UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO

Spectacular Subjects:
Race, Rhetoric, and Visuality in American Public Cultures (1870-1900)

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

in

Literature

by

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Spectacular Subjects:
Race, Rhetoric, and Visuality in American Public Cultures (1870-1900)

by

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Doctor of Philosophy in Literature

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Professor Nicole Tonkovich, Chair

Spectacular Subjects engages with the campaigns of three activists who inserted themselves into the nineteenth century American public sphere to combat forces of exploitation and disfranchisement in the communities they came to represent. The project is divided into three chapters, which correspond to the figures profiled: Ida B. Wells, an African American anti-lynching crusader; Sarah Winnemucca, a Native American advocate for reservation reform; and Wong Chin Foo, a Chinese American journalist for citizenship rights. During the last three decades of the nineteenth century, these subjects published editorials, spoke at live events, testified in courts,

appeared at fairs and exhibitions, and sat for portraits and photographs, participating in an array of cultural production over their careers.

Throughout this project, I show how Wells, Wong, and Winnemucca appropriated technologies of representation across diverse textual forms to craft their public subjectivities and further their political goals. I find that these activists were savvy rhetoricians who understood how they would be seen in the public sphere, and who constructed their public images at times to conform to and at other times to challenge dominant ideologies about how they should appear. This project extends beyond prior scholarship about Wells, Winnemucca, and Wong, to consider performed, written, and visual texts, produced by and about each activist. Through an interdisciplinary analysis of newspaper articles, photographs, pamphlets, literature, and lectures (including rare archival material), I reveal how these texts worked together in the rhetorical valences of each activist's campaign and in the constitution of each one's public subjectivity.

This dissertation is situated at the intersections of American literary, visual and performance studies. Rather than a comparative analysis, this is a relational study that addresses inquiries larger in scope than three individuals' campaigns: I use the campaigns as sites through which to theorize the formation of public subjectivity and the rhetorical contours of the public sphere. I find that the parallels in the campaigns of these activists shed light on the possibilities and limitations that subjects like them experienced in movements for national reform, and reveal the astounding intricacies of race and rhetoric in American public cultures during this era.

Introduction: ***Spectacular Subjects:***
Race, Rhetoric, and Visuality in American Public Cultures (1870-1900)

Spectacular Subjects engages with the campaigns of three activists who inserted themselves into the nineteenth-century American public sphere to combat the forces of exploitation and political disfranchisement in the communities that, in the public eye, they came to represent. The project is divided into three chapters, which correspond to the three figures profiled: Ida B. Wells, an African American anti-lynching crusader; Sarah Winnemucca, a Native American advocate for reservation reform; and Wong Chin Foo, a Chinese American journalist for citizenship rights. During the last three decades of the nineteenth century, these subjects traveled around the country to incite social, political, and legal change on behalf of their respective causes. To this end, Wells, Winnemucca, and Wong published editorials, spoke at live events before large audiences, testified in courts and government offices, appeared at fairs and exhibitions, and sat for portraits and photographs, participating in a large array of cultural production over the course of their long careers in public reform.

The very diversity of these activists' campaigns, individually and collectively, poses challenges for scholars who attempt to survey the contributions that they and their fellow reformers made to the cultural, social, and political landscape. Scholarship about them tends to take the form of either biographical accounts or disciplinary-specific analyses limited to a single genre or two of textual production.[1] This project extends beyond prior scholarship about Wells, Winnemucca, and Wong, to consider

performed, written, and visual texts, produced by and about each activist. By scrutinizing newspaper articles, autobiographical sketches, publicity photographs, pamphlets, literature, and lectures and transcripts of speeches (including rare archival material), I seek to understand how these texts worked together, both in the rhetorical valences of each activist's campaign and in the constitution of each one's public subjectivity.

Rather than a comparative analysis, this is a relational study that addresses inquiries larger in scope than the three individuals' campaigns: How do performed, written, and visual texts relate to one another in national, public reform campaigns? What are the mechanisms that create subjectivity in the public sphere, particularly in the case of persons marked as racially, nationally, or sexually other? What do the campaigns in question reveal about nineteenth-century American public cultures? The answers to these questions lie in the larger societal forces that conditioned how these subjects—and by extension, others like them—were seen in the public sphere. Standing at the intersection of the progressive era, with its devotion to social reform, and the cultural revolution, a time of rapid growth in technologies of representation, our three activists may be viewed as representative of a larger group of reformers whose campaigns are similarly textually diverse and as far-reaching, and hence whose work could be used to further illuminate this complex period.

At first glance the trio of Wells, Winnemucca, and Wong might seem anomalous. With different national backgrounds and belonging to different racial groups, they lived in different geographic regions of the country and worked toward different political goals. Despite these dissimilarities, however, they echo one another

in the criticisms that they leveled at the cultural and political structures in which they worked. Additionally, as will be seen, these were divisive figures, frequently at odds with contemporaries of theirs who had stakes in the activists' political agendas. From their tenuous positions in the public sphere, they transgressed a variety of norms with respect to their race, class, and gender identities, while at the same time appealing to normative respectability politics. They did this in an effort to lend their causes legitimacy. In many ways, these three crafted campaigns that embody many of the tensions that they, as activists of color, faced during this era. The parallels in their campaigns shed light on the possibilities and limitations that subjects like them experienced in movements for national reform.

Throughout this project, I show how Wells, Wong, and Winnemucca appropriated various technologies of representation across diverse textual forms to craft their public subjectivities and further their political goals. In other words, I find that these activists were savvy rhetoricians who understood *how they would be seen* in the public sphere, and who constructed their public images at times to conform to and at other times to challenge dominant ideologies about how they should appear. Always, though, they employed their public images to further the political claims they were making on behalf of the causes for which they fought. The public personas of these three activists, and of others in comparable positions, were constructed in a field of multiple gazes, where their external appearances were highly visually coded. Because their activism was predicated upon their *images*, they adopted innovative strategies to try to control the means by which they were represented. The diversity of

cultural production that circulated in their campaigns in part came out of that struggle over representation.

