

4-14-2006

## The True Picture of the Indian—As Jackson Viewed It: The Portrayal of Alessandro as an Atypical Native American

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The True Picture of the Indian—As Jackson Viewed It: The Portrayal of Alessandro as an  
Atypical Native American

by

Carrie Olin

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts  
Department of English  
College of Arts and Sciences  
University of South Florida

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Date of Approval:  
April 14, 2006

Keywords: Ramona, mission, Luiseño, Cahuilla, Temecula

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**The True Picture of the Indian—As Jackson Viewed It: The Portrayal of  
Alessandro as an Atypical Native American**

**Carrie Frances Olin**

**ABSTRACT**

Helen Hunt Jackson wrote the sentimental novel, *Ramona*, to call attention to social justice for Native Americans. This thesis presents a reconsideration and reevaluation of the novel, especially that of the Native American voice the novel presents, by recognizing the complexities of Native American literature and culture. Previous criticism of the novel focuses on the portrayal of Hispanics or the “real life” events, such as the shaping of Southern California, the “true” Ramona, or the life of Jackson. Since there is little critical debate of the text itself, this thesis initiates further exploration. An extensive review of the scholarship provides evidence of the problematic Native American voice. Other white authors, most significantly John G. Neihardt, have presented Native American literary texts such as autobiographies. While *Ramona* is a work of fiction, Jackson takes similar liberties as translators and editors of Native American autobiographies. In addition, Christianity shapes Jackson’s interpretation of Native American life. All of Jackson’s characters, both Native American and Hispanic, are influenced by Christianity, and no Native American religion exists within the novel. Despite Jackson’s genuine sympathy for Native American rights, she struggles with Native American stereotypes throughout *Ramona* and creates her own image of the civilized man as noble savage. Jackson can only present a portrait of the Native American

as she perceives it because she encountered at least two distinct obstacles that prevented her from writing in an authentic Native American voice. First, at the time that Jackson wrote the novel, the Luiseño tribe, the subject of Jackson's narrative, had been influenced by the role of Europeans in their society for over 300 years, and the tribe had lost at least some sense of its original native identity. Secondly, like other white authors, Jackson attempts to give voice to the Native American with her own white upper class female tongue. The Native American voice that Jackson presents is ultimately filtered through her Western lens.

## Introduction

Helen Hunt Jackson wrote the sentimental novel, *Ramona*, to call attention to social justice for Native Americans. This thesis presents a reconsideration and reevaluation of the novel, especially that of the Native American voice the novel presents, by recognizing the complexities of Native American literature and culture. Previous criticism of the novel focuses on the portrayal of Hispanics or the “real life” events, such as the shaping of Southern California, the “true” *Ramona*, or the life of Jackson. Since there is little critical debate about the text itself, this thesis initiates further exploration. An extensive review of the scholarship provides evidence of the problematic Native American voice. Other white authors, most significantly John G. Neihardt, have presented Native American literary texts such as autobiographies. While *Ramona* is a work of fiction, Jackson takes liberties similar to those of translators and editors of Native American autobiographies. In addition, Christianity shapes Jackson’s interpretation of Native American life. All of Jackson’s characters, both Native American and Hispanic, are influenced by Christianity, and no Native American religion exists within the novel. Despite Jackson’s genuine sympathy for Native American rights, she struggles with Native American stereotypes throughout *Ramona* and creates her own image of the civilized man as noble savage. Therefore, the Native American voice that Jackson presents is ultimately filtered through her Western lens.

The extensive debate regarding the authentic Native American voice includes elements not characteristic of discussions of other genres. The discussion involves

questions concerning language distinctive to this debate, such as whether the literature is written in English or in a Native tongue or whether an amanuensis, editor, or translator has somehow altered the text. The controversy also includes definitions of Native American identity and what is referred to as the blood quantum. Distinctive questions must be examined in determining whether a piece of literature accurately represents a Native American culture: Who is being described? What culture is being explored? From what viewpoint, Native American or otherwise, is the story being told? Often, the Native American voice can be defined by what it is not; the Native American voice does not rely on Indian stereotypes, nor does it reflect a people who should be wholly idealized. The authentic Native American voice should represent a “real” people, a people with distinct values and genuine concerns, a culture not defined by another, more dominant one, nor a culture that has been entirely resistant to change. The authentic Native American voice represents a living culture and is accepted by those who claim their status within such a community.

My thesis will examine the degree to which Helen Hunt Jackson’s *Ramona* is successful in depicting an authentic portrait of the Native American. Valerie Sherer Mathes argues that in the novel *Ramona* Jackson set out to write a work of fiction that presents a true picture of the Native American, but then Mathes qualifies her statement with the phrase, “as Jackson viewed it” (77). Ultimately, according to Mathes, Jackson can only present a portrait of the Native American as she perceives it because she encountered at least two distinct obstacles that prevented her from writing in an authentic Native American voice. First, at the time that Jackson wrote the novel, the Luiseño tribe, the subject of Jackson’s narrative, had been influenced by the role of Europeans in their

society for over 300 years, and the tribe had lost at least some sense of its original native identity. Although societies and communities are continuously subject to change, the Luiseño tribe, although made up of Native Americans, was so overly influenced by the Mexican society that they essentially became the lowest group in a Spanish-Mexican caste system, rather than a Native American entity. Secondly, like other white authors, Jackson attempts to give voice to the Native American with her own white upper class female tongue. Despite her intense concern for Native American rights, Jackson is writing from the vantage point of a white female, not of a Native American, and in her attempt to present the hero Alessandro as an admirable Indian, Jackson inadvertently establishes the dichotomy of the noble savage versus the “wild Injun.” In this thesis I will expand the work of Mathes, seeking to demonstrate that despite Jackson’s strong ties to the Native American movement, in the novel *Ramona*, she cannot give her hero a truly authentic Native American voice because she does not have the means to do so.

Jackson’s attempt to write in a Native American voice raises a plethora of questions regarding the debate of the authentic Native American voice, which is far reaching and encompasses discussions not only of authorship but also of heritage. Even today, Native Americans must contemplate whether it is better to unite and lose tribal differences or retain particular tribal distinctions and risk disappearance altogether. No agreement exists, and this problem further complicates the question of Native American identity. Ultimately, it is the Native Americans who determine what pieces of literature should be considered truly authentic; however, this certainly does not thwart the efforts of non-Native Americans to create their own idea of the “true” Native American voice.

### **Review of the Debate about the Authentic Native American Voice**

The question of authenticity in depicting the “true” Native American is a broad topic that includes aspects of lineage as well as language; however, the central concern is the possibility of members of a dominant culture assuming the voice of a minority culture. Multiple facets of this discussion exist, including the following: Can an authentic Native American voice be translated into English? Can an authentic Native American voice be written in English? Can an authentic Native American voice be written down at all, and, if so, who can represent an authentic Native American?

In *American Indian Fiction* (1978), Charles Larson determines the authenticity of the Native writer’s work by examining an author’s lineage and use of language. Larson argues that to write authentic Native American fiction, one must have a sense of the concept of Indian identity, and his qualifications for including an author in his study are that the author was established as a genuine Native American and that the author wrote the novel without the aid of a collaborator or an amanuensis. For Larson, “a prime distinction for determining ‘Indianness’ appears to be identification with and acceptance by one’s fellow tribesmen” (6). To determine whether an author was accepted by a particular tribe, Larson looked for the writer’s name on the tribal rolls. However, Larson was quick to state that the degree of Indian blood suggested by the tribal rolls did not account for one’s ability to write as a “true” Indian. Being a full-blooded Native American does not correlate with one’s ability to write with an authentic Native American voice. Larson also suggests that works can be assumed to be authentically

Native American if they are included in Native American anthologies or edited by Native Americans. In addition, Larson illustrates reasons why an author would choose to write in English: “Many of these [Native American] languages have no orthography, and that, of course, has curtailed the possibility of producing literary works in those languages despite their rich oral tradition” (9). By writing in the tribal tongue, the author eliminates readers who are non-Indians and also Native people who speak a different tribal language.

In “Indian Autobiography: Origins, Type, and Function” (1985), Arnold Krupat presents the origins of the Indian autobiography as it coincides with the development of the autobiography in early American history; however, Krupat notes that Indian autobiographies are groups of texts “explicitly presented by the white who wrote them down and published them as historical or ethnographic documents” (28). Thus no Indian autobiography conforms to the common definition of autobiography, and Krupat argues that the Indian autobiography is a contradiction in terms: “Indian autobiographies are collaborative efforts, jointly produced by some white who translates, transcribes, compiles, edits, interprets, polishes, and ultimately determines the form of the text in writing, and by an Indian who is its subject and whose life becomes the content of the ‘autobiography’ whose title may bear his name” (30). In his discussion, Krupat juxtaposes eastern autobiographers, such as Henry Adams and Henry Thoreau, with western autobiographers, who were considered more Indian-like, such as Davy Crockett, Daniel Boone, and Kit Carson, who could neither read nor write; however, he often compares the Indian autobiography with other autobiographies of the time without commenting on the full differences in editing and producing the texts. For example,

Krupat insists that the western autobiographies and the Indian autobiographies are similar due to the fact that the subjects are both close to nature and uneducated according to Western standards; however, Krupat fails to adequately note that the editors and the western autobiographers are of the same culture and language. For Krupat, white domination came “not only with the power of the sword but of the pen as well.” (34). Therefore, despite the biographers’ attempts to keep the spirit of the Native American alive, those who were preserving the spirit were allied with its destroyers.

