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AN APPROACH TO SELECTED NATIVE
AMERICAN WOMEN WRITERS THROUGH THEIR
POEMS

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Abstract

The subject of the native American people during colonisation has always been a frequent feature in films and books. However, there are several elements of the Indian culture which are not really known by most of us. Although the first Indian writers did not emerge until the colonisation, the cultural issue is reflected in their literature. The Native American women writers of the 19th C. had a significant role among the people of that period. Therefore, this essay will provide a summary about the circumstances surrounding the colonisation of North America, the forced displacement of the Indians to the reservations and their obligatory integration in the American society. In addition, this composition will present the life of four Native American women writers and will analyse some of their most remarkable poems focusing on the cultural aspects. Finally, the project will conclude with a final conclusion obtained from the analyses.

Keywords: Native Americans, women, writers, colonisation, North America, culture

El tema de los indios nativos americanos durante la colonización siempre ha sido muy frecuente tanto en el cine como en los libros. Sin embargo, hay varios elementos de la cultura de los nativos americanos que la mayoría de nosotros desconocemos. Pese a que los primeros escritores nativo americanos no surgieron hasta la colonización, su cultura se refleja en su literatura. Las escritoras nativo americanas del siglo XIX tuvieron un papel importante entre la gente de ese periodo. Por eso, este ensayo aportará un resumen de las circunstancias que rodearon la colonización de Norteamérica, el traslado forzoso de los indios a las reservas y su integración obligatoria en la sociedad americana. Además, se expondrá la vida de cuatro escritoras nativo americanas y se analizarán algunas de sus obras más importantes centrandose ese análisis en los aspectos culturales. Por último, este proyecto incluirá la conclusión final que se obtenga de los análisis.

Palabras clave: nativos americanos, mujeres, escritoras, colonización, Norteamérica, cultura

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1. Introduction

The study of literature enables us to understand and acquire knowledge about the diverse facts or cultural issues which occurred in the past. In the case of the Native American history, the study of literature is limited as they used to spread their knowledge orally before the colonisation. After the appearance of the white men in North America, the status and the interests of the Indians changed so much that their lives were totally modified. The European colonisers attempted to amend the traditions and revoke the culture of the indigenous population. As a consequence, it provoked different conflicts between both ethnic groups. Added to those conflicts, the marginalisation was affecting the Indian population who felt the alienation in their own land while they suffered an acculturation process. Apart from that, women were sometimes forced to get married to white men, resulting in the miscegenation.

Considering all those issues, this essay will provide a summary about the main events, and conflicts occurred during the colonisation in order to contextualize the study. After that, the second section will deal with the analysis of the distinct lives of four Native American women writers who were born in a fragmented Indian society during the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century. This study will be interesting since those women lived an acculturation process in first person and they wrote about different issues. Hence, the selected women writers are Jane Johnston Schoolcraft, Annette Leevier, Mabel Washbourne Anderson, and Gertrude Simmons Bonnin. The review of each author's life and their works will involve historical and cultural references which will be supported by secondary works. In addition, those analyses will include the objective that the authors had when they wrote their works.

The decision of researching the life and some poems of four women writers has not been arbitrary. Instead of analysing in depth the life and works of an author, this study will provide a broader perspective of the Native American women's works by a diachronic analysis of their lives and their diverse origins. For that reason, there are several cultural aspects which will be discussed during the analyses of the works. To conclude this essay, all those aspects will be considered for the purpose of achieving a conclusion about the elements studied.

2. State of the Issue

Diverse authors have researched the role of Native American women as well as the Indian history from the pre-colonial era to the present. However, the majority of the reliable sources are written in English since that issue of research is not studied widely in countries like Spain. Apart from the cited works in this essay like books and encyclopaedias which deal with Indian culture and history, the search of academic articles may be significant. In order to identify reliable articles, the databases consulted like EBSCOhost, ProQuest, JSTOR and TESEO provide documents for this purpose. In the article “Commonalty of Difference: American Indian Women and History” written by Devon A. Mihesuah, the author discusses the Indian women’s role and the elements which affected their lives and environment. As she declares, “If writers want to find out what Indian women think, they should ask Indian women” (22). It is interesting to realize the relevance that the works written by Native American women had during the 19th century. Due to their importance, this search will be focused on Native American women and their literature.

The results reveal some articles like “Spider Woman's Granddaughter: Autobiographical Writings by Native American Women.” written by Sarah E. Turner. Turner examines distinct Native American women’s works focusing in the cultural context. This purpose can be compared with the objective of this essay. Nevertheless, the writers analysed by Turner were born in the second half of the 20th century whereas the writers studied in this essay were born in the 19th and beginning of the 20th century.

Regarding those authors analysed in this essay, a more precise search has been required to find more specific information about their lives and works. In the case of Jane Johnston Schoolcraft, there is an article entitled "The Complex World of Jane Johnston Schoolcraft" written by Margaret Noori which discusses the involvement of the Indian writer in her husband’s works, but it does not include an analysis of any of her works.

When it comes to Annette Leevier, there are no articles which study her life or works. On the contrary, the studies of Gertrude Simmons Bonnin are more extensive. For example, Hafen, P. Jane analyses in "Help Indians Help Themselves: Gertrude Bonnin, the SAI, and the NCAI" the resistance showed by Bonnin in some of her works.

In addition, Tiffany A. MacBain conducts a review of the autobiographical works of Bonnin in “Cont(r)acting Whiteness: The Language of Contagion in the Autobiographical Essays of Zitkala-Ša.” Finally, the article “Lest We Remember: Civil War Memory and Commemoration among the Five Tribes” written by Jeff Fortney mentions one of the Mabel Washbourne Anderson’s works from a cultural perspective because she demonstrates the Indian position during the Civil War.

All the mentioned works study the role of Indian women, history, and the authors’ lives individually. Moreover, those articles which analyse different Native American women writers’ works written by the authors studied in this essay, do not deal with any of their poems. Therefore, the contribution of this essay will be relevant since the selected authors’ poems do not have a detailed study when it comes to the historical and cultural references. Besides that, this project will include a conclusion about the role and the objective of these authors when writing their works.

