

The Contexts of Religion and Violence

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Prophecy, Purity, and Progress

Religion and Violence in the Conquest of America

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Introduction

[1] Recently I spent an afternoon in an antique store rifling through bins of old magazine images and advertisements when I came across a strange and fascinating illustrated poem from a 1938 *Saturday Evening Post*. Although I had never heard of the author, Douglas McClure Anderson, the three-part poem and the accompanying images were too interesting to pass up, so I purchased it and took it home to ponder its significance.

[2] The piece is titled “The Pilgrimage of Grace, Retrospect from the Plaza at Santa Fe, New Mexico, 1938.” The first part of the poem reads:

This is the way the wagons came
From Cumberland and Burlingame,
From Broken Butte and Genesee,
And Kingdom City, Tennessee.

This was the way the trail was won:
With carpetbag and buffalo gun,

With King James Bible and blacksnake quirt,
And buckskin jerkin and crinoline skirt.

...

This was the way a people came
To the pueblo of St. Francis' name
In the valley of the Rio Grande,
Seeking a second Promised Land.

This was the trail of destiny
To those whom the Lord gave liberty.

Although these lines hardly represent the highest achievement in American verse, the simple poetic style actually distills in a concentrated manner a common and rather complex American ideology of conquest. This ideology links in a recurring cycle prophetic vision, purifying or regenerative violence, and a firm faith in notions of progress. That Anderson's poem expressing these principles appeared prominently in a high circulation American magazine only adds to its allure as a historical source (on regenerative violence in American culture, see Slotkin 1996).

[3] Anderson looks back in time, figuratively if not literally, from the plaza at Santa Fe to the history of the old multicultural capital of New Mexico. The "retrospect" of the subtitle suggests something more, however. This is an American poem. Anderson surveys the conquest of a place and its people. The wagons came down the Santa Fe Trail from the United States with buffalo guns and Protestant Bibles, men in buckskin and women in puffy skirts seeking their destiny – their Manifest Destiny – in "a second Promised Land." In Anderson's poetic history, God provided several gifts for these dusty travelers: the place itself, the liberty they would use to transform it, and the sanctifying grace that raised their mission well above the mundane world of merely human affairs and integrated it into the much longer and far more significant story of salvation. The poem appeared at a time of great anxiety for Americans, who were suffering through the Great Depression and watching fearfully as fascism infected the world. These developments interrupted the story of American progress and forced people to wander in a wilderness of uncertainty. Anderson reminded his readers that in the layered history of Santa Fe, they could still discover the essential values that made America a promised land.¹

[4] Anderson was hardly the first to notice or to celebrate the links between religion and conquest. Participants in the history of colonization and American expansion often remarked on the relationship and justified their actions in terms of religious ideology and obligations. Observers and commentators, including historians, filmmakers, and amateur poets like Anderson himself, have discovered in this history and propagated in their works a narrative of American purification and progress. And, finally, the first peoples of this continent did not remain silent on these issues. They, too, contributed prophecy and calls for renewal to the dynamic contest for power and hegemony in North America. The essay that

¹ Painters like Georgia O'Keefe and Marsden Hartley and authors such as Willa Cather also traveled to the Southwest in search of American distinctiveness in the 1920s and 1930s. They sought solace in the purity of Nature and enjoyed the "exotic" and "primitive" Indian and Hispanic cultures (see Doss: 86-91).

follows is a highly interpretive, synthetic, and selective treatment of American history and culture that explores these critical connections between the conception, the implementation, and the rationalization of religious violence in the conquest of America.

The Conquest of America

[5] From 1675 to 1676 the English and the Algonquian-speaking peoples of New England engaged in a bloody conflict – a holy war – which caused proportionally more casualties than any other war in American history. “King Philip’s War,” as it is popularly known, started in June of 1675 when three Wampanoag men were convicted of murder in the death of John Sassamon, a Christian Indian minister. Two of the convicted men died at the gallows; the third dropped to the ground when the hangman’s noose failed. The Wampanoag leader Metacom, “Philip” to the English, destroyed town after town during the next fourteen months of war, almost pushing the New England colonists back into the sea (Lepore: xi-xiii).

[6] Jill Lepore has argued persuasively that this war was in part a religious conflict. English observers explained without any apparent sense of contradiction that Indians were simultaneously servants of Satan and instruments of God’s wrath and that the hostilities justified English violence and the attempt to rid the colonies permanently of an Indian presence (97-121). In a prophetic announcement the Massachusetts government proclaimed:

The Righteous God hath heightned our Calamity and given Commission to the Barbarous Heathen to rise up against us, and to become a smart Rod, and severe Scourge to us . . . hereby speaking aloud to us to search and try our wayes and turn again unto the Lord our God from whom we have departed with a great Backsliding (quoted in Lepore: 102).