*In The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian*

*Traditions* (1986) Paula Gunn Allen states that Native Americans and their traditions are multitudinous; therefore, the themes of their novels are also numerous. Allen argues that even though most contemporary novels use western narrative plotting, they are ritualistic in approach, structure, theme, symbol, and significance. Allen finds these novels most properly termed American Indian novels “because they rely on native rather than non-Indian forms, themes, and symbols and so are not colonial or exploitative. Rather, they carry on the oral tradition at many levels, furthering and nourishing it and being furthered and nourished by it” (79). The protagonists in Native American novels are bicultural and deal with the effects of colonization and a sense of loss of self; however, each participates in a ritual tradition that provides shape and significance to their lives: “The structure of tribal narratives, at least in their native language forms, is quite unlike that of western fiction; it is not tied to any particular time line, main character, or event. It is tied to a particular point of view—that of the tribe’s tradition—and to a specific idea—that of the ritual tradition and accompanying perspective that inform the narrative. Ritual provides coherence and significance to traditional narrative as it does to traditional life” (79).

Allen suggests that literature—including ceremony, myth, tale, and song—is the primary mode of ritual tradition: “The tribal rituals necessarily include a verbal element, and contemporary novelists draw from that verbal aspect in their work” (80). Conversely, Allen insists that Western fiction is based on non-sacred aesthetic and intellectual precepts, including the three unities, and that it is structured to create the illusion of change over time due to conflict and crisis.

In *Mother Earth* (1987), Sam Gill proposes that everything we know about Native Americans has been viewed through the white man’s filter; therefore, no one can “authentically” speak with a Native American voice, including Native Americans. Gill uses the concept of Mother Earth as an example, arguing that while the concept of Mother Earth is typically attributed to native peoples, this attribution is frequently adduced as a somewhat racist example of how Native Americans are more in touch with the land than the Europeans. While this may have been true, he posits, the concept only crystallizes the “otherness” of the Europeans. Gill asserts that even Native Americans’ oral traditions are informed by contact and conflict with white culture and thus there is no such thing as an authentic Native American voice. In addition, at the time of Columbus, there were over 500 distinct tribes in North America, each with distinct language, rituals, food, art, and social structures. Some of these tribes were as different from each other as they were from the white man. In a subsequent book, *Storytracking* (1998), Gill suggests that it is possible to say something meaningful about native cultures once the concept of authenticity is discarded.

Anthony Mattina tackles the charges made by Dennis Tedlock and Dell Hymes that the traditional prose paragraph is inadequate for the writings of Native Americans in

“North American Indian Mythography: Editing Texts for the Printed Page” (1987). While listening to tapes of Zuni performances, Tedlock determined that there were various silences that recurred throughout a performance. Mattina argues that Tedlock’s translations of these oral stories appear more as a musical score, and because “oral narrative is not the equivalent to written prose (the latter being an invention that postdates literacy), Tedlock felt that records of oral narrative should not be printed as written prose” (131). However, Mattina counters that not all Native American narratives are composed in verse any more than all English literature is composed in verse. Instead, Mattina focuses on how Indians speak English and how the form and function of language is intertwined.

Brian Swann’s “A Note on Translation and Remarks on Collaboration” (1987) focuses on a key concern in Native American literature—the art of translation. In an ideal world, Swann asserts that “the best translations are made by translators thoroughly at home in both of the languages being worked on, and that literary expression is best translated by translators who are themselves writers” (247). While Swann hopes that current translations will occur in this manner, he does not fail to recognize that older translations of Native American texts need to be reviewed. Swann calls for “more qualified translators to reevaluate the old ‘texts,’ and until that happens, their value will retain a hint of the dubious” (248). Swann has two reasons for reevaluating older texts. First, Swann sees a “constant necessity for the retranslation of works” (248). Secondly, Swann observes that the unconscious forces and cultural osmosis that have shaped those translations must be sorted accordingly.

Joseph Bruchac begins his article, “Four Directions: Some Thoughts on Teaching Native American Literature” (1991), noting the comparisons between Native American literature and African literature: “More accurately, it is how speaking about African literature would be if we were living in an Africa which had lost 90% of its population in the last 500 years and was being run as a single united continent by European colonials” (4). Bruchac states that an incredibly vast body of work is encountered when approaching the totality of Native American literature, which derives from over 400 different languages and cultures that are thousands of years old. While his article focuses on tips for teaching Native American literature, particularly the breadth and diversity of the genre, he also offers one of the most unique analyses of Native American translation: “Imagine what it would be like if Shakespeare's plays had been written in Lakota and we only knew his work in English through a single translation of *Othello* done by an 18th century puritanical and racist Baptist missionary with a tin ear who transcribed the play from a verbal recounting of it by a slightly senile octogenarian who never liked the theatre that much” (7). While Bruchac’s attitude toward the issue of translation is humorous, it is also a striking reminder of the hazards of translation.

In *Forked Tongues: Speech, Writing and Representation in North American Indian Texts* (1991), David Murray demonstrates the ways in which translation has obscured and effaced texts that claim to represent or describe Native Americans and the underlying issues of cultural and ideological assumptions of this effacement. Murray claims this “effacement enables the production of two absolutely opposed mythical moments of encounter, which reappear implicitly in the presentation of Indians; the meeting with untouched and unknowable otherness, beyond the reach of language; and

the rapport of unproblematic translatability, and of transparency of language” (2).

Through an examination of these mythical moments and assumptions about language and nature, Murray seeks to define a discourse of “Indianness” that is available to both Native Americans and non-Native Americans. Murray suggests that the Native Americans could either adapt to the demands of the dominant group or cease to exist in cultural translations. Murray argues that “Indian attempts at speaking English are either ignored or patronized. One important reason for this, as well as the ideological ones I have outlined, would be the absence of an appropriate form in which to represent such speech until the development of literary conventions in which to express the vernacular, which were not available even to express English dialects” (7). Native Americans could either speak like the educated white men or they could not speak at all.

Simon Ortiz argues in “The Historical Matrix Towards a National Indian Literature: Cultural Authenticity in Nationalism” (1993) that Native Americans possess the creative ability to “gather in many forms of the socio-political colonizing force which beset them and to make these forms meaningful in their own terms” (65). Ortiz inverts the typical formula in which Native Americans have assumed European traditions and suggests that religious rituals brought to the southwest in the sixteenth century have lost their Spanishness and are now Indian. Ortiz argues that Native American literature has developed through a similar process and must embrace Euro-American colonization or else repress it: “And this kind of repression is always a poison and detriment to creative growth and expression” (66). Ortiz observes that the most authentic Native American voice is found in five centuries of the oral tradition, insisting that it is through this oral tradition that the Native community has maintained its integrity. Ortiz notes that some

critics may argue that Native Americans have succumbed to a different linguistic system, thereby forgetting their native selves. However, Ortiz suggests that it is possible for a native people to retain and maintain their lives through the use of any language: “The indigenous peoples of the Americas have taken the languages of the colonialists and used them for their own purposes” (66). For Ortiz, there is no question of authenticity; “rather it is the way that Indian people have creatively responded to forced colonization” (66).

In “This Voluminous Unwritten Book of Ours: Early Native American Writers and the Oral Tradition” (1996), William Clements suggests that written art derives from and builds on the long-standing tradition of verbal art in Native American communities: “Scholars have often noted that the American Indian writers whose work has generated that renaissance represent the continuation of tribal traditions of verbal art and participate in expressive cultures rooted in spiritual and intellectual contexts of their own local communities” (122). Instead of emphasizing parallels with Euro-American literature, Clements examines how the writing by Native Americans of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries relates to oral tradition. Clements does not dismiss claims by critics such as Krupat that Native American written literature generally drew on European and Euro-American literary models; however, Clements remarks that the oral tradition also influences Native American writers: “In writing autobiography and history, early Native American writers were bound to rely on Euroamerican models. Although oral narratives such as coup tales might provide indigenous precedents for such writing, the extension of a plotted narrative that covers a significant portion of a life or the collation of material from diverse sources into a sustained historical narrative had no real forerunners in Native American literary heritages” (130). Clements notes that Native American authors

recognized the ability to manipulate language and continue their oral traditions in a written form. Native Americans who used Euro-American forms and themes to develop their verbal and written art did not abandon their indigenous oral heritage by doing so.