3. Native American History and Culture

The Native American people located in North America, also called Indians, migrated from Asia thousands of years ago, and they established their villages the American continent. Over the years, those people evolved until they lived in tribes and societies. In addition, they developed special techniques and abilities to survive in the land which they inhabited. In order to feed themselves, they hunted and gathered local food in a balanced way. As many other ancient cultures, the Indians only hunted those animals which were necessary to survive and they utilised each part of the animals for their benefit. Therefore, they lived in direct contact with nature which was the source of their food because of that, they respected nature and all its elements. They worshipped nature so much that some animals were sacred for them and they represented different aspects or qualities. In general, these spiritual people mainly believed in the Great Spirit, but they also worshipped other deities resulting from their legends and myths. Regarding the relationships, Indians were people with a conception of family which motivated their deep connections and the support and protection of their families. Most likely, it was that protection which provoked the frequent battles among the tribes in an attempt to preserve their heritage.

Besides those common characteristics, each tribe developed its own rituals, and language. Depending on the tribe, it was possible to observe different religious ceremonies such as the “Sun Dance”. Moreover, the construction of the villages varied relying on the resources of the location they were settled. For example, the Indians who inhabited the Great Plains used to build a type of tent denominated tepee, whereas the constructions of those who live in the woodlands like the Ojibwe were distinct because of the environment. As they had to adapt themselves to those environs, “their shelters were of birchbark, known as waginogans or wigwams” (Tucker 12).

Until that period, the only wars the Indians knew were among their tribes, but everything changed after the arrival of the paleface to their lands. The first encounters among Indians and the white men were not conflictive but the relationship diminished gradually due to the colonisation. From the very beginning, the white men transmitted new diseases to the Indians who had not developed immunity yet, and as a result, the Native American population deceased drastically. Apart from that, the Indians felt

threatened by the invasion of the white men who traversed the Indians' lands and did not respect anything of theirs.

While the conflicts between both ethnicities were occurring, the American War of Independence began in 1775 which involved the participation of the Native American tribes. Those Indian people had to decide if they would join the British or the American cause. The Indian tribes had distinct perspectives which resulted in another conflict among the Indian tribes. When that war terminated with the Treaty of Paris (1783), the British Government presumed the transfer of their allied Indians' lands to the Americans without the Native Americans authorization. As the Americans considered those lands as a conquest of the enemy, they accepted those territories (Tucker 342).

The Native American people fought against the United States Army for years, and the outcome of these conflicts were the numerous wars and battles between them. In 1812, there was a new war in which the British and American were confronted. After having confronted the British abandonment again, the Indians would not ally with an European country to beat the United States.

On the part of the U.S. government, it created the Bureau of Indian Affairs in 1824 which sought to avoid the disappearance of the Native American tribes. However, the Indian Removal Act was accepted in 1830 and consequently, the Indians who lived in the eastern part of the Mississippi were forced to relocate their villages in the western part. While many of the Indians resigned themselves to the loss of their lands, some others resisted and fought battles like Black Hawk War in 1832 (Johansen and Pritzker 251). In order to convince the chieftains to relocate to the reservations, most of the times they were offered money, food or work utensils. In the case of the Treaty Party (1835), a minority group of Cherokees accepted to leave their lands and travel to the Indian territory.

As a consequence of those traumatic years, the Native American population was forced to refuse their customs, language, lands and beliefs. Their children were sent to schools because they need to be educated according to the ideals of the U.S Government. Obviously, the Indian society population decreased drastically after they were killed in battles, infected with different diseases or dead from starvation. In 1851, an Act was approved and the Government of the U.S. committed to bring food to the

reservations. Nevertheless, it was quite habitual that the amount of food sent was insufficient. Furthermore, the quality of the food was not appropriate and the components of the diet were very different from what they were used to. In fact, over time, Indians began to suffer diseases like diabetes, obesity, and hypertension which are studied issues by diverse researchers like that of Story et al. As regards to the crimes, the alcoholism and delinquency increased their rates due to the insecurity in the reservations.

After that dark period, the Dawes Act approved in 1887 was an attempt to stimulate the Indians' economy and integrate them into the American society. On the one hand, the first national organization headed by Indians and addressed to protect the Indian rights, called the Society of American Indians (SAI), was created in 1911. On the other hand, the creation of the Indian Citizenship Act of 1924 symbolises one of the latest and most positive changes for the Indian society (Tucker 1226). With its approval, the U.S. Government recognised the rights of the Indians as citizens of the United States of America.

As a result of all those events, the position taken by the Native American people depended on their personal experiences. The written works of the Indians were really beneficial to make people aware about the situation they were in. As well as the requirement for an amendment of their beliefs and betray their values and culture. Therefore, the writers had a different influence which was reflected in their works. Due to the purpose mentioned above, the focus of this study will be the life of four women and some of their works.

4. Native American Women Writers

Originally, Indian people did not write their stories but they transmitted them orally so their oral tradition was extensive. According to McClinton-Temple and Velie, those words communicated the following aspects:

“[...] the belief in the power of language to organize experience, to effect change, and to heal, greatly influence the ways in which Indian writers conceptualize language and craft poetry.” (30)

Those stories, songs, and speeches were characterised by a distinctive and recognisable rhythm. As literature, they were a tool to spread the knowledge among the members of the tribes while they listened to the lyrics which bounded man and nature. The author Samson Occom was the first Native American writer who published in English (MacKay par. 4), but the subsequent development of Indian literature was more remarkable when it came to the number of writers. Regarding the topics, whereas the Indian oral traditional stories dealt with the human and nature bond, their most frequent writing genre was the autobiographical one. Indians did not only write prose but poetry too. In fact, the authors McClinton-Temple and Velie state that “the beginning of written American Indian poetic tradition can be traced to the 1800s” (30). In that period, the Indians began to write their works as they served them to express their feelings and deal with different issues. Some of those works involve cultural and historical references to reclaim the rights of their ethnicity or just to spread their traditions.

As the gender roles were considered equally in most of the Native American tribes, both men and women were the authors of those works written when their society was being forced to modify their lifestyle. For example, the first noticeable feature of their works concerns the language since they are all written in English. The following sections of the project will deal with four women who belonged to different tribes although not all of them were full blood Indians. In addition, the environment of their childhood affected them, and as other authors, that change is reflected in their works.

