

**Wendy Red Star: Challenging Colonial Histories and Foregrounding the Impacts of  
Violence Against Indigenous Women**

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## Abstract

In my thesis, *Wendy Red Star: Challenging Colonial Histories and Foregrounding the Impact of Violence Against Indigenous Women*, I analyze two of Red Star's photographic series, *Four Seasons* and *White Squaw*. I argue that Red Star uses irony, humor, parody, and erasure to challenge stereotypes and misrepresentations of Indigenous lives. In *Four Seasons*, Red Star uses irony and humor to critique historically marginalized images in museum exhibitions, and the stereotypes created as a result of visions of empty land, ethnographic photography, and commercialization of Indigenous cultures. In *White Squaw*, Red Star uses parody and erasure to reveal the negative impacts of sexploitation, gendered stereotypes, and Indigenous women and girls' vulnerability to violence. In my thesis, I argue that Red Star's work is contextualized in Indigenous feminism and identity-based art. Indigenous feminism differs from mainstream feminism. It is grounded in decolonization, Indigenous sovereignty, and Indigenous cultural values. Indigenous feminism examines the intersections of colonialism, racism, and sexism, and addresses how these intersections have marginalized Indigenous women.

Red Star offers a personal perspective in her art, by representing objects and artworks from her own Apsáalooke culture. She uses her elk tooth dress in *Four Seasons* to subvert the stereotypes being projected onto her within the backdrop of this photographic series. In *White Squaw*, Red Star uses her own portrait and adds this dimension of reciprocity, where whatever harm occurs to the heroine in the novels that she occupies, would also occur to her as a result of stereotypes. Red Star inhabits the stereotypes of Indigenous peoples and women in order to speak from a discourse of colonial misrepresentation from within a colonial system. Red Star inserts Apsáalooke culture in her artwork in order to present one example of an Indigenous woman's experience; just one instance in an extremely complicated, interwoven web of misrepresentation, violence, and stereotypes. This personal perspective has the potential to reach a broad audience, to create a space for discussions about race, gender, and history, and to promote collective healing.

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## Introduction

Wendy Red Star, Apsáalooke (Crow), expresses Indigenous women's voice in contemporary art through her photography, performance art, beading, and painting. Her work rejects notions of Indigenous peoples as "historic caricatures," imagery often promoted in popular culture.<sup>1</sup> In my thesis, I will argue that Red Star uses irony, humor, parody, and erasure in her artwork to challenge misrepresentation of Indigenous lives. In her *Four Seasons* series, Red Star uses irony and humor as strategies to reveal how Indigenous peoples have been historically marginalized and misrepresented in images and museum exhibitions, and to shift the negative stereotypes that have been the result (Figs. 16-19). In her *White Squaw* series, Red Star uses parody and erasure to reveal how sexploitation negatively impacts Indigenous women, and to challenge derogatory gendered stereotypes through self-representation and a telling of a lived-experience from an Indigenous woman's perspective (Figs. 22-31). Red Star foregrounds her own voice from a perspective of Apsáalooke culture to provide a personal take on how stereotypes have affected her own life, and through this individual view, dismantle tropes of Indigenous lives. Red Star applies her own perspective in order to speak to a discourse of colonization from within a colonial system.

I will explore how Red Star uses an Indigenous feminist approach in her work as she confronts cultural appropriation and the commercialization of Indigenous culture, de-naturalizes colonial notions of an imaginary landscape and the doctrine of manifest destiny, and critiques stereotypes and parodies sexualized misrepresentations of Indigenous women. I argue that through her work, Red Star reaches a broad audience and creates a space for collective healing and engagement.

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<sup>1</sup> Abaki Beck, "Decolonizing Photography: A Conversation with Wendy Red Star," *Aperture.com*. December 14<sup>th</sup>, 2016 accessed September 27, 2018, <https://aperture.org/blog/wendy-red-star/>



### *Conceptual Framework*

Wendy Red Star confronts issues of gendered oppression and the legacy of the colonial doctrine of manifest destiny through a decolonizing approach that is central to Indigenous feminist theory. My analysis of Red Star's work draws on Cheryl Suzack's (Batchewana) "Indigenous Feminisms in Canada."<sup>2</sup> Suzack argues that Indigenous feminism "analyzes how gender injustice against Indigenous women emerges from colonial policies and patriarchal practices that inscribe gendered power dynamics to the detriment of Indigenous women."<sup>3</sup>

Indigenous feminism differs from mainstream feminism. It is grounded in decolonization, Indigenous sovereignty, and Indigenous cultural values. It examines the intersections of colonialism, racism, and sexism, and addresses how those intersections have marginalized Indigenous women.<sup>4</sup> Indigenous feminist theory challenges current systemic forms of oppression, such as legislation that implicitly sanctions gendered violence against Indigenous women, and confronts assimilationist policies that further cultural genocide and disempower Indigenous women.<sup>5</sup> I draw on Indigenous feminist theory to explore how Red Star confronts gender stereotypes and underlying colonial policies, in order to foreground Indigenous women's lived experience. Red Star also addresses expectations and limitations on Indigenous women's art; their work is often rejected when they move away from historical Indigenous art forms, such as beadwork, quillwork, and weaving. Lingering notions of authenticity assert that Indigenous art is valid only if it resembles artistic forms from the pre or early colonial contact period.

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<sup>2</sup> Cheryl Suzack, "Indigenous Feminisms in Canada." *Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research*, 23 no. 4 (2015): 261-274.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 261.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 262.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 261.

### *Literature Review*

I draw on M. Annette Jaimes-Guerrero's (Yaqui) article, "Patriarchal Colonialism and Indigenism: Implications for Native Feminist Spirituality and Native Womanism," to understand the nuances between mainstream feminism and Indigenous feminism.<sup>6</sup> Jaimes-Guerrero's discussion of the egalitarian roles of First Nations women in pre-contact history examines how these roles became distorted through Eurocentric notions of cultural superiority after contact. Jaimes-Guerrero also addresses the limits of Eurocentric feminism, which addresses colonial patriarchy, thereby excluding people of color.

In my analysis of the range of issues Red Star addresses, I draw from the work of Ktunaxa-Metis scholar Joyce Green in *Making Space for Indigenous Feminism*. Green clarifies what Indigenous feminism does, how it accounts for intersectionality in arts, culture, and across societies. She explains why Indigenous feminism is needed, and why so many Indigenous women resist the label of being a feminist as a result of the hardships brought on by being outspoken as a feminist woman. Green's findings support my analysis of Red Star's work because, as Green describes, Indigenous feminism "confronts the dominant myths... that dignify, deny, or perpetuate colonialism," which Red Star actively urges her audience to consider when viewing her work.<sup>7</sup> Green's purpose in *Making Space for Indigenous Feminism* is to "conclude that Aboriginal feminism is a valid and theoretically and politically powerful critique of the social, economic, and political conditions of Aboriginal women's lives," which Red Star portrays in her work.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> M. Annette Jaimes-Guerrero, "Patriarchal Colonialism and Indigenism: Implications for Native Feminist Spirituality and Native Womanism," *Hypatia* 18, no. 2 (2003): 58-69.

<sup>7</sup> Joyce Green, "Taking Account of Aboriginal Feminism," in *Making a Space for Indigenous Feminism*, ed. Joyce Green, (Black Point: Fernwood Publishing, 2007), 22.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

Allan J. Ryan's article "Postmodern Parody: A Political Strategy in Contemporary Canadian Native Art" grounds my exploration of Red Star's use of parody as a primary strategy in her photography.<sup>9</sup> Ryan claims that parody, or imitation with an edge, when used by Indigenous artists is a "critical recontextualization and ironic inversion" of misrepresented Indigenous imagery.<sup>10</sup> Parody is enacted through irony, which highlights the discrepancies of misrepresentation by re-contextualizing the histories of images and stereotypes. Ryan argues that parody allows an artist to "speak to a discourse from within it," a strategy that Red Star uses in her work.<sup>11</sup>

I also draw from Ryan's *The Trickster Shift: Humor and Irony in Contemporary Native Art* to ground my focus on Red Star's use of irony, another essential strategy in her artwork that creates healing through humor for her audience and tribal culture.<sup>12</sup> Ryan defines irony as a tool that "binds widely separated opposites into a single figure so that contraries appear to belong together...[irony] shatters and reforms the overly clear structures of the world and the overly-smooth images of the mind... [which reveals] a double-sidedness of reality."<sup>13</sup> Red Star's *Four Seasons* series illustrates the ironic doubleness described by Ryan, as she inserts Indigenous presence in constructed scenes, reminiscent of EuroAmerican landscapes depicting an empty land, ready to be occupied, in the fulfillment of manifest destiny. Irony and parody allow Red

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<sup>9</sup> Allan J. Ryan, "Postmodern Parody: A Political Strategy in Contemporary Canadian Native Art." *Art Journal*, 51 no. 3 (1992): 59-65.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 59; Parody is an imitation or a recontextualization of text or image, to critique the original. The original can be seen as parody's target. Irony is a word, phrase, or image that is assumed by an audience one way, but is employed to deliberately contradict that assumption.

<sup>12</sup> Allan J. Ryan, *The Trickster Shift: Humor and Irony in Contemporary Native Art*, (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1999), 13-92.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

Star to satirically mock preconceptions and stereotypes. Satire is similar to irony and parody in its double-sidedness; the edge between entertainment and serious intention.<sup>14</sup> Satire is a form of artistic denunciation, which allows for the moral opposition of an object's perceived wrongness.<sup>15</sup> Critique is central to satire's effects, but satire adds the dimension of social change to critique; satire attempts to resolve the wrongness created by the target of the critique.<sup>16</sup>

I draw from published interviews with Red Star as primary sources as well as articles about her work, in order to center her artistic voice in my study and to explore how she stages and manipulates her prints and photographs. In "The Insistence of a Crow Archivist," Tanya Lukin Linklater (Alutiiq) asserts that Red Star acts as an archivist who specifically accumulates, manipulates, and stages historical images to reaffirm Indigenous presence in a misrepresented pictorial tradition that claimed Indigenous people to be a 'dying race.'<sup>17</sup> I draw on Lukin Linklater's findings to explore how Red Star uses strategies of staging and erasure, to bring her audience to question constructed representations of Indigenous cultures by non-Indigenous artists, such as early twentieth-century photographer Edward Curtis. Erasure is a strategy that focuses on the removal of marks from a culturally significant artwork, as opposed to the creation of new images.<sup>18</sup>

Zach Dundas' interview "Wendy Red Star Totally Conquers the Wild Frontier: Exploring the Native America of a Portland Artist on the Rise," is an important source for my discussion of

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<sup>14</sup> Dieter Declercq, "A Definition of Satire (And Why a Definition Matters)," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 76 no. 3, (2018): 323.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Tanya Lukin Linklater, "The Insistence of a Crow Archivist," *Backlash Magazine*, February 2017.

<sup>18</sup> "Robert Rauschenberg, Erased De Kooning Drawing, 1953," SFMOMA, accessed October 03, 2018. <https://www.sfmoma.org/artwork/98.298>

the commodification of Indigenous cultures, often a focus of Red Star's ironic imagery.<sup>19</sup> Dundas foregrounds how Red Star critiques the commercialization of Indigenous cultures by purposefully using mass-produced renditions of Indigenous dress, made by non-Indigenous sources. Dundas' interview gives insight to Red Star's critique, through irony, of the trivialization and appropriation of Indigenous cultural material.

### *Methodology*

My study is grounded in a decolonizing methodology, an approach that challenges lingering presence of racist ideology and concepts of gender in academic writing, popular culture, social media, sports teams, and film. My purpose is to foreground Indigenous voice, which has been systematically silenced by colonial governments and institutions. I draw from Linda Tuhiwai Smith's book, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*.<sup>20</sup> According to Tuhiwai Smith, a decolonizing approach to research highlights the "counter-stories" of Indigenous peoples as "powerful forms of resistance."<sup>21</sup> A decolonizing methodology "provides space for further dialogue within a framework that privileges the Indigenous presence... and acknowledges [Indigenous] continuing existence."<sup>22</sup> Acknowledgement of the culture, values, histories of Indigenous communities are integral components to a decolonizing methodology, and my study follows this approach.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Zach Dundas, "Wendy Red Star Totally Conquers the Wild Frontier: Exploring the Native America of a Portland Artist on the Rise," *Portland Monthly*, April 2015, accessed September, 27, 2018, <https://www.pdxmonthly.com/articles/2015/4/2/local-artist-wendy-red-star-totally-conquers-the-wild-frontier-march-2015>

<sup>20</sup> Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, (London: University of Otago Press, 2005).

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

Chiricahua Apache scholar Nancy Mithlo's "They Never Liked the Dark Ones," in which she situates Indigenous women artists in opposition to Eurocentric expectations, is helpful in my analysis of how Red Star reinstates Indigenous voice.<sup>24</sup> Mithlo argues that the exclusion of Indigenous voice when analyzing Native arts results in its interpretation as a product of colonial dominance rather than the artist's individuality. Mithlo grounds her study in first-person artist's perspectives, an approach I draw from in my focus on interviews with Red Star.

### *Chapter Outline*

In Chapter One I will provide an overview of histories of gendered stereotypes of Indigenous women, of the appropriation and commodification of Indigenous cultures, and of misrepresentations of Indigenous land in order to contextualize Red Star's work. I will discuss histories of gendered violence and power imbalance that characterize settler-Indigenous histories into the present. I will also look at the work of American photographer Edward Curtis, which has had a powerful impact on the formation of the stereotypes I discuss. His sometimes-staged portraiture of Indigenous peoples has been frequently reproduced in popular culture and the media over the past fifty years.

In Chapter Two, I will analyze how Red Star confronts commercialization and an imaginary North American landscape in *Four Seasons*. In this series, Red Star uses irony to stage landscapes that challenge representations of manifest destiny, and to recover what was excluded in Edward Curtis' portraiture of the Native American west. Red Star uses this series to foreground Indigenous presence and to promote her own imagery in order to combat non-Indigenous expectations of what Indigenous art can be.