Paula Gunn Allen's *Off the Reservation: Reflections on Boundary-Busting, Border-Crossing Loose Canons* (1998) approaches a major issue for the modern Native American—how to retain Indianness while participating in a global society. Allen remarks that the Native American community is a braiding of cultures and includes various tribes and races. Due to the conglomeration of societies, Allen finds it impossible to write within a purely Western genre: “As Native Americans of the Five Hundred Nations never have fit the descriptions other Americans imposed and impose, neither does our thought fit the categories that have been devised to organize Western intellectual enterprise” (6). Allen suggests that from a Western perspective, the works appear to be mixed in content and form and combine myth, history, literary studies, philosophy, and personal narrative. Allen argues that neither Native American thought nor practice has been totally reconstructed into western modes. She posits that the ways in which Native Americans are viewed from the perspective of Western American cultures needs to be corrected so that Native Americans can be discussed with as little distortion as possible.

Roberta Hill, a Native American, presents a personal account of authenticity in writing in her book, *Immersed in Words* (1998). Hill begins the discussion of Indianness in her illustration of a court judgment that sought to distinguish between “historic” and “non-historic” tribes: “Although the distinction was first challenged and later invalidated, it illustrates the ironic twists of Indian law. Some solicitors planned to define as sovereign only those indigenous nations who have remained on their traditional lands and

kept their languages after five hundred years of genocide and ethnocide” (77). Hill suggests that the process of assimilation and acculturation as well as the federal definition of Indian blood has made it difficult to form an identity as a Native American person, and the “legal definition creates smaller and smaller pockets of indigenous people” (81). Hill notes that some children born of interracial or intertribal couples are unable to claim their heritage because of government policies. In addition, Hill addresses the use of language and her apparent love-hate relationship with writing in English. As a child, Hill simply loved what words showed her and how she was able to use words to express herself. However, as an adult, Hill finds problems with expressing Native Americans ways in English and invites the use of Native American language along with English.

In *I Remain Alive: The Sioux Literary Renaissance* (2000), Ruth Heflin asserts that both Native American and Euro-American cultures influenced the works of five Sioux authors, Charles Eastman, Luther Standing Bear, Gertrude Bonnin, Ella Deloria, and Black Elk: “All five writers maintained aspects of their Sioux identities, and all five writers used traditional Sioux literary techniques, blended, of course, with Euro-American considerations of craft and tradition, in their writings” (7). Heflin suggests that some scholars of American Indian literature, such as David Murray and Arnold Krupat, fall into a pattern of pan-Indianism and therefore view “literature as though all Indians were receptive to all forms of Indian writing, while all non-Indian readers are a nuisance Indian writers must accommodate” (9). Heflin also insists that some scholars overemphasize the role of amanuenses. Heflin suggests that no text is printed without the supervision of an editor; however, she fails to mention the cultural differences between an editor of a dominant culture working with a writer of a minority culture. The five

authors whom Heflin examines sought out non-Indian audiences, particularly Euro-American children, in an attempt to influence future relations. In addition, Heflin blasts critics who ignore the role of oral narratives in Native American literature: “Even though English literary scholars still study Old English poetry and its oral tradition as a significant part of the English literary tradition, Native American literature rarely receives the same consideration. In fact, many literary scholars fail to acknowledge Native American influences on the American literary tradition” (31). For Heflin, Native American literature should hold an equal place with Western-based literature; however, her argument at times fails to recognize the unique problems encountered in the writing and translating of Native American texts.

Sidner Larson suggests in *Captured in the Middle: Tradition and Experience in Contemporary Native American Writing* (2000) that the authenticity debate is still firmly grounded in blood quantum, “wherein an individual must usually prove one-quarter Indian blood and the higher the percentage of Indian blood the more authentic the individual is considered to be” (41). This debate of Native American authenticity has branched into Native American writing, creating a third problem: Who should be able to judge such authenticity? Larson anchors his debate in his own survey of the question of authenticity, starting with Vine Deloria’s analysis of the problems of Indian leadership in *Custer Died for Your Sins* (1969). Larson notes that for Deloria, discussions of authenticity are fueled by Indian cultural motifs. In addition, Larson discusses Daniel F. Littlefield’s article, *American Indians, American Scholars, and the American Literary Canon* (1992) and Arnold Krupat’s article, “Scholarship and Native American Studies: A Response to Daniel Littlefield Jr.” (1993) in which they point “out the ways academe has

been self-serving in its treatment of the issues” and categorize “underlying rhetorical strategies such as the double bind, essentialization, and cultural ownership” (43). Larson suggests that neither author resolves the debate because “they both continue to operate within the closed circuit of the debate without providing a means of moving forward” (43). Larson observes that levels of authenticity will vary from tribe to tribe: “The obvious reason is that the traditional world of the plains tribes is simply not available to the same degree as the traditional world of the Pueblos, which is thriving” (45). Larson argues that these types of discussions within the authenticity debate are more relevant than others focusing on personality.

In *Writing Indians: Literacy, Christianity, and Native Community in Early America* (2000), Hilary Wyss traces the historical development of Native American’s literacy in a Euro-American format and how Native peoples expressed themselves in a colonial culture. (A similar examination can be found in Bernd Peyer’s *The Tutor’d Mind: Indian Missionary Writers in Antebellum America* [1997]). Wyss suggests that in the attempt to find an authentic Native voice, critics have ignored those “who wrote and thought from a Native perspective that included a sense of their colonial position” (3). Wyss argues that in this search for the ‘real’ Indian, valuable resources have been overlooked, including the Massachusetts Bible marginalia, resulting in a silence in Native American literature until the nineteenth century. Although critics consider William Apess’s 1829 published narrative, *A Son of the Forest*, the first significant Native autobiography, Wyss asserts that Native American writing exists that precedes Apess by almost 150 years in the form of letters, journal entries, and religious confessions. Although the authors use the language and structures of the colonialists, their Native

identities are not eliminated. In fact, the authors “come to a distinct understanding of what Nateness means in a colonial order” (4). Literacy provided a means for Native Americans to acknowledge their participation in the larger colonial world. Wyss maintains that narratives written by Native converts are bicultural texts, and her work is less about identifying authentically Native texts and more about “pointing out the cultural influences that define and are in turn redefined by Christian Indians in particular” (5). In addition, she posits that there can be no written records of authentic Native American communities “because the act of writing and the possibility of recording the authenticity of nonliterate peoples ultimately contradict each other” (10). By learning to read and write, these Christian Indians could participate in the Euro-American world; however, this identification with the colonialists provides reason for scholars to reject these Native Americans as inauthentic.

In “Usurping Native American Voices” (2001), Larry Zimmerman makes a compelling argument about how the history of Native Americans is construed in current times through archaeology. His argument echoes similar complaints that the history of the Native Americans was written or translated by whites; however, in Zimmerman’s case, the “other” author is science. Zimmerman remarks that “one reason for archaeology’s lack of effective response to Native concerns is that archaeology has not been ready epistemologically to understand and address what might be called the ‘Native American voice’” (169). This voice provides “the authority from which archaeologists speak and write about the past,” and many archaeologists claim that they “speak” for the people of the past and are the only ones truly capable of doing so (169). For Native Americans, the idea “that discovery is the only way to know the past is absurd,” and

“conceptually and pragmatically, the past lives in the present” (172). The mechanism for knowing the past is through oral tradition, which recounts the mythic and makes the past and the present the same. A fundamental complaint of Native Americans is that the scientific voice is dry, depersonalizing, and fails to provide real meaning about the lives of the people: “When archaeologists state that the past is gone, extinct, or lost, unless archaeology is done, they send a strong message that Native American people themselves are extinct” (175). To counteract this, Zimmerman suggests that ethnocritical archaeology, in which archaeologists and indigenous people share construction of the past, may be more beneficial. Like Krupat, Zimmerman argues that the true Native American voice is overwhelmed by the dominant group, which for Zimmerman is the scientists and for Krupat the whites. Unfortunately, Zimmerman skims over the idea that Native American history is told through an oral tradition, and he almost completely bypasses this important point.

Robert Dale Parker states that his book *The Invention of Native American Literature* (2003) proposes an interpretive history in the ways that Native American writers have drawn on Indian and literary traditions to invent the genre of Native American literature. Parker claims to use the word invention “to suggest an air of the provisional, of ongoing process and construction, as opposed to a natural, inevitable effusion of Indian identity” (5). Parker addresses the many ways that form influences literary texts, arguing that abstract descriptions of form—such as symmetrical, asymmetrical, linear, circular, lyrical, and narrative—have no cultural specificity: “In the same way, a literary form, such as the novel, the autobiography, free indirect discourse, parallelism, repetition, and so on, doesn’t inevitably carry a cultural meaning or context”

(9). Parker asserts that any form connected to Indian writing may also appear in the writing of people of other cultures, and seeks to refute the argument of Paula Gunn Allen in the *Sacred Hoop* in which she suggests that novels such as Silko's *Ceremony* are cyclical rather than linear, fitting with an Indian sense of non-linear time. For Parker, Allen's argument implies, perhaps without meaning to, that to write with an authentic Native American voice, certain criteria must be followed, such as non-linearity, and that without the prescribed forms, writing cannot be considered Native American, even if written by a Native American.

