, "Civilization as Preached and Practiced." Although Eastman remained the physician at Pine Ridge for another two years after Wounded Knee, he came under increasing conflict with Captain George Le Roy Brown, the acting agent. The conflict largely resulted from a controversy regarding payments and property losses suffered during the Ghost Dance troubles.⁶ Due one hundred thousand dollars, allegations surfaced that monies were not fully and fairly distributed amongst the Sioux. Eastman grew disgusted with "dishonest politicians, who through unfit appointees first robbed the Indians, then bullied them" (*From the Deep Woods* 117). After quarreling with Brown over the investigation into the allegations, Eastman and his new wife, Elaine, eventually left the Indian service and moved to St. Paul so he could open a private practice.

III. "Civilization as Preached and Practiced"

However, before the medical practice gained steam Eastman accepted a position with the Young Men's Christian Association, working as a field secretary and trying to extend the organization's mission amongst various tribes. Eastman's portrayal of this work is detailed in the remarkable chapter "Civilization as Preached and Practiced." If his autobiography opened with a young Ohiyesa traveling "On the White Man's Trail" ever further east into an alien community to learn their customs, this chapter finds the grown doctor returning west, reacquainting himself with indigenous worldviews. And just as Eastman described his earlier journey as a type of ethnographic participant-observer, he returns to this narrative strategy in some of the more compelling moments in the final chapters of *From the Deep Woods*. Indeed, his description of his travels amongst Native communities while working for the YMCA anticipates the powerful penultimate chapter, "Back to The Woods," discussed below, which finds Eastman amongst the Ojibwe in the role of salvage ethnographer. In both instances, Eastman's return to Indian country transformed his own philosophy, recalled his Dakota upbringing and worldview, and complicated his relationship to Allotment policy. While *From the Deep Woods* consistently questioned the link between private property and a moral, modern society, the book's chapters detailing Eastman's experiences after Pine Ridge increasingly confronted the specious link between Christianity and a morally superior civilization. This presumption was foundational for Northeasterners since the colonial period. Indeed, Christian missionaries and churches were central agents implementing U.S. Indian policy since the early nineteenth century. By century's end, as Frederick Hoxie points out in "The Curious Story of Reformers and American Indians," the notion that "civilization and gospel go hand in hand" was axiomatic for champions of the Dawes Act (185). Ironically, the grounds for Eastman's critique of Christianity seem to have sprung from his experiences working for the YMCA. This is made clear in "Civilization as Preached and Practiced," which realizes his most severe

condemnation of organized religion, in particular as it relates to American materialism.

At chapter's beginning, even in the wake of Wounded Knee, Eastman expressed belief in "the better side of civilization" (138). The "Christ ideal," he wrote, "might be radical, visionary, even impractical. [...] [yet] it still seemed to me logical, and in line with my Indian training." Here again we see the "doubleness" or "equivalencies" that Malea Powell describes, wherein Eastman elevates Dakota belief systems through comparison (421). In this instance, the "Christ ideal" was not better than or different from Dakota faith, but resonant with Eastman's earlier "Indian training" (138). When he accepted the position with the YMCA, Eastman began traveling among a variety of different tribes. He visited mission stations across the western United States and into Canada, organizing over forty-three local organizations for the YMCA. But Eastman's account of this period emphasizes his own growing acknowledgement of the limitations of Christianity in the face of indigenous spiritual practices:

I seriously considered the racial attitude toward God, and almost unconsciously reopened the book of my early religious training, asking myself how it was that our simple lives were so imbued with the spirit of worship, while much church-going among white and nominally Christian Indians led often to such very small results.

A new point of view came to me then and there. This latter was a machine-made religion. It was supported by money, and more money could only be asked for on the showing made; therefore too many of the workers were after quantity rather than quality of religious experience. (141)

Eastman's work for the YMCA transformed his perspective by rekindling interest in his "early religious training" and exposing him to a variety of indigenous responses to his own Christian preaching. The experience forced

him to deal with the contradiction between American capitalism and the altruistic philosophy "of the Man Jesus" (142). This inconsistency lays the groundwork for the most profound critique of the American social order in "Civilization as Preached and Practiced." Eastman recounts numerous experiences with Native thinkers demonstrating the distance between Christian principles and U.S. materialism. One "old battle-scarred warrior" he met noted that Native peoples followed a Christ-like model "for untold ages" as they "owned nothing. [...] Food was free, land free as sunshine and rain." Yet, paradoxically, the "white man" who did not "seem to follow the example set by his brother Christ" actively worked to change such indigenous modes of existence. Another elder reached the conclusion that "this Jesus was an Indian. He was opposed to material acquirement and to great possessions" (143). But again, the elder found these fundamental values lacking in modern civilization.