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<sup>24</sup> Nancy Mithlo, "They Never Liked the Dark Ones," in *Our Indian Princess: Subverting the Stereotype*. (Santa Fe: School for Advanced Research, 2008), 43-74.

Lastly, in Chapter Three, I will analyze how Red Star uses erasure and parody to critique the sexploitation of Indigenous women. In the *White Squaw* series, Red Star erases the main character with her portrait and maintains the surrounding elements on covers of 1980s romance novels, parodying sexualized stereotypes of Indigenous women that were – and are – still used to sell. I argue that this work is grounded in an Indigenous feminist approach. I argue that Red Star addresses not only the colonial marginalization of Indigenous women, but how this marginalization emboldened a specific male gaze that viewed Indigenous women as both powerless and sexually available, which increases the vulnerability of Indigenous women and girls to experiences of violence and abuse.

## Chapter One

### *Gendered Stereotypes, Indigenous Women, and the White Male Gaze*

Gendered stereotypes surrounding Indigenous women have a long history and remain prevalent today. These stereotypes are entwined with themes of sexuality and conquest. The media of popular culture has been instrumental in instilling these stereotypes against Indigenous women through films, novels, magazines, costumes, cartoons, and advertisements. Each rendition of a stereotypical Indigenous woman is a tool to promote the White gaze, a lens that filters Indigenous history through settler eyes in order to “verify a false account of a shared history.”<sup>25</sup> The White gaze, represented by these stereotypes, validates outsiders’ myths about what Indigenous life is like and invalidates Indigenous lived experience. The two most powerful and relevant stereotypes of Indigenous women are the Indian princess and the squaw, which have evolved from a long history of misrepresentation.

Beginning in the fifteenth century, Indigenous peoples were represented as uncontrollable savages in order to justify the settler’s eradication of Indigenous tribes due to fear and hatred for their cultures.<sup>26</sup> Closely tied to the notion of a savage was the notion of the primitive. Indigenous peoples, their way of life and social and political order often incomprehensible to European newcomers, were considered “uncivilized” in European terms. Accounts of Indigenous “savages” and primitive “Others” were solidified through anthropological descriptions of Indigenous life, Wild West shows, world fairs, museum exhibitions, and filmography.<sup>27</sup> With the

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<sup>25</sup> Cornel R. Pewewardy, “Playing Indian at Halftime: The Controversy over American Indian Mascots, Logos, and Nicknames in School Related Events,” *The Clearing House* 77 no. 5 (2004): 181.

<sup>26</sup> Elizabeth S. Bird, “The Gendered Construction of the American Indian,” *Journal of Communication* 49, no. 3 (1999): 64.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.



dominance of these one-sided representations of Indigenous life that continued into the twentieth century, the customs, personality, and emotion of Indigenous social relations and lived experience were erased from imagery and texts concerning Indigenous peoples. Indigenous peoples were rarely documented as multi-dimensional human beings with a range of emotions and complex societies and social structure, but rather as experimental objects. This denied their agency as sexual beings within their own cultures. Indigenous customs concerning sexuality were viewed as morally wrong compared to European Christian ideals and this denial “reinforced a cultural tradition of viewing American Indian men and women separately as the sexualized objects of the colonialist gaze.”<sup>28</sup> In her *White Squaw* series, Red Star critiques outsider-produced assumptions on Indigenous female sexuality (Figs. 22-31).

Colonialist-produced Native American imagery and stereotypes have primarily focused on Indigenous men, from stoic portraits printed on posters and postcards to headdresses, but these images were typically titled by recognizable names such as Geronimo, Crazy Horse, or Sitting Bull.<sup>29</sup> Imagery regarding Indigenous women has largely remained nameless, portraying women as subservient princesses without names or voice. The Indian princess, readily used as an image representing the New World during the fifteenth century, gained popularity in the seventeenth century as a result of the tale of Pocahontas.<sup>30</sup> According to the settler narrative, Pocahontas saved her love, settler John Smith, from execution, formally betraying her culture for the God-ordained ideals of settler-colonialism, such as manifest destiny and Christian religion, and thereby becoming, in the colonial imaginary, a “civilized savage.” The White gaze utilized

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 64.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 72.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

Pocahontas and the Indian princess imagery of the New World, because their calm, non-threatening, and erotic depictions became justifications of a new settler's national identity.<sup>31</sup> The Indian princess supplied an origin myth of Indigenous peoples willingly sacrificing their independence for the greater good: colonization, civilization, and the formation of a new nation, therefore validating manifest destiny.

The Indian princess stereotype continued to be promoted, as was the sexualization of Indigenous imagery. With Joseph Mozier's 1859 Pocahontas, and then over 100 years later, the 1995 Disney film *Pocahontas*, the portrayal of the Indian princess became increasingly connected to sexual references (Fig. 1).<sup>32</sup> The Indian princess was stereotyped with large breasts, a thin waist, flowing hair, seductive bodily curves, lighter skinned than Native men, and scantily clad in minimal clothing (Figs. 2-4). The clothing itself, usually of hide rather than the trade cloth in actual use, was itself a reference to the stereotype of the savage. In many eighteenth- and nineteenth- century novels, for example Ann S. Stephens's *Malaeska: The American Indian Wife of the White Hunter* (1886), tales of Indigenous women marrying and sacrificing themselves for White men became extremely popular.<sup>33</sup> They represented "the White man's exotic fascination with an Indian woman [who] could be indulged, but tamed."<sup>34</sup> Therefore, the sexualization of the Indian princess is used to represent the colonial excitement with the foreign, unknown, and "exotic" New World, while still maintaining European ideals portrayed through sacrifice for the

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 73; Michael Gabriel and Eric Goldberg, *Pocahontas*. (1995; United States: Walt Disney Feature Animation) Film.

<sup>33</sup> Anna S. Stephens, *Malaeska: The American Indian Wife of the White Hunter*, (New York: John Day Company, 1929).

<sup>34</sup> Elizabeth S. Bird, "The Gendered Construction of the American Indian," *Journal of Communication* 49, no. 3 (1999): 73.

greater good of colonialism. The Indian princess gendered stereotype represents the origin myth that North American land was enticingly willing to be occupied by settlers.

The second most prevalent gendered stereotype regarding Indigenous women is the squaw, a highly offensive, racist term used to degrade Indigenous women today. The squaw is characterized as a promiscuously sexual being, always sexually available. The squaw stereotype portrayed a dutiful, quiet Indigenous maiden when surrounded by her family, while hiding a darker, uncontrollable personality. According to S. Elizabeth Bird, author of “The Gendered Construction of the American Indian,” a squaw stereotype was “drawn inexorably to White men.”<sup>35</sup> The squaw stereotype was used by settlers to validate the European construct of sexual inferiority of Indigenous women, as well as their dehumanization. European morality was vested in the docile, dutiful, religious, and strict nature of domestic women within the sacred space of the home, therefore the sexual convenience of the squaw justified white supremacy, and the imposition of European ideals upon Indigenous cultures.<sup>36</sup> The 1991 film *Black Robe* reinforced the White gaze notion of the inferiority of Indigenous sexuality by misrepresenting an Algonquin woman Annuka as sexually promiscuous and immoral until she falls in love with a white man, who introduces her to what were seen as “civilized” relationships by European missionaries. Regardless of the customs of relationships in Indigenous communities, Indigenous sexuality was always viewed in European eyes as promiscuous and unnatural.<sup>37</sup> Indigenous women were further dehumanized by being characterized as lazy and incapable of human affection and good childcare as a result of this stereotype.

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 75.

<sup>37</sup> Bruce Beresford, *Black Robe*, (1991; Canada: Alliance Communications Corporation). Film

### *How Cultural Appropriation is a Reproduction of the White Gaze*

In addition to the gendered stereotypes that misrepresent Indigenous women, Red Star focuses on the history of colonial appropriation and commodification of Indigenous cultures. Appropriation of Indigenous cultural material, or when cultural borrowing becomes exploitative, trivializes and disrespects Indigenous peoples' political and personal voices. In this way, cultural appropriation of Indigenous imagery has negative effects in Indigenous communities.<sup>38</sup> Cultural appropriation appears to promote the celebration and inclusion of diverse cultures, but its effects are to create caricatures, stereotypes, and inauthentic standards of "Indianism" that Native people become expected to follow in contemporary society.<sup>39</sup> These standards ultimately preserve Indigenous people as living in a vanished past, incapable of growth in a contemporary, globalized world. Cultural appropriation of Indigenous practices and imagery is normalized and quietly accepted. Historically, cultural appropriation appeared as early as medieval minstrel entertainment, where "blackface performances developed racial archetypes by 'displaying blackness.'"<sup>40</sup> Contemporary examples include: Pocahontas Halloween costumes; the notion of people 'becoming Indian' in finding a spirit animal; music festival attire such as headdresses; and fashion shows and commercial clothing lines employing Indigenous motifs without permission (Figs. 5-8).

According to James O. Young, a leading scholar in the debate against cultural appropriation, there are five main categories of appropriation. Object appropriation involves possession of tangible objects "transferred from members of one culture to members of another

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<sup>38</sup> Christina Giacona, "Is it Ever Just a Song," in *Singing Redface* (Master's Thesis, University of Oklahoma: 2016), 1.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

culture,” whereas content appropriation refers to intangible objects, such as oral stories and written ideas.<sup>41</sup> Style appropriation is a form of intangible appropriation where a portion of an artistic idea is adapted, transformed, or taken, and is closely related to motif appropriation. Motif appropriation is when artists are influenced by another’s artistic style, and incorporate this artistic style into new works. Finally, subject appropriation is the representation of someone’s culture by outsiders among a different culture. No actual cultural objects, ideas, or motifs are appropriated, just the voices of individuals within a culture. Subject appropriation occurs when an outsider represents a culture different from an insider point of view.

An example of subject appropriation that requires much-needed explanation and historical information, due to its contentious nature and unbridled support, is the appropriation of Indigenous imagery as sports mascots such as Chief Wahoo of the Cleveland Indians, or the name of the Washington Redskins (Figs. 9-10). Cult-like celebration of sports teams promotes “violent, inhuman, and often ludicrous images” of Indigenous people (Fig. 11).<sup>42</sup> Because mascots promote dehumanization and stereotypes of laziness and drunkenness, they “sustain and create the conditions under which discriminatory... economic systems thrive.”<sup>43</sup> These cyclical stereotypes essentially create a self-fulfilling prophecy for Indigenous people, and continually reinforce outsiders’ lack of response to social problems associated with life on a reservation. It is important to consider such examples of cultural appropriation, because Red Star critiques cultural appropriation in order to show how these appropriations of the characters of Indigenous peoples are honored by non-Indigenous people.

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<sup>41</sup> James O. Young, *Cultural Appropriation and the Arts*, (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), 5-9.

<sup>42</sup> Sudie Hofmann, “The Elimination of Indigenous Mascots, Logos, and Nicknames: Organizing on College Campuses.” *American Indian Quarterly* 29, no. 1/2, (2005): 167.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

Cultural appropriation, whether it be object, content, stylistic, motif, or subject appropriation, can lead to clumsily replicated artistic ideas, which creates ridicule from outsiders, mistaking the imagery to be original. Cultural appropriation creates and perpetuates harmful stereotypes for the people being appropriated from, which leads to sustained discrimination. In the *Four Seasons* and *White Squaw*, Red Star places herself in common instances of cultural appropriation to make evident their discriminatory nature.

### ***Iterations of the Commodification of Indigenous Cultures and How They Influenced Stereotypes***

The commodification of Indigenous cultures is closely related to cultural appropriation, and can be seen in the conceptualization of “Indian corners” within outsiders’ homes during the twentieth-century (Fig. 12). Red Star uses irony to exaggerate with humor the commodification of Indigenous culture in the *Four Seasons* (Figs. 16-19). She includes plastic props and backdrops in her photographs to show how outsiders have tokenized and fetishized Indigenous cultures and artistic motifs by replicating artistic forms within their homes. Indian corners were a widespread home decoration fad that claimed to bring exoticism and fascination into North American domestic spaces, which further alienated Indigenous peoples as objects of speculation within settler tradition.<sup>44</sup> Rugs, baskets, portraits, and tribal masks were common features of these Indian corners. Images of Indigenous peoples engaging in “timeless activities,” dressed in regalia, or performing activities in nature were collectible items, and often these images would be available in magazines to be cut-out, framed, and placed within outsiders’ Indian corners.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Elizabeth Hutchinson, *The Indian Craze: Primitivism, Modernism, and Transculturation in American Art, 1890-1915*, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2009).

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

After the Industrial Revolution and into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, people yearned for “cozy corners” in their homes to escape the bustling, noisy, and constantly evolving city life, and the stereotype of a majestic, noble, and stoic Indigenous person aligned with North America’s craving for nature, or an imagined simpler time of life.<sup>46</sup> For these Indian corners to be successful in assuaging North American nostalgia, Indigenous arts and peoples needed to be viewed as “the product of a pre-modern world cut off from contemporary life.”<sup>47</sup> North American nostalgia thrives on stereotypes of Indigenous peoples being “one with nature,” primitive in their ways of life, lost as a “vanished race.” Often, these Indian corners would be decorated with natural objects, such as ferns, boulders, or animal hides, to reinforce the “admired simple life” of Indigenous peoples of the past.<sup>48</sup> Indian corners were not only littered by kitsch natural objects, but also metaphorically situated within domestic spaces to reinforce themes of primitivism. Indian corners occupied liminal space within the home on the boundary between nature and the indoors, by being located on verandas, porches, and sunrooms.<sup>49</sup> Red Star parodies stereotypes of primitivism in the *Four Seasons* through exaggerated “naturalistic” elements. The result of Indian corners was to turn the diverse, expansive lives of Indigenous peoples into commodified objects, post cards, and calendars. Indian corners alienated and neglected the actual thriving lives of Indigenous peoples.