Although Sherman Alexie's essay, "When the Story Stolen is Your Own" (2006), focuses on blatant plagiarism from another author, his article also poses the question of whether non-Native Americans can write with an authentic Native American voice. Alexie discovered a piece by Nasdijj, who claimed to be Native American but was later discovered to be a white writer named Timothy Barrus. Although Nasdijj stole various aspects of Alexie's autobiography, sans specific tribal members, clans, ceremonies, and locations, Alexie's real concern was that the author had "cynically co-opted as a literary style the very real suffering endured by generations of very real Indians because of very real injustices caused by very real American aggression that destroyed very real tribes" (1). Although Nasdijj was not the first to do it, Alexie calls for an apology to the Native American community for usurping its voice.

The question of authenticity in a Native American voice exists on many levels. In this survey alone, the authors discuss topics of authenticity in heritage, form, language, and translation. Charles Larson points out that many Native American authors and those attempting to write from a Native American point of view are doing so because of the

desire to record an event or historical perspective before this point of view is forgotten. Although Native American identity cannot exist without contact and exchange between Native American and non-Native American cultures, the concept of “Indianness” is changing. For if the most authentic Native American novels were those written by full-blooded Native Americans still living on reservations, authors such as Leslie Silko, Scott Momaday, and D’Arcy McNickle would effectively be eliminated from the canon.

### **Review of the Literature Regarding *Ramona***

The critical discussion of *Ramona* is negligible at best, with few arguments focusing on the text of the novel itself. Instead, conversations about *Ramona* often include topics such as the tourism boom in Southern California based on the popularity of the book and translations and interpretations by Cuban nationalist Jose Martí. Overall, the scope of criticism remains inadequate; however, this leaves room for numerous critical debates.

George Wharton James' *Through Ramona's Country* (1913) and Carlyle Channing Davis and William A. Alderson's *The True Story of 'Ramona': Its Facts Fictions, Inspiration and Purpose* (1914) set about a similar task of determining the facts of Jackson's *Ramona*. All three authors are intent on uncovering the facts that are woven into Jackson's book and the lives of her fictitious hero and heroine. While all three authors are aware that *Ramona* is by and large a work of fiction, they argue that "many of the isolated facts of the romance had their absolute origin in the life history of this unfortunate people" (James xvi). The two books center on real people, on whom the authors believe *Ramona*'s characters and events are based, as well as the life of the Indians in the area, including evictions, villages, and basket weaving, and also Helen Hunt Jackson's visits to the area. Both books include pictures of Jackson and the Indians upon whom the story is allegedly based.

In a more recent but similar book, *Ramona Memories: Tourism and the Shaping of Southern California* (2005), Dydia DeLyser explores the lives of the people presented

in the James and Davis' books, such as a Cahuilla Indian named Ramona Lubo, whose similarities with Ramona in the novel include such events as witnessing her husband's brutal murder. However, DeLyser's book focuses less on the historical accuracy of the novel and instead centers on how the obsession with finding the "real" Ramona has led to a tourism boom in Southern California. DeLyser notes that Jackson's novel changed how Southern California is remembered. Many places affiliated themselves with the novel by either naming themselves for the novel's characters or by claiming that they were actually described in the text, therefore making them authentic *Ramona* locales: "What emerged most prominently was not a call to aid the Indians, but rather a vast series of books, brochures, and magazine and newspaper articles serving as guides, and fueling the proliferation of *Ramona*-identified sites across the region" (xi). DeLyser's book examines the practices of tourists at these landmarks, the development of *Ramona*-related attractions, and the impact of the social memory of Southern California.

John Byers discusses the similarities between Jackson's *Report of the Conditions and Needs of the Mission Indians of California, made by Special Agents Helen Jackson and Abbot Kinney to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs* and her novel *Ramona* in "The Indian Matter of Helen Hunt Jackson's *Ramona*: From Fact to Fiction" (1975). Byers notes that Jackson's report on the Indians of Southern California has an unusual quality in that it is well-written and that it is "not merely the findings of a person intent on accumulating facts" (332). He claims that the Mission Indian report was the seed for *Ramona* and that Jackson had written the report only six months prior to writing the novel. In his discussion, Byers, like many other *Ramona* scholars, focuses on the factual or real-life aspects of the novel, such as the similarities of the towns of San Pasquale and

Temecula in both the report and the novel: “It is much as if Alessandro and Ramona had lived in or near all the villages that the author visited during her investigation and had been the principal protagonists in all the stories that she heard. By placing the suffering on an individual basis, however, Mrs. Jackson has succeeded in making the action more intense and more condemnatory” (345). Despite the realistic aspects of the novel, Byers notes that Jackson did not hesitate to take liberties with facts if it added to the overall effect of the novel: “She followed the facts of various incidents, but she had no compunction about shuffling those facts about a bit to obtain the desired picture. Considering the fact that Mrs. Jackson was a woman with a battle to fight, it is to her credit, then, that the story is essentially an accurate account of the Indian in his dealings with the government” (345).

While the title of Valerie Sherer Mathes’ article, “Ramona, Its Successes and Failures” (1990), suggests an analysis of Jackson’s novel, Mathes does little more than present a historical overview of the period surrounding Jackson’s writing of *Ramona*. Mathes begins her essay by describing Jackson’s desire to help the American Indian by writing a novel, “one that presented the true picture of the Indian” (77). In her brief analysis of the novel, Mathes notes that *Ramona* failed to be as influential as *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* partially because the time and issues were different. Uncle Tom represented four million slaves in fifteen southern states, while the Indian population at most was in the low hundreds of thousands. In addition, the vast majority of westerners living near Indian communities were not sympathetic and they wanted Indian land. Mathes finds that “Ramona’s impact has been stronger in the field of literature, as a love story, than in the Indian reform arena, as a condemnation of avaricious white settlers” (82). Mathes notes

that Jackson lamented that many people missed the Indian side of the story, and she identifies the novel's fatal flaw as Alessandro's portrayal not as a typical Indian but rather "as a Christian with a position almost as high as a high-caste Mexican"—with his "Indianism" ignored (84). Mathes offers a scant view of initial reviews of the novel, which is perhaps the most intriguing and valuable aspect of the article. For the most part, Mathes tends to ignore the novel and focus more on the general events, such as Jackson's letter writing, health, and legislation in Washington.

Michele Moylan focuses on the material representations of "Ramona in Materiality as Performance: The Forming of Helen Hunt Jackson's *Ramona*" (1996). Moylan begins her discussion with an explanation of how "materiality functions as a causal agent in interpretation" (223). Certain illustrations compel a reader to interpret the text one way, while another set of illustrations may encourage the reader to interpret it another. Moylan also posits that a text's illustrations may represent meaning for a particular group and act as a response to the text. While these approaches to materiality appear contradictory, Moylan seeks a median in which textual materiality can act as an expression of interpretive performance. In the case of *Ramona*, Moylan argues that Helen Hunt Jackson insisted on contracting the "the physical form of her novel *Ramona* in such a way as to encourage readers towards her own interpretation" (225). Because of the book's popularity, it has had an enduring relationship between form and interpretation, such as the movies and plays based on the novel. Moylan offers the following six possible interpretations of the novels and the ways in which the novel has been manifested as reader response and material texts: 1) readers respond to the novel as social criticism, with the publishers supplementing the original story with sociological and

geographical verification so that readers feel that they are reading a “true” portrayal; 2) readers come to a conclusion opposite to that intended by Jackson and find the book romanticized or dangerous or perhaps interpret the novel as suggesting that Indians should be civilized from the savages that they were; 3) readers choose to respond to Ramona as Spanish rather than Indian, effectively eliminating the Indian quality in her character; 4) readers focus on the love affair between Alessandro and Ramona; 5) the book increases California tourism; and 6) the book engenders interest in multiculturalism. Moylan examines the material aspects of the book, such as book covers, illustrations, plays, movies, and the Ramona pageants and how these various interpretations of the novel affected these productions.

In “‘White Slaves’ and the ‘Arrogant Mestiza’: Reconfiguring Whiteness in the Squatter and the Don and Ramona” (1998), David Luis-Brown compares two political novels, Jackson’s *Ramona* and Maria Amparo Ruiz de Burton’s *The Squatter and the Don* written in 1885. Both novels narrate conflicts over land, class, position, and racial status in California during the 1870s. Luis-Brown states that romantic racialism, or the use of sentimentalism as protofeminist moral critique, provides female authors “with a vocabulary to yoke their protofeminism to the more legitimized traditions of racial reform” (814). According to Luis-Brown, the novels affirm and rework dominant discourses in relation to their allegorical structures and fuse romance and history through melodrama. In addition, Luis-Brown argues that an attempt should be made to understand the mixed-race, or *mestizo*, American future that Ramona embodies: “Ramona undermines whiteness by proposing cross-racial alliances through the ambiguous figure of the blue-eyed Ramona, the daughter of an Anglo and an Indian, who, as Jose Martí

suggests, chooses a politicized Indian identity, and through Ramona's successive marriages to Alessandro, an Indian, and Felipe, a *Californio*" (823). Luis-Brown further suggests that the novel undermines racial discourses because Jackson has her readers identify with racially ambiguous characters. Although, the marriage of Felipe and Ramona creates a multiracial family, their decision to move to Mexico expresses disgust with the U.S. and "their willingness to consider alternative models of racially egalitarian rule" (829).