4.1. Jane Johnston Schoolcraft

Jane Johnston Schoolcraft (1800-1841) was born in Sault Sainte Marie, Michigan. Her father's name was John Johnston, a Scotch-Irish fur trader who was related to the Indians due to his activity. Jane's mother was Susan Johnston (Ozhaguscodaywayquay), she was the daughter of the famous Ojibwe war chief Waub Ojeeg (White Fisher). Thus, Jane Johnston belonged to the Ojibwe tribe and she was the granddaughter of Waub Ojeeg. She lived in Michigan, but as her father was a trader, she travelled with him to different places and cities of Canada, U.S, and Ireland (Schoolcraft and Parker 28).

Traditionally, Ojibwe women were taught to prepare food, heal the members of the tribe and the raising of children. Though it could seem the traditional women's role, their occupations were as valued as men's works so women were not devalued. As Walter wrote in her work, the relevance of women's role was reflected in the everyday life of the tribe (171).

The case of J.J. Schoolcraft was different because during her childhood her education differed from what was usual among Ojibwe population due to her parents' origin. While her father taught her the English language, culture, and literary classics, her mother taught her the Ojibwe traditions and language. Due to her miscegenation, she could acquire knowledge of both white and Ojibwe societies, and obviously, that education was a fundamental element throughout her life. In her case, the miscegenation did not result in the scarcity of the Indian knowledge and heritage.

In 1823, she got married with the acclaimed writer, ethnographer, and explorer Henry Rowe Schoolcraft. Henry published traditional Indian tales, myths, poetry, essays, and biographies in the magazine *The Literary Voyager*. As a result of his relations with the Ojibwe tribe, most of his works were based on Ojibwe culture. It is interesting to emphasise the significant reliability of his publications since he wrote more realistic works than other authors such as Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. That credibility was motivated by his main source of accurate information that was Jane. She told him the stories that she had heard during her childhood but also, she interpreted and translated her husband's works. In fact, some authors such as Branch assert that:

[...] it is fair to say that the cultural and linguistic access and acumen necessary to render these tales are more her skills than his own. (303)

Thus, she worked with her husband to produce some of his works although it was his name which was more recognised. In a sense, she lived in the shadow of his husband and she did not enjoy as much fame as him. However, on some occasions, Jane's works were published in the journal though she did not write her real name. She used to sign with different pseudonyms like "Bame-wa-wa-ge-zhik-aquay" (the Sound the Stars Make Rushing Through the Sky) which was her Ojibwe name (Schoolcraft and Parker 62). This way, she became in one of the first Indian poets who was able to print her works. Furthermore, although the journal was mainly targeted at the local residents, it was distributed in Detroit and New York city.

With her writings, Jane's purpose was to contribute to maintain the traditional stories for the subsequent generations. In this project, the analysis of her works "Otagamiad" (Kilcup 60) and "Invocation to My Maternal Grandfather on Hearing His Descent from Chippewa Ancestors Misrepresented" (Kilcup 63), will be helpful to reflect the style of this author. Both poems, which were written in 1827, deal with the Ojibwe culture and tradition, but moreover, she depicts the chief Waub Ojeeg. The maintenance of these traditions would result in a bridge of comprehension between the Indian and white people.

In the first poem called "Otagamiad" (Kilcup 60), the author may have adapted the title of the Ojibwe word "Odagaamii" or "Outagamie" which means "people of the other shore" (Sturtevant 646). By this word, the Ojibwe tribe named to one of their enemy tribes called the Fox. It was "one of the earliest and most widespread names attached to the Fox" (Sturtevant 646). Nevertheless, this hypothesis should not be assured yet since a profound analysis of the poem is required to comprehend the context.

Regarding the form of the poem, the first stanza consists of fourteen verses. Each of them are composed by seven heroic couplets (aabbccddeeffgg) with decasyllabic iambic pentameters. As regards to the content, Jane describes a "gathering council" (line 10) in which her grandfather Ojeeg meets with four others. In the first stanza, Jane introduces her grandfather and describes the scene:

Now round his tent, the willing chieftains wait,
The gathering council, and the stern debate –
Hunters & warriors circle round the green,
Age sits sedate, & youth fills up the scene,
While careful hands, with flint & steel prepare,
The sacred fire – the type of public care. (Kilcup 60)

This way, the reader can imagine the development and context of the event. While the hunters and warriors wait for the chief, the “careful hands” prepare the “sacred fire”. Fire was one of the most relevant tools in Indians’ life since they utilised it for hunting, tree felling, clearing areas among other uses (Williams 11). Furthermore, the fire was considered a sacred element, it was the used by the Great Spirit to enlighten the Indians. Moreover, they believed that the Sacred Fire provided strength and power to the warriors of the tribes. In the case of Ojibwe, such was their worship of fire that it is the most important guidance they had according to the “Seven Fires Prophecy” (Swan).

The second and third stanzas reproduce the words that Ojeeg said to the rest of chieftains. He encourages them to fight against the enemy “whose public faith, so often pledg’d in vain” (line 19) and “no treaty binds them, & no stream confines” (line 26). In addition, Ojeeg says that their woes “heap on their banks the earth they first despoil’d” (line 30) which may lead the reader to think about the enemy’s identity. After reading those last verses cited, the profile of the enemy could be modified as Ojeeg could be talking about the white men. In fact, the Indians had always accused the white men of occupying their lands and distorting the treaties. However, the reader might not be able to claim it because it could be any other Indian tribe. The wars between distinct tribes like the Ojibwe and the Sioux were very frequent (Tucker 583). In the line 32, Ojeeg states “War – war or slavery is our only choice”, so he affirms that the war against the enemy is the only way to avoid the enslavement. Again, this verse supports the idea that the chief Ojeeg is referring to the white men since their slave trade affected all the tribes they colonised.

After hearing to Ojeeg, it is the warrior Camudwa who disagrees with Ojeeg’s perspective. The analysis of this stanza reveals the ideas of this warrior whose mind does not conform with the Indian stereotypes. Since he is a man of war, the

preconceived idea about his view would be that he is incapable of reasoning. Moreover, white people considered Indians to be savages whose desire for revenge controlled them. Instead of that, Camudwa says:

The foe may yet, be reason'd into right.
And if we fail in speech – we still may fight. (Lines 65-66)

According to him, there could be a possibility to converse with the enemy before commencing a new battle. At the end of this stanza, Camudwa's final sentence is "And all who value peace, repeat my name!" (line 72). Thus, it can be inferred that he prefers to avoid war and he encourages the other members of the council to support his assertion. At this point of the poem, Jane has provided two different perspectives about war, one of them desires to fight whereas the other one prefers to speak in order to preserve the peace of their nation.

