Introduction

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Forcefully captured by Powhatan Indians while on a mission to locate the source of the Chickahominy River, Captain John Smith was held prisoner for a little over three weeks by the Jamestown colony's Native neighbors. The turning point in his captivity occurred after a three-day ceremony in which a priest, attended by dancers in paint, skins, and feathers, carefully placed meal, grains of corn, and sticks in circles around a fire and delivered a series of orations in order to disclose the captive's intentions toward his people. Smith was then finally brought before their "Emperor" (whom he called Powhatan after the tribe's name) and a group of men and women gathered in the "great house." Smith, referring to himself in the third person, wrote in his 1624 account of the event that, after feasting and cleaning his hands,

> a long consultation was held, but the conclusion was, two great stones were brought before Powhatan: then as many as could layd hands on [Smith], dragged him to them, and thereon laid his head, and being ready with their clubs, to beate out his braines, Pocahontas the Kings dearest daughter, when no intreaty could prevaile, got his head in her armes, and laid her owne

> upon his to save him from death: whereat the Emperour was contented he should live to make him hatchets, and her bells, beads, and copper; for they thought him as well of all occupations as themselves.[1]

Two days following his daughter's apparent intervention in Smith's execution, Powhatan formalized a friendship with Smith and allowed the captain to return to Jamestown.

Reading Smith's account of the event today, one confronts, among other things, the "unique epistemological challenge" of extracting Indian actions and intentions from texts penned by European colonizers.[2] One wonders what Pocahontas, an eleven-year-old girl whose actual name was Matoaka (Pocahontas being a child's nickname), intended by her actions, and what she accomplished in reality. One might very well ask, what did this young woman perform before her leader and father, his captive, and the audience gathered in the great house at Werewocomoco?

And to ask this question about Native performance is to reflect on the complexity of the scene Smith reports and the variety of scholarly interpretations it has received in recent decades. To *perform*, of course, means to present something (like dance, drama, or music) on stage or to an audience. It also means, in the transitive sense, to carry out something promised or commanded or, more broadly, to carry out a particular action or function. Finally, it can denote the

formal or solemn execution of a public function, ceremony, or ritual.[3] For those historians who consider Smith's report to be truthful and accurate and his interpretation of events valid, the bold young Pocahontas acted impulsively and sincerely, challenging the authority of her father and of Powhatan custom in order to preserve the life of the fascinating visitor. For others, Smith misinterpreted a Powhatan adoption ceremony—a ritual purification and staging of near death followed by incorporation—wherein Pocahontas played a sacred role. If Smith willfully misrepresented the scene, it is likely that he did so to create a text promoting Virginia colonization and his invaluable connections and expertise. Still other historians, emphasizing the purpose of Smith's Virginia accounts, have charged the shape-shifting captain with fabrication and described the scene as an instance of Smith taking up the theatrical role of colonial hero. In this respect, the passage and the events it describes turn on the complex and perhaps indistinguishable interaction of diverse performances: by Pocahontas, by her father and people, by Smith himself, and by his transatlantic readers.[4]

The Pocahontas story and the controversial nature of Smith's account elucidate the central undertaking of this book: the elusive but necessary recovery of Native people's role in the intercultural performative contexts of the colonial

Americas, often (and necessarily) through texts that are themselves complex performances from within intercultural contexts.[5] Traditionally, Smith's account of the Powhatan girl's actions has been read in ways that minimize Indians' participation in these contexts; the tale of a noble young Indian woman driven by love to save the European and embrace the Christian civilization he represents has provided an allegory for providential European ascendance that incorporates and thereby erases the history of peaceful as well as violent Indian-white negotiations in colonial North America. (Ironically, those obscured negotiations were themselves dependent on the kind of performances Smith participated in during captivity.) Yet the exploits of Pocahontas in the great house at Werewocomoco as reported by Smith have not only produced colonialist narratives and dramas; at the same time, they have periodically served as a resource for American Indians who, in response to the trope of the Indian convert or Noble Savage submitting body and soul to the European colonizer, have enacted an alternate identity and performed public protests against cultural and territorial imperialism and social neglect. Put another way, the Pocahontas legend has become part of what Laura Peers terms "a tradition of cultural performance in which the performance serves as a vehicle for Native agendas and creates an intercultural space which can be controlled by Native

performers." Rereading Smith's account today, we thus find an opportunity to challenge the essentialist myths it spawned and to acknowledge a centuries-long process whereby the public actions of Indians—individual, familial, communal, ceremonial, theatrical, political, literary—have countered, informed, and shaped the public actions of European colonizers.[6]