Over and over I demonstrate how Wells, Winnemucca, and Wong appropriated forms of spectacle as a key tactic. They did so both to craft subjectivities in service of their campaigns and to influence their audiences' perception of them when it came to public debates about citizenship, equality, and the national body. Capitalizing on cultural spectacle, these activists used technologies of vision to expose the everyday violence faced by them and the communities they served across the nation. My analyses of the construction of each activist's public subjectivity in relationship to the arguments they made in their campaigns illuminate the opportunities and limitations that each faced regarding how they could be represented in the larger cultural arena, and how they could—or could not—participate in the public sphere. This involves interpreting their public appearances in the context(s) of larger ideologies about race, class, gender, nation, the body, and visuality, which structured how they were seen and what their bodies and cultural texts meant to their audiences.

It is worth noting here that this study also offers a methodological intervention regarding how scholars might approach such nebulous sites as reform campaigns and the public sphere itself. This study engages with these sites despite the limitations of the archive itself: texts that resist the archive, texts that are missing or that have been destroyed, texts that are inaccurate or highly unreliable. In the face of these challenges, I employ approaches to cultural analysis that American Studies scholars have designated as critical interventions in and hallmarks of this kind of interdisciplinary work.[2] For example, I analyze images in texts that contain no visuals;

I interpret performance without ever seeing the subjects on stage; and I locate strategy, intent, and intervention in subjects that shapeshift so thoroughly that it is impossible to separate authenticity from artifice. I reveal rich and nuanced intertextual dialogue among texts that do not appear to be related, but that in fact were produced and performed in dialogue with one another. Finally, I heed the calls of these three activists by engaging with their campaign materials—not just as sites or objects of analysis, but as a methodology by which to see and interpret the American public sphere itself. It is important to remember that Wells, Wong, and Winnemucca created their bodies of work not just to further their own interests and their respective causes, but to illuminate and critique the very conditions of American modernity that structured their lives, and the lives of those for whom they were advocating.

Modernity and Race

The last three decades of the nineteenth century brought significant cultural, social, and political upheaval. As Alan Trachtenberg discusses in his preface to *The Incorporation of America,* the economic foundation of the nation shifted radically as the agrarian and mercantile systems of the earlier nineteenth century gave way to an increasingly urban, industrial, capitalist society. Trachtenberg uses the idea of "incorporation" to locate and connect key tensions in these shifts:

> [T]he term "incorporation" gives a name to visible signs of change and less visible causes; it's both a description and an explanation . . . a way to braid together several simultaneous stories: colonization of the West, standardization of time; linking of East and West Coast by railroad; mechanization of production; the rise of metropolis with its department stores, railroad terminals, and tall office buildings. Less tangible but no less material manifestations included new class formations and

> antagonisms, extreme polarization of the propertied and the propertyless. (ix-x)

The changes that Trachtenberg refers to are illustrative of late nineteenth-century modernity. Trachtenberg's main argument is that the struggle over national incorporation, or the forging of a unified, coherent nation, came out of profound contradictions in modernity, especially the ones affecting new class formations.

As Seth Moglen claims in his introduction to *Mourning Modernity*, these concurrent and contradictory realities produced both political hope and political despair in the national body. On the one hand, as Moglen writes, "Burgeoning advanced capitalism brought benefits: dazzling new technologies, exciting forms of urban life, access to undreamt of commodities, and the expanding promise of social mobility and material prosperity." On the other hand, however, Moglen declares that "Millions also felt the emerging economic order inflicting terrible wounds: intensifying economic exploitation, extreme social and material inequality, a betrayal of democracy, and pervasive feelings of alienation" (xiii). The phenomena that Moglen describes here can be summarized by an overview of the multiple, competing meanings of the notion of progress in this era.

For the subjects of this dissertation, progress meant increased opportunity for equality and inclusion, or, to echo Trachtenberg, the opportunity for national incorporation. It meant a public sphere that was more democratic and open to participation by women and minorities, subjects who were previously less visible in American culture. This was facilitated by an explosion of mass and popular culture, modes of public discourse that appeared to promise expanding avenues for self-

representation, community participation, and political intervention. However, simultaneously, articulations of national progress ran counter to the opportunity promised by an increasingly democratic public sphere. As I discuss later in this introduction, dominant notions of progress were linked to technological and scientific advancements, which emphasized social control through surveillance and the taxonomic categorization of racialized populations. Mass culture was used to disseminate and popularize devastating racial and sexual stereotypes. Increasing public fascination with spectacle and visual phenomena tended to serve a dominant imperialist social order. Hence late century modernity became closely associated with the key concept of national progress, but whose vision of progress? Therein lie the contradictions of late century modernity, and my references to modernity throughout the dissertation are always in the context of these tensions.

This dissertation finds that the campaigns of Wells, Winnemucca, and Wong are linked through their complex relationships to modernity amid these contradictions. It was out of this tension that Wells, Winnemucca, and Wong developed their campaigns: they took to the public sphere in response to the wounds inflicted upon the communities for which they fought, with the aim of exposing the fault lines in American democracy. Those dazzling technologies that Moglen referenced offered opportunities to do just that: they enabled reformers to use various forms of media to represent themselves and their causes to mass audiences of spectators. Or, to echo Nancy Bentley in her introduction to *Frantic Panoramas*, these activists seized the opportunity to harness the energies of mass print and spectacle toward new forms of

thinking (18-19). No doubt they were moved by a combination of political despair and hope.