The next to talk is Baimwáwa and he supports the view of Camudwa by remembering the time when the woes were not their enemies. He calls for peace and equality saying:

When the same tongue, express'd our joys and pains,
And the same blood ran freely thro'our veins?' (Lines 85-86).

Analysing the first line of the quotation, he highlights their similarities to their enemies such as the tongue they spoke. Nowadays, there are diverse academics and authors like Randy Valentine classify the Ojibwe and Mesquakie-Sauk (language of the Fox and Sauks) tongues as Central Algonquian Languages (12). Therefore, there is another allusion to the inner conflict between these two Indian tribes.

Then, Keewaydin talks and supports the war citing distinct events which occurred among the Fox and Ojibwe tribes. In the line 90, this chieftain claims that "They sunder'd name, league, language, rites and all." Since both tribes were Algonquian, they were potential candidates to found a league of allied tribes. Seeking for peace among the Native Americans, some Indians like the Iroquois speaking tribes founded "the Six Nations" league or the "Great League of Peace and Power" (Richter 30). This unification was an effort to achieve peace among the Indian tribes as well as the reinforcement of their power. However, when it comes to attain the liberty of the Indian society, the Iroquois allied with the British whereas the Algonquian tribes allied

with the French. By the previous allusions to the Fox tribe it is possible to infer that the next lines of the speech deal with their confrontation with the Fox. Although the Fox tribe was involved in the Algonquian group, their enemies and allies differentiated them from the Ojibwe as Jane states:

They, with our firm allies, the Gallic race,
First broke the league, [...] (Lines 91-92)

Moreover, the Sauk which was another Algonquian tribe, supported the Fox war against the French. Thus, the line 94 of the poem in which the chief asserts “And earn’d their proper title, Fox and Dog”. Though the Indian culture respected to the majority of the animals, the dog sometimes symbolised the tameness. Therefore, that line may refer to the Fox tribe and the Sauk since they cooperated in the war becoming the enemies of the French and the rest of the Algonquian tribes. Subsequently, the chief reminds the other members that the Fox had betrayed them by allying with the Dakota and states:

Next to the false Dacota gave the land,
And leagued in war, our own destruction plan’d. (Lines 95-96)

While the French were forcing the Fox relocation, they allied to the Dakota (Sioux) which was an ancient enemy of the Ojibwe in order to seek the victory over their enemies and conserve their lands.

The last chief to speak is Canowakeed who talks in a philosophical way tries to defuse the other members of the council. Nevertheless, he does not refuse to battle against the foes. At the end of the poem, the reader does not achieve a conclusion since the writer does not provide the final decision of the chiefs and in the last four lines of the poem, she leaves the issue unresolved:

And the sole question, of this high debate,
Is – shall we longer suffer – longer wait,
Or, with heroic will, for strife prepare,
And try the hazard of a gen’ral war! (Lines 117-120)

One of the main features reflected in this poem is the speech of the chiefs. Before the colonisation, there was no Indian written works but oral tradition which motivated their brilliant skill in speech. The rhetoric of the Native American people convinced to their audience with their arguments and their oratory.

Regarding the second poem called “Invocation to My Maternal Grandfather on Hearing His Descent from Chippewa Ancestors Misrepresented” (Kilcup 63), it was originally published in the *Southern literary messenger; devoted to every department of literature and the fine arts* magazine, in the year 1860, so it was a posthumous publication. Concerning the form, this poem is composed by octaves but its verses are irregular so it is not achievable to fix a pattern.

Writing this work, Jane defends her grandfather’s memory from a rumour by remembering his “valorous youth” (line 8). She exposes the rumour in line 9 “They say, when a child, thou wert ta’en from the Sioux” and she denies it emphatically. As it has been mentioned above, the Sioux and Ojibwe tribes had always been enemies so that rumour was offensive for her and her ancestors. In the third stanza, she attempts to highlight his exploits and says:

The scenes where so bravely thou’st lifted the blade,
Who have fought by the side,
And remember thy pride,
When rushing to battle, with valor and ire,
Thou saws’t the fell foes of thy nation expire. (Lines 20-24)

These argumentations were not just the result of their relationship, according to Anna Jameson “Waub-Ojeeg commanded his nation in all the war parties against the Sioux and the Ottagamies [...] they never afterwards ventured to oppose him, but retired down the Wisconsin river” (240). Hence, the attainments and qualities that Jane is citing are not manipulated. And although her grandfather rests “in the dark house of clay” (line 33), she states that he will always persist with her as she reflects in the last two lines of the poem:

Yet thy name shall be held in my heart’s warmest care,
And cherish’d, till valor and love be no more. (Lines 39-40)

As a conclusion of this poem, the reader can notice the relevance of family in Native American culture. Jane emphasises the significance of her relatives and ancestors as well as the unification of the family.

Regarding both poems, they deal with Ojibwe culture and heritage. The first of them reveal more historical facts whereas the second one deals with an important issue

for the Indian culture. In this case, these works were produced to spread knowledge and instruct the readers with the Ojibwe traditions.

As regards the author, she created quality works including those in which she cooperated with her husband. Though she died young, she had a significant role when it comes to the link Indians and white people from the moment she actively helps her husband. Due to the content of those works, Jane was involved in spreading the truth about the Ojibwe heritage which was very distinct from the biased opinions widely extended among the white people. Thus, the role of Jane represents a bridge among the Indian and the rest of cultures who inhabited the United States.

4.2. Annette Leevier

Annette Leevier was born in Quebec in 1856 but the date of her death is unclear due to the lack of data about her life and her heritage. In fact, the majority of information about her life is collected in her work *Psychic Experiences of an Indian Princess, Daughter of Chief Tommyhawk* (Kilcup 188) published in 1920. In that work, Leevier reflects her life, including her origin, healing abilities and her achievements. She also specifies the origin of her grandparents as it can be observed in this line written by Kilcup:

She affirms that her paternal grandfather, Big Sun, was a Mohawk, while her grandmother, Princess Laconquinne, was Ojibwe. (187)

Therefore, Leevier's father was Ojibwe-Mohawk which was not unconventional because the marriages between couples from distinct tribes were quite frequent in that period. On the other hand, Leevier states that her mother belonged to a French Catholic family that had migrated to North America owing to the revolution (Kilcup 189).