New England ministers had warned for years of a moral decline from the first generation of Puritan saints that colonized Massachusetts. The covenant had been broken and the heathen Indians now acted as God’s swift sword of justice. A 1679 synod that met in the immediate aftermath of the conflict listed dozens of moral failures that threatened to destroy John Winthrop’s city on a hill, everything from the simple pride of unnecessary ornamentation to drunken debauchery, gambling and greed, nudity and fornication. The ministers even suggested that parents had through their indulgence allowed their children to become more like Indians than Christians (Morone: 34-46, 74-82; on the connection between Puritan notions of chosenness and colonization of New England, see Stephanson: 3-12).

[7] As the English put soldiers in the field to turn grave losses into eventual victory, the people of New England sought ways to cleanse themselves of the great sins and the land itself of the Native people that seemed responsible for the traumatic events. Lepore counts at least twenty instances of official fasting, humiliation, and thanksgiving in the New England colonies during the war. Connecticut declared every Wednesday from September 1675 to July 1676 a day of fasting. Colonists also rejected the Praying Indians of Massachusetts as potentially disloyal, frighteningly liminal figures who remained more “savage” than Christian. In 1674, over a thousand Indians lived as Christians in Praying Towns. For fearful colonists, their admission into the body of Christ endangered the social body already weakened by sin and war. In 1675, Massachusetts ordered the Indians to evacuate their towns for Deer Island in Boston Harbor, where they would no longer pose a

threat to the colony. During the terrible winter that followed, hundreds died on the bleak island. In the spring authorities finally released the suffering survivors from bondage, but by then the confinement had already demonstrated that there was an immutable divide between colonists and Indians (Lepore: 28-41, 103-4, and 138-41).

[8] Metacom finally met his death on 12 August 1676 in a hot and humid New England swamp. The English beheaded and quartered his body, taking parts of it as trophies. Five days later Plymouth Colony celebrated with a day of thanksgiving. Soldiers arrived in the midst of the celebration with King Philip's head, which they placed on a pole staked in the middle of town as a reminder of the war for decades to come. The New England religious intellectual Increase Mather saw the hand of Providence in the appearance of Philip's head, commenting that God had offered the trophy as "meat to the people inhabiting the wilderness . . . the very day of their solemn Festival" (quoted in Lepore: 174). Philip and the many Indians and English who died in the bloody war became the sacrificial victims of a terrible violence that served to purify the suffering colonies and their people. As Lepore explains, the war strengthened English identities, marking more deeply than ever the perceived boundaries between Indians and English, savagery and civilization, wilderness and town, and contributing further to the emerging myth of the vanishing Indian (173-85).

[9] The English rebuilt their towns and largely ignored the marginalized Indian communities that continued to exist in New England. A century after the conflict ended and just as the War for Independence began a New England minister commemorated the centennial in a sermon. The Reverend Nathan Fiske reminded his audience:

Instead of a desolate uncultivated wilderness – instead of mountains and plains covered with thick untraversed woods – and swamps hideous and impassable, the face of the earth is trimmed, and adorned with a beautiful variety of fields, meadows, orchards, and pastures . . . Instead of the smoaky huts and wigwams of naked, swarthy barbarians, we now behold thick settlements of a civilized people, and convenient and elegant buildings (quoted in Lepore: 186).

The remarks, which contain a rhetorical violence of their own, reveal the fulfillment of English prophecy and the powerful and abiding ideology of purity and progress that has animated so many expressions of American violence.

[10] Tenskwatawa, also known as the Shawnee Prophet, and his much more famous brother, Tecumseh, show that the English colonists were not the only people to view the contest for America in terms of prophetic religion. The Shawnee Prophet emerged out of a world of chaos and violence that followed the defeat of the British in the American Revolution. Tribal communities throughout the Ohio River region struggled with war, internal conflict, punishing treaties, land loss, and the ubiquitous liquor carried by American traders. The Shawnee Prophet grew up in this difficult and uncertain environment, insecure and addicted to whiskey.