The study of *Indian performance*, by which we mean performance by Indians and the performance of *Indianness* by Indians and non-Indians alike, uniquely clarifies how the struggle for survival as well as supremacy in early North America was constitutive of cultures and, more specifically, of common intercultural practice.[7] Recognizing traditions of performative exchange on North American soil and strategic performative adaptations by American Indians does not, however, preclude a consideration of the power inequities between Indians and non-Indians. In his insightful overview of American Indian performative traditions, L. G. Moses appropriately insists that "we look at the performance not only for its window into cultural change and persistence, but also for the ways it reveals the working of power, domination, and resistance in Indian-American relations." Certainly Indian performance, physical as well as literary, has in recent years been important to critics' promotion of American Indian literary nationalism. Jace Weaver, Craig S. Womack, and Robert Warrior attribute

inspiration in particular to Simon J. Ortiz's account in "Towards a National Indian Literature" of the Acqumeh use of Catholic saints' days ritual to recall the 1598 razing of Acqu by Spanish soldiers. Ortiz heralds such performances as key to understanding American Indian literature's "authenticity" as based not in a lack of references to colonizing practices but in its clear "struggle against colonialism."[8] In this collection, essays likewise move from performances to texts and back again, offering us stories that recover the cultural, social, political, and artistic agency of Indians in the intercultural contexts of early North America through renewed attention to tactical, often defiant enactment of Indianness. Such work requires not only that contributors carefully contextualize and analyze the thorny records produced in the colonial context, but also that they exercise empathy and imagination, humility and nerve, in doing so.

When we refer to *Indianness* in this volume, we mean the acknowledged attribute of direct association with American Indian peoples and cultures; *who* identifies American Indian attributes determines the substance of Indianness at specific moments.[9] In early North America, Europeans' conceptions of Indianness were inextricable from the moral, religious, teleological, political, and economic justifications for their presence. Indigenous bodies, material culture, beliefs, and

actions registered for Europeans, among other things, the health of the land, the potential for evangelism, the promise of hospitality, the threat of violence, the echo of Europeans' own past, and of course the legitimacy of their occupation. When Europeans applied such meanings of the Indian in the activities of trade, mission work, marriage and procreation, political negotiations, and entertainment, they enacted the basis for the colonial project. In response, Indians actively performed Indianness that often directly challenged the scriptural, scientific, legal, and aesthetic narratives animating European colonialism. And when they resisted, revised, or forcefully rejected the category of Indian, they challenged a binary (European versus Native) essential to colonizers' quest for domination on North American soil. The result of these entwined performances of Indianness was a developing, transformative sense of what it meant to live in and be of North America.

Since the emergence of Performance Studies in the late 1980s, a number of works on the history and culture of North America in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, as well as works on the colonial Americas more broadly, have established what my co-editor, Joshua David Bellin, identifies as a *performative paradigm*, exploring the ways in which intentional public acts of entertainment, ritual, and suasion do not simply reflect or represent cultures but, in the words of

Rosemarie K. Bank, "constitute cultures."[10] Such an account of culture as performed and the related rendering of the close relationship between textual and oral forms are highly relevant to the study of Indian performance in early North America. Indeed, it should come as no surprise that many of the works falling under the performative paradigm—including ones by Bank, Jay Fliegelman, Joseph Roach, David Waldstreicher, Sandra M. Gustafson, and Carolyn Eastman, to name a few—have addressed to some degree the vital role of American Indian performance in the development of national cultures.[11]

Many of these works have also shown how performance in Early America, and in particular what we might call playacting, was used to reinforce European ideologies of racial-ethnic essentialism and ascendant nationalism. As Laura Browder observes, "The success of ethnic impersonators depends in large part on their manipulation of others' essentialist beliefs about race and ethnicity." In his influential *Playing Indian* (1998), Philip J. Deloria examines the phenomenon of white residents of the thirteen colonies and then the United States engaging in acts of Indian mimicry and imposture. He identifies in particular two paradigmatic moments for such performances, the Revolution and the early twentieth century, when whites took up the Indian role first in the interest of national formation and subsequently in flight from industrialism and other perceived