Leevier was instructed to be a nun since she was three years old when she her family sent her to reside in a nunnery. This early involvement allowed her to dedicate a great part of her life to the Catholic religion. In contrast with other mixed blood writers, the conversion of Leevier was evident as well as the impact of her miscegenation. The visible acculturation and assimilation of the imposed religion and culture are reflected in her works.

Other events such as the death her mother modified the orientation of her life. Leevier's mother succumbed to her illness when her daughter was at Montreal convent school. When she returned home, she perceived that her father and his new wife refused her permanence in their residence. That event provoked her decision of migrating to a convent in New York where she fell in love with a priest. Unfortunately, her love could not persist and she resolved to cease being a Christian and relocated to Walpole Island Indian Reservation in Ontario.

Throughout her life, she was a spiritual woman who had faith in the mediumistic communication. For that reason, she believed that her loved ones' souls would and the rest of the souls would be unified, and together, they guided her way. She was a religious woman whose purpose was the assistance to other people who share the same beliefs, values, and faith. But she did not only pursue the objective of her life during her Christian period, but also when she inhabited the reservation. In that latter period, her beliefs evolved in another direction. At the conclusion of her work, she explains her faith in the Great Spirit:

I hope this small publication and others that will follow will touch some heart that is looking for peace and comfort from the spirit side and help guide them in some manner so that all will be found in the knowledge of a happy future and belief in the Great Spirit. (Kilcup 206)

Before the narration of her life, there is a poem titled "To Sitting Bull – The Sioux Brave" (Kilcup 188) dedicated to the famous Sioux chief. The verses of this poem are octosyllabic in iambic tetrameters. In addition, the verses are couplets (aabbccdd) which form octaves.

As regards to the content of the poem, Leevier considers the chief Sitting Bull as a brave, wise, and powerful man due to his successful life. The famous chief fought in several battles and he resulted victorious. He protected his culture and proved his bravery and dedication to his people in the diverse battlegrounds he fought. For that reason, Leevier refers to him as a superior man who can serve as a model for all mankind. Throughout the poem, she begs Sitting Bull to guide her from the first stanza in which she prays:

Oh, Sitting Bull, to you I say
Come close to me and always stay;

That I may know you're ever near,
And knowing it I'll never fear. (Lines 1-4)

She asks him to stay with her which makes her feel safe since Sitting Bull could protect her. Being Sitting Bull the chief of the Lakota tribe, hundreds of Indians sought his protection during the Battle of Little Bighorn (1876). Regarding his role as a chief, this battle was one of his most distinguished attainments, and with reference to the Indians, it signified the most relevant defeat of the U.S Army. Before the battle was provoked, the general George Armstrong Custer and his soldiers were seeking a reason to colonise the Black Hills (Sioux territory) when the gold deposits were discovered in that area (Tucker 72). While some tribes decided to concede their lands to the U.S, the Sioux did not accept the relocation in the reservations and the occupation of the Black Hills. Sitting Bull was one of those chiefs who declined the offers and attempted to preserve their lands and due to his resistance, it was also known as "Sitting Bull's War" (Tucker 344). As he demonstrated his excellent judgement, Leevier trusts in his criteria because his "judgement and wisdom rule" (line 5) and he can guide people to the light as she states in the following lines:

Let your judgement and wisdom rule
In me – an ever ready tool –
To give your dictates to mankind
That men the light may ever find. (Lines 5-8)

In the second stanza, Leevier emphasises the "pow'r and might" (line 9) which were always present in Sitting Bull. Because of his courage, she is disposed to be guided by him and to transmit his values to other people as she requests him:

Come unto me both day and night,
And in your power let me stand
An instrument shaped to your hand. (Lines 10-12)

Since the chief was renowned by his capacity to contribute his expertise when he had to protect the Indian heritage and the Indian population who had lost everything. In the same way, Leevier's objective involves helping and blessing other people:

That through your power I may find
The means of helping all mankind,
To open my way by voice and pen

For blessing to my fellow men. (Lines 13-16)

After reading the poem, the reader might be confused about the identity of the protagonist of the poem. In consequence of the description provided by Leevier, it may be inferred that her work deals with Sitting Bull. In fact, whereas she specifies the name of the chieftain in the title of the poem, she demonstrates her special conception of him by expressing her faith in Sitting Bull. On the one hand, her devotion to the chief and the narration of his achievements in a heroic way are transmitted in this epic poem. On the other hand, this work is clearly influenced by her Christian education and reflects the acculturation. Regarding the style of the description, Leevier utilises the techniques that Catholicism provided her during her religious life. For that reason, she describes Sitting Bull and his attainments as if she was writing about God. Thus, her description leads us to realise that she deifies Sitting Bull.

Concerning the acculturation of the Native Americans, she ignores the conflictive relationship between the Ojibwe tribe which was supposed to be her homeland, and the Sioux. That lack of knowledge could be motivated by two distinct reasons. The first of them could be the acculturation which had a main role in Leevier's life. The second reason may be due to a general perspective of Sitting Bull. Regardless of the inner conflicts, Sitting Bull contributed to the preservation of the Indian land, and the protection of their heritage as a common concern to the Native American tribes.

4.3. Mabel Washbourne Anderson

Mabel Washbourne Anderson (1863-1949) was born in Arkansas to a family of notable Cherokee ancestors. On the one hand, her grandfather on her mother's side, called John Ridge, was one of the members who agreed the Treaty Party in 1835. On the other hand, her paternal grandfather Cephus Washburn was a missionary and the founder of Dwight Mission in Arkansas. Concerning her childhood, she was reared in the Cherokee Nation which was located in the present-day Oklahoma (Bataille and Lisa 14).