[11] The young man's dramatic transformation into prophet took place early in 1805 when his family discovered him apparently dead in a lodge. As his family made funeral arrangements, the prophet awoke to share a tale of death and resurrection, of the past and

the future. The Master of Life had sent two guides who took him on a journey to the spirit world and showed him the divergent paths of the Shawnees, one leading to paradise, the other to certain destruction. He took the name Tenskwatawa, the Open Door, and began advocating a return to many Shawnee ways. "The punishments I saw terrify you! But listen," he said, "those punishments will be upon you unless you follow me through the door that I am opening for you!" The Shawnee Prophet preached against alcohol, internal violence, and the technology of the whites. Like the New England ministers, he accused his listeners of severing their relationship with the divine. "We shut our ears to the Great Good Spirit. We did not want to hear that we were being foolish," the Prophet lamented, "and that is why Our Creator purified me and sent me down to you full of the shinning [*sic*] power, to make you what you were before!" (Hoffman and Gjerde: 205-7). Even the dances the people performed had been corrupted. The Open Door promised to teach the people the ceremonies and rituals that would begin the process of purification. He explained that the Americans were not children of the Master of Life but rather the spawn of the Evil Spirit. Only by avoiding the Americans and their nefarious influence could the Shawnees recreate the order that had been lost. This message resonated with many Native peoples throughout the southern Great Lakes region, and the Shawnee Prophet soon moved his converts to a village on the lower Tippecanoe River called Prophetstown.

[12] Tecumseh became for a while the most famous Indian in America by using the religious revitalization movement orchestrated by his brother to support a broader pan-Indian resistance movement against American expansionism. The leader told governor William Henry Harrison, "the being within me hears the voice of the ages, which tells me that once, always, and until lately, there were no white men on all this island, that it then belonged to the red men, children of the same parents, placed on it by the Great Good Spirit who made them, to keep it, to traverse it, to enjoy its yield, and to people it with the same race. Once they were a happy race!" (Hoffman and Gjerde: 205). But now, the invasion of the multiplying Americans had replaced happiness with sorrow and shame, threatening the very survival of Indian communities west of the Appalachians. Tenskwatawa joined the military resistance early in the winter of 1811 in a bold attack on Harrison's troops, assuring his warriors that his powerful medicine would protect them as they crushed the hated Americans. In a severe personal defeat for the Shawnee Prophet, the attack failed. Tenskwatawa never again regained his previous stature as a great prophet and leader, while Harrison used his victory in the Battle of Tippecanoe to become president of the United States (Edmunds: 3-116; see also Dowd: 123-47).

[13] In this interpretation, it was the Americans and not the Indians who were savage. The Shawnee Prophet and Tecumseh argued that Americans were responsible for the chaos that enveloped Native communities and threatened to destroy them. The Prophet, awakened to the present reality and enlightened by messengers from the Master of Life, searched the Shawnee past for inspiration and looked into the future to an Indian world free of the greedy, lawless, and violent Americans. His prophecy proposed a world made pure once again not through progress toward some uncertain objective but through a return to something rich and deep and strong that would clear the path to paradise that had been obscured by several generations of unrest.

[14] Within a few decades, of course, the United States government forced the Shawnees and other Native nations in the East to move to territories west of the Mississippi. Carefully crafted treaties and the common contention that separation of Indians and Americans would result in benefits for both cannot hide the fact that removal was part of the conquest of this continent. In fact, Americans articulated an increasingly organized ideology of conquest at this time that linked Indian removal and the conflict with Mexico in an explicitly racial and religious explanation of an unfolding millennial history.

[15] The newspaper editor John L. O’Sullivan captured the spirit of the age in 1845 when he wrote that no power could interfere with “the fulfilment of our manifest destiny to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions.” Looking forward to a time when California would be released from the weak and ineffective rule of Mexico, O’Sullivan noted that “already the advance guard of the irresistible army of Anglo-Saxon emigration has begun to pour down upon it, armed with the plough and the rifle, and marking its trail with schools and colleges, courts and representative halls, mills and meeting-houses” (Hoffman and Gjerde: 240-41; on O’Sullivan, see Stephanson: 38-48).

[16] O’Sullivan packed his prophetic statement with references to the American institutions that would transform land and people into the white, Christian, democratic nation seemingly willed by God. Mr. Polk’s war with Mexico between 1846 and 1848 appeared to fulfill this dream, the holy mission of God’s chosen people. Greater Texas, New Mexico, and California became part of the United States.