Susan Gillman offers two articles on Cuban nationalist Jose Martí and his influences, Harriet Beecher Stowe and Helen Hunt Jackson, in "Ramona in 'Our America'" (1998) and its follow-up, "The Squatter, The Don, and The Grandissimes in Our America" (2002). Gillman argues that Martí combined the two authors into a Stowe-Jackson figure: "For Martí, however, the point of pairing Stowe with Jackson is less to rank the relative merits of the two reformist writers than to bring together the two oppressed groups for which they speak" (*Ramona* 91). The figure of Martí's Stowe-Jackson was an interethnic, international figure who was "capable of speaking to the limits as well as the possibilities of the multiple racial and national aspirations of Latin America and the Caribbean" (*Ramona* 92). Martí's figure of Stowe-Jackson insists on thinking of the Negro Question and the Indian Question as one question: "Looking toward the Southwest as well as the Atlantic seaboard, Martí's Stowe also locates a possible intersection between two important fields of geographical and cultural analysis, the Black Atlantic and the Spanish Borderlands, both of which seek to disrupt the provincial focus and nationalist imperative of traditional American historical and literary studies" (*The Squatter* 142). Gillman in turn discusses the "fantasy heritages" of the

South and Southwest and how these regions were marketed as locations for history and for travel.

In “Ramona and Postnationalist American Studies: On 'Our America' and Mexican Borderlands” (2003), Robert Irwin focuses on the Hispanic element of *Ramona* by presenting a contrasting argument to that of José Martí, who proposes the idea that Helen Hunt Jackson had written the “nuestra novella” and suggests the notion of “Nuestra América” as a strategy of Latin American resistance to mounting U.S. imperialism in the Western Hemisphere. Irwin examines *Ramona* from a specifically historical context of the northwestern Mexican borderlands to rebut Martí’s arguments and establish the importance of Mexican borderlands “in forming a postnational vision of race and intercultural relations in the Americas” (540). Irwin suggests that the “common reductive view” is that Mexico assimilated its indigenous population, while the “U.S. racial purists chose to annihilate theirs” (550). Unlike Debra Rosenthal, Irwin does not view Ramona’s mixed heritage as an allegory of racial identity in the novel. Ramona is the girl who “abandons her privileged culture” and “personifies the rejection of racist Mexican *criollo* culture” (551). Irwin finds that Martí’s error is in assuming that Latin America’s treatment of “the Indian problem” was essentially different from that of the United States. While intermarriage, religious conversion, cultural syncretism, and cultural assimilation were characteristic of central Mexican society, “attitudes in Mexico’s northwestern borderlands were, in fact, not much different from those in the U.S. Southwest” (558). In closing, Irwin suggests that the renewed interest in *Ramona*, including Televisa’s 2000 production of *Ramona* as a *telenovela*, may allow the novel to finally become the *nuestra novella*.

In “‘I Think Our Romance is Spoiled,’ or Crossing Genres: California History in Helen Hunt Jackson’s *Ramona* and Maria Amparo Ruiz de Burton’s *The Squatter and the Don*” (1999), Anne Goldman suggests that both of the works racialize the marriage plot of a California pastoral: “The struggles of the suitors are not purely stylized versions of romance as much as they are representatives of an overtly historical struggle to (re)define borders, of *Californio* efforts to maintain their livelihood and their land amidst increasing pressure from encroaching Anglo settlers” (67). Goldman asserts that the novels suggest a turning towards history, rather than away from it: “Jackson’s book writes a version of recent history that backdates current events, anticipating the demise of the *Californios* and the mission Indians and foreclosing upon any recommendation for change” (68). Jackson seeks to have readers not only recognize conquest for what it is, but also to empathize with those people who have been humiliated on their own turf. Like Chimene Keitner, Goldman brings up the issue of law and justice: “*Ramona* demonstrates the facility with which the law becomes an abstraction; in Jackson’s critique of Gilded Age mercantilism, legality is a trope that simultaneously decries and justifies the inexorable advance of civilization” (74).

Diana Price Herndl’s “Miscegen(r)ation or Mestiza Discourse?: Feminist and Racial Politics in *Ramona* and *Iola Leroy*” (1999) argues that the mixed-race title characters must choose the race to which they will belong. The neologism in her title is meant to call attention not only to the mixing of race in these novels but also to the mixing of genres. Herndl posits that Jackson and Frances Harper, author of *Iola Leroy*, believed their texts were read for their cultural validity. However, Herndl questions whether making the heroines similar to their northern white audiences effaces the causes

that the authors are working towards, and she suggests this could lead to enslaving racial identities or, on the other side, possibly opening a dialogue between women of color and white women. Herndl also suggests that the authenticity of the character's voices as women of color is doubtful because both heroines are raised in the culture that they choose in the end. Herndl feels that Ramona is always "playing" Indian when she is with Alessandro. In addition, Herndl suggests "the choice of genre in some ways determines the choice of race itself, by forcing the writer to accede to certain ideas of realism and to shape certain of her desires and ambitions for her fiction" (266). Herndl also discusses the ending options available to Jackson for the novel. She concludes that if Ramona were to survive on her own, Jackson would be implying that Indian policies were sufficient. If Ramona were to die, readers might not want to partake in the misery. Jackson's choice to save Ramona by having her move to Mexico "may amount to evading her real political question, but it also avoids a necessarily politically helpless ending" (271). However, by having Ramona pass as a Mexican woman rather than resist the white settlers, Jackson negates the racial identity that she has been trying to validate throughout the novel. In conclusion, Herndl finds that it may be the inauthenticity of the texts that testify to their true authenticity.

Martin Padget's "Travel Writing, Sentimental Romance, and Indian Rights Advocacy: The Politics of Helen Hunt Jackson's *Ramona*" (2000) presents an interdisciplinary critique of *Ramona* and Jackson's Indian rights support that establishes the context in which the novel was written and foregrounds the role that literature can play as an agent of social change. Padget argues that *Ramona* is able to dramatize complex issues of race, ethnicity, gender, class, citizenship, and nationhood without

reconciling them. First, Padget examines how Jackson set about writing her novel as the *Uncle Tom's Cabin* for the Indian. Second, Padget discusses *Ramona* in detail and attempts to “clarify how the novel carried within its own pages the possibility for readings that largely ignored its Indian reform initiative” (836). And finally, Padget attempts to investigate the legacy of the novel immediately following Jackson’s death by discussing Constance Goddard DuBois' report to the Women's National Indian Association on the progress of missionary efforts among southern California Indians and by examining George Wharton James's *Through Ramona's Country*, which “endeavored to authenticate the ‘real life’ events on which *Ramona* was based” (836). Padget argues that *Ramona* acts as a form of imperialist nostalgia, where members of a colonizing society can come to mourn the passing of the formerly autonomous culture their society has defeated and incorporated.

The title of Georgiana Strickland’s article, “In Praise of ‘Ramona’: Emily Dickinson and Helen Hunt Jackson’s Indian Novel” (2000), insinuates that Dickinson had a role in the production of the novel; however, in actuality, Strickland simply concludes that Dickinson at some point read *Ramona*. Her evidence is a letter to Jackson dated March 1885 in which Dickinson declares “Pity me . . . I have finished *Ramona*. Would that like Shakespeare, it were just published!” Strickland then moves to a discussion of *Ramona* in order to translate Dickinson’s response. Like other critics, Strickland focuses on Jackson’s role as an Indian commissioner in the development of the novel, arguing that Jackson idealized her central characters. Strickland finds *Ramona* too saccharine, although she has a tough core that is tested often, and Alessandro too genteel and too similar to a high-caste Spanish-Mexican. Strickland also discusses the popular culture

phenomenon of *Ramona*, including a five-hour dramatization, a hit song, and an outdoor pageant in Hemet, California that launched the careers of Raquel Welch and Victory Jory. In conclusion, Strickland points out that neither Jackson nor Dickinson lived to read the evaluations of later critics, both dying within two years of the book's publication. Strickland notes that there is no evidence suggesting that Dickinson appreciated Jackson's message about Indian rights and reform policies.

In her discussion of Native Americans portrayed in white-authored fiction, "Race Mixture and the Representation of Indians in the U. S. and the Andes: Cumandá, Aves sin nido, The Last of the Mohicans, and Ramona" (2002), Debra Rosenthal applies the Andean genres of *indianismo*, which is "concerned with the romantic portrayal of passive, uncivilized Natives in an exotic, erotically charged natural setting" and "often aligned with nineteenth-century romanticism," and *indigenismo*, which is "associated with twentieth-century realism" and "can be characterized as a social progressive movement that exposes white and *mestizo* exploitation of Indians and advocates their eventual liberation" (123). Scholars of U.S. literature do not have such categories, and Rosenthal argues that these models challenge the conception of U.S. literary heritage. Rosenthal suggests that in both North and South America, writings about Indians engage the theme of miscegenation to serve nationalist aims, and the portrayal of Indian-white sexual relations can determine a novel's thematic and political concerns. Rosenthal presents several novels in which incest, not racism, prevents Indians and whites from uniting in marriage, effectively removing the romantic relationship and replacing it with familial ties. In the case of *Ramona*, Rosenthal argues that the heroine is able to "detect" race, which "accounts for her attraction to the Indian Alessandro" (129). Rosenthal

suggests that *Ramona* has much in common with the *indigenista* movement and that Jackson uses women's bodies and interracial sex as "powerful narratological devices" (133). All of the nineteenth-century novels that Rosenthal examines share the common theme of the inevitable disappearance of the Indians.