In terms of gender roles in Cherokee society, the men were hunters, fishers and they lumbered trees in order to leave space for plantations. Furthermore, they built

fences, homes, and canoes with the wood of the forests. In the case of Cherokee women, their functions comprised the traditional jobs which could be seen in other tribes, but Cherokee women had some other distinctive functions. As similar jobs to other women's tribes, they gathered food and sowed in the plantations, but they also made baskets and designed clothes with the skin of the animals. For raising the children, Cherokee women maintained them while they were performing the other jobs. However, those women were members of the government, and though they did not use to build the homes of the village, they managed their families and their homes. Moreover, Cherokee women were warriors and they fought in different battles which differentiated them from other Native American tribes (Perdue 38). Thus, Cherokee women had more control in their tribes and homes than other Native American women.

Regarding Anderson's education, she attended the Cherokee Female Seminary, and after that, she became a teacher at Cherokee Schools in Vinita. She was working there for several years before she got married in 1893. Thereafter, she dedicated her life to teach at schools and write about the Cherokee history. As she appreciated the Southern culture and traditions, her objective was to maintain and protect their heritage. That concept is integrated in her works as *Nowita, the Sweet Singer* (Kilcup 249).

In *Nowita, the Sweet Singer* (1903), there is a first paragraph in prose in which Anderson introduces the story to the reader. She describes a place called Spavinaw, the nature, surroundings, and hills where full-blood Cherokees reside isolated and protected by the forests. In addition, she tells the encounter between an Indian girl and a white man who belonged to dissimilar cultures. On the one hand, the girl, who was called Nowita, was a Cherokee pupil in the Female Seminary. On the other hand, the man had displaced from the East and he worked as a teacher in the Male Seminary. According to Anderson words (line 16), those Seminaries were separated but there was an event in which the pupils and teachers of the Male Seminary were received at the Female Seminary. During that important day, Nowita "had learned the language of love more rapidly than she acquired English" (line 30). Initially, they had met each other because of the culture and education, but it was precisely their different cultures habits and capabilities which motivated their love. When the summer ends, Nowita should return to her home but her acts are not accepted by her family because she has injured the dignity and pride of her full-blood Cherokee family and acquaintances. In the last line,

Anderson attaches an "Indian romance of local celebrity" (line 48) which tells the story in parodical form.

The structure of this poem is similar to the introduction of Longfellow's *The Song of Hiawatha* (3) poem. In both poems, the stanzas are formed by octosyllabic verses in trochaic tetrameters. The rhythm of the stressed syllables is linked to the rhythm of the traditional Indian ballads. Longfellow used it as well as the anaphora to produce a similar poem to those ballads in order to make it more reliable. Moreover, the first words of some verses are the same in both poems like the first words of both poems "Should you ask me" or the last words of other verses "[...] I should tell you" (line 10). Writing a similar work in those aspects, Anderson may be attempting to achieve the same success than Longfellow with his work.

Returning to the issue of reliability, the fact that Anderson was a real Cherokee woman improves enormously the credibility of her story whereas Longfellow was a white man who wrote about the Indians. He improved the accuracy of the story by mentioning different Indian tribes and providing the Indian words for birds (stanza 4). Another resource is the origin of the story as he repeats the words he heard from an Indian man. That origin is related to the oral tradition of the Native American stories which were transmitted from parents to children. Since he creates a fictional world which resembles to be real, he creates a metafictional narration. Concerning the objective of Longfellow's poem, "the real point of *The Song of Hiawatha*, however, was to give expression to the other face of Indian savagery, the noble savage" (Witgen 9). Consequently, he presented a behaviour of the Indians that differs from the widespread conception of that ethnicity.

Apart from the structure of the poems, the content of those poems is quite different. Throughout the entire introduction, Longfellow explains the origin of the story he is going to tell and utilises the elements mentioned above. In contrast with that content, Anderson's Indian romance (Kilcup 249) tells the entire story including the origin and conclusion.

The beginning of the Indian Romance deals with the origin of the love story protagonists. Anderson provides the Indian names that Nowita uses for each character and "Ska-kle-los-ky, the sweet speaker" (line 31) is the name of the white man. In the

second stanza, there is a brief description of the relationship between them. The author includes the perspective of the sweet speaker's friend called "Oo-naw-whee-hee, cold and cruel" (line 43) who rejects the relationship they are starting. During the period of colonisation, the white people refused to establish any kind of the relation with the Indians. Due to the Indian reputation, the colonisers did not rely on the savages who demonstrated their brutality and inhumanity in the battles. At the end of the stanza, Nowita is sad because she must separate from the white man. That feeling changes when he finds her home and he says to Nowita:

I have come to know your people,
Learn your language, customs, habits,
Learn your legends and traditions,
Will you be my skillful teacher?
I will help you with your English
With your books of prose and verses,
And we'll while away the hours
Helping, teaching, one another." (Lines 79-86)

Therefore, the man's objective is the learning of the culture and heritage of the Cherokee society and the teaching of his own culture and heritage to Nowita. His approach to the Indian village is pacific and he just wants to be a tool to spread his knowledge and acquire a different one. Contrary to the colonisers whose objective was the amendment of the Indian people, he does not force the acculturation since his purpose deals with sharing knowledge. Notwithstanding, Nowita's Indian family does not rely on the white man probably because of the typical lack of commitment of the colonisers. Approaching this poem from the perspective of white culture, Anderson compares the days that teacher and pupil spend together to those "ancient days of Eden" (92). This way, she is introducing a biblical issue and relating it with the Indian culture. After spending the summer with Nowita and living as an Indian man:

Thus the days of summer glided
Onward towards the coming autumn,
And the day of his departure
Dawned with its foreboding shadows. (Lines 131-134)

From that moment, she becomes a nostalgic girl which provokes her profound sadness which was reflected in her face. Despite of the instructions of her family to

ignore her sentiments, they were not able to recover the essence of Nowita. The happiness disappears from her life until a wretched moment. After some years, the author asserts that:

[...] And the gentle Indian maiden
Grew into a sad faced woman.
No more twilight found her singing,
Silent was her voice forever.” (Lines 183-186)

As Anderson writes in lines 192-195, the Indians attempted to recover by spirituality including powerful figures of their society. But instead of encouraging her, she remained impassive. Therefore, her people supported the relationship and the returning of the white man when noticed the pain she was suffering. The Indians’ attitude towards the situation demonstrates that their unification is more significant than the antagonism with the enemy. In the following lines, the reader notices that the white man never returned to Nowita’s home and finally:

[...] Thus she passed away in silence
To the land of the hereafter. (Lines 208-210)

In this poem, the unification between the white and Indian heritage is represented in form of love. The characters of this story provide the different perspectives of people when it comes to accept the other ethnicities without biased perceptions. In addition, Anderson’s poem is based on the introduction of *The Song of Hiawatha* (Longfellow 3) structure. Probably, she produces the poem in order to criticise those writers who wrote stories as if they were Indians or have enough knowledge about the Indians.