Eastman's exposure to indigenous beliefs was not the only reason his faith in American society fractured. The YMCA also exposed him to urban squalor, which he witnessed in his beloved Boston, no less:

Among other duties of my position, I was expected to make occasional speaking trips through the East. [...] [on such a journey] I was taken by slum and settlement workers to visit the slums and dives of the cities, which gave another shock to my ideals of "Christian civilization." Of course, I had seen something of the poorer parts of Boston during my medical course, but not at night, and not in a way to realize the horror and wretchedness of it as I did now. (147)

As with earlier moments in *From the Deep Woods*, Eastman usefully deploys a type of ethnographic juxtaposition in this chapter, pointedly contrasting his reflections on the Boston slums with reflections on Dakota civilization. While there may have been poverty amongst some of the Dakota,

our poor lost nothing of their self-respect and dignity.
Our great men not only divided their last kettle of food

with a neighbor, but if great grief should come to them, [...] they voluntarily give away their few possessions and begin life over again in token of their sorrow. We could not conceive of the extreme luxury and misery existing thus side by side [in the US]. [...] These things troubled me very much; yet I still held before my race the highest, and as yet unattained ideals of the white man. (147-48)

By chapter's end, however, Eastman demonstrates a nuanced self-awareness regarding his own social position as spokesman for the YMCA and a deep respect for Native communities that rejected the religious ideas he professed. In the final pages of "Civilization as Preached and Practiced" Eastman recalls an invitation to address the Sac and Fox tribe in Iowa. Church leaders in the region were apparently worried about the "absolute refusal of this small tribe to accept civilization and Christianity [...] [and] hoped to use me as an example of the benefits of education for the Indians" (148). Eastman was graciously received by the Sac and Fox, whose chief was glad "the white man's religion and civilization" were fulfilling for him. However, the tribe chose to remain autonomous, suspicious of the "white man [who] had showed neither respect for nature nor reverence toward God" but tried to buy entry into heaven "with the by-products of nature" (149). Impressed by the elder's speech, Eastman was further awed when his misplaced pocket book was returned: "I said to the state missionary who was at my side, 'Better let these Indians alone! If I had lost my money in the streets of your Christian city, I should probably have never seen it again.'" The call to "let these Indian's alone!" speaks to the larger project of *From the Deep Woods*, as it elevates the Dakota "philosophy in which [Eastman] had been trained" while repudiating many assumptions about progress, property and faith undergirding Dawes policy (151). Sent to the tribes to proselytize as spokesman for the YMCA, Eastman left this position, himself converted. "I found," he wrote, "the fact and logic of [the Native communities visited] often hard to dispute, but was perfectly consoled by the wonderful opportunity to come into close contact with the racial mind, and to refresh my understanding of the

philosophy in which I had been trained, but which had been overlaid and superseded by a college education" (150; emphasis added).

After working with the YMCA, it is not altogether clear why Eastman never returned to medical practice in the first decades of the twentieth century. He pursued a number of different professions, however temporarily, in the decade beginning in 1910: his earlier stint as a salvage ethnographer, an association with the Boy Scouts of America, a blossoming writing career, his family's establishment of a Camp Oahe in 1915, and continued work with the Society of American Indians. Understanding the relationship between these seemingly disparate endeavors illuminates the narrative strategy that shapes his autobiography's closing chapters, titled "Back to the Woods" and "The Soul of the White Man."