evils of modernity. As purveyors of the civilized attracted by the siren appeal of the wild, whites romantically appropriated the Indian in the context of violent conquest, establishing "a 'have-the-cake-and-eat-it-too' dialectic of simultaneous desire and repulsion." Key to "redface" performance were the reference to essentialist notions of Indianness and an ironic denial of culture-as-performed, for the often ceremonial and always entertaining public display actively naturalized national identity and the civilized/savage binary. At the same time, argues Theresa Strouth Gaul, "[m]arking American Indians as performative" through the plethora of Indian plays in the early nineteenth century "became a way of marking them as potentially more duplicitous than whites."[12] Playing Indian cut two ways, as whites garnered the power of the "authentic" Indian for nationalist purposes and simultaneously denied American Indians that same empowering authenticity.

While the scholarly texts I have mentioned pay homage to Indian performance as one aspect of colonial and (more commonly) early national culture, each simultaneously demonstrates the limitations of prevailing historical and theoretical paradigms for understanding such performance. On the one hand, while it is vitally important to reconstruct the suppression and dispossession of Indians by those whites who adopted Indian "play," the scholarly emphasis on these processes has

unfortunately underrated or erased the impact of Indian performances on white performances of Indianness, and vice versa.[13] On the other hand, if these representative studies dramatize the cross-fertilization of white and Indian performative traditions in the Revolutionary and Early National periods, they also indicate the extent to which a scholarly focus on the national period has largely eclipsed the contemporary relevance of earlier forms of Indian performance. Whites alone did not set the tone and the terms of these exchanges; rather, these performative occasions arose from the creative, adaptive, and iterative energies of Indian and white peoples alike. Furthermore, these performative occasions were not distinguished principally by their generation of such abstractions as "identity," "culture," "race," or "nation." Instead, the forms of performance in North American sites of encounter were unique and emergent, rooted in various peoples' distinctive material, linguistic, religious, economic, and artistic practices. Finally, not only is it erroneous to describe these early Indian performances as headed toward an apotheosis in the birth of the United States, it is wrongheaded to assume Indian performances were confined to the English-speaking world or even to North America. Performers crossed regions and continents, nations and languages, revealing the

extent to which a continental and transatlantic colonial world was reliant on the dynamics of Indian performance.

By bringing together Native Studies methodology and the performative paradigm of Early American Studies, the essays in *Native Acts* speak specifically to the ways in which the cultures of contact in colonial North America were performed through trade negotiations, legal proceedings, religious rituals, and political ceremonies—and subsequent accounts of such, whether written, oral, or gestural.[14] This approach accomplishes a number of things. Most obviously, the essays of *Native Acts* show how the historical and literary record yields complex and diverse examples of performative exchange in the years prior to 1776, including local forms of material and linguistic negotiation, ceremonial cross-fertilization, and intercultural and intertribal contestation and compromise.

At the same time, these essays call attention to the highly contested nature of colonial cultures in ways not articulated by traditional histories that emphasize military conflict, imperial expansion, and Indian cultural loss. In this respect they take a cue from Richard White, who in his groundbreaking study of the convergence of Algonquian, French, and British in the Great Lakes region (*pays d'en haut*) from the seventeenth through the early nineteenth centuries identifies a geographic and cultural *middle ground*, the site of "alliance through rituals and

ceremonials based on cultural parallels and congruences, inexact and artificial as they originally may have been." Yet our contributors keep in mind the limitations of White's thesis, especially the insistence that the (cultural or political) middle ground relied on the mutual dependence of parties and thus disappeared as soon as Euro-American dominance was attainable.[15] The history of Native acts as recorded in documents often implicated in the European colonial project, but also sustained in the performative practices not accounted for in those documents, suggests that mutual accommodation, and more specifically, intercultural performances, persisted (and *persist*) long after the establishment in North America of Euro-American nations.