4.4. Gertrude Simmons Bonnin

In 1876, the Battle of Little Bighorn occurred and it resulted in a major defeat for the United States Army. In that same year, Gertrude Simmons Bonnin, called Zitkala-Ša (Red Bird) in Sioux language, was born on the Yankton Reservation, South Dakota. She was the daughter of a Yankton Sioux woman and a white man who abandoned them, so she was reared and educated as a Sioux (Lewandowski 3).

Therefore, she inhabited the reservation where her tribe had been relocated, but moreover, the miscegenation would be always present in her life.

The Sioux was a tribe constituted by three distinct tribes (Dakota, Lakota and Nakota) and was based on a patriarchal society. Sioux men were recognised hunters and warriors whereas women used to harvest and prepare food, and retain their villages (Hassrick 41). As the Sioux Indians were nomadic, it was the women who transported their appurtenances and organise them in the new locations. Furthermore, they designed and ornamented the skin which was utilised by the members of the tribe.

After living with the Sioux eight years, Zitkala-Ša begged her mother to consent her attendance to a white Quaker school called White's Manual Labor Institute located in Indiana. Though her mother disagreed with her daughter's request, she thought, as other Indians, that her daughter had the right to receive that education. When those schools began to integrate the native children in the U.S. educational system, many Native Americans contemplated it as an exchange, the payment because of the lands stolen by the colonisers. However, the consequences of the education provided to the Indian children were enormously different from the initial concept that the Indians had. In "The School Days of an Indian Girl" (Zitkala-Ša 47), Zitkala-Ša tells the traumatic experience during the time she attended the White's Manual Labor Institute. In this work, she describes how the white people observed her, and she felt treated like an inanimate object. Certainly, she did not understand the white people manners and throughout that period, she felt humbled because of their impoliteness. Due to the lack of respect with her own culture, she felt disenfranchised in that school since no one could empathise with her as she declares in "The School Days of an Indian Girl", "Not a soul reasoned quietly with me, as my own mother used to do" (Zitkala-Ša 56). Nevertheless, that acculturation process predominated in the U.S. educational system. It consisted in amending the Indian children traditions and culture integrate them in the white society. In order to achieve that objective, the missionaries of the schools restricted the usage of indigenous languages, attempted to convert the children to Catholicism and denied their traditions among other issues.

Apart from experiencing that process, the white men's actions would provoke her exclusion from Indian society. She could be rejected by her own people since she

had not respected her culture and even the Great Spirit could refuse her. Consequently, the feeling of alienation arose among the children who were conveyed to those schools. On the one hand, they were not able to find their place in the schools with the rest of native children. But nevertheless, they would never be white people since they had been disrespectful with the Indian values and culture. Hence, they felt that they did not belong to anywhere.

In 1898, Zitkala-Ša was a teacher for one year at Carlisle Indian Industrial School and she maintained her position regarding the problems of the Indian educational system. From that moment, she became in an important figure who protected and promoted the Indian identity. In order to do so, she claimed that the dispossession of lands affected the Indian children since they could not be educated as their ancestors. According to Bloom, she stated that the education and the English language could be a tool to make visible the oppression and to preserve the Reservations and the future of the native Americans (157).

From 1900, Zitkala-Ša ceased to be a common native person who disagreed but accepted the dictates from the Government and commenced to write. That resoluteness allowed her to express her sensibility, manifestations, and disgruntlement with the situation the Indians were living. Apart from legends and autobiographical works like “Impressions of an Indian Childhood” or “The School Days of an Indian Girl”, she wrote poems in which she defended the native culture.

The first analysis deals with the poem entitled “The Indian Awakening” (Kilcup 296) which was written in 1916 as part of the *American Indian Magazine*. The stanzas of this poem are composed by eight decasyllabic verses that, as we can observe, are iambic pentameters. Those eight verses of each stanza result in octaves which are formed by two different quatrains (abab;aabb). That structure is repeated throughout the poem and the quatrains always form an octave because of the final rhyme. In this work, Zitkala-Ša protects her native culture by addressing the changes that her ethnic group has been forced to make and includes symbols of her own culture. In the first and second stanzas, she tells the obliged modifications in her habits and education. But in addition, they have amended her appearance since in line 1 she declares “I snatch at my Eagle plumes and long hair [...] my robes did deplete”. The Eagle is a traditional Indian

symbol which represents wisdom, freedom, and strength. It was believed that the eagle carried the prayers to the Great Spirit. Thus, when her “Eagle plumes” are snatched, they are dissociating her from the Great Spirit. On the other hand, the length of their hair was very significant among the native American people. As Zitkala-Ša asserts in her autobiographical work called “The School Days of an Indian Girl” (Zitkala-Ša 47), “Among our people, short hair was worn by mourners, and shingled hair by cowards!” (Zitkala-Ša 52). However, after all, she affirms that she is the same “Left heart all unchanged; the work incomplete” (line 3). So, despite the missionaries’ attempts, they would not achieve their purpose of denying her culture and beliefs. After that, she mentions the disinformation of white people when she says:

Dear teacher, you wished so much good to me,
That though I was blind, I strove hard to see. (Lines 5-6).

Regarding this issue, there is an interesting episode in “Impressions of an Indian Childhood” (Zitkala-Ša 7) in which she tells how she was convinced by the white missionaries with their distorted information to attend their school. They promised that she could ride the iron horse and eat as many red apples as she may wish. Her mother contested the request of his daughter, but finally, she yielded to the desires of Zitkala-Ša. The missionaries of that school persuade the young native people to attend their school where children of several tribes were gathered together. As it has been previously mentioned, the objective of that type of schools was to provide an appropriate education for native American children which involved English teaching and the Christian religious values that nullify the native ones.