Although *From the Deep Woods to Civilization* was published in 1916, antimodern discourses had circulated since the late nineteenth century and had persisted across the Northeast. Indeed, two organizations Eastman worked with, the Boy Scouts of America and the Campfire Girls, had sprung in part from white middle-class anxieties about the effects of contemporary industrial civilization. The idea of a rugged, restorative "return" to nature in the midst of increasing urbanization helps explain the popularity of groups like the Boy Scouts in this period (Wilson, *Ohiyesa* 151). The founder of the movement, Ernest Thompson Seton, held Eastman in high regard, and Eastman in turn began collaborating with the Boy Scouts in 1910, writing articles for *Boys' Life* and a book titled *Indian Scout Talks* (1914), which served as a reference guide for both the Boy Scouts and the Campfire Girls of America (Wilson, *Ohiyesa* 150-51). As Philip Deloria argues, "playing Indian" facilitated these organizations' social missions as they celebrated a romanticized Indian Other that existed beyond, yet reaffirmed, American modernity. Indian play was not only an ameliorative for industrial life; it could better prepare boys and girls for it (105).

There was, Deloria adds, a strong correlation between the ideology driving camp life and the ideology driving evolutionary and salvage

anthropology. The evolutionary model framed tribes in a type of pre-contact present, somehow outside American modernity (106). Moreover, the trajectory of the ethnographic expedition—from the modern metropole to a primitive hinterland where social evolutionary time moved slowly, and back to home institutions with tangible proof of an encounter outside of modern time—paralleled the modern/antimodern journeys advocated by camping, nature study, and Indian play enthusiasts. (116)

Indeed, Eastman perhaps understood the allure of the “primitive” so well that he, along with Elaine and his children, founded their own summer camp for girls, Oahe “The School of the Woods,” located at Granite Lake in New Hampshire. For \$200 the Eastmans offered campers “genuine Indian activities and instruction conducted by a ‘Real Indian’” (Wilson, *Ohiyesa* 151).

But rather than simply capitalizing on primitive and anti-modern stereotypes, Kiara M. Vigil argues that Eastman and his family used the camps to push against them, to “center indigenous peoples in the making of America and push back against assimilationist politics related to deracination, dispossession, and erasure” (30). Oahe was founded in 1916, the same year *From the Deep Woods* was published. This is a useful point to note, as Vigil suggests that Oahe was “an extension of his other political projects” (30). Eastman and his daughters, who helped him run the girls camp, “worked to incorporate Dakota cultural practices and epistemologies into camp activities [...] with the hope of shifting campers’ perceptions toward a vision of America that affirmed the centrality of Native people in shaping both the past and present of the nation” (27). Vigil’s argument is particularly relevant in relation to Eastman’s penultimate chapter “Back to the Woods.” For a middle-class Northeastern reader, the allure of this chapter was not far removed from the urban anxieties that brought the Boy Scouts and Camp Fire Girls into existence. While Camp Oahe offered a solution for girls, perhaps the parents themselves were seeking a similar type of restorative escape,

albeit symbolic, via Eastman's story. If *From the Deep Woods* opened with a young indigenous "ethnographer" interpreting Anglo-civilization "On the White Man's Trail," "Back to the Woods" finds Eastman assuming the position of a salvage ethnographer returning to Indian country. Following Deloria's framing above, Eastman here travels outside of "modernity" to a "primitive hinterland where social evolutionary time moved slowly" to secure traditional objects from the Ojibwe (116).⁷

In the chapter's beginning Eastman dramatizes the Ojibwe's supposed distance from American modernity, writing that within "the zone of railroads and automobiles" the tribe was one of "a few roving bands of North American Indians still hold[ing] civilization at bay" (167). The inland lakes in Minnesota and Ontario, with their "almost impenetrable jungle" of bogs and tamaracks, sheltered the tribe and produced a "paradise for moose, deer and bears" with countless waterfowl, "blueberries and cranberries in abundance," while wild rice in the region was found "by thousands of acres" (*Ibid.*). In the midst of this pre-industrial Eden, the Ojibwe lived "quite to themselves and almost unconscious of the bare pathos of their survival" (168). Eastman further underscores the Ojibwe's distance from Euro-American influence by tracing their determined history of anti-colonial resistance. He notes their opposition to the Hudson Bay Company, to the U.S. Military and, a year before Eastman's arrival, their refusal to "allow the census taker" to count them in the twentieth century (168, 171). This was a tribe that sustained itself "after the old fashion by hunting, fishing and the gathering of wild rice and berries," a tribe that "plants no gardens, will have nothing to do with schools or churches, and meets annually, as of old, for the 'Grand Medicine Dance'" (168-69). Some of the descriptions of his experiences amongst the Ojibwe echo the rhetoric of his own summer camp advertisements. In one instance, along with an Ojibwe guide, Eastman traveled to Rainy Lake, "remote and solitary," where he found "the true virgin wilderness, the final refuge, as it appears, of American big game and primitive man" (173). Further,