[17] It is easy to find examples of people who justified these events in terms of white supremacy, the advance of civilization, and the spread of Christianity. In 1846 Senator Thomas Hart Benton told his colleagues in the Senate:

It would seem that the White race alone received the divine command, to subdue and replenish the earth! for it is the only race that has obeyed it – the only one that hunts out new and distant lands, and even a New World, to subdue and replenish . . . In a few years a great population will grow up [in the new lands of the West], luminous with the accumulated lights of European and American civilization . . . Civilization, or extinction, has been the fate of all people who have found themselves in the track of the advancing Whites, and civilization, always the preference of the Whites, has been pressed as an object, while extinction has followed as a consequence of resistance. The Black and the Red races have often felt their ameliorating influence (Hoffman and Gjerde: 241).

The last line is curiously but perhaps not surprisingly ambiguous. The “ameliorating influence” Benton refers to could mean either civilization or extinction. Regardless, American progress involved the conquest of others.

[18] Less than two years later another senator, John Dix, shared his thoughts on the decline of the Spanish and their descendents from civilization to savagery, thus justifying their conquest:

The bold and courageous enterprise which overran and conquered Mexico, appears not to have descended to the present possessors of the soil. Either from the influence of climate or the admixture of races – the fusion of castes, to use the technical phrase – the conquerors have, in turn, become the conquered. The ancient Castilian energy is, in a great degree, subdued . . . [by] a proneness to civil discord, and a suicidal waste of its own strength (Hoffman and Gjerde: 242; for the full speech, see *Congressional Globe*, 30th Cong., 1st Sess., 250-57 [1848]).

For Dix, the hot sun and miscegenation introduced fatal impurities into the Spanish blood. White Spaniards became brown Mexicans. Americans, then, had a sacred duty to correct this failure to make the place what it should be. Dix declared, “it is the behest of Providence that idleness, and ignorance, and barbarism, shall give place to industry, and knowledge, and civilization. The European and mixed races, which possess Mexico, are not likely, either from moral or physical energy, to become formidable rivals or enemies.” He concluded that the “inevitable course of empire . . . needs no powers of prophecy to foretell.” Rather, he referred to the “force of an invincible law” that explained the natural progress of civilization and the eventual extinction of savagery and savage races. For Dix, this iron law reflected the designs of divine providence, but his statements to the Senate also reveal the strong influence of mid-nineteenth-century scientific racism (Hoffman and Gjerde: 242; on racism, progress, and geographic destiny in American culture, consult Horsman).

[19] The military forces of the United States soon overwhelmed the Mexican opposition, although Dix did not get everything he desired. The United States did not hold on to all of its Mexican conquests. Nevertheless, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo proclaimed the end of one phase of conquest and transformation and the beginning of another. Americans would have to be vigilant, unlike their Mexican enemies, to maintain their purity in these newly conquered lands. Living according to the highest ideals of democracy, Christianity, and racial purity was the only way to ensure success. It is useful to remember in this case that the contest over the expression of these values in the Mexican acquisitions increased the sectional tensions in the United States that eventually erupted in war. The Civil War represented in part the great crucible in which the nation, heated to the limits of endurance, finally separated itself from the institution of chattel slavery, although not from the vicious racism that supported it.

The End of the Frontier

[20] Douglas McClure Anderson likened the conquest of Mexico and the introduction of American ideals of liberty to a “pilgrimage of grace” that ended in Santa Fe. The plaza of the old colonial city became for Anderson a site from which to remember the people who made American progress possible:

Now the wagons and the guns are rust
And the men who followed the trail are dust,
And Indians selling native ware
Patrol the sleepy little square
Where once vaqueros in sheepskin chaps,
And ragged plainsmen in coonskin caps,

And duel-scarred dons in jingling spurs,
And renegade adventurers,
Forgathered from the ends of the earth
To give a prairie empire birth.

In 1938, the trail had become overgrown and the colorful, heroic men who followed it were gone. Quiet Indians sat passively selling their pots to tourists who arrived on the rails of American empire to survey the Land of Enchantment. Anderson echoes here a progressive view of the past that one finds repeated endlessly in historical writing, in film, and in literature from the nineteenth century to the present.

[21] In his influential 1893 address and essay “The Significance of the Frontier in American History,” historian Frederick Jackson Turner presented a nationalistic and patriotic account of pioneer progress that celebrated the American spirit. The 1890 census declared the frontier closed because analysts could no longer identify a clearly demarcated line between the settled and unsettled portions of the country. Turner suggested that it was time to begin an inquiry into the significance of the frontier in shaping the American character, and he argued that the frontier experience itself made Americans unique and best explained the emergence of American democracy and individualism. As he put it, “The existence of an area of free land, its continuous recession, and the advance of American settlement westward, explain American development” (17-19).