The context for their political struggle included relatively new frameworks for understanding and interpreting racial identity and how race was represented in the public sphere. Fledgling theories in developmental anthropology and biology, derived from the work of Lewis Henry Morgan and inspired by Darwin's theories of evolution, identified and categorized racial types on a linear scale from barbarism to civilization. Anglo Saxons represented the pinnacle of civilization, while Native American tribes and people of African descent represented different stages of savagery and barbarism.[3] Morgan's successor, Franz Boas, became one of the founding fathers of modern Anthropology, facilitating spectacular displays of humans and human artifacts in the public sphere, in venues such as the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893. Boas's public exhibitions of racial others, in mass venues such as world's fairs and museums, were intended to offer visual evidence of white progress and modern advancements by using non-white people and primitive objects to represent savagery.

In this understanding of race, which was dominant in America at the time, racial characteristics were imagined to be fixed, essential, and natural. Furthermore, as I will show later in the introduction, they were imagined to be visibly apparent through signifiers on the body, or scientifically discernable biological tests of one's blood or physical measurements. These ideologies, of course, ran counter to everyday phenomena that suggested that race was, in reality, indeterminate and utterly confounding. In their public appearances Wells, Winnemucca, and Wong were attempting, by manipulating the racial signifiers attached to their bodies (such as their

dress and hairstyles), to work within the dominant ideologies of their respective racial groups to cast themselves as authentic or respectable with regard to their political work. At the same time, their manipulation of racial signifiers undermined essentialized notions of race. This suggests that *they* understood race to be fluid, malleable, and changing. In a sense, then, their cultural and political work bridges dominant understandings of racial meaning in the late nineteenth century with contemporary understandings of racial construction. My analysis of their campaigns acknowledges that majority opinion at the time viewed race as biologically determined and stable, while engaging with race as socially and culturally constructed. This approach depends on recognizing the relevant building blocks of the construct, the signifying practices that only come to have stable meanings and material effects through their repetition on a structural level and particularly through their reification in social constructs that impact everyday life.

This understanding of race comes from the seminal book by Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States from the 1960s to the 1980s*. In it they use the key concept of "racial projects" to identify how race came to be a set of meaningful organizational principles in American society and culture. They posit that racial projects were enacted through a combination of social structures (such as laws, policies, and customs), and through cultural representations (such as literature, photography, and performance). Cultural representations can be reflective of larger social structures; but, as many scholars have noted, they can also shape social structures.[4] Even though *Racial Formation* applies specifically to the contemporary United States, the processes described in this study are germane to the late nineteenth

century; indeed, this was an era of far-reaching new racial projects that repositioned African Americans, Native Americans, Chinese Americans, and other groups within the body politic.

My analysis of the public subjectivities of Wells, Winnemucca, and Wong engages the optics of race, class, and gender in this period. It outlines how these reformers staged and performed their identities through appropriating and repurposing the visual meanings that were socially/culturally attached to identity. I also consider how they were represented by others in the periodical press. Parallels in the mechanisms of racial representations that I identify in the context of each campaign become the connective tissue of this study. My conception of this study as a relational one is informed by Natalia Molina's work in *How Race is Made in America*. Here is how she differentiates between relational and comparative analyses: "a comparative treatment of race compares and contrasts groups, treating them as independent of one another; a relational treatment recognizes that race is a mutually constitutive process and thus attends to how, when, where and to what extent groups intersect" (3). Hence, while I analyze each individual campaign in a separate chapter, the study as a whole identifies intersections in the critiques made by each activist and in the representational strategies that each uses.

What I identify is very much akin to the key concept of "racial scripts" that Molina coins in her book. As she writes, racial scripts "highlight the ways in which the lives of racialized groups are linked across time and space and thereby affect one another, even when they do not directly cross paths" (7). She adds that racial groups are also subject to various principles and processes of racialization, and that they

invent what she calls counterscripts to create alternative expressions of racial meaning or to challenge or resist dominant racial scripts. She states that "a racial scripts approach pulls the lens back so that we can see different racial projects operating at the same time, affecting different groups simultaneously" (7-8). This dissertation acts precisely in this way: while I focus on the specificities of racial formation in each chapter, the dissertation as a whole pulls the lens back to account for how three concurrent campaigns that operated independently in the public sphere followed very similar scripts.

In this study, those scripts emerge in the descriptions of how racial minorities like Wells, Winnemucca, and Wong could access the public sphere, and in the analysis of how those minorities chose to conform to or challenge societal expectations. As I noted earlier, I find that Wells, Winnemucca, and Wong faced very similar cultural and political regimes around respectability and authenticity and used very similar rhetorical techniques[5] to represent themselves in the public sphere—techniques that both drew upon and challenged regimes of spectacle in mass culture. The title of this dissertation is a nod to those representational techniques. It is an attempt to articulate my point that the subjectivities of figures like Wells, Winnemucca, and Wong were *effects* of the larger representational constructs in which they worked, namely the conditions of visibility that structured how they could participate in the public sphere.

Visuality and Spectacle in the Dominant Public Sphere

Wells, Winnemucca, and Wong were all recognizable (and at times, notorious) public figures throughout the nation in the last three decades of the nineteenth century.

The campaigns they waged, despite the different causes and contexts of their work, circulated through very similar facets of the public sphere. They used their campaigns as vehicles to maximize the circulation of their bodies and texts in the service of their causes because this proved to be the most effective way for them to access and influence public opinion. As Jürgen Habermas theorized, the public sphere contains multiple sites in which people, mostly of the bourgeois class, gather to discuss social matters, work through competing or contradictory ideologies, and ultimately form a *public opinion*.[6] Habermas's emphasis on the role of the public sphere in mediating multiple intersecting and competing discourses connects to the late nineteenth century, when the national public sphere had a hand in reconciling contradictions about the character and identity of the nation.[7]

In the late nineteenth century debates of this sort yielded competing visions of what an "incorporated" America should look like, to recall Trachtenberg's term. As I discuss at length, the cultural formations of the dominant public sphere created new systems of knowledge that profoundly impacted social relations and political developments. This was the cultural moment that saw the rise of world's fairs, Wild West shows, museum displays, scientific exhibitions, circuses, freak shows, lectures, and performances of all kinds, including vaudeville and minstrel shows.[8] While these highly popular events were designed as entertainment, they also sought to performatively[9] create a coherent national body. Many of these events sought to consolidate notions of national identity by making clear which kinds of bodies did and which did not *belong* in the citizenry.[10] From world's fairs to freak shows, large exhibitionary events in the public sphere often featured glittering visions of

technological advancement, scientific discovery, and the development of industry. They frequently contrasted those scenes of alleged Anglo Saxon ingenuity with scenes depicting the imperial conquest of so-called savage peoples at home and abroad. Bodies and artifacts from around the globe were on put on display for mass audiences who were fascinated by the exotic spectacle.