Finally, the essays of *Native Acts* contextualize questions of cultural authenticity and racial purity in the interest of documenting not just oppression but opposition, creativity, and vitality and in the interest of linking performances of Indianness across time. If one begins with the premise that in colonial North America Indians and Europeans performed mutually recognized cultures for and with one another, then one must recognize the influence of both on subsequent national cultures. At the same time, identity and nation become products of ongoing strategic performances rather than markers of static cultures and individuals. Indians and non-Indians alike perform for

public consumption to religious, economic, political, familial, and pleasurable ends. Looking back to the Praying Indians of seventeenth-century New England, for example, we see that conversion meant not a simple swapping of an Indian for a European culture but the creation of an Indian Christianity that had implications for adherents' positions within the developing colonial society. Neither did the acquisition of literacy in European languages and related access to scripture and the Western historical record negate Indianness. Rather, it provided another means of performing culture. Many of the texts authored by American Indians and Euro-Americans in the colonial period record the intercultural performances—including the meaning-laden acts of reading and writing—that illustrate so well intercultural evolution and the persistent, continuing resistance of American Indians to white ascendancy through the body, speech, and a wide range of texts.

In sum, the essays of *Native Acts* represent a critical intervention in the scholarship treating the performance of Indianness because they restore Indian peoples to the intercultural matrix from which such performances arose. The contributors to this volume share a commitment to an expansive definition of Indian performance that bridges past and present and reaches across national boundaries, questions conventional designations of "real" and "fake" Indianness or "authentic" and

"compromised" American Indian cultures, approaches texts as performances and non-alphabetic Indian communications as texts, and heralds the performative paradigm as an indispensable tool for comprehending the complex production and evolution of post-contact cultures on North American soil. For all of these reasons, we adopt the term *Native acts* (rather than *Indian play*) as shorthand for American Indian participation and agency in a tradition of Indian performance. *To act*, like its synonym *to perform*, means to carry out a particular action or function, to execute a public ceremony, or to present for others an entertainment, including the representation of another. At the same time, it does not preclude the less positive connotation of simulation or counterfeit.[16] The *Native acts* chronicled here include instances of American Indian ceremonial participation as recorded by literate observers; American Indian peoples' creative and often pragmatic appropriation of others' cultural practices, including writing and publication; American Indians' strategic expropriation of others' cultural practices for the assertion of political authority or rights; American Indians' dishonesty (as perceived by non-Indians) in such public acts as conversion testimony and treaty negotiations or, more commonly, in their representation of Indian culture for non-Indian audiences; and American Indians' appraisal of other performers'

reliability and skill, including whites' impersonation of Indians.

To return to our opening figure in light of this redefinition, it appears likely that Pocahontas well understood the variety of Native acts required of and even thrust upon her in the context of the Jamestown colony's founding and the ongoing negotiation between her father and the English leaders who sought to curb his territorial power. The principal documents on Pocahontas and her public frolics as a girl, her (possibly) sacred role as a preteen, and the rituals of the Powhatan great house are Smith's narratives and letters; like so many American Indians, she did not leave a record in her own hand. Her captivity, subsequent marriage to John Rolfe, and conversion to Christianity initiated a peace between Jamestown colonists and the Powhatans. It also provided Pocahontas the means to represent the Powhatans in the London court and potentially to gather invaluable information on the English, whose continued migration threatened the physical wellbeing of her father's people. If closely observed by Londoners as a representative noble Indian and civilized convert, Pocahontas likely, in turn, directed her own gaze on the court and even on Smith, as when she rebuked him for having led the Powhatans to believe he had died when he returned to London in 1608.[17] One need only read with Native acts in mind to view Pocahontas as a

skilled performer who assumed a range of roles, from ethnographic subject to royal ambassador, and demonstrated a keen understanding of the political function of such public presentations as she moved between the worlds of her father and her husband, building a new world between them.

Events essential to the Pocahontas story, captivity and conversion, are two of the most studied occasions for Native acts and associated intercultural negotiation in early North America. American Indians regularly socially incorporated white captives, especially women, through ceremonial performances that quite literally produced new people and new families. For Indians held "captive" by Euro-American societies, conversion to Christianity, especially as seen in public displays of religious zeal, became a precondition to social incorporation; however, Indians' public expressions of faith were subject to the scrutiny of many convinced of the savage's innate deviousness. Within the context of these constraints, American Indians' conversion to Christianity, as recorded in missionary tracts and in the first American Indian autoethnographies and autobiographies, was in many ways less an attempt to "fool" whites than a pragmatic action in the interest of physical and cultural survival.[18] American Indian converts practiced an evolving and intercultural faith that provided opportunities publicly to criticize the physical and political hardships

brought upon them by their Christian "redeemers." Thus when viewed from an *Indian* perspective, as James Axtell concludes, the success of early Christian missions should be measured by the extent to which Indian Christians were able to incorporate into it elements of their ethnic identity.[19] Certainly the "Praying Indians" of seventeenth-century New England were neither feeble accommodationists nor desperate victims but residents of a rapidly changing environment who found in Christian practice and alliances a means of challenging Euro-American authority by reviving and revising traditions of political and religious authority. American Indians who adapted a European faith for Indian life spurred the distrust of those colonists who believed that they were simply putting on an act, remaining unreconstructed savages behind Christian masks.[20]