[22] For Turner, contact with a successive series of frontiers – “the meeting point between savagery and civilization” – caused a fall from European civilization into a temporary state of savagery. The long process of recreating civilization from the Indian trader’s to the farmer’s frontier and beyond was a purifying experience. The complex and corrupting institutions of Europe could not survive on the frontier, so pioneers abandoned them in favor of liberty and independence. This freedom left unchecked could be dangerous, however. The labor of missionaries and school teachers, productive religious competition, and the erection of democratic institutions checked the excesses of frontier individualism. “The result,” Turner concluded:

is that to the frontier the American intellect owes its striking characteristics. That coarseness and strength combined with acuteness and inquisitiveness; that practical, inventive turn of mind, quick to find expedients; that masterful grasp of material things, lacking in the artistic but powerful to effect great ends; that restless, nervous energy; that dominant individualism, working for good and for evil, and withal that buoyancy and exuberance which comes with freedom – these are traits of the frontier, or traits called out elsewhere because of the existence of the frontier (39-40).

Historians continue to debate the usefulness of Turner’s frontier thesis. Indeed, only recently have scholars started to get out from under the enormous weight of its influence. One point on which there is widespread agreement, however, is that Turner downplayed the violence that made expansion possible. Indians and Mexicans are not agents in this history; they were merely obstacles to be overcome or, in another formulation, unwilling participants in the process of creating Americans (See the essays in Etulain for a brief introduction to these debates).

[23] Turner made his famous address to the American Historical Association annual meeting at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago. The setting for his comments is significant, for the fair celebrated the very progress that Turner explained in its commemoration of the quadricentennial of Columbus's "discovery." The opening ceremonies signaled this emphasis on American destiny at a time when there was great anxiety over the effects of industrialization, urbanization, and ethnic diversity. The exercises included the playing of the Columbian March, a long prayer of invocation by the chaplain of the House of Representatives, the dramatic recitation of a poem – "The Prophecy" – that honored Columbus's vision, and an address from President Grover Cleveland. As President Cleveland prepared to start the great engine that would power the fair's modern machinery, he acknowledged the twin triumphs of self-reliant individualism and American democracy and looked forward to a growing American influence in the world. With the graceful notes of Handel's "Hallelujah Chorus" traveling on the Chicago wind, the president pressed the key and a 2000 horsepower engine roared to life. Millions of visitors streamed into the classically-designed White City at the center of the fair and strolled the lanes of the Midway Plaisance over the next several months (World's Columbian Exposition 1898: 209-12, 402-8; Burg: 109-13; Huhndorf: 35-64; for a recent popular account of the fair, see Larson).

[24] Visitors who came by Lake Michigan entered the grounds through the Peristyle, a portal and colonnade that clearly expressed both the neoclassical architectural style of the larger White City and the exposition's animating themes of discovery and progress. An illustrated guide to the fair, aptly named *The Dream City*, presented a photograph and written description of the Peristyle:

The colonnade in which this portal was centrally placed contained forty-eight great Corinthian columns . . . The States and Territories of the Union were symbolized in the columns. Placed upon the arch of triumph, in the most distinguished position, stood the Columbus quadriga, or four-horse chariot . . . On pedestals at the right and left of the portal are groups representing the "Genius of Navigation" . . . Heroic figures stand in double row on the balustrade, representing Eloquence, Music, Navigation, Fisherman and Indian . . .

Above the portal, but below Columbus, appeared the names of other great explorers and adventurers: Champlain, La Salle, Ponce de Leon, Cortez, De Soto. This central architectural feature of the White City also contained a dedication "to the pioneers of civil and religious liberty" (World's Columbian Exposition: 1893).

[25] The Peristyle and the White City more generally traced a path from discovery to civilization. Navigators followed the stars and wind from Europe to discover a new world full of promise. As Turner suggested in his address, the pioneers then traveled the rivers and trails into the wilderness, where they constructed farms and villages, cities and towns and in the process erected the democratic institutions that preserved civil and religious liberty. Chicago represented one of the greatest of these cities. Less than a century old, Chicago was born of the wilderness and had emerged as a leading commercial city that linked East and West. The gleaming White City stood as a symbol of purity and order in the midst of the profane realities of rough-and-tumble Chicago. Buildings displayed the spectacular advances

of the day in electricity, agriculture, mining, machinery, and the liberal arts. The frontier was gone, but a great and modern nation had arisen. If the American people remained true to the principles of individual initiative and collective democracy, if they aspired to the ideals of the White City, they might have the ability to avoid the worst excesses of industrial development and the imminent dangers of the historical transition from frontier republic to nation of nations. The Indian remained only a silent sentinel, a reminder of the past, his statue looking out from the portal with others representing fishermen, navigation, music, and eloquence.