These public visual displays participated in what Tony Bennett calls "the exhibitionary complex" of the nineteenth century. Bennett references Foucault's model of the "carceral archipelago" to argue that articulations of power, regulation, and surveillance were not limited to the confinement of bodies (as Foucault argues in *Discipline and Punish*), but were also exercised through the public ordering and display of bodies and objects in venues such as art museums, arcades/malls, and fairs and expositions. As Bennett argues, the exhibitionary complex "sought not to map the social body in order to know the populace by rendering it visible to power. Instead, through the provision of object lessons in power—the power to command and arrange things and bodies for public display—[it] sought to allow the people, and *en masse* rather than individually, to know rather than be known, to become the subjects rather than the objects of knowledge" (119). Collectively, then, these events and shows worked within the exhibitionary complex to codify visual signifiers of racial, national, gender, and sexual difference. The visual content of these shows was frequently constructed to serve as scientific evidence of Anglo Saxon (bourgeois, male, able-bodied) superiority, and as justification of the exploitation and second-class political status of racialized populations. This produced a kind of "common sense" knowledge

about what identity, citizenship, and progress *looked like* for a mass audience of observers.

Jonathan Crary offers a theoretical corollary to Bennett's arguments about the role of visuality in the organization of social relations and the hierarchies of power in the public sphere; his work underscores the significance of the observer in the exhibitionary complex. In *Techniques of the Observer*, Crary argues that throughout the nineteenth century, shifts in the organization of knowledge produced modern observers, or subjects who understood themselves and their relationship to others specifically through the mechanisms of the gaze. As Bennett notes in the passage above, the dominant arrangement of visual phenomena in the public sphere during this era enabled mass audiences—the observers—to define, interpret, and classify the observed. Normative relations of looking involved a predominantly white consumerist class who gazed upon the spectacle of the other, and who understood themselves in opposition to that objectified other on stage. This is how the exhibitionary complex did its ideological work: Observers learned to identify themselves as normal by what was displayed as abnormal, as virtuous by what was displayed as morally corrupt, as progressive by what was displayed as backward, as a citizen of the nation by what was displayed as un-American.

Hence both Bennett and Crary suggest that, corresponding with developments in modern technologies of visual representation, the relationship between *seeing* and *knowing* took on a new role in the creation and organization of knowledge and social relationships during this era. In *The History of Bourgeois Perception*, Donald Lowe offers a model of how the relationship between seeing and knowing contributed to the

construction of a bourgeoisie, or middle class, in the late nineteenth century. Lowe argues that primacy of sight intersected with a new "typographic culture" to enable the emergence of a middle class, defined primarily through its ability to perceive others, and through the epistemological constructs that were attached to that perception. Lowe writes, "Typography promoted the ideal that knowledge could be detached from the knower to become impartial and explicit. The primacy of sight made possible scientific verification of that knowledge" (18). Lowe's references to typography, or letterpress printing, underscore a culture reoriented by easily reproducible and reproduced texts, a particular hallmark of the late nineteenth century, given the unprecedented circulation of illustrated weeklies, story papers, dime novels, and other cheap mass media.

Just as live exhibitionary events experienced a surge in mass audienceship, popular periodicals experienced a surge in mass readership in the late nineteenth century. Advancements in education produced an increasingly literate public; and, as Lowe discusses, developments in printing technology and infrastructure allowed for periodicals to be reproduced and circulated on a wide scale.[11] Periodical literature in this period was also more visual than ever before, featuring pages crammed with political cartoons, illustrated stories, block prints, and even halftone photographs.[12] Rather than circulating as discrete textual forms, live-audience events worked in tandem with the periodical press. For example, advertisements and editorials in newspapers and magazines announced upcoming events; and in turn, staff at those events distributed typographic and visual materials to audiences, including journalists in attendance. Journalists turned around and penned blow-by-blow highlights for

readers who were not able to be present, and they occasionally reproduced or responded to materials from the events. Readers then frequently wrote in to comment on the event, or the journalist's take on the event. This back-and-forth constituted an intertextual dialogue, one of the ways that public debate took place in the public sphere. These interdependent cultural formations structured the public debate so as to negotiate shared meanings. The debates may have been about specific events or regional news, but they were always linked to larger ideologies about pressing national issues.

In *Never One Nation*, Linda Frost explains this phenomenon through a comparative analysis of regional periodicals in the years surrounding the Civil War, which, she maintains, facilitated regionally specific ideologies about nation and place. Overall, however, Frost finds that while the content and tone of news articles varied by geographical region throughout the United States—from coverage of the 1862 Dakota uprising in Minnesota newspapers, to representations of African American slaves in Southern periodicals—they are ideologically connected by how they consolidated Anglo Saxon identity in response to the question of "who should have possession of American identity" (36). Frost finds that the primary function of popular periodicals was to consolidate a nationalist whiteness against those constructed as freaks and savages in their pages. Frost's analysis is especially attentive to the functions of image in this type of literature, with its focus on the articulation of race, class, and gender difference through spectacle.