The sweet roving instinct of the wild took forcible hold upon me once more. I was eager to realize for a few perfect days the old, wild life as I knew it in my boyhood, and I set out with an Ojibway guide in his birch canoe, taking with me little that belonged to the white man, except his guns, fishing tackles, knives and tobacco. The [Ojibwe] guide carried some Indian-made maple sugar and a sack of wild rice. [...] Only think of pitching your tent upon a new island every day in the year! (175)

Such exclamations bring together the discourse of restorative camp life with the antimodern model of representation characteristic of anthropology. Eastman marveled at the “traditional” Ojibwe practices he witnessed: women made nets and baskets and prepared “simple meal[s]”; men’s canoes glided over “the placid waters” and they lifted “nets full of glistening fish.” The community made wise use of all of their hunted goods, drying leftover fish, making trinkets out of the hoofs of big game, and preserving bone-marrow oil “in dried bladders or bags of pelican skin” (176-77). Finally, Eastman heard tales from Ojibwe elders and learned about the history of the land from his guide.

As Eastman’s journey seemed to pull him further from industrial society, it likely did not shock a reader perhaps riveted by the “call of the wild,” to hear him lament the impending decampment from such an ideal setting. “Every day,” he wrote, “it became harder for me to leave the woods” (178). Here was Eastman, the model of assimilation for white reformers, hesitant to return to the “modernity” of post-allotment America. To recall his journey, he had left urban America, where he made his home, employed by a Western institution/benefactor (first the YMCA, later George Gustav Heye) to go to Indian country and salvage (first souls, later curios) what he could, only to find himself transformed through his reconnection with indigenous philosophies and modes of existence. And it was Eastman’s admiration for Ojibwe culture and community that grounded his partial rejection of the American social order at the end of *From the Deep Woods to Civilization*. It was in the

"deep woods" of this indigenous "civilization" that he seemed most content. As such, the apparent evolutionary narrative Eastman's title implies is undercut by the circularity of his story. Rather than tracing a path from an indigenous life to an assimilated American life, *From the Deep Woods* begins and ends in the heart of indigenous civilization. Consequently, Eastman disrupts the classic Euro-American *Bildungsroman* that his very title seems to imply. His own coming of age narrative did not resolve itself in a glowing, integrated existence in the eastern United States. The fact that Eastman titles his final chapter "The Soul of the White Man" illustrates this autobiographical circularity: in closing he returns to the ethnography of white America that characterized the book's opening. The rhetorical effect of this chapter positions Eastman at a distance from white civilization: not fully assimilated, he is still capable of casting an indigenous, ethnographic gaze upon the community he first began observing as an adolescent. The chapter title also evokes Eastman's earlier work, published in 1911, *The Soul of the Indian*. But whereas *The Soul of the Indian* offers rich insight into a Dakota worldview, "The Soul of the White Man" is marked by a deep skepticism about the promises of Western civilization. This skepticism colors the final pages of *From the Deep Woods* as Eastman recalls his varied accomplishments in the early twentieth century. He was now a widely recognized public figure: a popular writer, speaker, and even a participant at the First Universal Race Congress. He was invited to speak to prominent politicians, educators, and clergymen, and he rubbed elbows with the nation's literary lions such as Mark Twain and William Dean Howells. While reflecting on his own accomplishments at story's end, Eastman also reflects on the failings of Western civilization. The "soul of the white man," he muses, seemed spiritually vacant and driven by violence and raw materialism:

Why do we find so much evil and wickedness practiced by the nations composed of professedly "Christian" individuals? The pages of history are full of licensed murder and the plundering of weaker and less developed

peoples. [...] Behind the material and intellectual splendor of our civilization, primitive savagery and cruelty and lust hold sway [...]. When I let go of my simple, instinctive nature religion, I hoped to gain something far loftier. [...] Alas! It is also more confusing and contradictory. The higher and spiritual life, though first in theory, is clearly secondary [to Native religion], if not entirely neglected, in actual practice. When I reduce civilization to its lowest terms, it becomes a system of life based upon trade. The dollar is the measure of value, and *might* still spells *right*; otherwise, why war? (194)

Here, as he couples modern “civilization” to “primitive savagery” and upraises indigenous religion, Eastman concludes his interrogation of the evolutionary paradigms that anchor allotment policy.