[26] In the 1890s most Americans assumed that Indians would soon vanish. The so-called Indian wars had come to an end and the Native population of the United States had dropped to its lowest point since Columbus arrived in the Caribbean. The myth of the vanishing Indian suggested that the disappearance of the continent's Native people represented an unfortunate by-product of the inevitable conquest and development of America. The World's Columbian Exposition occurred at a time when Americans showed a renewed fascination in the allegedly vanishing primitive, a kind of "imperialist nostalgia" (see Rosaldo: 107-22) for that which had been destroyed. Visitors to the fair could walk through a Kwakiutl village complete with totem poles, watch Penobscot families from Maine paddle birchbark canoes on the waters of the exposition, or ascend the reproduction of ancient cliff dwellings from the Southwest. They could also spend a day with Buffalo Bill Cody not far from the fairgrounds and watch Indians perform the past in staged battles. The highlight of the entertainment was the recreation of Custer's defeat on the Little Big Horn. The United States overcame this temporary defeat to fashion a continental empire. American progress relegated Indians to the past and fairgoers could witness in the displays the path from savagery to civilization (*The Dream City* contains images of the Native villages and cliff dwellings; see also Huhndorf: 35-64; on Buffalo Bill Cody in Chicago, see White: 45-57; Kasson: 94-121; Moses: 129-49; and Slotkin 1992: 63-87).

[27] Of course, Indians did not vanish and they spoke with eloquence and passion about their perspectives on history and the problems of the present, as the Potawatomi leader Simon Pokagon did at the Columbian Exposition. Pokagon's Potawatomi people lived not far from Chicago and had watched with dismay waves of settlement, the loss of land, the clearing of forests, and the forced removal of most Indians from the Midwest. Fair organizers invited the leader to participate in a special public ceremony. Pokagon rung a replica of the Liberty Bell and then delivered a forceful speech that condemned colonization and lamented the lost liberties of Native peoples: "In behalf of my people, the American Indians, I hereby declare to you, the pale-faced race that has usurped our lands and homes, that we have no spirit to celebrate with you the great Columbian Fair now being held in this Chicago city, the wonder of the world." Pokagon continued:

No; sooner would we hold the high joy day over the graves of our departed than to celebrate our own funeral, the discovery of America. And while you . . . bring the offerings of the handiwork of your own lands and your hearts in admiration rejoice over the beauty and grandeur of this young republic and you say, "Behold the wonders wrought by our children in this foreign land," do not forget that this success has been at the sacrifice of *our* homes and a once happy race.

The Red Man's Greeting, as Pokagon's speech came to be called, circulated widely as a pamphlet that questioned the very nature of "progress" and demanded that American Indian perspectives be included in any assessment of America's contentious history. Pokagon took advantage of his invitation to speak and forced at least some listeners and, later, his readers to contemplate the consequences of colonization (31).

[28] Women also staked out a place at the exposition, forming a board of lady managers and organizing a series of exhibits and activities at the Woman's Building. Set aside in a separate sphere, women at least joined the fair as active participants. In contrast, women played almost no role at all in Turner's frontier drama and made only a cameo appearance as "crinoline skirts" in Anderson's poem. This relative invisibility did not always extend, however, to twentieth-century films about the American frontier, in which white women (other than dancehall girls and prostitutes, of course) frequently represented the approach and development of the civilization that would mark the end of the frontier and the domestication of the West (Muccigrosso: 132-41; Riley: 59-71).

[29] The 1956 film *The Searchers*, directed by John Ford and starring John Wayne, represents a fairly common American captivity narrative and perhaps that is one reason it contains so many of the recurring patterns of prophecy, concerns with purity, and dreams of progress. In the film, Indians attack and destroy the Edwards homestead on the Texas frontier and capture young Debbie. John Wayne's character Ethan Edwards is a Civil War veteran with a mysterious past who returns in time to lead the search for Debbie. For years he travels the southwestern frontier searching for Debbie and Chief Scar, accompanied by Martin Pauley, a mixed-race young man adopted into the family. Ethan seems strangely obsessed with Debbie's purity as a white girl and barely tolerates the presence of his olive-skinned partner Martin.