Wells, Winnemucca, and Wong took to the public sphere to respond to this question of "who should have possession of American identity" and to expose and

critique the violent imperialist regimes that impacted their lives and the lives of those they represented.[13] They inserted themselves squarely into the exhibitionary complex, placing themselves in the very sites at which power relations were articulated and nationalist ideologies were formed. From that vantage point they interrogated their audiences' perceptions, both of them (as in their bodies, identities, and causes), and of the character and identity of the nation. Thus, all three of these activists staged their multiple forms of cultural production to work both within and against the ideologies that mediated the epistemologies of vision and perception during this era.

Spectacle, Subjectivity, and Reform

Wells, Winnemucca, and Wong were recognizable public figures by virtue of how they staged their interventions. Over the course of my research, I collected mounds of material—essays, articles, images, advertisements, pamphlets, transcripts, remembrances, and other bits of ephemera related to their campaigns and their work in the public sphere. I viewed copies of the anti-lynching pamphlets that Ida B. Wells distributed at the World's Columbian Exposition. I read descriptions in California newspapers about the tableaux vivants in which Sarah Winnemucca participated. I followed sensational accounts in the *Chicago Daily Tribune* of Wong's civil disobedience in a local courthouse.

In these moments and many others, Wells, Winnemucca, and Wong were actively cultivating spectacle not just as a means of gaining wide audiences, but also as a rhetorical strategy. Spectacle emerges as the predominant framework that not only structures and links live-audience shows and the periodical press within the

exhibitionary complex of the late nineteenth century, but also provides the means by which reformers gained access to and staged their arguments within the public sphere. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines spectacle as “a specially prepared or arranged display of a more or less public nature (esp. one on a large scale), forming an impressive or interesting show or entertainment for those viewing it,” or "person or thing exhibited to, or set before, the public gaze as an object either (a) of curiosity or contempt, or (b) of marvel or admiration.” This definition specifies the key elements of spectacle: it is highly visual in nature, it engenders a positive or negative fascination among a viewing audience, and it occurs in the space between the objects or images on display and the viewing audience, through the mechanism of the gaze.

As Guy Debord argues, spectacle is not merely a collection of images; rather, it is a force that mediates human relationships. It does this, according to Debord, through images, or more specifically, by constructing a relationship between audience and image. While *Society of the Spectacle* (1967) is primarily an analysis of postmodern culture, it pinpoints the origin of spectacle culture in the United States in the nineteenth century, when the public sphere became a realm of representation. It was there that spectacle became a potent mediating force in that representation, and henceforth in the hierarchies of social power. Most scholars understand spectacle as a powerful tool in the creation and maintenance of hegemonic social relations. For example, Alan Trachtenberg notes that in the late nineteenth century, spectacle was an articulation of modernity, and was a primary force in the push for national incorporation because of its ability to produce familiarity and habituation among viewing audiences. Trachtenberg, writes, “Spectacle instructs by aestheticized

mystification; in print as advertising or in theatricalized display it produces passive consumption of what's given in place of critical skepticism, consumers in place of engaged citizens" (x-xi). Indeed, spectacle created a dominant class of American viewers—very much as Crary and Bennett theorized—just as it still does today.

Cultural spectacles, however, were so multivalent in their composition, circulation, and reception that they often exceeded their dominant ideological purpose. Spectacle is inherently unstable and open to interpretation, manipulation, and the creation of alternative meanings both by participants in the spectacle and by spectators. This is why spectacle was such a potentially rich and productive medium for activists like Wells, Winnemucca, and Wong in which to work—it not only provided them access to the public sphere, but it also became a rhetorical mechanism in and of itself, a tool they could use to try to shift or alter the conditions of representation and the relations of power.

The three reformers under study in this dissertation fall within the purview of diverse activist crusades in this era, including the labor, temperance, education, and women's movements, to name just a few. As Amy Hughes argues in *Spectacles of Reform*, spectacle was a critical part of those campaigns throughout the nineteenth century. Hughes draws from Debord's framework regarding how spectacle mediates power in social relations; however, she reappropriates that framework by examining the power of spectacle to facilitate social critique. Hughes's study, which looks at American activist melodramas in the mid-nineteenth century, engages with spectacle not as a feature of a larger work or event, but as a methodology or "a unique system of communication, employed in myriad contexts, that rehearses and sustains conceptions

of race, gender, and class in extremely powerful ways" (4). Her definition of spectacle enables her to examine how activists in the progressive era tapped into the performative functions of spectacle to interrogate, destabilize, or redefine conceptions of race, gender, and class. The consistent appeal to spectacle by Wells, Winnemucca, and Wong reveals that they understood the power of spectacle and that they used it as a critical part of their rhetorical methodologies to advance their campaigns.

Working *with* spectacle as a rhetorical tool and *within* spectacle as a larger structuring framework for their interventions meant that Wells, Winnemucca, and Wong had to navigate tricky terrain in the public sphere. On the one hand, working with and within spectacle offered these reformers multiple ways to manipulate their audiences' gazes and the public field of vision. On the other hand, these activists had to negotiate ambiguous lines between working with and within spectacle, and becoming objects *of* spectacle. Whenever activists became objects of spectacle, their agency and their ability to construct alternative meanings for their audiences were threatened or foreclosed.[14] The normative relations of looking and the race, class, and gender signifiers discursively attached to activists' own bodies were always both their currency and their liability with respect to their work in the public sphere. Much of the analysis in the body of this dissertation follows how Wells, Winnemucca, and Wong manipulated visual signifiers across all of their texts: their incorporation of visual description in their writing; their uses of illustration, image, and photography; and their bodily representations in their performances. In their rhetorical work with the gaze, the three of them were continually asserting particular versions of themselves or

certain aspects of their public subjectivities against the forces of objectification and in the service of their social and political interventions.