American Indians' adoption and adaptation of Christianity in early North America produced a wealth of texts making manifest innumerable Native acts. Thus written expression was yet another way in which Indian engagement with Christianity facilitated the performative pursuit of cultural survival. For example, as Craig White documents, John Eliot's transcriptions of seventeenth-century New England Praying Indians' questions, conversion narratives, and dying speeches, while compiled in the interest of Puritan missionary work, serve as unique records of early Massachusett oral traditions and of American Indian

interrogations and adaptations of Christian theology and practice. While American Indians have long utilized indigenous literacies, as Kristina Bross and Hilary E. Wyss emphasize with reference to Algonquian communicative practices, literacy in a European language was for many American Indians a promising and malleable technology accessible through Christian education. Viewed in this light, conversion constituted a means of cultural negotiation and assertion rather than of abnegation, and the related texts are themselves performances of such. Wyss and Joanna Brooks chronicle how Native-written texts from the seventeenth through the early-nineteenth centuries served as politicized Native acts, communicating American Indians' grievances and demonstrating that Indianness and Christian literacy were not mutually exclusive, and Lisa Brooks traces such political work of Native writing to the present day. "Acts of conversion were acts of self-determination," concludes Brooks, and committing one's narrative to the page (directly or through an amanuensis) was, finally, a performance of autonomy for the present and the future. Undoubtedly the words and actions of American Indians subject to Christian mission work had a lasting impact on European missions.[21] Thus to reconsider religious conversion as a Native act is to reject racial-ethnic essentialism and to recognize the ways in which American Indians

enacted new religious, political, and intellectual traditions that could and do sustain Native communities.[22]

We have organized this collection to reflect patterns and divergences in Native acts as they constituted these emergent traditions. *Native Acts* begins with essays considering the performances that simultaneously illustrated and shattered European colonists' preconceptions of Indian behavior. Approaching a seventeenth-century "problematics" of performance through a mixture of Native studies, ethnohistory, and performance theory, Matt Cohen draws connections between English records of Algonquian strategic deception in the 1630s and the contemporary controversy in New England over who is "truly" Indian. Zeroing in on the fate of Indian converts during the pan-tribal resistance in New England that came to be known as King Philip's War, Nan Goodman unpacks a cruel irony in the history of Native acts: the Praying Indians' banishment to Deer Island in Boston Harbor and voluntary military service brought about what prior acts of conversion could not—legal status under English Common Law. Of course neither entrance into English law nor physical displacement extinguished Indianness. Performance as a category, as Cohen concludes his essay, moves us beyond the elusive search for the "authentic" to the recognition that the relational and evolving nature of American Indian cultures does

nothing to diminish the reality of Native identity and sovereignty.

John Pollack and Olivia Bloechl shift the geographic focus to seventeenth-century New France but likewise trace European expectations for Indianness and Indians' performative responses. Pollack takes up the construction of indigenous authority via performance, arguing that Samuel de Champlain's *Des Sauvages* (1603) registers the ritual practices, including story-telling, through which French and Montagnais leaders vied for supremacy in diplomatic, economic, and religious alliances. Bloechl follows the Jesuit missionaries of mid-century who, by comparing Wendat ritual and the Carnival of the French peasantry, at once articulated their fears of sinister and socially destabilizing communal song traditions and inadvertently confirmed the value of such traditions in the indigenous struggle to resist the imposition of external religious and political authority.

Like Pollack, Stephanie Fitzgerald and Caroline Wigginton trace how individual American Indians—in this case, powerful women[23]—established a peculiarly Native authority within and through their relationships with representative European colonists. Fitzgerald recovers the history of Wunnatuckquannum, a seventeenth-century queen sachem on Martha's Vineyard who negotiated tribal and colonial legal systems in order to retain her people's allegiance and to secure their land base. The

deeds Wunnatuckquannum left behind record her evolving position among her people and within colonial New England, while serving in the present as vital resources for the Wampanoag's Wôpanâak Language Reclamation Project. Similarly, but in a southerly clime, Wigginton argues that Creek leader, diplomat, and translator Coosaponakeesa insisted on the sovereignty of her people through coded dress and the language of Creek kinship. Identifying a "genealogy of sovereignty," a temporal continuity of performances in the interest of Native peoples, Wigginton, like others in the collection, documents how Indians in early North America asserted territorial, political, and cultural authority through discursive and embodied Native acts, securing crucial legacies in the process.