[30] At one point in the search wise old Mrs. Jorgensen says, "It just so happens we be Texicans. Texican is nothin' but a human man way out on a limb, this year and next. Maybe for a hundred more. But I don't think it'll be forever. Some day, this country's gonna be a fine good place to be. Maybe it needs our bones in the ground before that time can come." The statement suggests that only time and persistence will transform the land into a good place to be. The first bones were actually already in the ground. The community had already celebrated the last rights of the Edwards family. The hymns they sang and the crosses they planted marked a significant step toward the promise of the future.

[31] Even if Debbie could not be rescued, her virtue and whiteness preserved, Chief Scar's people, the Comanches, would have to move on or be extinguished so that Texicans could become Americans. Ethan Edwards makes this clear when the first search party comes across the body of a dead Comanche. As one of the party tries to smash his face in a fit of rage, Ethan asks, "Why don't you finish the job?" and shoots out his eyes. Pressed by a minister for the purpose of the violence, Ethan explains that "what that Comanch believes – ain't got no eyes . . . can't enter the spirit land . . . has to wander forever between the winds." The Indians, already perceived as rootless due to their nomadic ways, struggling to hold on to a rapidly diminishing homeland, would now be spiritually rootless as well.

[32] After searching for years, Ethan and Martin do bring Debbie home. Although Debbie lived with Chief Scar and the Comanches during a formative time in her development, she

still speaks English, the lovely Natalie Wood who plays her could not be whiter, and the community prepares to move on. In the final scene John Wayne stands just outside the door of a frontier house unable to come in. This violent frontier figure cannot comfortably enter the sheltering domestic space of the home (Slotkin offers a brilliant interpretation of the film in 1992: 461-73; see also Kilpatrick: 36-64).

[33] In “The Pilgrimage of Grace,” Anderson also recognizes the significance of bones in the ground for the transformation of place. He writes:

Who will remember in days to come
How all the trails in Christendom,
From Helsingfors to Hudson’s Bay,
Came out on the square at Santa Fe? . . .

And who will hear, at millennium,
The roll of a ghostly garrison drum,
And the clank of sabers and the tread of feet
As the Governor’s men march down the street? . . .

And who will remember when we are dust
The names of the men who put their trust
In Spanish beads and Yankee lead:
Who will remember the deathless dead? . . .

Anderson insists that we do remember this past. The memory of vaqueros and plainsmen, Spanish dons and renegade adventurers calls our attention to the sacrifices that brought civilization and Christianity to the American West. The emphasis on the establishment of Christianity and the progress of civilization, reminiscent in its own way of Turner’s thesis, eliminates the guilt associated with the violence represented by the clank of sabers and the reference to Yankee lead. Anderson asks, finally, that “God give them rest tonight, we pray, / Who sleep at last in Santa Fe.”

[34] In making his request to remember the past in this way, as a pilgrimage of grace, Anderson cannot help, however, but participate in the rationalization of conquest and the assimilation of a history that incorporates the prophetic impulse and the positive moral evaluation of violent events. Only once, for example, do Indians make an appearance in the poem and then only as simple traders on the sleepy square. There are alternatives to this sanitized history, and the Indians on the plaza and in the surrounding pueblos could have told Anderson about it.

Conclusion

[35] In August 1680, the Pueblo peoples responded to more than a century of Spanish violence and religious oppression with a spectacular assault on the colonists. Drought, famine, and Apache raids, in combination with Spanish demands for labor and the suppression of Pueblo religion, had made life for the Pueblos particularly difficult in the 1670s. Pueblo religious leaders promoted the revitalization of traditional religious ceremonies as a way of combating the severe challenges. A Pueblo religious leader named Popé was a key figure in the revitalization movement and in the revolt that accompanied it.

According to sources, Popé received visions and communicated with powerful Pueblo spiritual beings and learned that a return to the old ways would restore order to the Pueblo world.

[36] The Pueblos coordinated the attacks with knotted cords sent via messengers from Taos. Each knot represented a day until the war would begin. Despite the failure of secrecy and a change in the schedule of the revolt, the Pueblos quickly drove the Spanish into the village of Santa Fe, where they hoped to find refuge. Surrounded and under siege, with their water supply cut, the colonists finally decided to abandon the capital for El Paso. The Pueblos allowed them to leave, but not before around four hundred of three thousand Spanish colonists had been killed. The Pueblos also killed twenty-one of New Mexico's thirty-three Franciscans. They desecrated and destroyed churches throughout the region. It took the Spanish sixteen years to complete the reconquest of the northern province (Knaut; Weber: 3-18).