Throughout this dissertation, I use the term "public subjectivity" to refer to the layers of meaning that accumulate around a public figure with regard to that figure's real or perceived social position, identity, character, and significance. This meaning is derived out of a complex interplay between subject and audience, or between self-representation and the perceptions of others. Shawn Michelle Smith's scholarly work helps illuminate how the epistemological framework for vision during this era mediated the constructs for public subjectivity. Smith argues in *American Archives* that nineteenth-century observers understood visual markers on the body to be indicative of an interiority, or an essence or truth, about the character of the person being observed. Smith notes that nineteenth-century observers relied upon this ideology about readable, apparent, knowable interior essences to stabilize race, class, and gender identities—despite the fact that the visual markers that allegedly signaled these identities were shifting and unstable. Smith recontextualizes the technological changes in vision and representation that occurred throughout the nineteenth century within the rise of scientific and sentimental discourses, in order to trace how visual practices *produced* subjectivities.[15]

Yet while Smith emphasizes that these visual practices yielded dominant forms of white middle-class privilege and exclusionary nationalism, she cautiously reminds her readers that the instability and excess of visual meaning also produced space for counter-representations. Ultimately, Smith argues

> [N]ot only that photographic archives stabilized a white middle-class subject in distinction to racial and criminal others . . . but also that such archives stabilized that middle-class subject by endowing it with a laudable interiority. Thus, the photographic archive both delimited the boundary between self and other and reaffirmed a distinction between interior and exterior, positing a split subjectivity that could be harnessed, in turn, to the larger delineations of self and other that determined national identities. (7)

Smith notes that this potential for "harnessing" is not unidirectional. The new visual practices that Smith theorizes opened up avenues for those othered by the gaze to manipulate the signifiers attached to their bodies, to redirect the gaze, to look back at their audiences. It is this opportunity for harnessing the gaze that drew Wells, Winnemucca, and Wong into the public sphere. It is precisely those moments that show how thoroughly they struggled to control the representations of themselves and of those on whose behalf they campaigned that I closely examine in this dissertation. Their work underscores how, across their very different battles for social and political change, enacting agency and intervention in the visual public sphere became part of the battle itself.

Daphne Brooks explores the opportunities that public figures had for self-representation, self-fashioning, and agency during this era in her meticulously researched study, *Bodies in Dissent: Spectacular Performances of Race and Freedom, 1850-1910*. Brooks maps how African American performers transformed the conditions of alienation and estrangement that came with the hypervisibility of their black bodies on stage. "Wedding social estrangement with aesthetic experimentalism and political marginalization with cultural innovation," Brooks argues, "these resourceful cultural workers envisioned a way to transform the uncertainties of (black)

self-knowledge directly into literal and figurative acts of self-affirmation" (3). Brooks cites feminist performance theorist Elin Diamond's term "looking-at-being-looked-at-ness,"[16] which attempts to capture how actors knew that their very bodies on stage were spectacles, and how they used that knowledge to "critically defamiliarize their own bodies by way of performance in order to yield alternative racial and gender epistemologies" (5). Brooks's argument rests on the important premise that cultural workers who put themselves in the public eye understood how the gaze worked in relationship to epistemologies of race and gender. Overall, she examines "the ways that various historical and cultural figures engineered and experimented with diverse cultural innovations and in doing so, crafted new forms of narrative agency and corporeal representation in theatricalized spaces" (11). The agency and representation to which Brooks refers constitutes the (very much embattled) subjectivities of the performers whose work she carefully reconstructs.

Throughout this dissertation, I attempt to hold space for agency, resistance, and self-fashioning—all vital tools in the interventions that our three activists made through their campaigns—as I simultaneously grapple with the formidable constraints that came with the regimes of mass spectacle and the dominant relations of looking. Furthermore, through identifying their subjectivities as *effects* of the cultural production that became the foundation for those identities, I gesture toward the complexity of their public work; the multiple valences through which their public appearances registered; and, ultimately, the utter impossibility of gaining unmediated or "authentic" access to who they were and what they created during their public work.

Methodology and Chapter Breakdown

At times, Wells, Winnemucca, and Wong devised their participation in the public sphere in accordance with their articulation of the dominant signifiers of their perceived race, class, gender, and sexual identities. At other times (or at the same time), their work was predicated upon their subversion of these signifiers. This study is not about whether these figures ultimately assimilated or resisted hegemonic norms of representation, or whether their campaigns were successful or unsuccessful. Instead, this study interrogates the discursive possibilities of racialized performance and the conditions of public visibility in this era. For each of these three reformers, how exactly may we distinguish between self-representation and *being* represented? The means by which each activist could participate in the public sphere were circumscribed and highly mediated because assembling a public audience often required negotiating longstanding, pervasive norms regarding how they could or should appear in public.

The individual chapters of this dissertation provide vivid examples of this dilemma. Wells had to contend with respectability politics and the norms of representation that governed how middle class black women were supposed to look and act. Winnemucca was constantly in dialogue with stereotypes about Indian savagery and patronizing ideas about Native American "dependence" on the United States. Additionally, she both cultivated and could never escape the "Indian Princess" caricature, and she had to contend with questions about her sexual propriety in the national press. Wong both courted and battled the framework that rendered bodies of Asian descent as "curiosities" or objects of fascination and repulsion and the ways in

which bodies like his were often represented as the antithesis of American masculinity.

For these activists and others like them, the conditions of public visibility entailed working within or against these visually coded "types," which both enabled and constrained these subjects' participation in the public sphere. As these constructs were inescapable, and as they facilitated both access to the public sphere and objectification within the public sphere, activists and the texts they produced were continuously citing, denying, negotiating, altering, invoking, resisting, remaking, and destabilizing the reigning representational norms. Hence, even in the work they themselves produced, the boundaries between self-representation and being represented are blurred: for Wells, Winnemucca, and Wong—and others like them—there was no such thing as unmediated self-representation.