Just as Indian representatives performed versions of Indianness to establish political, economic, and cultural authority, they also sought to capitalize on Europeans' expectations for indigeneity by staging notions of "authenticity." Jenny Hale Pulsipher's essay considers John Wompas, a Nipmuc Christian in seventeenth-century Massachusetts known by the English name John White, who attempted to reconcile his participation in colonial trade with his credibility in Nipmuc society. As the seventeenth century progressed—and as King Philip's War forever altered the place of Christian Indians in New England colonial society—Wompas found himself

increasingly defined by the racial rather than cultural definitions of the individual. In his essay, Timothy J. Shannon focuses on the intersection of political and commercial interests for American Indians who traveled to Britain in the wake of the Seven Years' War; the performance of these "Indian kings" in the arenas of diplomacy and popular entertainment at once rested on claims of Indianness and undermined in the public's eye their claims of genuineness. Pulsipher and Shannon remind us that Indians, like whites, were both judges and subjects of performances of ethnicity—and ethnic imposture—in the colonial context, cultivating new performances responsive to the multiple actors and audiences of European imperialism.

The collection concludes with two essays that track the permutations of Indian performance into the more familiar period of the Early Republic. However, these essays—Phillip H. Round on Indian interventions into and inventions of the public sphere in the late eighteenth century and Theresa Strouth Gaul on Elias Boudinot's performative editing of the *Cherokee Phoenix*—offer original readings of this period and gain new resonance and relevance in light of the prominence accorded to Indian performers in the earlier period. Thus the final essays bridge the colonial period and the Removal era, providing a more detailed, nuanced historical map for the shifting construction and reception of Indianness as enacted by American Indians. The

volume concludes with Deloria's reflection on his formulation of "playing Indian" and the need to consider Native agency in the history of performances of Indianness.

The essays of *Native Acts* enrich our understanding of how American Indians of early colonial North America complicated and concretized, claimed and reclaimed, the meaning of Indianness through performance, a process that continues to this day. They employ the performative paradigm of Early American studies, with its focus on the enactment of culture and its challenge to the stale historical narratives of overpowering cultural imperialism or romantic multiculturalism, and they affirm the Native Studies emphasis on establishing "an alternative historiography of nonwhiteness."[24] In the process, the contributions to this volume demonstrate the ways in which writings about Native acts from the colonial period are not simply incomplete, unreliable, or dead records of actions long lost. They are themselves performances, linked to well-established, living traditions of which they are unique manifestations, and they deserve to be read carefully, creatively, and respectfully.

Ultimately, the contributions to this volume help us understand the ongoing relevance of Native acts from the seventeenth through the early nineteenth centuries as American Indians continue to contest racism and political and social inequality through performative resistance, innovation, and

transformation. Peers reports in her illuminating study of American Indians' roles in contemporary living history sites that the American Indian interpreters she interviewed time and again declared they were "playing themselves," "expressing their contemporary identity as persons rooted in their heritage."[25] The essays in this volume return to a neglected time in American Indian performance in order to recover traditions of American Indian agency. Native acts were not and are not "just play" but an assertion of a persistent and vibrant American Indian presence on North American soil.

Notes

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[1] Smith, *Captain John Smith*, 64-65.

[2] Cohen, *Networked Wilderness*, 9.

[3] "perform, v."