[37] An inquiry into the revolt in December 1681 provided some insight into the reasons for the bloody uprising. Colonial officials asked a Spanish-speaking Indian named Josephe "why the apostates burned the images, churches, and things pertaining to divine worship, making a mockery and a trophy of them, killing the priests and doing the other things they did." Josephe replied that as the Indians burned the church they "shouted in loud voices, 'Now the God of the Spaniards, who was their father, is dead, and Santa María, who was their mother, and the saints, who were pieces of rotten wood,' saying that only their own god lived. Thus they ordered all the temples and images, crosses and rosaries burned, and this function being over, they all went to bathe in the rivers, saying that they thereby washed away the water of baptism." Continuing the rites of purification, they made offerings of feathers, maguey seeds, maize, and tobacco at the center of the village. The people reopened the ceremonial kivas, violated for so long by the Franciscan priests, and started to dance once again. They reclaimed at least for a while their pueblos, the river valley, and their traditions from the oppressive rule of Spaniards (Hackett: 2.238-42).

[38] In the only other poem I have identified by Douglas McClure Anderson, the poet again returns to Santa Fe. This time he narrates the history from the perspective of the ancient town itself. In "Santa Fe Remembers" Coronado and Marcos de Niza appear along with Andalusian grandees, chiefs of the plains tribes, Mexican officials, and "covered-wagons by the tens of hundreds," yet there is no revolt and, indeed, there are not even any Pueblo Indians. Anderson writes:

I have sat too long at the crossroads of the centuries
Not to know what burns in the hearts of the children of man:
Not to know that the faiths and the dreams and the quests of the latest
Are the same as when the slow march of aeons began.

History begins in Anderson's poem with the Spanish *entradas*. Once again the faiths and the dreams and the quests of the prophetic impulse have guided men to this place where they will find their destiny. The latest, like Coronado before them, also seek "the Seven Lost Cities of Cibola, and the gold undreamed of by man." They, too, will "march in the shadow of the Spanish crucifix with Fray Marcos de Nizza."

[39] In his poems, Anderson conducts a kind of archaeological investigation into the layered history of Santa Fe, an inquiry that finds only traces of the people and events that contributed to the history of New Mexico. Native people are for the most part buried in the rubble of the past or present only as silent peddlers of romantic imagery and tourist art. Anderson concludes “Santa Fe Remembers” with a desire to forget, perhaps because the quest for the Lost Cities, the golden dream of gilded perfection, remains and will forever remain unfulfilled. The poet writes on behalf of the village, “I pray that I may be left alone with the ages, / Where the flesh of the strong goes down to the dust of the weak / . . . And I, at long last, am beyond the poor memory of man.” Yet, people do not forget some things very easily, and memory is contested terrain.

[40] Juan de Oñate led soldiers and settlers to New Mexico in 1598, and the four hundredth anniversary of this event prompted celebrations and protests alike. While some people contend that the founding father of New Mexico deserves recognition, others argue that Oñate represents the worst excesses of violent colonialism. Settling New Mexico involved subduing Indians. Oñate’s actions at the Acoma Pueblo are among the most painful memories for those who oppose formal recognition of the colonial leader. In 1599 Oñate responded to resistance at Acoma with orders to cut off a foot of village males. Twenty-four men suffered the awful punishment, and the Acomas and others have never forgotten. In January 1998, almost four hundred years after the violence, a group of protestors took a saw to the foot of a prominently placed Oñate statue in Alcalde, New Mexico. A letter sent to the *Albuquerque Journal* (8 January 1998) explained, “This was done in commemoration of his 400th year anniversary acknowledging his unasked for exploration of our land.” Furthermore, the note said, “We will be melting his foot down and casting small medallions to be sold to those who are historically ignorant.” Like Simon Pokagon at the Columbian Exposition, the protestors saw no reason to honor the arrival of Europeans four centuries earlier. The controversial tactics forced people to consider and reconsider the past and how to remember it.

[41] This Oñate statue received a new foot, unlike the Acoma victims, but the debate over how to remember appropriately the difficult and contentious history of New Mexico continues, just as it does elsewhere in the United States. If the modern Americans who took possession of Santa Fe recite Anderson’s verse, read Turner’s famous essay, or watch uncritically the great westerns of the twentieth century, they will fail to discover the subversive alternative to a simple history of prophecy fulfilled by American progress. Metacom, Tenskwatawa, Simon Pokagon, participants in the Pueblo Revolt, and even the protestors of our own time remind us of the unimaginable violence that made conquest possible as well as of the strength and religious faith that resisted it.

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