The doctrine of manifest destiny, which led to the misrepresentation and romanticizing of North American land, was another way that Indigenous existence was commodified. Notions of manifest destiny perpetuated stereotypes against Indigenous men and women regarding their

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 28.

savage natures and lack of legitimate legislative rights. The notion of manifest destiny is central to Red Star's uses of irony and humor in the *Four Seasons*, because she asserts that through ideas such as manifest destiny, romanticism, and commodification, Indigenous artists are seen as vanished, and therefore ignored in contemporary museum settings. Manifest destiny is the concept that "the expansion of the United States was divinely ordained, justifiable, and inevitable," and served as validation for the removal of tribes hindering America's progress westward.<sup>50</sup> Manifest destiny emerged during the first 170 years of colonial practices, which largely informed settlers of their attitudes and strategies regarding Native North Americans. This doctrine was strongest during a seventeen-year period from 1842 to 1859 as a result of many political and capitalist developments.

Attitudes of intolerance and superiority led to the major developments of manifest destiny and the Indian Removal Act of 1830. Politically, manifest destiny has been a tacit policy of many Christian states. During the Crusades, Pope Innocent IV (1243-1254) mandated that Europeans had the divine responsibility of protecting non-Christian peoples, and that the act of conquest was a God-given right to ensure this protection.<sup>51</sup> Therefore, Christianity directly sanctioned the conquest of all non-Christian peoples throughout the world, when encountered. The racist rhetoric concerning the sanctioned conquest of Indigenous peoples led to a history of assimilation, removal, attempted elimination of tribes and cultures, and the notion of manifest destiny under the guise of Christian benevolence.

As the formation of the United States continued to develop, so did the settler need of westward expansion during the nineteenth century, and Native tribes were seen as the primary

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<sup>50</sup> Smithsonian American Art Museum, "Manifest Destiny and Indian Removal."

<sup>51</sup> Gayle Olson-Raymer, *Whose Manifest Destiny? The Federal Government and the American Indians*. Last modified December 2014. <http://users.humboldt.edu/ogayle/hist110/unit3/indians.html>



obstacle. Manifest destiny allowed for the justification that Indigenous tribes would benefit from removal from the land that colonists wanted. Settlers believed that Natives tribes were wasting western land by not cultivating it, and land speculators believed they could increase the value of western land once settlers' demands for territory increased as more and more settlers migrated west.<sup>52</sup> James Monroe stated that the removal of tribes would benefit their well-being, specifically addressing Congress in 1825:

The removal of the tribes from the territory which they now inhabit... would not only shield them from impending ruin, but promote their welfare and happiness. Experience has clearly demonstrated that in their present state it is impossible to incorporate them in such masses, in any form wherever, into our system.<sup>53</sup>

James Monroe not only thought that Indigenous peoples were culturally inferior, but that they were incapable of imposed acculturation, therefore claiming that forced removal would benefit tribes. This concept therefore contributed to the romantic landscape painting traditions of the nineteenth century which portrayed North American land void of Indigenous peoples, such as Albert Bierstadt's *Among the Sierra Nevada Mountains, California* (Fig. 13). Often, Bierstadt would depict God-given justice and the right to Manifest Destiny through divine shafts of light pouring from the sky onto empty patches of land, as seen in Figure Thirteen. When Bierstadt did include Indigenous presence in his paintings, such as in *The Rocky Mountains, Lander's Peak*, Indigenous peoples were reduced to small, overshadowed figures, weak and susceptible to the conquest of manifest destiny (Fig. 14). Bierstadt's representations of Indigenous peoples were likened to the status of unimportant background animals.

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<sup>52</sup> Smithsonian American Art Museum, "Manifest Destiny and Indian Removal."

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

***Romanticism, Stereotypes, and Ethnography: Connections to Commodification of Indigenous Cultures and Notions of Manifest Destiny***

Falsities about who inhabited North American land, gendered stereotypes against Indigenous men and women, and the commodification and appropriation of Indigenous cultures is still promoted today by Edward Curtis' documentation of Native North Americans. Curtis' photographs still have an impact on outsiders' notions about Indigenous lives, and Red Star dismantles the stereotypes of stoic, primitive Native peoples that Curtis normalized by presenting herself in an ironic take on his imagery. Hired by J.P. Morgan in 1906, Curtis received \$75,000 to create a series of works on Indigenous tribes of North America, comprised of twenty volumes and 1,500 photographs.<sup>54</sup> At the end of his career in 1930, Curtis captured over 40,000 images of Indigenous peoples spanning over eighty tribes.<sup>55</sup> Curtis' work, titled *The North American Indian*, has been praised for its intimate journalistic nature, ability to establish common ground with Indigenous peoples, and wealth of knowledge on diverse tribes.<sup>56</sup> But, Curtis' photographs and documentation of North American tribes was often false, and a product of the outsiders' assumptions of North American origin myths. Curtis "misrepresented history by staging his photographs and having a romantic attitude by idealizing his figures and invoking nostalgia about the past."<sup>57</sup> Curtis projected how he believed an Indigenous person should interact with the environment, how they would dress, and what they would say. Often, Curtis would bring props

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<sup>54</sup> Abaki Beck, "Decolonizing Photography: A Conversation with Wendy Red Star," *Aperture.com*. December 14<sup>th</sup>, 2016, accessed September 27, 2018, <https://aperture.org/blog/wendy-red-star/>

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Edward S. Curtis, *The North American Indian: Being a Series of Volumes Picturing and Describing the Indians of the United States and Alaska*, ed. by Frederick Webb Hodge, (Cambridge: The University Press), 1904.; Edward S. Curtis Gallery, "Edward S. Curtis Biography," accessed May 23, 2018 <http://edwardscurtis.com/e-s-curtis-biography/>

<sup>57</sup> Patricia Vervoort, "Edward S. Curtis's 'Representations:' Then and Now," *The American Review of Canadian Studies* 34, no. 3, (2009): 463.

to his photography sets, and dress his subjects in traditional regalia when they were in fact dressed quite differently. Curtis would stage Native peoples to sit atop horses, triumphantly gazing across empty, rolling plains, instigating a distant, forgotten connection with nature (Fig. 15). Curtis' photographs provided a way for outsiders to project their own interpretation of settler history; "they did not necessarily represent Native Americans as how they were, but how whites wanted them to be remembered."<sup>58</sup> Readers of *The Native North American Indian* did not crave images of Indigenous peoples, but craved nostalgia for a false history.

Curtis claimed his work "represents the personal study of a people who are rapidly losing the traces of their aboriginal character and who are destined ultimately to become assimilated with the 'superior race'."<sup>59</sup> By imposing urgent nostalgia within his documentation of North American tribes, Curtis' "photographic mission... perpetuated [the] prevalent notion of Indians as anachronisms in need of preservation," effectively delivering a message that Indigenous peoples lack the ability to be capable, independent, and diverse.<sup>60</sup> Curtis was not academically trained in journalism or photography, but intended *The Native North American Indian* to be a completely accurate scientific study on the lives of Indigenous peoples.<sup>61</sup> Curtis' anthropological approach to capturing Indigenous peoples before they disappeared was dehumanizing. The result was to suppress peoples' livelihoods, violate their dignity, create stereotypes, objectify diverse tribes. This presents Indigenous knowledge and tradition through the judgement of Christian

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<sup>58</sup> Ashley Stull-Meyers, "Interview with Wendy Red Star," *Daily Serving*, March 14, 2017, accessed September 27, 2018, <https://www.dailyserving.com/2017/03/interview-with-wendy-red-star/>

<sup>59</sup> Edward S. Curtis, Introduction to *The North American Indian: Being a Series of Volumes Picturing and Describing the Indians of the United States and Alaska*, xii, ed. by Frederick Webb Hodge, (Cambridge: The University Press), 1904.

<sup>60</sup> Patricia Vervoort, "Edward S. Curtis's 'Representations:' Then and Now," *The American Review of Canadian Studies* 34, no. 3, (2009): 465.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 464.

outsiders automatically assuming superiority over the subjects whom they studied. The effect was not only to misrepresent Indigenous peoples as vanishing, but to promote them as stoic stereotypes locked in the past.

Curtis' imposed nostalgia of Indigenous life evolved into stereotypes of Indigenous peoples seen today, and there is a disconnect between the way outsiders perceive Indigenous peoples, and how Indigenous peoples perceive themselves.<sup>62</sup> Red Star addresses this outsider obsession with false accounts of Native life in order to encourage interest in Indigenous issues through re-education about stereotypes and assumptions.

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<sup>62</sup> Abaki Beck, "Decolonizing Photography: A Conversation with Wendy Red Star," *Aperture.com*. December 14<sup>th</sup>, 2016 accessed September 27, 2018, <https://aperture.org/blog/wendy-red-star/>

## Chapter Two

### *Four Seasons*

In her *Four Seasons* series, Wendy Red Star offers a layered parody that challenges numerous constructs of Indigeneity. Through “brash humor, scholarly research, and personal narrative,” Wendy Red Star disrupts outsiders’ assumptions, which are largely informed by a history of misrepresentation about Indigenous cultures and histories.<sup>63</sup> In this chapter, I explore her spoof of several themes: the EuroAmerican landscape tradition of an empty land waiting for conquest; misrepresentation of Indigenous peoples in nineteenth-century ethnographic photography; natural history museum representations of a vanishing race; and commercial imagery today. She challenges notions of a Vanishing Race, manifest destiny, museum hierarchies, and denaturalizes contemporary commercialization— all in four images (Figs. 16-19).

Red Star created *Four Seasons* while attending a graduate program at the University of Los Angeles, California in 2006. A photographic series, the *Four Seasons* images are archival pigment prints transposed on Museo Silver Rag and Sunset Fiber Rag, mounted on Dibond.<sup>64</sup> In all four, Red Star poses herself amidst what appear at first glance to be vast, beautiful landscapes lush with vegetation and animal life. However, on closer inspection we see that Red Star staged her landscapes with inflatable prop animals, plastic flowers, AstroTurf, and flat cardboard elements. The panoramic screens depicting the North American West in the backdrop are

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<sup>63</sup> Josephine Zarkovich and Sara Reisman, “Making Noise: Wendy Red Star.” CUE. Last modified May 12, 2017, accessed September 27, 2018, <http://cueartfoundation.org/young-art-critics-essays/making-noise-wendy-red-star-by-josephine-zarkovich>

<sup>64</sup> *Four Seasons* (Fall). The MET. Accessed June 23, 2018. <https://metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/660751>

reproductions of mass-produced images created in the 1970s.<sup>65</sup> Red Star's backdrops are reminiscent of Albert Bierstadt's romantic landscape paintings of the nineteenth century that represents notions of manifest destiny and empty Western land, available for the colonial project of settler expansion. Bierstadt often depicted North American land as void of Indigenous peoples, though there were hundreds of tribes then living in the terrain he depicted.<sup>66</sup> If he did include Indigenous figures, they were more as elements of the landscape, as staffage.

In each photographic panel Red Star is adorned in traditional Apsáalooke regalia, an elk tooth dress. Red Star's grandmother, Amy Bright Wings Red Star, sewed and created Apsáalooke beadwork and garb, which heavily influenced Red Star in her own artistic identity.<sup>67</sup> An elk tooth dress represents the epitome of feminine identity within Apsáalooke culture.<sup>68</sup> An elk tooth dress is created from wool cloth and elk teeth, and the more elk teeth that adorned the dress, the more powerful the wearer. Elk teeth represented the hunting abilities of the men within a woman's family, and a young woman would wear the dress to display familial honor and respect.<sup>69</sup> Red Star's grandmother's beadwork traditions were not the only aspect of Apsáalooke culture that influenced the creation of the *Four Seasons*, but many other Apsáalooke traditions as well. The *Four Seasons* are saturated with vibrant color, which reflects the color palette of other

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Robert Enright, "The Incredible Rightness of Mischief: An Interview with Kent Monkman," *Border Crossings* 36, no. 3 (September 2017): 30

<sup>67</sup> Morgan Mentzer, "Wendy Red Star: Owning Your Power," *NEA Magazine*, accessed September 27, 2018, <https://www.arts.gov/NEARTS/2018v1-women-arts-galvanizing-encouraging-inspiring/wendy-red-star>

<sup>68</sup> Chuck Thompson, "Wendy Red Star and the Indigenous Voice," *Cowboys and Indians: The Premier Magazine of the West*. January 25, 2018, accessed September 27, 2018, <https://www.cowboysindians.com/2018/01/wendy-red-star-and-the-indigenous-voice/>

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

Apsáalooke artforms.<sup>70</sup> Her dress and use of color illustrate the influence of Apsáalooke culture and intergenerational relationships and the transmission of this culture, making this series a statement of Red Star's Apsáalooke identity.

By presenting herself in ancestral dress, demonstrating the continuity of her ancestral customs, Red Star offers a personal perspective on how her intergenerational identity influences her art. Red Star hopes to relate to her audience and demonstrate that stereotypes originating from Edward Curtis' photography, doctrines of manifest destiny, and commercialization of Indigenous cultures, all in their own ways representing Indigenous peoples as vanishing, are outsiders' assumptions about Apsáalooke culture. According to Red Star, she uses identity-based art such as the *Four Seasons* series to reflect racial and cultural histories from a uniquely Apsáalooke perspective. Red Star uses traditions from her own family and culture so as not to represent "the entirety of the Crow Nation or all Native people," but to engage her audience more personally, from the specific perspective of an Apsáalooke woman and her family history.<sup>71</sup> Red Star makes space for dialogue with the viewer, drawing them into her work through irony and humor, as I will discuss, and creating questions and urging consideration of the racial history behind the stereotypes presented in her images through her use of props together with personal themes and experiences inspired by Apsáalooke dress and intergenerational artwork.