[4] Examples of each of these interpretations may be seen in the most recent books on the history of Powhatan Indians and the

Jamestown colony. In *Love & Hate in Jamestown*, Price accepts as true Smith's account of Pocahontas's intervention, building on Lemay's book-length defense, *Did Pocahontas Save Captain John Smith?* (Price, *Love & Hate* 243-45). In *The Jamestown Project*, Kupperman once again asserts that Smith underwent an adoption ceremony, citing Gleach's *Powhatan's World and Colonial Virginia* (Kupperman, *Jamestown Project* 228)—an interpretation also embraced by Allen (*Pocahontas*, 52-56). Notably, ethnohistorian Rountree, in *Pocahontas, Powhatan, Opechancanough*, asserts that the Powhatans had no such ceremony, that Pocahontas was too young and unimportant to attend any official gathering in the great house, and thus that Smith's account is false (76-82). No matter what the analysis, few would disagree with Richards's description of Smith as having "a theatrical vision that . . . makes him the central actor in a land free of playhouses and an enervating obsession with social performance" (*Theater Enough*, 85). Horn concludes, "What we can say with some certainty is that the ritual did not happen as [Smith] described it" (*A Land as God Made It*, 68).

[5] That is, this book is concerned with what Bellin calls "the complex, conflictual, cross-cultural acts that lie at the heart of American life and literature" (*Medicine Bundle*, 4). In this way, *Native Acts* draws on two prominent strains in Performance

Studies: an interest in discursive performances, or language that "does work," as initiated by Austin, and an attention to embodied performances, as highlighted in the work of Taylor (who calls instances of nondiscursive performance "performatics" to distinguish them from Austin's "performatives"). For a cogent treatment of these divergent strains in Performance studies see Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire*, 4-6.

[6] Peers, *Playing Ourselves*, 61. Examples of American Indians staging themselves, intervening in the tradition of white Indian performance, is also a stated concern of Bank in "Staging the 'Native'." On the ideological use of the Pocahontas legend in American culture, see especially Tilton. Regarding Indian adaptations or expropriations of the Pocahontas figure, I am thinking in particular of such nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century activist-authors as Gertrude Bonnin (Zitkala-Ša), Sarah Winnemucca Hopkins, and Emily Pauline Johnson, each of whom used public performances in Indian dress of music or oratory to advocate for the rights of North American Indians.

[7] My co-editor, Bellin, first defined Indian performance in these terms in "John Eliot's Playing Indian," 3. See also *Medicine Bundle*, 3.

[8] Weaver, Womack, and Warrior, *American Indian Literary Nationalism*, xix; Ortiz, "Towards a National Indian Literature," 256.

[9] For this reason, Harmon concludes Indianness to be "a multitude of identities" due to its innumerable and even conflicting sources: individual, tribal, non-Indian, pan-Indian, historical, genetic, and political (to name just a few that she mentions) ("Wanted," 254).

[10] Bank, *Theatre Culture in America*, 9. On the emergence of a performative paradigm in early American studies, see Bellin, "The Place of Performance" and *Medicine Bundle*, 12.

[11] For example, Roach examines the Mardi Gras Indians of New Orleans as an example of *surrogation*, or a collective performance that attempts to fill the vacancy and loss created by the violence of colonization; those who play Indian draw on the performance of actual American Indians and thus are actually threatened with being replaced "by those whom they imagined into existence as their definitive opposites" (*Cities of the Dead* 6). In *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes*, Waldstreicher presents the case that U.S. nationalism is constituted not by communal assent but by concrete performances of contested, local meanings, including American Indian oratories and texts that challenge the meaning of the American Revolution. Similarly, emphasizing

"diverse, interactive, and simultaneous cultural universes" in what she deems the "theatre culture" of antebellum America, Bank traces how performances of Indianness by Indians and non-Indians in political and theatrical settings outside of Indian country informed and responded to one another(*Theatre Culture in America* 29). Gustafson chronicles how American Indian orators capitalized on the image of "a 'savage' speaker whose oral heritage endowed him or her with a greater authenticity than textbound white orators" and employed writing tactically in text-driven Euro-America to demonstrate intellectual, spiritual, and legal equality (*Eloquence Is Power* xxii). More recently, Eastman traces the evolving role of Indian oratory (actual and fabricated) in the formation of an elocutionary culture essential to the post-Revolutionary formation of a U.S public (*A Nation of Speechifiers* Ch. 3).

[12] Browder, *Slippery Characters*, 10-11; Deloria, *Playing Indian*, 3; Gaul, "'the Genuine Indian'," 17. For a fuller description of United States nationalism and the use of the Indian to justify imperialism and to craft an ancient pre-history, see Marienstras, "The Common Man's Indian."