All those changes had irretrievably distanced herself from her own culture and had led her to an “amiss” (line 12). Owing to that distance, she states at the end of the third stanza “I stand isolated, life gone amiss” (line 24). In the fourth stanza, she expresses her feeling of alienation saying:

“Oh what am I? Whither bound is thus and why?
Is there no a God on whom to rely?”. (Lines 26-27)

This way, she evokes desperately to someone who can help her because she feels that no one, not even God or the Great Spirit, could guide her. She obtains a response that makes her close her eyes and feel in peace. She has a kind of dream in which she is

riding a horse and the amiss disappears. At that moment, she is enjoying the freedom because she is in the spiritual world. She has left the real world behind, including the “reptiles and monsters, war, graft and greed” (line 53). In that space, the Great Spirit reigns, he transmits her that peace and calm in the world, everything similar to that ancient times. In addition, she observes the “Earth-legends” (line 67) in a village as the old ones. Astonished, she tells the ancestors that three people of the tribe had cried their death. In the ninth stanza, “One of the Spirit Space” (line 73) explains her that all of them are souls who live like stars following an orbit. Then, they commend her to rejoice the gift of life and not be spending her time with tears and laments (line 87). At the end of the poem, the steed carries her to the reality where she will live with a new objective and she says:

I sing “Gift of Life, pray waste not in wails!
The Maker of Souls forever prevails!” (Lines 95-96)

As can be observe, the great amount of spiritual elements in this poem reflects the distinctive spirituality of Native American people since she mentions both God and the Great Spirit. Reading this work, the reader may infer that Zitkala-Ša purpose was to return to the old period that she dreams about in the poem.

The second poem to be analysed is “The Red Man’s America” (1917) which was also published in the *American Indian Magazine*. This Zitkala-Ša’s poem is a parody of the hymn entitled “My Country, ‘tis of Thee” written by Samuel F. Smith. In that hymn, he describes a land of liberty and where each citizen, regardless the ethnic group, is equal. In addition, he proclaims that it is the “land of the pilgrims’ pride” and where his fathers died (lines 4-5).

On the other hand, Zitkala-Ša creates an ironic poem parodying the Smith’s hymn. She retains the structure introducing the stanza with a couplet followed by a triplet and between them, there is another couplet which serves as a link (aabcccb). Therefore, both poems are quite similar in that aspect. The only difference between the poems is that Zitkala-Ša shifts the four last verses of each stanza. Nevertheless, when it comes to the content of the poem, she describes the land in an ironically because there is no freedom for Indians in that land. Instead of saying the “land where my fathers died”, she specifies the “land where OUR fathers died”. This way, she emphasizes that her

ancestors were the original inhabitants of the land, and then, she criticises the treatment the Indians receive from the Government. In lines 6 and 7, she complains about the “Franchise”. Zitkala-Ša proclaimed that the Indian people were patriotic and loved the land as the rest of the citizens of the United States (Lewandowski 13). To prove it, she used to refer to the Indian people who had fought in the First World War as other ethnic groups who composed the U.S. For that reason, she did not understand why the citizenship was still denied to the Native Americans and not to other ethnicities.

The following stanzas deal with the consumption of peyote among the Indian population. In fact, this work has been denominated by some authors like Lewandowski the “anti-peyote” (113) poem. Zitkala-Ša was emphatically against the utilisation of peyote in the Indian Reservations as it prejudiced Indian children and improved the rate of crimes committed among their societies. One of the South Dakota Representatives called H.L. Gandy proposed the “Gandy’s Bill” (line 18) against the use of peyote. He attempted to condemn the consumption and trade of this drug in the Reservations. Zitkala-Ša, who had joined the SAI in 1914, supported that bill. Indeed, she was a fundamental figure during the crusade against the consumption of peyote. Finally, Zitkala-Ša left the SAI in 1919 the consumption of this drug was condemned.

Therefore, the character of Zitkala-Ša should be considered when it comes to the history, treatment, and evolution of the Native American tribes. Although she lived a hard period for her people, but she succeeded in her objective of defending and promoting the Indian culture. Through literature and organizations, she made white and red people aware of the visible inequality among the U.S. population.

5. Conclusion

After reading the events occurred during the colonisation, it is obvious that it dramatically affected to the Native American population by causing more conflicts, wars, and deaths. Notwithstanding the attempts by both sides, the treaties agreed over the years did not solve their clashes. Due to the white people domination, the Native American society was forced to relocate their villages to reservations. When the European people achieved control over the tribes, their objective was the margination and denial of the Indian culture as well as the segregation of the tribes which would debilitate the Native American society. As a result, the traditional gender roles and societies of Indian people were modified noticeably after the arrival of the colonisers. Moreover, as it is reflected in the previous sections, the U.S. government considered the Indian culture as one of the crucial aspects to amend in order to integrate the Indians into the predominant society.

After the analysis of the authors' lives, it is possible to realize the acculturation process forced upon Indian children like Mabel Washbourne Anderson who was full blood, Annette Leevier, and Gertrude Simmons Bonnin who were mixed blood. In their case, all of them were raised in distinct Indian tribes. On the contrary, Jane Johnston Schoolcraft, who was mixed blood, was not acculturated since their parents provided her enough knowledge about both cultures. Thus, the acculturation process was imposed to the majority of the Indian children who assimilated the imposed culture regardless of their origin and miscegenation.

Thereafter, each of the writers studied had different life experiences, however there is a common link among them which is literature. In general, the main purpose of their works was the spread of the Indian culture and traditions as they attempted to prevent the disappearance of their heritage. Nevertheless, the cultural references and the characteristics of their poetry served as tool to expose their feelings. For instance, Bonnin expresses her disagreement by writing new or parody poems. In other cases such as Schoolcraft and Anderson poetry, they produce metafictional poems in order to spread their Indian culture and to approach their heritage to different societies. When it comes to Leevier's work, her Catholic influence is more than evident due to the style of her poem adoring Sitting Bull.

Finally, the great impact of the forced modifications in Indians' lives is obvious since it provoked collective and individual conflicts among the population. The colonisation of the Indians' lands had a direct impact on their lives which are reflected in some of the Indian women writers of the 19th century. In any case, the former Native American women writers spread their culture through their works in order to protect and maintain their traditions, but also, to bring Indian heritage closer to white people.

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