### *A Closer Analysis of Four Seasons*

#### *Visions of an empty land*

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

In *Four Seasons* Red Star uses irony to subvert misrepresentations of Indigenous identity and reclaim what has been obscured through these misrepresentations, in particular focusing on the doctrine of manifest destiny and ethnographic documentation. Red Star's use of irony, in the double-sidedness described by Ryan, as I discussed in my Introduction, subverts widely accepted Western power structures and origin stories of colonization by bringing together opposites and reinserting Indigenous presence into the colonial narrative. The doctrine of manifest destiny asserted that North American land was empty, according to Western understandings of political and social structures, and therefore available for colonization as seen in the vast, sweeping panoramic backdrops of *Four Seasons*. Red Star creates a contrary interpretation by repopulating these apparently empty vistas with her presence. In this way, she can be interpreted as a Trickster, an Indigenous mythical being who activates political space through 'doing.'<sup>72</sup> In *Four Seasons*, Red Star activates the political space of the empty land and confronts the stereotype of Indigenous peoples as vanished, or primitive, in cultural evolutionist terms, by playfully shifting her audience's preconceived perspectives and political mindsets to reveal alternative perspectives, dialogues, and images.<sup>73</sup> The Trickster is widely celebrated for pushing boundaries and transforming thoughts, qualities that Red Star demonstrates as she urges her audience to reevaluate the result of misrepresentation and colonization through her use of irony as social critique.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Allan J. Ryan, *The Trickster Shift: Humor and Irony in Contemporary Native Art*, (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1999), 13-92.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.



Closely associated with the Trickster identity that Red Star composes is the aspect of humor, which Red Star utilizes by starting a conversation with her audience.<sup>75</sup> The inflatable animals, plastic flowers, and AstroTurf of *Four Seasons* are outrageously comical, and Red Star purposefully creates this viewer response as a strategy of collective healing. Red Star claims that within Apsáalooke culture, teasing and humor are used as a policing system to humble or sometimes uplift tribal members.<sup>76</sup> Red Star says that “a little bit of laughter is healing,” and universal.<sup>77</sup> Red Star claims that people are more receptive to humorous artwork, and with the avenues of opportunity humor allows, people can more comfortably begin to discuss histories of race, power, gender, colonization, and violence.<sup>78</sup>

*Edward Curtis: stereotypes and homogeneity*

Wendy Red Star asserts the power of Indigenous voice in *Four Seasons* not only by reclaiming Indigenous presence in North American landscape, but by reinstating the diversity of Indigenous cultures, which Edward Curtis effectively erased from his portraiture of Indigenous tribes. Curtis utilized props and generic headdresses in the images of many of the eighty tribes he documented, despite the fact that only some tribes, those from the Great Plains, actually wore war bonnets.<sup>79</sup> To combat notions of authenticity, that Indigenous peoples’ identity relies on

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid., xiii.

<sup>76</sup> Abaki Beck, “Decolonizing Photography: A Conversation with Wendy Red Star,” *Aperture.com*. December 14<sup>th</sup>, 2016 accessed September 27, 2018, <https://aperture.org/blog/wendy-red-star/>

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> “Native American Headdresses,” *Native Languages of the Americas Website*, accessed September 27, 2017, <http://www.native-languages.org/headdresses.htm>

them wearing outsiders' misinformed understandings of what Native dress looks like, Red Star wears, in each of the installments of *Four Seasons*, her elk tooth dress, a garment that to her embodies "the ultimate symbol of Crow womanhood"<sup>80</sup> (Fig. 20). An elk tooth dress shows the hunting abilities and talents of the men in an Apsáalooke family, but according to Red Star, also symbolizes much more. Red Star was given her final version of an elk tooth dress when she was sixteen, but because of the dress' relevance and importance, she recalls wearing several different versions since she was a child.<sup>81</sup> To Red Star the dress represents a range of Apsáalooke traditions, and encompasses Red Star's political messages.<sup>82</sup> Because of the honor one receives from wearing an elk tooth dress, "it changes you to have it on – you stand taller and feel really dignified, you have an experience wearing it."<sup>83</sup>

In the *Four Seasons* Red Star reinstates the diversity of tribes that was and is always present, yet seemingly erased through nineteenth-century ethnographic documentation traditions. Red Star encourages her audience to "interact with and acknowledge cultural productions and viewpoints outside of dominant colonial narratives."<sup>84</sup> The *Four Seasons* examines EuroAmerican society's fascination and obsession with its fabricated notions of what Native American lives are like. Red Star's *Four Seasons* offers ironic, biting humor and critique about the racism linked with stereotypes about Indigenous peoples, while providing her audience her

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<sup>80</sup> Ashley Stull-Meyers, "Interview with Wendy Red Star," *Daily Serving*, March 14, 2017, accessed September 27, 2018, <https://www.dailyserving.com/2017/03/interview-with-wendy-red-star/>

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Josephine Zarkovich and Sara Reisman, "Making Noise: Wendy Red Star." CUE. Last modified May 12, 2017. <http://cueartfoundation.org/young-art-critics-essays/making-noise-wendy-red-star-by-josephine-zarkovich>

experience as an Apsáalooke woman creating contemporary art that functions as humor, critique, and identity formation.<sup>85</sup>

### *Natural history exhibitions and museum hierarchies*

In *Indian Summer* from the *Four Seasons*, the cardboard deer, mass-produced plastic flowers and faux cow skull in the backdrop bring humor as a critique of the way Indigenous peoples and their artistic traditions are historically marginalized and invalidated within the Euro-American art canon. The staging of *Indian Summer* spoofs a diorama in a natural history museum, the usual exhibition space of historical Indigenous arts, rather than a fine art museum or contemporary gallery. The myth of the Vanishing Race, of Indigenous peoples thought to be disappearing before dominant Western notions of progress, civilization, and assimilation, was the reasoning behind museum diorama displays, thought to be an act of preserving cultures and peoples (Fig. 21). Indigenous peoples become spectacles for outsiders to ogle within these settings. Red Star is portraying how Indigenous peoples are likened to extinct or vanishing animal species by posing next to a longhorn skull. The longhorn skull is also made out of plastic, adding the dimension that this symbolic link of Indigenous peoples to a Vanished Race is fabricated.

Not only were Native peoples likened to extinct, prehistoric animals and fauna through these dioramas and the placement of their cultural heritage in natural history museums, today historical Indigenous artwork is not usually included in contemporary fine art gallery spaces. For example, Red Star recounts a time when she considered beadwork, sewing, quilting, and

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

weaving, historical Native art forms, to be less valuable than more widely-acclaimed contemporary paintings and sculptures:

My whole life, my grandmother, Amy Bright Wings Red Star, was always making something in regards to Crow traditional outfits. Most of my memories are of walking into her little craft room. She'd be behind a sewing machine or drawing beadwork designs. But I'd never thought of her as an artist. Being an Indigenous person, I thought it was just a lifestyle. It was hard for me to see that in a different light.<sup>86</sup>

Red Star asserts that the reasoning behind excluding Indigenous arts from the Euro-American art canon is because Native lives have always been viewed as eradicated, therefore their arts must also be unimportant, and trivial as well, following the stereotype.<sup>87</sup> Indigenous women's work, such as beading and quilting, were excluded from the traditional fine arts of painting, sculpture, and architecture, because they were considered primitive items of use, rather than fine art within the Western European art history canon. Though Red Star recognizes that certain museums, such as the Denver Art Museum, the Tacoma Art Museum, and the Minneapolis Institute of Art, are paving the way for decolonized museum spaces by including Indigenous voices within their exhibitions, most museums have a long way to go before equality and inclusion are accomplished.<sup>88</sup> One of Red Star's most pressing goals with *Four Seasons* is to show the necessity of including Indigenous arts within a contemporary space. Red Star claims that

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<sup>86</sup> Morgan Mentzer, "Wendy Red Star: Owning Your Power," *NEA Magazine*, accessed September 27, 2018, <https://www.arts.gov/NEARTS/2018v1-women-arts-galvanizing-encouraging-inspiring/wendy-red-star>

<sup>87</sup> Braudie Blais-Billie "Wendy Red Star Makes Probing Art About Native American Identity," *i-D Vice*, November 19, 2016, accessed September 27, 2018, [https://i-d.vice.com/en\\_us/article/ywdyag/wendy-red-star-makes-probing-art-about-native-american-identity](https://i-d.vice.com/en_us/article/ywdyag/wendy-red-star-makes-probing-art-about-native-american-identity)

<sup>88</sup> Abaki Beck, "Decolonizing Photography: A Conversation with Wendy Red Star," *Aperture.com*. December 14<sup>th</sup>, 2016 accessed September 27, 2018, <https://aperture.org/blog/wendy-red-star/>

Indigenous artwork is often overlooked to the disadvantage of the artists and audience, and that contemporary Indigenous artists deserve independent exhibitions outside of history museums.<sup>89</sup>

### *Commercialization of Indigenous imagery*

The humor and irony found in the cellophane ‘river’ and plastic crows of *Winter* are also a way to critique commercialization of Indigenous imagery and cultural objects. The mass-produced party props that inhabit the landscapes of *Winter* symbolize how Indigenous motifs and arts are being created by outsiders for their own consumption, because the plastic crows are meaningless representations of their real counterparts, and can be produced, bought, and sold anywhere.<sup>90</sup> Red Star is an Apsáalooke woman, known as a “Crow” within the community, and the plastic crows add a layer of meaning on how Red Star’s heritage is perceived by outsiders. Outsiders refer to Red Star as a ‘Crow’ as if they can also speak from the perspective of the Apsáalooke tribe, which emphasizes the commodification of Indigenous cultures, and how outsiders assume authority of it. Additionally, the plastic crows can also symbolize stereotypes of primitivism and mysticism when outsiders choose ‘spirit animals’ as party tricks and imitation spirit quests. Since the 1970s with the emergence of hippie culture and New Age Spirituality producing a reappearance of the Indian Princess stereotype, there has been a newfound

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<sup>89</sup> Chloe Alexandra Thompson, “Story Trader: An Interview with Wendy Red Star,” *Art in America*, November 8, 2017, accessed September 27, 2018, <https://www.artinamericamagazine.com/news-features/interviews/story-trader-an-interview-with-wendy-red-star/>

<sup>90</sup> Daniel Larkin, “Rethinking American Indian Influence on Bushwick Art.” *Hyperallergic*. Last modified June 25, 2016, accessed September 27, 2018, <https://hyperallergic.com/214240/rethinking-american-indian-influence-on-bushwick-art/>

popularity and interest surrounding the commodification of Indigenous rituals for outsider pleasure.<sup>91</sup> As Vine Deloria Jr. writes, tribal rituals are being taken and fetishized by outsiders:

Sweat lodges conducted for \$50, peyote meetings for \$1,500, medicine drums for \$300, weekend workshops and vision quests for \$500, two do-it-yourself practitioners smothered in their own sweat lodge – the interest in American Indian spirituality only seems to grow and manifests itself in increasingly bizarre behavior – by both Indians and non-Indians. Manifestos have been issued, lists of people no longer welcome on the reservations have been compiled, and biographies of the most fraudulent medicine men have been publicized. Yet nothing seems to tide the abuse and misuse of Indian ceremonies. Indeed, some sweat lodges in the suburbs at times seem like the opening move in a scenario of seduction of naive but beautiful women who are encouraged to play the role of ‘Mother Earth’ in bogus costumes.<sup>92</sup>

These generic productions of tribal ceremonies lead to stereotypes of Indigenous peoples as primitive, or existing in a simpler, nonindustrial society, close to nature, which Red Star mocks in *Four Seasons* by lounging amidst lush faux vegetation. The generic stereotypes and romanticism associated with and fueled by commercialization of Indigenous imagery allows outsiders to select only certain aspects of Indigenous customs, those that fit into preconceptions of what Indigenous life is actually like.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Daniel Larkin, quoting Vine Deloria Jr. in “Rethinking American Indian Influence on Bushwick Art,” *Hyperallergic*. Last modified June 25, 2016, accessed September 27, 2018, <https://hyperallergic.com/214240/rethinking-american-indian-influence-on-bushwick-art/>

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

## Chapter Three

### *White Squaw*

The stereotypes created through European colonizers' distorted understandings of Indigenous gender relations, which I discussed in Chapter One, perpetuate derogatory assumptions about Indigenous women into the present. Indigenous women are represented as exotic princesses or sexualized squaws, trapped in the limitations of the settler male gaze. In this chapter, I explore how Wendy Red Star parodies exaggerated stereotypes of sexualized Indigenous women through erasure in her *White Squaw* series, her purpose to raise awareness of Indigenous feminist issues.

E.J. Hunter, a pseudonym for Mark K. Roberts, is the author of the *White Squaw* series. Hunter wrote his first novel *White Squaw: Sioux Wildfire* in 1983, and his last novel in the series, *White Squaw: Rough and Ready* in 1992.<sup>94</sup> His books detail the adventures of Becky, a half-Indigenous, half-white woman who was sold into slavery and captivity to the Sioux by her two uncles.<sup>95</sup> Described in pulp fiction purple prose, Becky experiences sexual and violent assault from an early age. Becky's mother, a white woman named Hannah, was raped and murdered by a Sioux chief, and as soon as Becky is enslaved, she encounters many instances of violence.<sup>96</sup> In

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<sup>94</sup> E.J. Hunter, *White Squaw #1: Sioux Wildfire*, (New York: Zebra Regency Romance, 1983); E.J. Hunter, *White Squaw Series #24: Rough and Ready*, (New York: Zebra Regency Romance, 1992).

<sup>95</sup> By using a pseudonym, Roberts further distances his personal bias when writing this novel from an outsider's perspective, assuming this experience of a half-Indigenous, half-white woman to be truth. I was not able to obtain a copy of the *White Squaw* novels, and there are different interpretations of Becky's heritage. Some book reviewers assert that Becky is a white woman sold into slavery and held captive by the Sioux. However, Red Star in her interviews described reading the books, and recounts the narratives. My analysis is drawn from her interpretation of the book series that Becky is of mixed heritage.