[13] That said, a small number of critical studies have traced Native influence on performances during the heyday of white appropriations of Indianness. For example, Kamrath locates in

the American Indians' speeches transcribed in eighteenth-century colonial periodicals evidence that Revolutionary rhetoric and public displays of nascent nationalism drew upon Indian performance. Abrahams identifies a 1786 meeting between a Seneca band led by Cornplanter and Philadelphia's "Sons of Tammany" as a moment of mutual Indian play; the latter claimed the role of legendary Indian sachem Tammany as an expression of sovereignty, the former as a means of burying their prior alliance with the British. And in "Staging the 'Native'," Bank considers the participation of American Indian men, including Sauk leader Black Hawk, in the theatrical performance of Indianness in the 1820s and 1830s, highlighting the exchange of performance traditions but also the very different cultural stakes for Indians and their white contemporaries.

[14] In "New England, Nonesuch," Cohen calls for just such a combination of Native Studies and Performance Studies methodology in order to challenge "the idea that textuality is a transhistorical constant" (313).

[15] White, *The Middle Ground*, 93. For treatments of how the concept of the middle ground has been misused, see in particular *The Middle Ground Revisited*, a special issue of *William and Mary Quarterly* edited by Sleeper-Smith, and Deloria's afterword to this volume. In "Romance on the Middle Ground," Herman was one

of the first to criticize White's theory as subject to abuse by those longing "for a truly pluralistic, multicultural society" (291).

[16] "act, v. 4."

[17] On Pocahontas's visit to London, see Townsend, *Pocahontas and the Powhatan Dilemma*, 135-58. Of her recorded rebuke of Smith, Townsend observes, "She was clearly expressing profound sadness and anger, not unrequited love. She spoke rather of political matters. Her father had established a kin relationship with this man, implying reciprocity and honesty. Smith had defaulted on both counts" (155). The final chapter of Allen's *Pocahontas* argues most explicitly for Pocahontas's role as political and spiritual ambassador/spy on her London trip (253-302).

[18] Here I use American Indian autoethnography to refer to a study of American Indian cultures written by a member of that culture and American Indian autobiography to indicate a first-person life story written or dictated by the subject. On these genres see especially Michaelsen, "Introduction"; and Krupat, *Voice in the Margin*, Ch. 4, respectively.

[19] Axtell, "Some Thoughts on the Ethnohistory of Missions." Axtell's claim is reinforced by Burkhart's examination of an indigenous Christianity apparent in sixteenth-century Christian devotional songs composed by Nahua (Aztec) converts in "The

Amanuenses Have Appropriated the Text." For a rich description of intercultural faith among seventeenth-century Huron and Montagnais Indians of New France and the Massachusett, Wampanoag, and Nipmuc tribes of southern New England, see Ronda, "'We Are Well as We Are'."

[20] Van Lonkhuyzen, "A Reappraisal of the Praying Indians." On puritan unease over the Playing Indian's performance of Christianity, see especially Bellin, "John Eliot's Playing Indian."

[21] White, "The Praying Indians' Speeches"; Bross and Wyss, "Introduction"; Wyss, *Writing Indians*, 1-16; Joanna Brooks, *American Lazarus*, 18; Lisa Brooks, "Digging at the Roots." Two works tracing the Native impact on European missions come to mind. In *Dry Bones and Indian Sermons*, Bross argues that, from the 1640s through King Philip's War (1675-1676), New England Puritanism was defined by its mission to local American Indians, and the figure of the Praying Indian proved essential to Puritan self-conceptions and authorship. Stevens, in *The Poor Indians*, shows how, in the subsequent century, English missionary tracts on American Indians contributed to the larger culture of sensibility.

[22] Relevant here is Warrior's identification of Native nonfiction as constituting an intellectual tradition crucial to "the

intellectual health of Native America, its people, and its communities" (*People and the Word*, xiv).

[23] Unfortunately such recovery of American Indian *women's* Native acts is a rare accomplishment. As Wyss notes in "Native Women Writing," very little Native women's writing from this period has been found in the archive, and given this lack, Native women's performances must be read between the lines of what we do have. On the necessity of examining non-alphabetic Native texts, see especially Fitzgerald and Wyss, "Land and Literacy"; Bross and Wyss, "Introduction."

[24] Fitzgerald and Wyss, "Land and Literacy," 273.

[25] Peers, *Playing Ourselves*, xxiii, 84. As Wilmer writes, Indian performance is vital "both historically and in the modern world as a means of preserving and reasserting cultural values amid Eurocentric incursions and globalized lifestyles" ("Introduction," 1).

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