Chimene Keitner's "The Challenge of Building an Intercommunal Rule of Law in Helen Hunt Jackson's *Ramona*" (2003), explores the problems of inter-communal rule of law in *Ramona* and whether any differences could have produced a more cooperative outcome. Keitner identifies three facets of philosophy of law within the text. First, Keitner notes "a strong element of natural law thinking, which enables Jackson to construct an ideal of justice based on her conception of all individuals as members of a common humanity" (53). Secondly, Keitner suggests that Jackson presents a critique of misunderstanding that is most often rooted in ignorance. And thirdly, Keitner sites "a deeper critique of incommensurability—the fundamental incompatibility of perspectives and values—as the greatest threat to the long-term possibility of an inter-communal rule of law" (53). Keitner argues that expression, regulation, facilitation, and validation fail to operate across the various communities in *Ramona*; instead, the creation of an inter-communal rule of law is impeded by delineation and separation. In addition, "white American and Native American values and ideas about appropriate behavior are not the same" (57). The white settlers may have believed that they were living under the law; however, the Mexicans and Native Americans did not share the sentiment. In his examination of the characters, Keitner finds that Felipe's vocabulary is full of stereotypes, despite his enlightenment towards Native Americans, and that Aunt Ri suggests ignorance as the sole reason for misunderstandings about the Native American

community. Judge Wells is a primary figure in the discussion of law, but Keitner insists that the judge is either unwilling or unable to contest “the divergence between a discriminatory positive law and an egalitarian ideal of natural justice” (67). In summation, Keitner feels that law may exist in a society that is unable to punish all guilty individuals; however, the society does not have justice.

In his “The Warp of Whiteness: Domesticity and Empire in Helen Hunt Jackson's *Ramona*” (2004), John Gonzalez identifies Aunt Ri’s multihued rag carpet as representing a post-Reconstruction U.S. that makes no distinctions based on color. Gonzales argues that through the metaphor of the rag carpet, Jackson presents the view that “the incorporation of all citizens, actual or potential, regardless of race, appears as the necessary task and happy result of white women's housework” (437). According to Gonzales, Jackson transforms this seemingly apolitical domestic object into a powerful actor in the masculine sphere of governance. Through moral persuasion, readers of *Ramona* join Aunt Ri in “repudiating widespread discourses of Indian inhumanity” and instead acknowledge Indians as “fellow human beings in a less civilized but tractable state” (446). Similarly, acting as a sort of a missionary of civilization in every Indian village she inhabits, “the semicivilized *Ramona* influences not only Indian women but also Indian men, particularly her husband” (450). However, even those Indians ready to become individual property owners like Alessandro might never fully retain the lessons of racial tutelage since Alessandro's madness represents a reversion to a state of savagery, in which only tribal relations are recognized. By representing the domestic influence of white women as essential to the colonial project of civilizing Indians, *Ramona* and other

Indian reform novels facilitate white women's direct involvement in the management of the U.S. empire.

In “The Erotics of Racialization: Gender and Sexuality in the Making of California” (2004), Yolanda Venegas discusses the symbolic use of women to describe colonization projects in ways that justify the violence of conquest in California’s popular culture in the nineteenth century while focusing on what she believes to be the movement’s most influential novel, *Ramona*. Venegas argues that the racial order that was to emerge in the late nineteenth century was grounded in a gendered and sexually charged idea of Manifest Destiny that was redeveloped through romanticizing California’s Spanish heritage. Venegas posits that Jackson, among other East Coast intellectuals and Euro-American writers, participates in creating a myth of Spanish heritage by celebrating the missions and pastoral days of California. The myth allows Euro-Americans to not only conceal the state’s violent origins but also to assert white supremacy and justify the racialization processes that placed those who were conquered at the bottom. Venegas points out that *Ramona* was meant to raise consciousness about the destruction of Native communities but instead became propaganda for the state’s fantasy heritage: “For example, although the novel narrates the fate of Native California resulting from Euro-American settlement through the series of tragedies endured by Ramona and Alessandro, it also silences the devastation of Native communities during the mission period by presenting a romanticized version of colonization in which benevolent Franciscan friars brought enlightenment to welcoming Natives” (72). In addition, the Native characters are presented as either savage or civilized. Ramona is essentially Hispanicized, and her civilized ways are placed above those of the indigenous

women, reasserting a racial hierarchy that places Spanish Californians above Mexicans and Natives and naturalizing any effects of the Manifest Destiny.

Criticism of *Ramona* is concerned with discussions of “real-life” events, whether it is a “true” Ramona, the shaping of Southern California, or the life of Jackson herself, rather than any critical debate of the text. While essays and articles do exist regarding the text, this is an area that invites much more exploration.

## **History of the Relationship of the Tribes of Southern California to European Missions**

In *Ramona*, Jackson portrays several tribes living in Southern California, including Alessandro's tribe, the Luiseño, that had complex relationships with the European missions. By the time that Helen Hunt Jackson encountered the remnants of the Luiseño in the late 1800s, the tribe had already altered much of its Native American identity through the tribe's extensive contact with the Europeans. Raymond C. White codifies the tribe's interaction with the Europeans within a succession of nine periods. In the first period, Precontact, the Luiseño tribe has had absolutely no contact with anyone outside the Native American population. The second period, Early Contact, spans the time from Cabrillo's voyage of 1542 until 1769. From this point, the Luiseño's contact with the Europeans largely centers around the establishment of the missions. The third period, the Initial Mission, occurs between 1769 and 1776; the fourth period, the Early Mission, from 1776 to 1798; the fifth period, the Intermediate Mission, from 1798 to 1825; the sixth period, the Late Mission, from 1825 to 1834; the seventh period, the Postsecularization of the Missions, from 1834 to 1846; the eighth period, the Early Anglo-American period, from 1846 to 1876; and, finally, the ninth period, Reservation period, from 1876 to the present (qtd. in Gill 89). White's divisions demonstrate that Jackson's experience with the Native Americans of San Luis Rey would have already been filtered through almost 350 years of intense involvement with the Europeans. After

such an extensive history of relationships, the Luiseño no doubt absorbed many European qualities while losing some of their own.

The relationship between the Native Americans and the missionaries was not altogether peaceful, despite the cohesive relationship that Jackson presents between the Luiseño and the missions of *Ramona*. Sam Gill notes that from 1776 “until the time the missions were secularized, missionaries made a concerted effort to destroy or to greatly alter Luiseño culture” (89). Several important changes occurred in the lifestyle of the Luiseño. The hunting-gathering economy of the tribe was replaced by herding and agriculture, and the tribal order disintegrated as native generals were appointed to supervise the tribe’s relationship to the mission (Gill 89). These changes resonate throughout *Ramona*, particularly in the following introduction of Alessandro’s father and his tribe: “Most strenuously Pablo had striven to obey Father Peyri’s directions. He had set his people the example of constant industry, working steadily in his fields and caring well for his herds” (Jackson 52). This passage indicates that the chief of the tribe, Pablo, is commanded by Father Peyri, and that the tribe’s industry focuses largely around herding and farming. Indeed, Alessandro’s tribe is so well known for their herding that Señora Moreno will have no one but the Indians shear her sheep, although, as Juan Canito observes, “all the other ranches in the valley” employed Mexicans (Jackson 2). However, although the tribe’s way of life had changed from hunting and gathering to one of farming and herding, the most dynamic change that occurred within the tribe involved the role of Christianity in the Native Americans’ lives. While folktales and myths continued to resonate throughout the Luiseño tribe, Christianity ultimately dominated their modes of spirituality.

For hundreds of years, the Native Americans of Southern California experienced an intense pressure to accept Christianity. Gill comments that the “Luiseño are one of a number of tribes in southwestern California collectively designated in this century as Mission Indians because of their association with Spanish missions that devoted themselves to their Christianization” (88). In fact, the term “Luiseño” derived from the tribe’s close association with the mission from San Luis Rey (Gill 88). As early as 1822, few if any of the Luiseño people would have remembered a time in which there had not been a dominating mission presence or an intense pressure to accept Christianity; however, by this point, the Luiseño had been in contact with the Europeans for approximately 300 years (Gill 90). Evidence of the association between the Luiseño and the missions is illustrated throughout *Ramona*. Pablo, Alessandro’s father and chief of the tribe, strives in all ways to follow the guidance of Father Peyri, and the tribe, under the guidance of Father Peyri, has one of the finest bands in San Luis Rey: “The music in the little chapel of the Temecula Indians was a surprise to all who heard it” (Jackson 50). Jackson presents multiple situations in which the Luiseño are practicing Christians, particularly when Alessandro’s tribe initially arrives at the Moreno plantation and Alessandra is described as kneeling “on the stones outside the chapel door, mechanically repeating the prayers with the rest” (Jackson 54). Although the Indians do not appear familiar with all aspects of Christianity, a discussion of Catholicism, rather than Native American spirituality, dominates the novel. This Christian influence shapes the ways in which Jackson describes her Native American characters, particularly Alessandro.