This applied even more clearly to texts *about* these reformers, which circulated as prolifically in the public sphere as the texts they themselves created, and were just as instrumental in creating who these subjects were, or what these subjects meant, to their audiences. For every essay, speech, or performance that activists produced, there were articles, reviews, and editorials *about* them. Some were in support of their causes; some were personal attacks; and some were sensational, ambivalent, or critical reviews of their work. The amplification of these subjects and their work across different media extended the spectacle of their public appearances to wider audiences, beyond those who were spectators at the events. Hence newspaper articles or other reports, written by journalists or others present at the live events, which purported to

"retell" the content of the performance or lecture as it happened, came to serve as proxies for the original public occasion.

At times, these accounts drew far wider audiences than the primary "texts" (the live lectures and performances). Since the primary texts are not always available to researchers today, the follow-up written reports stand in as objects of analysis in and of themselves; they fill in the absences in the archive, but they certainly do not replace the primary text. In the late nineteenth century, when the performances that inform this study took place, there was no widespread audio or video technology, which led to notoriously sloppy reporting; and, as I show throughout the chapters that follow, many contemporary articles and reviews are unreliable. Additionally, critiques of this sort are always filtered through the perception of the reporter. This corpus of hybrid documents is fascinating: it captures the tensions between the elusive primary text and the impressions, ideas, and opinions of the viewing public. The picture becomes even richer when we consider that the performance reports circulated alongside the campaign materials that the activists created. Together these diverse textual forms produced a dialogue in the public sphere that reveals what might be called the intertextuality of these activists' public subjectivities.

In the first chapter I analyze a pamphlet that Ida B. Wells co-wrote, edited, and disseminated at the Chicago World's Fair, "The Reason Why the Colored American is Not in the World's Columbian Exposition" (1893), which Wells scholars usually read as a critique of the lack of African American representation at the fair. I find that Wells makes a far more radical argument. In refuting the dominant perception that lynching was justified punishment for savage black men who preyed upon innocent

white women, Wells exposed that the racist economy of Lynch Law was a function of the capitalistic exploitation of black labor. As such it served to advance national progress at the expense of the rights of former slaves. I argue that Wells included lynching photographs in the pamphlet to put the spectacle of murdered black bodies in dialogue with the glittering visions of American modernity in the Exposition.

As the most prominent leader of an international movement to stop lynching in the American South, Wells appeared on stage and in studio photographs as the very model of Victorian femininity, a role denied to black women during this era. I connect Wells's use of lynching photography in her campaign to the ways that she created a visual subjectivity that invoked a sentimental virtuosity typically reserved for Anglo Saxon women. I elucidate how Wells's use of photography challenged the widespread dehumanization of black bodies and manipulated the rhetoric of race science to provide visual evidence of the savagery of white American modernity.

In the second chapter I treat the work of Sarah Winnemucca, the first Native woman to publish an autobiography. Winnemucca released *Life Among the Piutes: Their Wrongs and Claims* (1883) in conjunction with a larger campaign she waged all along the East Coast to gain land rights for her tribe, the Northern Paiutes. She conducted her campaign with the support of white reformers who were advocating reservation reform and who helped earn Winnemucca an invitation to appear before the Congressional Subcommittee on Indian Affairs in 1884. In that hearing Winnemucca testified about the conditions of her tribe and asked that they be brought back from a reservation in the state of Washington and receive permanent land rights to a parcel of land in their native homeland in Nevada. The transcript of that

testimony, an archival document buried for the last few decades in a tiny museum in Nevada, is the foundation for this chapter's exploration of Winnemucca's rhetorical strategies.

Most existing scholarship about Sarah Winnemucca is in the vein of literary analysis, and/or is caught between the polarizing debate of whether she was "resistant" to white imperialism or "assimilationist" within the regimes of white power. To attempt to go beyond these disciplinary and theoretical constraints I analyze the Subcommittee transcript alongside her other forms of written and visual cultural production, such as her autobiography and press photos. I argue that Winnemucca's increasing appropriation of white reform rhetoric throughout her campaign illuminates more about the constraints and conditions for Indian participation in the dominant public sphere than it does about Winnemucca's subjectivity or the history and experiences of her tribe. Winnemucca's position in public is predicated upon her being a knowledgeable informant regarding the experiences of her tribe and a recognizable and relatable representative of her people. As such, she is able to manipulate the regimes of public representation and visibility to gesture to the trouble with the politics of knowledge—both in the national debate about Indian policy and regarding the reliability of technologies of modern representations. This, I argue, is an essential part of Winnemucca's critique of American imperialism: that the forms of modernity that reformers pointed to as evidence that U.S. society was superior, progressive, and civilized were manipulable, thoroughly unstable, and inherently violent.

In the final chapter of this project I profile Wong Chin Foo, who resided in New York City and Chicago in the last three decades of the nineteenth century,

launched the first Chinese language newspaper in the United States, organized Chinese exhibits in two world's fairs, and founded the first Chinese voters' rights league on the East coast. Despite his impressive range of achievements, however, Wong has been virtually forgotten in contemporary scholarship. This might be because his primary texts and biographical narrative remain largely unpublished. I suspect, additionally, that the fact that Wong waged a public campaign through a dizzying array of genres, facets of culture, and public personas makes his work exceedingly difficult to engage using traditional disciplinary methodologies.

In this chapter I draw from my extensive archival research on Wong Chin Foo to discuss two sensational public appearances in which he invoked figurative or literal violence against Chinese exclusion: his bid to fight anti-Chinese labor organizer Denis Kearney in a duel, and an incident in which Wong brandished a gun against a white attorney in court. Analyzing periodical reports of these events alongside his scathing editorial "Why Am I a Heathen?" (1887), I argue that Wong staged these visual spectacles to underscore the violence of anti-Chinese rhetoric and to disrupt dominant cultural representations of Chinese immigrants as unfit for American citizenship. Ultimately, while Wong's claims for citizenship rights for *assimilated* Chinese immigrants were problematic, his radical performances located Chinese people, culture, and labor within—rather than outside of—American modernity.