Despite these criticisms, Eastman’s conclusion is complicated by his characteristic ambivalence. He could continue, he wrote, to play the part reformers asked of him: “I stand before my own people still as an advocate of civilization. Why? First, because there is no chance for our former simple life any more; and second, because I realize that the white man’s religion is not responsible for his mistakes” (194-95). Certainly the assertion that there was “no chance for our former simple life” seems to ignore Eastman’s experiences amongst the Ojibwe and to validate the Dawes Act and its demand for assimilation. But at the end of an autobiography that destabilized the progressive narrative undergirding the policy, such an assertion surely struck a reader as decidedly ambivalent. And this ambivalence carries Eastman’s narrative to its conclusion:

I am an Indian; and while I have learned much from civilization, for which I am grateful, I have never lost my Indian sense of right and justice. I am for development and progress along social and spiritual lines, rather than those of commerce, nationalism, or

material efficiency. Nevertheless, so long as I live, I am an American. (195)

In a final paragraph bookended by the assertions "I am an Indian" and "I am an American," it is no longer entirely clear what Eastman actually values within the American social order. Eastman scorned a "life based on trade" and the distance between a faith "preached and practiced." He even dismissed nationalism right before espousing "I am an American." And as he wrote that there was no chance for a "former simple life," he insisted that the values he took from his Dakota upbringing were "never lost," and hence he was "an Indian." Recognizing Eastman's difficult position in this period, still relying on the graces of many white politicians, still quite connected to the Northeastern élites who helped him throughout his adult years, and some of whom he considered family, we can acknowledge the ambivalence in Eastman's ultimate critique as, in fact, fairly courageous (Eastman, *From the Deep Woods* 51; Wilson, *Ohiyesa* 158). More than this, following Kevin Bruyneel, we should read Eastman's ambivalence as precisely the "third-place of sovereignty." As Bruyneel puts it, "Reading the claims of Eastman [...] as *articulations of the ambivalent* American political identity of indigenous people captures the manner in which [he] sought to argue simultaneously for U.S. citizenship and for the persistence of a culturally distinct indigenous identity" (Third Space 35; emphasis added). Christopher Pexa develops this point further in "Citizen Kin: Charles Eastman's Reworking of US Citizenship":

Part of Eastman's continuing interest, if not intrigue, *lies in these ambivalences of his life and work*. [...] Like other SAI members who advocated for Indian citizenship, Eastman's insistence on being both American and 'Indian' reveals him negotiating a structural crisis defined by stark binaries of insiders and outsiders, citizens and aliens, the "civilized" and the "wild." [...] Rather than resolving these dialectics, the force of Eastman's work rests in his keeping both terms of the dialectic in play in

order to deconstruct them or show how their truths were produced in the interests of the settler state. His writing occupies, in other words, a “third space,” [...] from within which Eastman asserted the possibilities of Dakhóta life across the boundaries of US political time. (3, 4; emphasis added)

Rather than fault Eastman for failing to imagine sovereignty in the terms that would come to characterize Native struggle in the latter half of the twentieth century, we should recognize the cracks he helped lodge in the presumptiveness that structured Indian policy in and beyond the Dawes era.⁸ *From the Deep Woods to Civilization*, then, should be understood as part of a growing body of indigenous work that transformed the twentieth century. This work helped spark changes in both federal policy and in the way tribes understood their own communities. As Malea Powell writes, “For me, this is the beginning of a rhetoric of survivance—Eastman helps me, then, to imagine a new mixed Indian subject” (427). Again, a major catalyst for Eastman’s shift in consciousness was his trip amongst the Ojibwe. As David Martinez argues, the trip further solidified his growing understanding of the benefits of Pan-Tribal alliances. Traveling amongst the Ojibwe, the Dakota’s historic enemy, Eastman underwent a “transvaluation of traditional customs and beliefs” (Martinez, *Dakota Philosopher* 56). A race consciousness began to emerge that was linked to the political identity “American Indian.” At the same time, Eastman’s travels amongst the Ojibwe challenged his own assumptions about progress, faith, and the necessity of American Indian assimilation. Martinez writes:

It is probably fair to say that the Ojibwe taught Eastman something quite valuable about being Indian in the early twentieth century. After his experiences at Pine Ridge, then working for the YMCA, followed by serving as lobbyist in Washington, DC, it could easily seem to Eastman that the Indian in America was being swept

Ryan Burt, "The Autobiography of Charles Eastman"

away by so-called progress, that it was only a matter of time before all Indians disappeared into the melting pot. In the woods of northern Minnesota and Canada, however, Eastman saw that it was possible to maintain a vigilant stance against the push of civilization, a posture which, even if futile in some respects, is worth holding on other levels. (*Dakota Philosopher* 77)

A few years after the publication of *From the Deep Woods* Eastman returned to an executive capacity in the Society of American Indians. In 1918 he replaced Arthur Parker, who so persistently advocated for Eastman's support, as president. Eastman now seemed to embrace the organization's desire to influence governmental affairs: he immediately called for the abolition of the Bureau of Indian Affairs and vigorously campaigned for universal citizenship for American Indians (Wilson, *Ohiyesa* 160). He clearly viewed the call for citizenship, BIA dissolution, and a "culturally distinct indigenous identity" as a movement away from U.S. paternalism and a step toward justice for American Indians (Bruyneel 35). As Bruyneel notes, this "form of political argument in favor of U.S. citizenship for indigenous people prevailed beyond [World War I] and through the passage of the Indian Citizenship Act" of 1924, which "unilaterally made United States citizens of all indigenous people living in the United States" (35, 30). While Eastman may have never explicitly articulated a vision for tribal self-determination, the seeds of sovereignty seemed to sprout in his political imagination at the end of an important decade in his life. It is ironic, then, that a trip into Ojibwe country driven by anthropology's salvage imperative, with its attendant assumptions about the vanishing races of Native peoples, helped facilitate the conditions of possibility for Eastman to imagine radically different futures for American Indians than white reformers had imagined for Eastman himself.

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Notes

¹ See for example Richard Henry Pratt's *Battlefield and Classroom: Four Decades with the American Indian, 1867-1904*, xi.

² Nancy Glazener, in *Reading for Realism*, refers to such periodicals as the *Atlantic* group. Cushing's popular works from this period, roughly 1882-83, include: "The Zuñi Social, Mythic, and Religious Systems" in *Popular Science*; "The Nation of the Willows," in *Atlantic Monthly*; and "My Adventures in Zuni" in *Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine*. According to Hinsley, Lewis Henry Morgan catalyzed much of the early anthropological interest in the study of the Southwest, as tribes like the Pueblos inhabited, in his figuration, a liminal, "semi-civilized" space. Morgan's debates with Hubert Howe Bancroft about the state of the Pueblos, and the methodology for understanding their state, "compelled and framed the Southwestern work of Cushing's generation" (175).

³ On the relationship between anti-modernism and ethnography see also Michael Elliott's *The Culture Concept: Writing and Difference in the Age of Realism*. Elliott writes: "The publication of Native American verbal expression relied upon the same antimodernist pleasure generated by authentic difference that played such a role in the popularity of dialect tales and local color fiction" (130).

⁴ Eastman apparently felt that the SAI should have further promoted social and moral programs among Indians rather than focusing on governmental Indian affairs (Wilson, *Ohiyesa* 157).

⁵ See Lewis Henry Morgan's "Factory System for Indian Reservations" (58-59).

⁶ At least according to Eastman's assessment. Brown suggested that Eastman held a grudge over the agent's refusal to facilitate a land deal for Eastman in Colorado. Others suspected Eastman may have been, following his wife Elaine's encouragement, seeking appointment as agent himself (Wilson, *Ohiyesa* 71-74).

⁷ While David Martinez's essay "Out of the Woods and into the Museum" offers a nuanced account of the complicated politics surrounding

Eastman's actual expedition, I focus on how, and to what end, Eastman represented his experiences in the role of salvage ethnographer amongst the Ojibwe to a predominantly white readership in this period.

⁸ See Charles Wilkinson's *Blood Struggle: The Rise of Modern Indian Nations* for an account of the modern tribal sovereignty movement. Wilkinson emphasizes how the "vision and actions of Native American leaders themselves" created a movement that can "fairly be mentioned in the same breath with the abolitionists and suffragists of old and the contemporary civil rights, women's, and environmental movements" (xiv).

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