<sup>96</sup> Captivity narratives originated from the accounts of settler men, women, and children who were captured by Indigenous warriors and adopted into their communities. These captives most often settled and stayed in their new communities. In the nineteenth century, fictional accounts of such narratives appeared, portraying Indigenous men as brutal savages who assault, plunder, and destroy. According to James Axtell, *The Invasion Within*, actual captivity was far from barbaric. Indigenous tribes were more psychologically capable at converting Europeans to their ways of life, and many settlers willingly chose to join Indigenous tribes. Many settlers elected to remain with

the first book, “Sioux Wildfire,” Becky is forced into prostitution, opium addiction, and is sexually assaulted by a local woman who also assaults a twelve-year-old girl, one of the many times child abuse occurs throughout the series. Becky’s purpose in the series is to have revenge against her captors. Reminiscent of pulp magazines, *White Squaw* glorifies violence, sexual exploitation, and euphemisms that describe, in graphic detail, Becky’s sexual encounters.<sup>97</sup> While Becky is half European settler and half Indigenous, her character is represented in a way derogatory to Indigenous women; the captivity narrative portrays stereotypes of Indigenous women as sexually available, and also reinforces another stereotype, the brutal savage Indigenous warrior. The squaw stereotype is not alone, it is embedded in other inaccurate and violent portrayals of Indigenous life.

Created in 2014, Red Star’s *White Squaw* is an archival pigment print photographic series. Red Star scanned the cover pages of E.J. Hunter’s *White Squaw* novels, then erased the image of the figure Becky, and replaces it with images of herself in a range of poses that parody the original.<sup>98</sup> Hunter’s original covers featured the image of Becky, whose enlarged face and feathered headbands would dominate the cover, and content, of each of his twenty-four novels (Fig. 22). The covers retain the original backdrop and images of the other characters in the storyline. Becky, represented in the squaw stereotype I have defined in Chapter One, found herself caught in romanticized, sexualized turmoil with a white man, cowboy, or otherwise

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their new families, even after treaties of peace were signed permitting them to return home. James Axtell, *The Invasion Within: The Contest of Cultures in Colonial North America*, (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985): 302-327.

<sup>97</sup> Pulp magazines were readily produced in the 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> centuries, and get their name from the cheap, wood pulp paper from which they were created. Pulp magazines and fiction comics were fantastical in nature, often describing foreign locations, beautiful women, escapist narratives, and mysterious villains; Common in pulp magazines was purple prose, or an extremely metaphorical, descriptive, and vivid writing style. For example, in *White Squaw #1*, Becky’s anatomy is described as a “warm cave of pungent nectar.”

<sup>98</sup> E.J. Hunter, *White Squaw Series*, (New York: Zebra Regency Romance, 1983-1992).



“civilized” colonist, serving as the link between the outside world and her unspecified tribal culture.

Red Star’s inspiration for her photographic series was a Google search she made to research the origins of the squaw stereotype. In a Google search result, *The White Squaw* film appeared, immediately catching Red Star’s interest.<sup>99</sup> *The White Squaw*, which inspired Hunter, was an American western film released in 1956 and directed by Fred F. Sears.<sup>100</sup> Similar to the premise of Hunter’s *White Squaw* novels, *The White Squaw* film details a half-Caucasian, half-Indigenous woman fighting for the independence of her tribe and the love of a Swedish colonist.<sup>101</sup> Flabbergasted that such derogatory material was published as recently as the 1990s, Red Star felt it was her responsibility to shed light on this subject, mostly because she felt if anybody could pose as Becky from *White Squaw*, to undermine this stereotype, it would be her.<sup>102</sup> Red Star related to the mixed heritage of the *White Squaw* heroine, and could contribute a uniquely Indigenous feminist perspective on the subject.

### *The Strategies of White Squaw*

Erasure and parody are Red Star’s main strategies, in addition to irony and humor, in her dismantling of the cover pages of Hunter’s *White Squaw* novels. Erasure is a strategy that removes the original marks of a significant artwork, and creates new meaning for the piece.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> “The White Squaw,” Internet Movie Database, accessed May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2018. <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0049950/>

<sup>100</sup> *The White Squaw*, directed by Fred F. Sears, 1956: Columbia Pictures, Film.

<sup>101</sup> “The White Squaw,” Internet Movie Database, accessed May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2018. <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0049950/>

<sup>102</sup> Portland Art Museum, “Wendy Red Star: Apsáalooke Feminist,” YouTube Video, 1:05:20. Posted [June 2015]. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QXFkvWPUU0s>

<sup>103</sup> “Robert Rauschenberg, Erased De Kooning Drawing, 1953,” *SFMOMA*, accessed October 03, 2018. <https://www.sfmoma.org/artwork/98.298>

Hunter's novels might not be well known, but are culturally significant in how they portray Indigenous peoples, and how they contribute to a literature of captivity and violent pulp fiction. The effect is to alter the components of the original artwork to understand why a piece became popular. Red Star does this by parodying the original text and images of the cover pages.<sup>104</sup> Parody reimagines and alters an image while still maintaining its original components, resulting in the ironic difference of a new image. Irony is a key component to the employment of parody, critically portraying difference through similarity.<sup>105</sup> Allan Ryan claims that parody is becoming an extremely popular tool for artists, because it “offers a perspective on the present and the past which allows an artist to speak to a discourse from within it, but without being totally recuperated by it.”<sup>106</sup> Parody is therefore a strategy that allow marginalized peoples to critique the accepted worldview that is their oppressor.<sup>107</sup> Parody allows for the revelation of an artist's political purpose, in Red Star's case, this is Indigenous feminism.<sup>108</sup>

Informed by Indigenous feminism and using parody as her strategy, Red Star portrays to her audience the inaccuracy of outsiders' assumptions of Indigenous women's lived experiences. Red Star accomplishes this in *White Squaw* by processing her own Apsáalooke identity and how it has been affected by stereotypes. She parodies normalized imagery of Indigenous women and mass-produced images of Indigenous peoples, and sheds light on the pervasiveness of these images across cultures and continents by offering a revision of history from an Indigenous

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Allan J. Ryan, “Postmodern Parody: A Political Strategy in Contemporary Canadian Native Art,” *Art Journal*, 51 no. 3 (1992): 59.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

perspective.<sup>109</sup> Red Star parodies Hunter's fantasized Indigenous character by replacing it with a heroine who symbolizes all Indigenous women's struggle against negative stereotyping. As a half-White woman, Becky is permitted to engage in revenge and kill enemies, but because she is also half-Indigenous, she is deserving of violence and sexual abuse, a misrepresentation that is understood to be for all Indigenous women.

Red Star utilizes the strategies of parody and erasure to critique the sexploitation of Indigenous women and to assert an Indigenous feminist perspective. Hunter's *White Squaw* novels support a perceived sexual availability of a half-Indigenous, half-Caucasian woman, reinforcing a squaw stereotype. Indigenous feminism makes evident the extent of the negative impact on Indigenous women that this creates. Indigenous feminism goes beyond issues surrounding patriarchy that are the focus of mainstream feminism.<sup>110</sup> Indigenous feminism examines histories of colonial practices, and makes colonial ideology visible, in a decolonizing approach. Indigenous feminism brings together mainstream feminism with a critique of colonial ideology to show how Indigenous women have been affected by both patriarchy and colonialism.<sup>111</sup> Indigenous feminism confronts the justifications of colonial practices perpetuated in contemporary society, and demands the acknowledgement of Indigenous peoples as valid and politically capable.<sup>112</sup> Red Star's parodied accounts of Becky are an effective challenge to patriarchy and lingering colonial biases.

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<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Joyce Green, "Taking Account of Aboriginal Feminism," in *Making a Space for Indigenous Feminism*, edited Joyce Green, (Black Point: Fernwood Publishing 2007), 21-22.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 22.

Red Star's confrontation of sexploitation of Indigenous women addresses major social issues that have serious implications for the safety of Indigenous women today. While working with the Vancouver Rape Relief and Women's Shelter for over five years as a rape crisis counsellor, Indigenous feminist activist Tina Beads became aware of the disproportionate number of Indigenous women living in a transition house for battered women as opposed to women of other backgrounds.<sup>113</sup> She argues that Indigenous women are more likely to be assaulted, because men tend to assault women they perceive to be racially inferior.<sup>114</sup> Beads also attested that Indigenous women who experienced assault and battery were repeatedly failed by the system, therefore becoming repeat callers.<sup>115</sup> Beads believes these statistics are partly a result of gendered stereotypes of Indigenous women.<sup>116</sup> The squaw stereotype, illustrated in Hunter's *White Squaw*, with books in the series selling today for as much as seventy dollars, labels Indigenous women as constantly sexually available and deserving of sexual attention despite their non-consent, and perpetuates this sexual violence.

The Canadian, United States, and Mexican governments have neglected much of the violence and crime committed against Indigenous women and girls. Though previously the United States government refused to account for the statistics of crime against Indigenous peoples, Indigenous women and girls are more likely to encounter extreme violence, and often

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<sup>113</sup> Tina Beads and Rauno Kuokkanen, "Aboriginal Feminist Action on Violence Against Women," in *Making a Space for Indigenous Feminism*, edited Joyce Green, (Black Point: Fernwood Publishing 2007), 223.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 222-223.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 223.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*

lack access to services and avenues for justice.<sup>117</sup> In May 2016, the National Institute of Justice released these statistics on violence against Indigenous women:

The researchers found that more than 84% of Alaska Native and American Indian women had experienced some form of violence in their lifetimes: 66% experienced psychological violence, 56% experienced sexual violence, 55% experienced physical violence from an intimate partner, and 49% experienced stalking. Despite the grave need for support and protection from this violence, 38% of Alaska Native and American Indian female victims were unable to access legal, medical, and other services. The report also found that, amongst the women who reported experiencing violence in their lifetimes, 97% of victims experienced violence by an interracial perpetrator.<sup>118</sup>

In Canada, a report by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police found large discrepancies between acts of violence against Indigenous women as opposed to non-Indigenous women:

An estimated 1,181 Indigenous women and girls are missing or murdered. As is the case in the United States, most homicides of Indigenous women are committed by a non-Indigenous intimate partner. These murders—which the Canadian government believes are vastly underestimated—occur at a rate that is at least seven times higher than for non-Indigenous women.<sup>119</sup>

A report by the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues found that “in Mexico, lethal violence against Indigenous women and girls is also a serious problem. Across Latin America it is estimated that Indigenous women and girls are disproportionately the victims of ‘femicidios’ (gender-motivated killings).”<sup>120</sup> Former United States President Barack Obama, Prime Minister of Canada, Justin Trudeau, and President of Mexico, Enrique Peña Nieto met on June twenty-ninth, 2016 in Ottawa for the North American Leaders’ Summit, which resulted in

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<sup>117</sup> Carry Bettinger-Lopez. “Violence Against Indigenous Women and Girls: Commitments from the North American Leaders Summit.” the *White House* (blog), July 28, 2016 (8:00 a.m.). <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/blog/2016/07/25/violence-against-indigenous-women-and-girls-commitments-north-american-leaders>

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

the establishment of the North American Working Group on Violence Against Indigenous Women and Girls, which will create new programs to aid in tribal justice, crisis lines for victims, support for abused parents and children, as well as other research projects and social programs.<sup>121</sup> There is still much work needed to be done to achieve better treatment of Indigenous women, but Red Star's work is in the context of these efforts.

### ***White Squaw: Image and Text***

Sexploitation plays a large role in objectifying Indigenous women and girls, making them more vulnerable to violence, which Red Star calls to attention in her *White Squaw* series. Red Star examines the novels' sexist rhetoric and images through her strategy of parody in order to uncover social issues related to Indigenous women and girls. Red Star's revisioning of the *White Squaw* novel covers keeps the original text of the cover pages. The text makes blatant sexual innuendos emphasizing the sexual characteristics of a squaw stereotype. The cover text emphasizes the importance of sexual conquest and the sexual availability of Indigenous women. It characterizes Indigenous women as craving sexual attention and immoral compared to Christian settler women. I identify four themes in the cover pages of *White Squaw*: sexploitation; masculine/colonial conquest; Christian purity; and Indigenous women as a connection to a Western understanding of civilized life. In my discussion, I group the covers into the themes they most strongly portray through text and image, and analyze the meanings behind their double entendres and innuendos. Then, I will explore how Red Star uses parody and erasure to disrupt the intersection between text and imagery, while analyzing the issues they present for Indigenous

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<sup>121</sup> "FACT SHEET: North American Working Group on Violence against Indigenous Women and Girls, New Commitments & Accomplishments from the Obama Administration." the *White House* (blog), October 14, 2016. <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2016/10/14/fact-sheet-north-american-working-group-violence-against-indigenous>

feminism. For each theme, I will analyze covers in which Red Star parodies the text through an image of herself, posed in a way to mimic the original with a parodic edge.

### *Sexploitation*

The cover pages of #11: *Hot Handed Heathen* and #14: *Red Top Tramp*, through text and image, construct a squaw stereotype that characterizes Indigenous women, no matter their heritage, as deserving of and wanting negative sexual attention.<sup>122</sup> In *Hot Handed Heathen*, Becky will “blow her way out of trouble” when interacting with a male enemy. The language of the title describes her as a sexually charged, non-Christian, unruly, and cunning (Fig. 23). This text describes Becky as overwhelmingly sexual, so desperate that she will pleasure any man who crosses her path, while the image references oral sex through hand gestures. Red Star’s hand placement references fellatio, with the text reinforcing acts of “blowing.” But, Red Star’s hands are also in the shape of a gun, with her thumb and index finger extended, portraying the message that oral sex will result in violence instead of pleasure. Red Star is pointing the ‘gun’ at herself, reinforcing that it is she who will experience violence, not the patriarchal system in place.