George Wharton James also argues that the Native Americans of California proceeded through three periods of contact with the Europeans. In his book, *Through*

*Ramona's Country*, published in 1913, James establishes the following three periods for the contact of the Cahuilla tribe with the Europeans: "I, prior to the coming of the Franciscan padres, II, while under their influence and teaching, and III, after the demoralization of the Mission system by secularization" (178). While James' model is much simpler than that presented by White, he establishes the three main periods of before, during, and after contact. James points out that the Native Americans of *Ramona* are living after the time of secularization, which is apparent in Jackson's work as her characters continuously note the breakdown of the mission system, as in the following statement: "Chief Pablo, after the breaking up of the Mission, had settled at Temecula, with a small band of his Indians, and endeavored so far as was in his power, to keep up the old religious services" (Jackson 50). Chief Pablo attempts to maintain the teachings of the missions, despite their breakdown. Perhaps lacking Gill's 1987 hindsight, James asserts that the Mission Indians, although largely Catholic, retained "some features of their heathendom, and especially of their ancient dances and aboriginal superstitions" (178). James suggests that the Cahuilla tribe has maintained their native traditions, despite their intense contact with the Europeans; however, as mentioned above, there is little if any evidence of the Native American tribes of Southern California praying to native gods in *Ramona*.

### **Racial Stereotyping of the Native Americans**

Perhaps the most notable difference between the arguments of Gill and White and that of James is that James presents the common stereotype of the Native American as either the noble savage or the wild Indian, although it could be argued that James is perhaps echoing Jackson in his *Through Ramona's Country*, for despite her intense effort to create the "true" portrait of the Native American, Jackson certainly conforms to stereotyping. James describes the Mission Indians as "a peaceable, industrious and home loving people, though, occasionally, when whiskey is introduced upon their reservations, or they come to the towns and obtain it, they give trouble, as do drunken whites" (179). Similarly, in her description of the tribe, Jackson depicts Alessandro's tribe as the peaceable rustics who are close to nature, as she states: "So long as the wheat-fields came up well, and there was no drought, and the horses and sheep had good pasture, in plenty, on the hills, the Temecula people could be merry, go day by day to their easy work, play games at sunset, and sleep sound all night" (Jackson 53). Both James and Jackson portray idyllic descriptions of Native American life. The members of the tribe are close to nature, peaceful, and playful, at least until the whiskey is introduced. Like James, Jackson also comments on the drinking problems of the Native American population; however, she attempts to project the responsibility onto the whites: "There were sometimes a thousand Indians at this fête, and disorderly whites took advantage of the occasion to sell whiskey and encourage all sorts of license and disturbance" (Jackson 68). Perhaps one of James' most tinted visions of the Cahuilla Indians occurs in the following passage: "when

goodness is combined with the simplicity and childlikeness of the uncorrupted Indian, then there is a combination that is as delightful as it is rare” (190). James depicts the ideal Native American as simple, childlike, and uncorrupted. However, this description leaves little room for any type of flaw. The Native American is cast as either the noble savage or the wild “Injun,” and Jackson becomes even more encased in these stereotypes as she attempts to establish Alessandro as the exemplary Native American.

Perhaps because the Native American subjects of Jackson’s novel had been influenced by Europeans for several hundred years and also because Jackson was attempting to express a Native American attitude with a distinctly white voice, Jackson struggles with the stereotyping of Native Americans throughout *Ramona*, and this struggle is nowhere more apparent than in her portrayal of her Native American hero Alessandro. Jackson’s portrayal of Alessandro as the ideal Indian inadvertently repeats the dichotomy of the noble savage versus the lazy or wild Indian.

Several factors contribute to Alessandro’s ideal image; however, many of these elements tend to remove Alessandro from his Indian heritage, rather than reinforce it. Perhaps one of Alessandro’s most distinguishing features is his association with the Church. As noted earlier, White and Gill record the influences of the mission on the Luiseño tribe, and Alessandro is an Indian subject living after the great reign of the missions. Mathes argues that Alessandro is not portrayed as a typical Indian and that he is not stereotyped; instead he is “presented as a Christian with a position almost as high as a high-caste Mexican—his Indianism was ignored” (84). Alessandro is initially introduced to the reader at the moment when he sees Ramona as she frantically tries to clean the stained altar cloth at the brook during sunset. Though the rays of the sunset play around

Ramona's hair "like a halo," Alessandro halts, "as wild creatures of the forest halt at a sound" (Jackson 47). While the novel establishes a dichotomy between the angelic Ramona and the savage Alessandro, Alessandro's first words are "Christ! What shall I do!" (Jackson 47). Alessandro does not pray to Kivish, Atakvish, Toopash, or Tai-mai-ya-wurt; rather, Alessandro immediately solicits the assistance of a Christian figure, demonstrating that Alessandro cannot escape the European mission's influence that has affected his tribe over the last several hundred years. In addition to soliciting Christ in his first statement, Alessandro knows the hymns of the San Luis Rey mission. As Jackson observes, he has "inherited his father's love and talent for music, and knew all of the old Mission music by heart" (Jackson 50), and Alessandro's singing voice first alerts Ramona to his presence: "At the first notes of this rich new voice, Ramona's voice ceased in surprise...Alessandro saw her, and sang no more" (Jackson 50). However, Alessandro is not only an excellent singer of Christian hymns, but he is also known for his ability to play the violin. Jackson's choice of the violin for Alessandro appears to be an unusual one. Although the violin was certainly played throughout Spain, other instruments, such as the guitar or drums, may seem more appropriate to a Mexican society than a violin, which connotes images of orchestral symphonies or mountain fiddling rather than the southern coast of California. Perhaps Jackson's choice of instrument was intended to suggest a higher culture, that of Mozart and Beethoven, thereby again elevating Alessandro's achievements above those of his tribal counterparts. However, despite his artistic successes, Alessandro, as depicted by Jackson, is not a civilized man. If he were civilized, he would have instantly recognized his feelings for Ramona, and "would have been capable of weighing, analyzing, and reflecting on his sensations at leisure" (Jackson

54). However, Jackson states that Alessandro is not a civilized man, and “he had to bring to bear on his present situation only simple, primitive, uneducated instincts and impulses” (54). Ironically, Father Gaspara, who marries Ramona and Alessandro, notes that Alessandro “speaks as a gentleman speaks to a lady” (Jackson 235). Alessandro’s association with the church, his knowledge of the arts, and the language that he uses with Ramona all seem to indicate that he is indeed a civilized man; however, Jackson attempts to classify Alessandro as the savage, albeit a noble one. The combination of a civilized man who is also a noble savage breaks from stereotypes of Native Americans; however, Jackson does not appear to commit to this new image she has created wholeheartedly, and she continuously states that Alessandro is nothing more than the ideal version of the noble savage.

As noted above, by presenting Alessandro as the ideal Native American, Jackson inadvertently establishes a dichotomy between the noble savage versus the lazy or wild or uneducated Indian. Aside from Chief Pablo, no other Native American in *Ramona* is comparable to the hero Alessandro. Within the few pages that introduce the Luiseño tribe, Jackson immediately establishes the differences between Alessandro and his fellow tribe members: “No wonder Alessandro seemed to the more ignorant and thoughtless young men and women of his village, a cold and distant lad. He was made old before his time. He was carrying in his heart burdens which they knew nothing” (Jackson 53). While Alessandro is carrying the weight of the world on his shoulders, his fellow tribe members are “ignorant and thoughtless” and “they knew nothing.” However, Jackson not only establishes Alessandro as a foil to his entire tribe but also to individual characters as well. As representatives of the Luiseño tribe, Jackson presents four characters in addition

to Alessandro: Chief Pablo, Fernando, Jose, and Antonio. The first of these, Chief Pablo, serves at the discretion of the missions, attempting to maintain the chapels and keep his tribe involved in the church. Like Alessandro, he is also a Christian, almost a high-caste Mexican. The second, Fernando, is the member of the tribe who takes Alessandro's place as captain once Alessandro decides to stay with the Morenos; his chief duty as leader of the sheep-shearers is to "see that the shearers were not gambling away all their money at cards," but "he preferred to roll himself up in his blanket and sleep till dawn the next morning" (Jackson 69). Within this single passage, Jackson unintentionally depicts the other members of the Luiseño tribe as lazy, because Fernando would rather sleep than do his duty, and gamblers, because, without the watchful eye of a leader, the other Indians are certain to gamble away all of their money. As for Jose and Antonio, their only defining feature is their "perpetual feud of rivalry...in matter of the fleetness of their respective ponies" (Jackson 72), and Alessandro easily manipulates the two by bolstering their egos about their horses. Jose is also established as a foil to Alessandro in their reactions to the destruction of their village in Temecula. Their reactions, although similar in their sense of madness, are also radically different. When the sheriff comes to Temecula, Jose "went crazy in one minute, and fell on the ground all froth at his mouth" (Jackson 180), whereas Alessandro slowly goes mad. He has the strength and will to survive for many years, and, despite his madness, it is ultimately a bullet from a white man's gun that ends Alessandro's life. While other dichotomies exist between Ramona and Alessandro and the other tribes that they encounter, the differences presented between Alessandro and his own tribe conform most closely to stereotypes about Native Americans.