*Red Top Tramp* utilizes the same language alluding to oral sex, claiming Becky has to “blow off steam from a hot situation.” Red Star erases Hunter’s image of a sexually available, beautiful Becky with a cringe-inducing image of her eating Land-o-Lakes Butter by the spoonful. This also refers to fellatio, as Red Star focuses the image on her mouth (Fig. 24). Red Star mocks the commercialization of Indigenous culture and the sexualized stereotype of an Indian princess on Land-o-Lake’s label, but also contrasts sexual attractiveness through text and image. The text and image of *Red Top Tramp* alludes to the pleasure of oral sex, but Red Star’s parodic image is

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<sup>122</sup> *White Squaw* #4: *Hot Texas Tail*, #7: *Abilene Tight Spot*, and #18: *Hot Pursuit* can be categorized on the theme of sexploitation.

anything but pleasing. The image of Red Star eating butter removes pleasure and replaces it with repulsion, therefore disrupting the original text through a new image.

The fabricated expectation of Indigenous female sexuality in the sexualized “squaw” images contributes to violence and justification of that violence, against Indigenous women, as I have discussed. The language of *Hot Handed Heathen* and *Red Top Tramp* portrays Becky as an object for male pleasure, erasing Becky’s autonomy as a woman and her own sexual desire. *Hot Handed Heathen* and *Red Top Tramp* not only sexualize Becky, but deny any possibility of her intelligence. Instead of logic and reasoning, Becky’s only option to escape and outsmart her foes is to perform sexually, therefore portraying all Indigenous women as sexually willing. With these two cover pages, Indigenous women are characterized as devoid of personality, out-of-control in their desire for sexual attention, and only possessing the option of selling their bodies to get what they want or need.

### *Masculine/colonial conquest*

In *White Squaw* #2: *Boomtown Bust*, #13: *Track Tramp*, and #15: *Here Comes the Bride*, Hunter’s cover illustrations and text privilege sexuality in men, but shame female sexuality, while reinforcing themes of conquest over Indigenous peoples.<sup>123</sup> In *Boomtown Bust*, the cover page reads, “In a man’s world, she’s a *wanted* woman,” suggesting that the patriarchy is not only rightfully and solely constructing society’s infrastructure, but that a man’s wants take priority over a woman’s (Fig. 25). Because Becky is portrayed as an Indigenous woman, the text encourages the challenge and triumph of conquering an unruly ‘savage.’ The image however, shows Red Star disguising herself as a man. The ends of her braided wig are upturned on her

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<sup>123</sup> *White Squaw* #3: *Virgin Territory* portrays themes of masculine/colonial conquest.



upper lip to mimic a mustache. This image parodies the text by mocking sexual privilege in men, making them look like a caricature. *Track Tramp* privileges male sexuality through metaphor (Fig. 26). The phrase, “she’s got her hand on a hot rail,” is a double entendre for the power and speed of a train, but also the sexual ability of a man. A man is compared to an efficient technology, a locomotive responsible in part for the world’s modernization, whereas the female character is reduced to a pleasure-fulfilling tool. The rhetoric of *Track Tramp* blatantly privileges masculinity over femininity, refers to the sexual ability of men and the ineptitude of women. Red Star’s cover image parodies feminine hands as an allusion to sexual desire, as reinforced by the text. Red Star’s hands are gestured in a profanity, instead of being sexually posed. Red Star’s rendition of this cover is similar yet different to the original cover, which results in a repellent, parodic portrayal of sexual pleasure.

Lastly, *Here Comes the Bride* portrays masculinity as an overpowering, indisputable force, yet the image shows Red Star weeping (Fig. 27). Becky is characterized as on the verge of “[getting] hitched,” that is “if trouble doesn’t get to her first.” Trouble is used as a symbol for an attractive young man with the intentions of breaking Becky away from her groom, suggesting that men have the power to claim what they believe to be rightfully theirs, a direct parallel to the myths of colonization. The *Here Comes the Bride* text implies joy, because matrimony is often referred to as an important and longed-for occasion for young women, but Red Star’s portrait is wrought with grief and sadness. The original background image retained in Red Star’s version shows Becky being romantically swept away by a male suitor, yet Red Star alters the meaning behind the text and image, showing that forced marriage due to masculine power or disruption of marriage by way of “trouble finding her first,” is disempowering for women. Red Star is also critiquing Becky’s experience being sold to men as a bride without consent. *Boomtown Bust*,

*Track Tramp*, and *Here Comes the Bride* allude to the power of a strong male role whose power lies in his sexuality, a belief that subsequently disenfranchises and subordinates Indigenous women.

### *Christian purity*

*White Squaw #9: Twin Peaks – OR Bust*, and *#12: Ball and Chain*, similarly devalue Indigenous femininity and sexuality, but through a Christian lens.<sup>124</sup> In these cases, the squaw stereotype is portrayed as sexually depraved in comparison to its pure Christian counterpart, people with a mission encompassing manifest destiny and civilization of “savage” cultures. In *Twin Peaks – OR Bust*, Becky is described as intending to sexually pollute men in the name of revenge (Fig. 28). In her version of *Twin Peaks – OR Bust*, Red Star uses parody to link sexual pleasure with violence and pain. The title alludes to Becky ruining a man’s potential through sexual performance, and Red Star’s version of the cover reinforces the sexual nature of the text with an image referring to oral sex once again. Instead of disrupting the image of oral sex with repulsion, however, Red Star links it to violence against Indigenous women. If Red Star engages in the fellatio that the image suggests, then she risks cutting her tongue, therefore harming herself. Sexism and colonialism are therefore through parody shown as concepts and characters resulting in abuse toward Indigenous women and girls. Yet, Indigenous women are expecting to engage with them despite certainty of their own suffering as a result. *Ball and Chain* also alludes to Becky being attracted to taboo forms of sexuality, as she is characterized with a fondness for chains and restraints (Fig. 29). The text reads, “It would take more than just chains to keep the White Squaw down!” which insinuates that Becky is more sexually taboo than the European

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<sup>124</sup> *White Squaw #8: Horn of Plenty* and *#10: Solid as a Rock* also use text and imagery indicative of Christian purity.

women associated with the other European male characters in the series, due to her sexual desires and fondness of chains being perverse and degenerate. Through text, chains are connotative of prisoners and punishment of criminals, yet in the image, Red Star stands tall and proud, without constraints. The image parodies the expected subordination of Indigenous women.

*Sexually available as a connection to outsiders*

*White Squaw* #20: *Bareback Beauty*, and #24: *Rough and Ready*, are most relevant to my discussion of Red Star's Indigenous feminist ideology, as they present the woman in the squaw stereotype as a connection between a tribal nation and the inevitably more powerful outside, EuroAmerican world.<sup>125</sup> *Bareback Beauty* and *Rough and Ready* also further emphasize that sexuality and performing sex acts on men is the only way for Indigenous women to escape from a difficult position. Becky is used to alleviate sexual tension and subsequently prevent battles from arising between her unidentified, vague tribal nation and outside bandits or European colonizers. In *Bareback Beauty*, the title alludes to an inherent affinity to nature as a stereotype for Indigenous peoples, but also describes Becky as "going down hard to stop an Indian uprising" (Fig. 30). The text refers to Becky engaging in sexual activity to please a colonial, patriarchal system, but Red Star's image portrays the opposite. The "Indian uprising" described through the text refers to sexual excitement, but Red Star is physically cringing in the image, subverting the outsider obsession with Cowboy and Indian folklore and battles. In *Rough and Ready*, Hunter's twenty-fourth and final installment of *White Squaw*, he sends Becky on a fast-paced adventure with "her twin guns cocked," where she "comes down hard on a gang of

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<sup>125</sup> *White Squaw* #21: *Arizona Laydown*, #22: *Desert Climax*, and #23: *Comanche Come Down* fall into this category.

outlaws fixin' to excite an uprising" (Fig. 31). The text of the original cover suggests sexual activity between Becky and a "gang" of men. In her image however, Red Star takes over the cover, depicting herself sticking a feather up her nose, an act of mockery and pain. This refers to a systemic patriarchy that forces women into certain activities, which can be painful or abusive. *Bareback Beauty* and *Rough and Ready* portray Indigenous women as easily discarded tools.

Red Star's purpose when creating her *White Squaw* series was to spread awareness of stereotypes and prejudices against Indigenous women, and to challenge the implied violence of the word "squaw," and by extension the systemic violence against Indigenous women, through parody. Red Star wanted to create a platform to discuss the nature of gendered stereotypes with parody "as a tool to get to bigger underlying issues."<sup>126</sup> Through parody Red Star makes her audience physically uncomfortable by linking sexual pleasure with pain, repulsion, and disgust. Red Star makes her audience physically uncomfortable with the subordination, sexualization, and disempowerment of Indigenous women, which has traditionally been accepted and normalized through sexism and colonialism in society. The *White Squaw* Series also allowed Red Star to share something more personal with her audience, and to explain what her life is like with the dual perspective that Becky portrays. She states, "I'm half Crow and half Irish... most of my art explores this experience of being from two worlds along with some of the issues that occur within that territory."<sup>127</sup> Hunter's representation of Becky serves as a misrepresentation of all Indigenous women and girls, because outsiders assume Becky's behavior and experience to be true, and that Indigenous women are immoral and unruly sexual creatures. Red Star shows that

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<sup>126</sup> SOFIA, "Wendy Red Star," Contemporary Arts America Tbc... (blog), December 2, 2014, accessed August 17, 2018. <https://mmaracuja.wordpress.com/2014/12/02/wendy-red-star/>

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

Indigenous women do not owe anything to society, due to colonial and patriarchal pressures, by parodying Becky's sexualization.

## Conclusion

Wendy Red Star is a powerful, influential voice in Indigenous arts and issues. Red Star seeks to dismantle misrepresentations of Indigenous femininity, sexuality, and livelihood through her use of parody and irony to critique stereotypes. She spreads awareness of derogatory slurs, stereotypes, and outsider opinions to create a platform of conversation to get to the underlying issues behind misinformed assumptions and misrepresentation: colonialism, racism, and sexism. Red Star engages outsiders' fascination with Indigenous arts while politically engaging with her audience.

Red Star uses her personal identity and experience as an Apsáalooke woman to challenge stereotypes and outsider notions of what it means to be an Indigenous person living in a colonized world wrought with outsiders' assumptions about Indigenous culture. My research and discussion into gendered stereotypes of Indigenous women, cultural appropriation of Indigenous cultural material, commodification of Indigenous culture, and the ethnographic photography of Edward Curtis help to contextualize Red Star's artwork and ideology. These four issues helped forge a collective origin myth of North American land that many people still believe in today, and fosters attitudes of superiority versus inferiority of cultures.

In the *Four Seasons*, Red Star shows the importance of including Native Arts in contemporary museum settings, and challenges misrepresentations of Indigenous authenticity. Red Star re-populates a landscape that ethnographers and settlers alike assumed to be an empty, God-given right of conquest. Encompassing a trickster identity, Red Star utilizes personal themes, experiences, and generational traditions to reflect racial histories. Irony allows Red Star

to re-evaluate the political systems in society, while humor allows her to engage in conversation with her audience.<sup>128</sup>

In *White Squaw*, Red Star shows the negative impact of sexploitation and a perpetuation of colonial practices on Indigenous women. Red Star's employment of parody and erasure in her *White Squaw* series, and applies Indigenous feminist theory to prejudices and instances of violence against Indigenous women and girls. Red Star uses parody to reimagine the text and image of the cover pages of Hunter's *White Squaw* novels while maintaining original components for satirical effect. Erasure of the cover model in Hunter's novels places Red Star in the foreground of the work, and revises history from an Indigenous perspective, and allows Red Star to portray her personal perspective being of mixed heritage. Parody and erasure help Red Star create a humorous effect, but her employment of Indigenous feminism dismantles oppression of patriarchy and colonization, and spread awareness of violence towards Indigenous women and girls.<sup>129</sup>

Building from this study, a future research project would be the genre of pulp fiction, in particular Westerns, and how it portrays Indigenous lives. It would also offer new insights to analyze the supporting cast and characters of Hunter's *White Squaw* novels, to understand the multilayered stereotypes produced. Ultimately, Red Star expands the slowly growing discourse of Indigenous art history, and foregrounds Indigenous voice in the conversation.

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<sup>128</sup> Allan J. Ryan, *The Trickster Shift: Humor and Irony in Contemporary Native Art*, (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1999): xiii-8.

<sup>129</sup> Joyce Green, "Taking Account of Aboriginal Feminism," in *Making a Space for Indigenous Feminism*, edited Joyce Green, (Black Point: Fernwood Publishing 2007): 23.

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## Appendix A: Figures

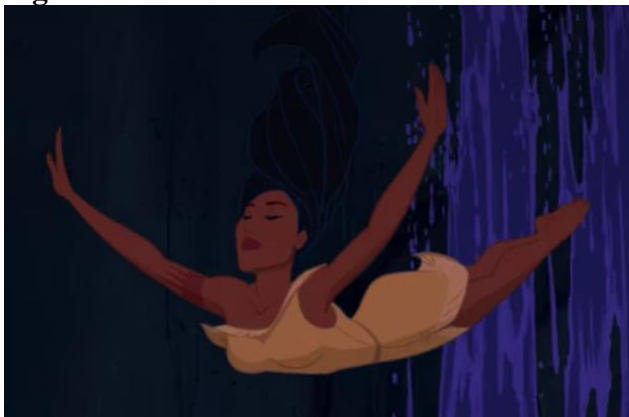
Figure 1:



Joseph Mozier. *Pocahontas*. Marble. 1868. 48 inches. Art Institute Chicago.  
<http://www.artic.edu/aic/collections/artwork/146929>.

**Figure 2:****Figure 3:**

Eric Goldberg and Mike Gabriel. *Pocahontas*. 1995. Stills from Netflix.  
<https://www.netflix.com/search?q=pocahontas>

**Figure 4:**

Eric Goldberg and Mike Gabriel. *Pocahontas*. 1995. Stills from Netflix.  
<https://www.netflix.com/search?q=pocahontas>

**Figure 5:**



Zack Rota. *Untitled*. July 29, 2014. Available from: "Why Native Headdresses No Longer Belong at Music Festivals," *Thump Vice*. [https://thump.vice.com/en\\_us/article/jpnzz7/why-native-headdresses-no-longer-belong-at-music-festivals](https://thump.vice.com/en_us/article/jpnzz7/why-native-headdresses-no-longer-belong-at-music-festivals)

**Figure 6:**



*Tribal Princess Sexy Costume*. Available From: For Play. <https://www.forplaycatalog.com/p/Cowgirls--Indians/2Pc.-Tribal-Princess-Sexy-Costume/157138.html>

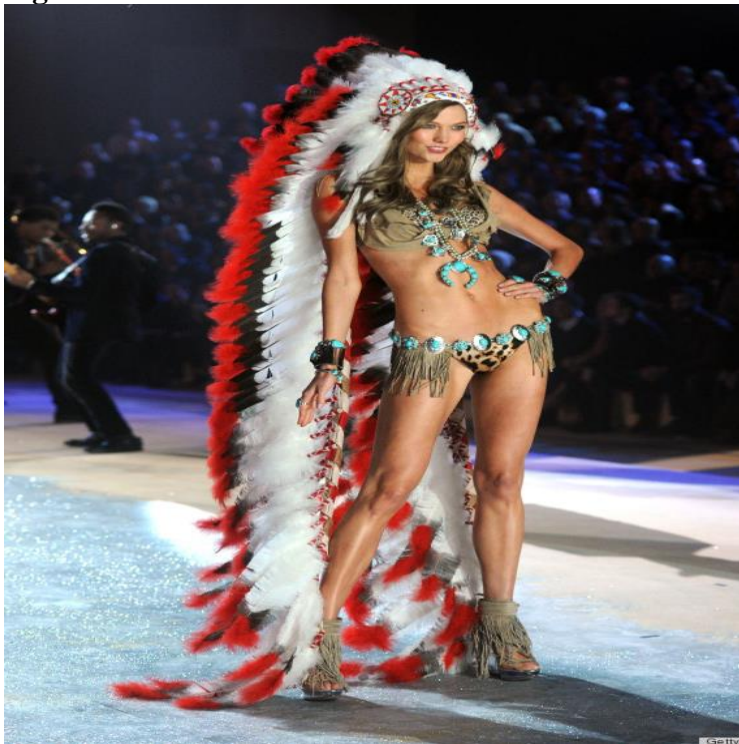
**Figure 7:**



*Minnetonka Women's Kilty Suede Moccasin.* Available from: Amazon.

<https://www.amazon.com/Minnetonka-Womens-Kilty-Suede-Moccasin/dp/B0026MRNGO>

**Figure 8:**



Jessica Misener. *Untitled*. Photograph. November 8, 2012. Available from: "Karlie Kloss Wears Native American Headdress at Victoria's Secret Fashion Show," *Huffington Post*.

[https://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/11/08/karlie-kloss-victorias-secret-headdress-fashion-show\\_n\\_2091958.html](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/11/08/karlie-kloss-victorias-secret-headdress-fashion-show_n_2091958.html)

**Figure 9:**



*Chief Wahoo*. Last modified June 21, 2018. Available from: Wikipedia.  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chief\\_Wahoo](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chief_Wahoo)

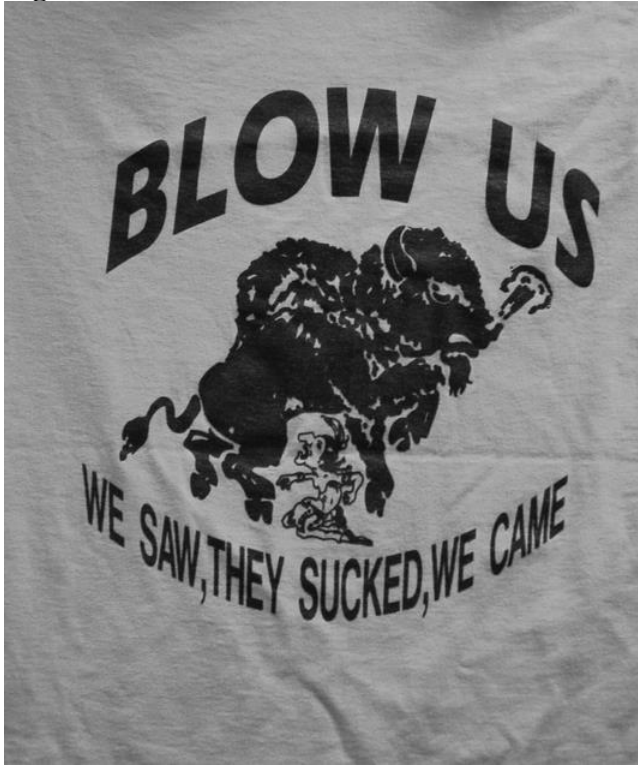
**Figure 10:**



*Washington Redskins*. February 13, 2018. Available from: Washington Redskins Facebook Page.  
<https://www.facebook.com/redskins/>



**Figure 11:**



Lucy Ganje. *Blow Us*. T-shirt. Available From: "The Elimination of Indigenous Mascots, Logos, and Nicknames: Organizing on College Campuses."

Figure 12:



Joseph "Udo" Keppler. *Untitled*. Photograph. 1903. Available from *The Indian Craze: Primitivism, Modernism, and Transculturation in American Art*

**Figure 13:**



Albert Bierstadt. *Among the Sierra Nevada Mountains, California*. Oil on Canvas. 1868. Available from: Smithsonian American Art Museum. <https://americanart.si.edu/artwork/among-sierra-nevada-california-2059>

**Figure 14:**



Albert Bierstadt. *The Rocky Mountains, Lander's Peak*. Oil on Canvas. 1863. Available from: The Metropolitan Museum of Art. <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/10154>

**Figure 15:**



Edward Curtis. *An Oasis in the Badlands*. Photograph. 1905. Available from:  
<http://curtis.library.northwestern.edu/curtis/toc.cgi>

Figure 16:



Wendy Red Star. *Fall*. Archival Pigment Print on Sunset Fiber Rag. 2006. Available from: Portland Art Museum Online Collections.

<http://portlandartmuseum.us/mwebcgi/mweb.exe?request=record;id=77991;type=101>

Figure 17:



Wendy Red Star. *Winter*. Archival Pigment Print on Sunset Fiber Rag. 2006. Available from: Portland Art Museum Online Collections.

<http://portlandartmuseum.us/mwebcgi/mweb.exe?request=record;id=77992;type=101>

Figure 18:



Wendy Red Star. *Spring*. Archival Pigment Print on Sunset Fiber Rag. 2006. Available from: Portland Art Museum Online Collections.

<http://portlandartmuseum.us/mwebcgi/mweb.exe?request=record;id=77954;type=101>

Figure 19:



Wendy Red Star. *Indian Summer*. Archival Pigment Print on Sunset Fiber Rag. 2006. Available from: Portland Art Museum Online Collections.

<http://portlandartmuseum.us/mwebcgi/mweb.exe?request=record;id=77990;type=101>



**Figure 20:**



*Amy Bright Wings Red Star*, date unknown; Image courtesy of Wendy Red Star

Wendy Red Star. *Amy Bright Wings Red Star*. Available from: "Wendy Red Star: Owning Your Power," *NEA Magazine*. <https://www.arts.gov/NEARTS/2018v1-women-arts-galvanizing-encouraging-inspiring/wendy-red-star>

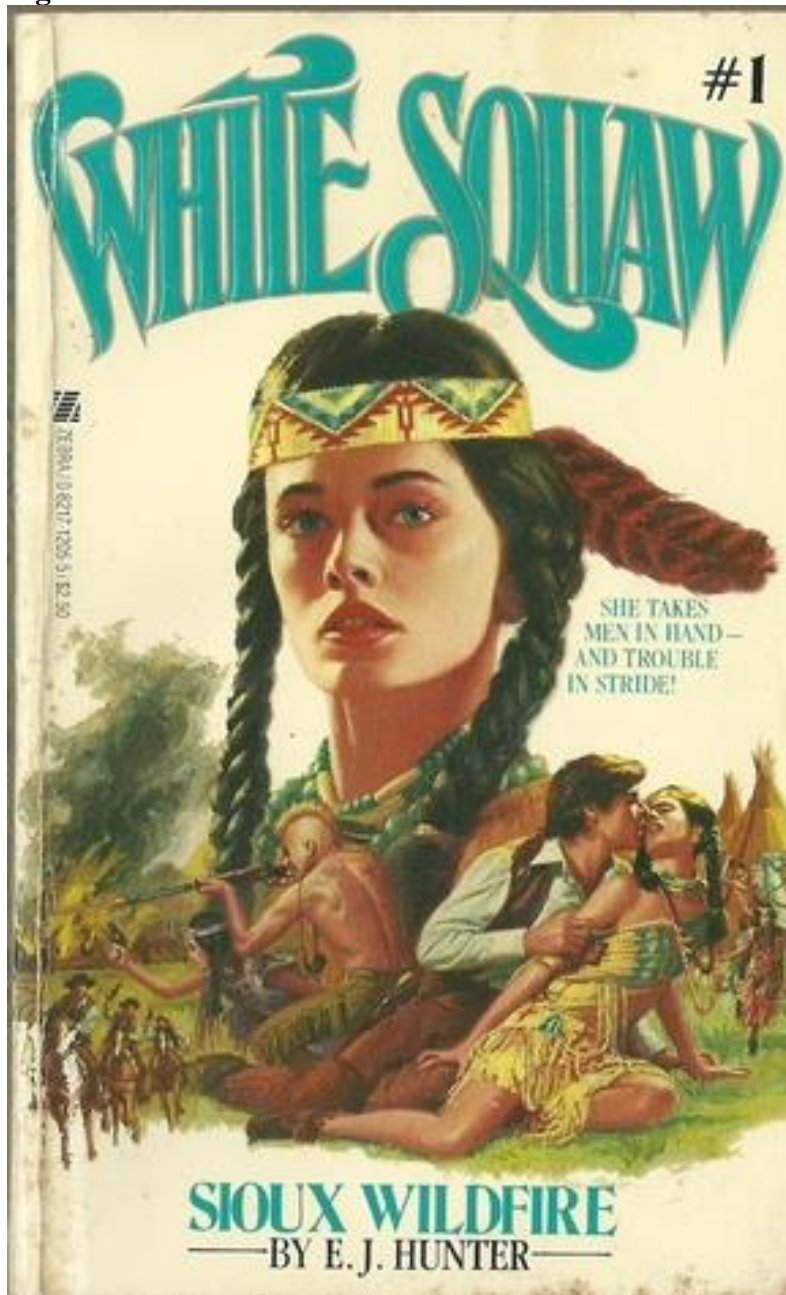
**Figure 21:**



Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History. *Chumash Diorama*. January 19, 2013. Available from: Wikipedia.

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Santa\\_Barbara\\_Museum\\_of\\_Natural\\_History\\_-\\_Chumash\\_diorama.JPG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Santa_Barbara_Museum_of_Natural_History_-_Chumash_diorama.JPG)

Figure 22:



E.J. Hunter. *White Squaw #1: Sioux Wildfire*. Book Cover. 1983. Available from: <https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/9524520-sioux-wildfire>

Figure 23:

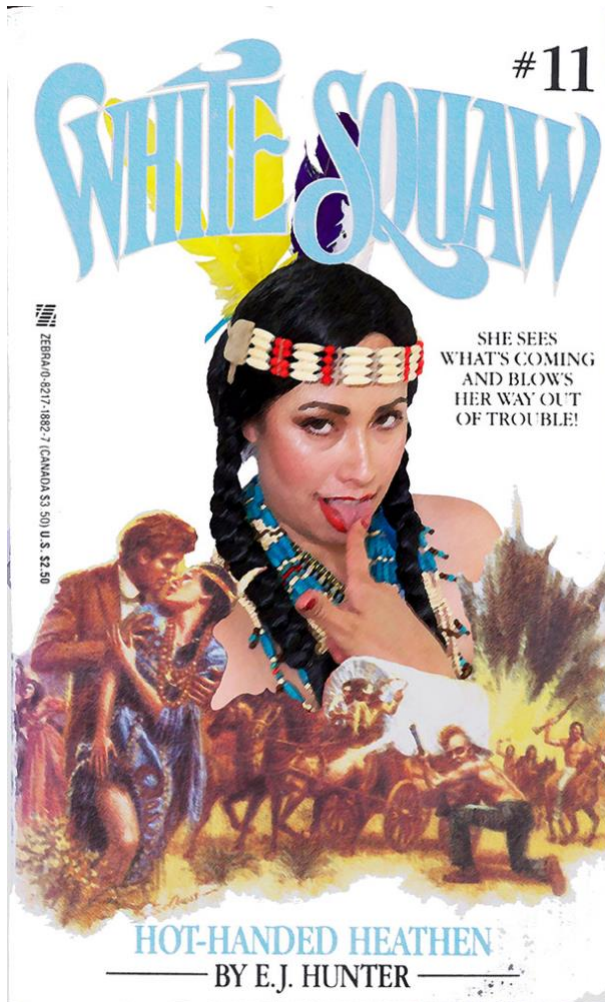
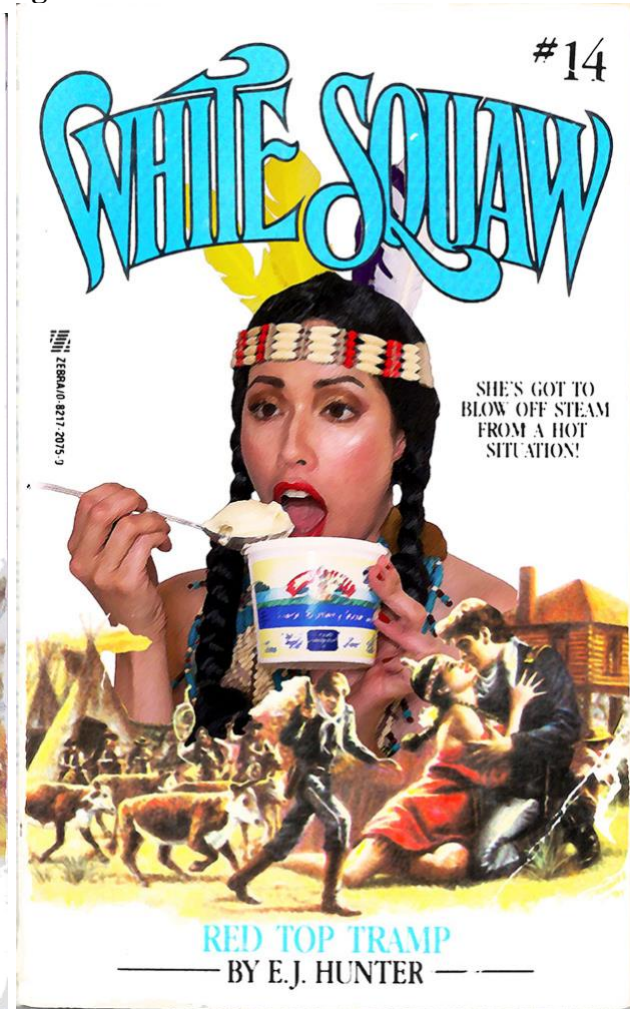