### **Jackson's Use of Non-Fiction in *Ramona***

While James' and even Jackson's descriptions of the Indians of Southern California paint a rather idyllic picture, they represent one of the major problems in writing in the Native American voice: the fact that a white author filters the concept of the Native American identity through a distinctly European or Western lens. Essentially, it is the whites who will define what is authentically Indian (Mary Brave Bird qtd. in Kaye 153). Nowhere can this concept be better examined than in the autobiographies of Native Americans. It is difficult to consider an autobiography of a Native American in the 1800s as a legitimate autobiography based on the production of the text. The Native Americans did not have the ability to write their stories in English; therefore their narratives would have had to be translated, interpreted, and transcribed by an editor, who was most likely white. Arnold Krupat posits that Native American autobiographies are groups of texts "explicitly presented by the white who wrote them down and published them as historical or ethnographic documents" (28); therefore, no Native American text could conform to the definition of autobiography in the strictest sense, since "The Indian himself did not paint things as they 'really were;' the Indian could not write. His part was to pose—and disappear" (Krupat 38). The Native American was a subject to be written about, and while the storyteller offered guidance, the editor ultimately decided what would be included in the final product.

While multiple Native American autobiographies exist, several have received more attention and debate than others. In *Black Elk Speaks*, Black Elk, through the

assistance of John Neihardt, presents a story that is part autobiography, part tribal history, and part spiritual revelation. Although Black Elk could have easily written his story in Lakota, he was “probably also aware of the widespread impact of written stories in English” (Heflin 4). The tale was communicated by Black Elk through an interpreter and then transcribed by John Neihardt. The simplicity of the language may be partly attributed to the fact that Black Elk’s son was the interpreter. Ruth Heflin proposes several reasons why Black Elk chose his son Ben to be the interpreter, suggesting that because of ongoing government prohibition of religious practices, Ben may not have been allowed to succeed Black Elk and Black Elk may have realized that an opportunity had arisen for him to pass on his knowledge, almost surreptitiously, to his son (Heflin 9). Moreover, although Neihardt is not a character in Black Elk’s stories, there is considerable debate as to how much editing and revising was done: “Although many critics acknowledge Black Elk’s communal efforts in telling his stories to Neihardt, most dismiss Neihardt’s initial pursuit and final gathering of Black Elk’s stories as only those of a Westerner trying to pin down, for his own purposes, an individual’s life story” (Heflin 5). However, by the time Neihardt transcribed the text, Black Elk’s words were already twice removed from the speaker. In addition, it is significant to note that the Lakota believed that anything transformed from the oral tradition into writing was “a falsification into Western consciousness” (Linden 80). Western influence was not only established through Neihardt’s transcription, but also, as with the Luiseño tribe, through the influence of the Christian culture: “Black Elk’s literary efforts grew out of a Christian, mostly Roman Catholic, milieu, where the use of Christian metaphor, code, and symbol was frequently employed” (Wise 29). By the time that *Black Elk Speaks* was

completed, his narrative would have proceeded through a wide array of Western filters, from translation, interpretation, and transcription, to the editing and revision, and even through Western concepts of religion. The publication of *Black Elk Speaks* illustrates the problems with transcribing a Native American voice with a distinctly Western pen.

While Helen Hunt Jackson's *Ramona* is fiction, the actual stories that inspired Jackson's novel have surfaced and can be found in such books as *Through Ramona's Country* and *The True Story of 'Ramona'*. While it can be argued that Jackson was writing fiction and could not possibly be held to the standards of a transcriber of a Native American autobiography, I suggest that Jackson employed some of the same techniques in describing the Native American through a Western lens and that Jackson took liberties similar to those of the editors and transcribers of Native American autobiographies. Jackson seeks to give voice to Native Americans, in particular Alessandro, and her endeavor follows the procedures used by Neihardt to give voice to Black Elk. While Jackson's story derives its inspiration from various sources, the death of Alessandro can be directly linked to the murder of a Cahuilla Indian in 1877. As Davis observes, "There was no Ramona, and there was no Alessandro, in the relation in which they are portrayed by Mrs. Jackson. And yet there was a strong suggestion of both the incidents and the persons in events transpiring at the time. It is an historical fact that in October, 1877, Juan Diego, a Cahuilla Indian, was shot and killed by Sam Temple for alleged horse stealing, in the Cahuilla Range" (Davis 40). Jackson provides two versions of this tale. The first version appears in Jackson's *A Century of Dishonor*:

An incident which occurred on the boundaries of the Cahuilla Reservation a few weeks before our arrival there is of importance as an illustration of the need of

some legal protection for the Indians in Southern California. A Cahuilla Indian named Juan Diego had built for himself a house and cultivated a small patch of ground on a high mountain ledge a few miles north of the village. Here he lived along with his wife and baby. He had been for some years what the Indians called a 'locoed' Indian, being at times crazy; never dangerous, but yet certainly insane for longer or shorter periods...Juan Diego had been off to find work at sheep-shearing. He came home at night riding a strange horse...A white man named Temple, the owner of the horse which Juan had ridden home, rode up, and on seeing Juan poured out a volley of oaths, leveled his gun, and shot him dead. The woman, with her baby on her back, ran to the Cahuilla village and told what had happened (483).

While her presentation of the story in *A Century of Dishonor* sympathizes with the Indians and with their need for governmental protection, one may question how well the tale authentically portrays the Native Americans. Jackson at least attempts to remain true to reality in *A Century of Dishonor*, and portions of the tale are relayed as direct quotes, as when "His wife exclaimed, 'Why, whose horse is that?' Juan looked at the horse, and replied confusedly, 'Where is my horse then?'" (483). Despite this apparent direct transcription of the events from Juan Diego's wife, the same questions of translation, interpretation, and editing must be examined as they were in the Native American autobiography. However, by including the tale in *Ramona*, Jackson further removes the story from the authentic voice of the two Cahuilla Indians:

In a moment more Ramona followed,—only a moment, hardly a moment; but when she reached the threshold, it was to hear a gun-shot, to see Alessandro fall

to the ground, to see, in the same second, a ruffianly man leap from his horse, and standing over Alessandro's body, fire his pistol again, once, twice, into the forehead, cheek. Then with a volley of oaths, each word of which seemed to Ramona's reeling sense to fill the air with a sound like thunder, he untied the black horse from the post where Ramona had fastened him, and leaping into his saddle again, galloped away, he shook his fist at Ramona, who was kneeling on the ground, striving to lift Alessandro's head, and to stanch the blood flowing from the ghastly wounds (316).

While both murderers issue "a volley of oaths," the version of the narrative presented in *Ramona* does not contain the more realistic aspects found in *A Century of Dishonor*, such as the Native American dialogue. Instead, Jackson romanticizes the moment, describing how, for Ramona, the "volley of oaths" fills the air with a "sound like thunder." Jackson further focuses on Ramona's grief and her efforts to stop the "ghastly" bleeding, while in *A Century of Dishonor*, Jackson does not even mention the grief of the wife. Examining these two passages, and even the versions presented in *The True Story of 'Ramona'*, causes us to question which version of the incident presents a more authentic Native American voice. I would argue that the version of the tale in *A Century of Dishonor* offers a more accurate reflection of the Native American story, not only because Jackson includes dialogue but also because she excludes romantic embellishments. Although Jackson was attempting to communicate a particular point through Ramona's grief, the romantic additions cause Jackson to lose sight of her original goal, which was to depict a genuine portrait of the Native American.

## **Conclusion**

Helen Hunt Jackson wanted to create a “true” picture of the Native American; however, it appears that all of the characters that she created were formed not only by the immediate perception of Jackson but also by several hundred years of European influence on the Native Americans of Southern California. While it may not be possible for Helen Hunt Jackson to write with an authentic Native American voice or to portray an authentic Native American character, her vision of Native American rights cannot be ignored. Jackson simply lacks the tools to depict a convincing picture of the Native American, and she, like many other writers, falls victim to common stereotypes. Black Elk hoped that “the outsider to Lakota culture could grasp the significance of the Great Vision through the medium of text” (Wise 241), and while the Native American voice may always be distorted by a white lens, Jackson’s genuine concern for the rights of the Native Americans is apparent. Once the concept of authenticity is discarded, Jackson, and others like her, may be able to say something meaningful about native cultures.

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