Figure 24:



Wendy Red Star. *White Squaw*. Archival pigment print. 2014.  
 Available from : <http://www.wendyredstar.com/white-squaw>

Figure 25:

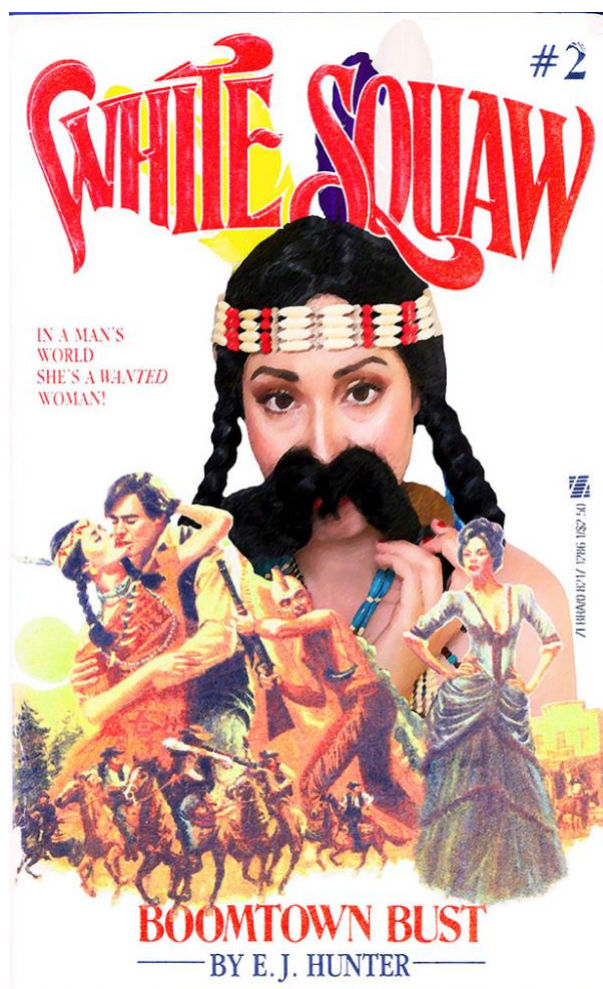
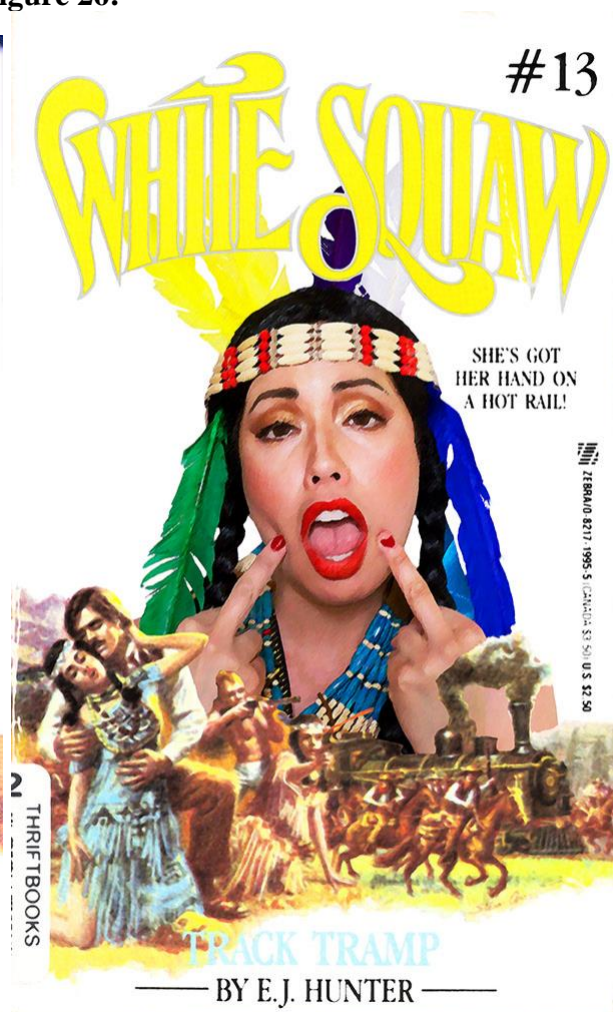


Figure 26:



Wendy Red Star. *White Squaw*. Archival pigment print. 2014.  
 Available from : <http://www.wendyredstar.com/white-squaw>

Figure 27:

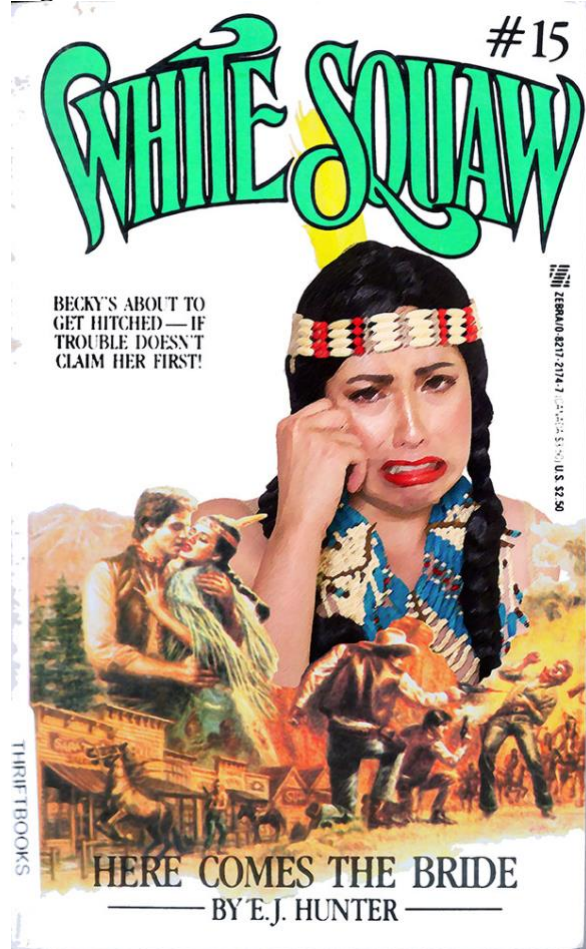
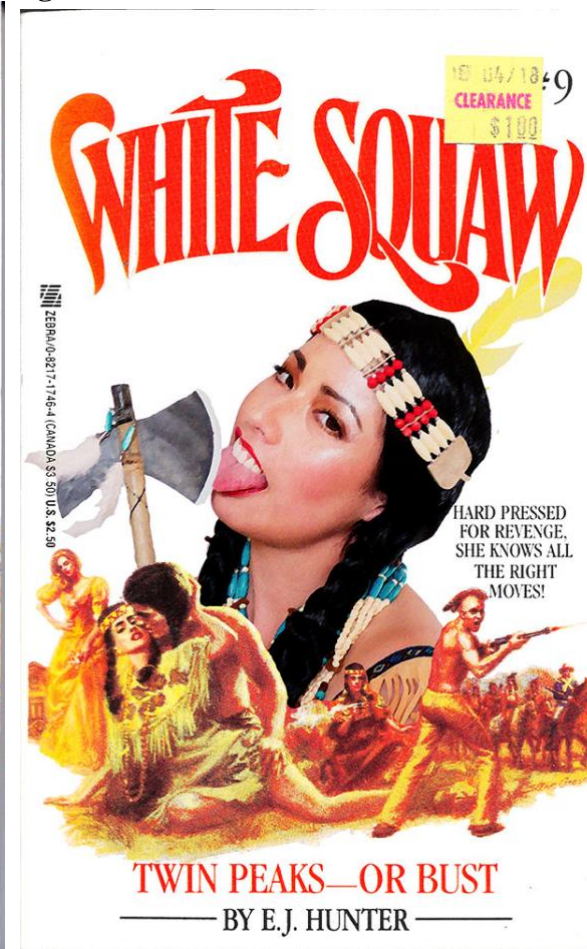


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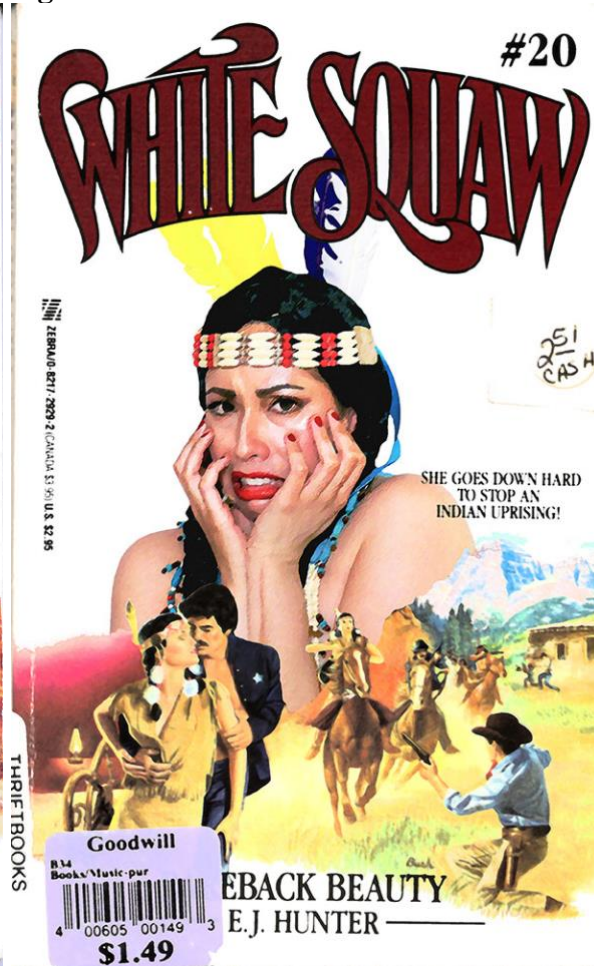


Wendy Red Star. *White Squaw*. Archival pigment print. 2014.  
Available from : <http://www.wendyredstar.com/white-squaw>

Figure 29:



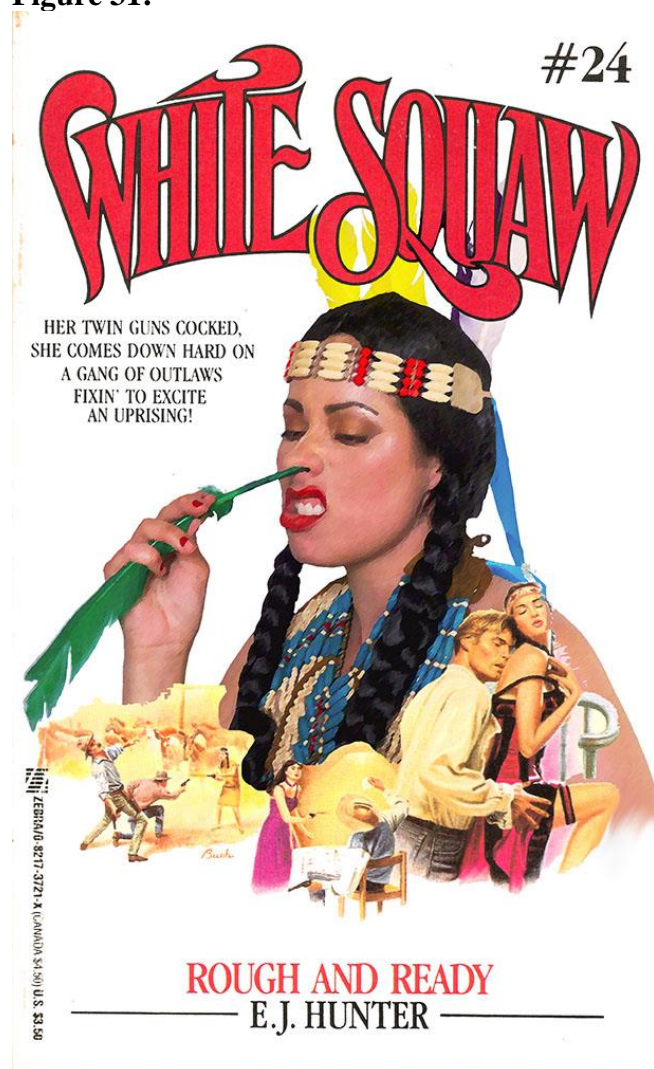
Figure 30:



Wendy Red Star. *White Squaw*. Archival pigment print. 2014.

Available from : <http://www.wendyredstar.com/white-squaw>

Figure 31:



Wendy Red Star. *White Squaw*. Archival pigment print. 2014.  
Available from : <http://www.wendyredstar.com/white-squaw>