Across the three chapters of this dissertation, I demonstrate how Wells, Winnemucca, and Wong cultivated a hyper-visibility to further their arguments for social and political equality and to invert nationalist rhetoric to expose the racial violence at the core of American modernity. My argument traces how these three

figures managed complex negotiations between competing visions of progress in late nineteenth-century American modernity. Whereas the individual chapters delve into very specific moments in these activists' careers, the dissertation as a whole illuminates the intertextuality of cultural production in the public sphere, the role of visuality in that intertextual dialogue and in the constitution of public subjectivity, and the mechanisms of spectacle in activism during this era. Along with shedding new light on the activism of Wells, Winnemucca, and Wong, this dissertation seeks to demystify the very contours of the public sphere during this era.

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[1] Although no study of which I am aware links these particular practitioners, excellent interdisciplinary studies of activism during this era, which are central to the academic discourse into which this dissertation is entering, are increasing in number. My research is indebted to P. Gabrielle Foreman's *Activist Sentiments: Reading Black Women in the Nineteenth Century*; Carol Mattingly's *Well Tempered Women: Nineteenth-Century Temperance Rhetoric*; Nicole Tonkovich's *The Allotment Plot*; Bruce Baum and Duchess Harris's anthology *Racially Writing the Republic: Racists, Race Rebels, and Transformations of American Identity*; and Daphne Brooks's *Bodies in Dissent: Spectacular Performances of Race and Freedom, 1850-1910*. While I was working on this dissertation, Shelley Streeby published *Radical Sensations: World Movements, Violence, and Visual Culture*; her analysis of the visual rhetoric of U.S. activists in an international context touches on many of the same themes as the ones that I examine in this study.

[2] Alan Trachtenberg, Shawn Smith, Daphne Brooks, Eric Lott, Joy Kasson, Laura Wexler, and Saidiya Hartman all come to mind as representative practitioners of interdisciplinary American cultural studies; their techniques in engaging with visual texts, performative texts, ephemeral texts, popular texts, and missing or absent texts inform my own methodologies throughout this dissertation.

[3] For a brief overview of Morgan's theory, see "Evolution" in Gary Ferraro and Susan Andreatta's *Cultural Anthropology: An Applied Perspective* (74-75).

[4] I take a cue from Lisa Lowe and David Lloyd, who state: "Rather than adopting the understanding of culture as one sphere in a set of differentiated spheres and practices, we discuss 'culture' as a terrain in which politics, culture, and the economic form an inseparable dynamic" (1).

[5] I use the terms "rhetoric" or "rhetorical" here and throughout the dissertation to refer to persuasive speech. In this study, persuasive speech can consist of, or occur through, performance, dress, image, writing, oratory and any other number of cultural practices. I mark Wells, Wong and Winnemucca as rhetoricians through my analysis of how they created persuasive speech across a variety of textual forms; they reconstructed, manipulated, appropriated and disrupted representational constructs and the normative relationships between signifier and signified. My conception of "rhetoric" hence marks a departure from scholarship that considers rhetoric as exclusively connected to public oratorical culture or the study of oratory, and is instead more representative of approaches in critical cultural studies.

[6] In *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, Habermas argues that social and economic shifts in the late eighteenth century, brought about by the end of feudalism and the formation of early capitalism, precipitated the creation of the kind of public sphere that we recognize as such today, and that existed in surprisingly similar form at the end of the nineteenth century.

[7] Nancy Bentley points out that Habermas models public discourse after the reading public of the bourgeois class of eighteenth-century Europe and hence did not believe that the postliterary communication and associations fostered by mass media were genuinely public. Bentley notes that Habermas believed that with mass culture, "the web of public communication unraveled into acts of individualized reception" within consumer culture (qtd. in Bentley 5-6). Bentley describes how scholars of the public sphere who draw from Habermas's theories reconcile this tension.

[8] Alan Trachtenberg and Robert Rydell have written important works about world's fairs. See also Jennifer Barrett's recent *Museums and the Public Sphere*; Rosemarie Garland Thomson's fascinating work on freak shows, circuses, and disability; Eric Lott's study of blackface minstrelsy, *Love and Theft*; and Daphne Brooks's aforementioned study of black live-stage performance in the second half of the nineteenth century, *Bodies in Dissent*.

[9] My use of the term "performatively" here and throughout the dissertation, comes out of J.L. Austin's work on performative speech acts, as applied by Judith Butler. Influenced also in her theories about gender construction by Derridean and Foucauldian philosophies, Butler offers a remarkably succinct definition of performativity in her 1999 preface to *Gender Trouble*. She defines performativity in two ways. The first, she says, occurs when the anticipation of a socially constructed meaning, such as that of gender or race identity, produces "that which it posits as outside itself" (ix). Butler's second definition insists that "performativity is not a singular act, but a repetition and a ritual, which achieves its effects through its naturalization in the context of a body" (x). My discussions of race, class, and gender throughout this dissertation touch frequently on the performative quality of these intersecting, socially constructed categories of identity. I examine specifically how these categories become legible in the late nineteenth-century American public sphere through visual cues that are read and interpreted by a viewing audience.

[10] This assessment synthesizes the aforementioned scholarship by Trachtenberg, Rydell, Barrett, Thomson, Lott and Brooks, as well as Joy Kasson's work on Buffalo Bill and the Wild West shows of the late nineteenth century.

[11] Kenneth M. Price and Susan Belasco Smith's introduction to *Periodical Literature in Nineteenth-Century America* provides useful social and historical context regarding readership during this era. They note that by the 1870s, "inexpensive weekly magazines, an estimated 4,295 of them, had a combined circulation of 10.5 million, a staggering figure given even the fact that the population of the United States was only 30 million in 1870" (5).

[12] In *Burden of Representation*, John Tagg explains the technological advancements that facilitated a "cultural revolution" in visual media, from the Daguerreotype of 1839, to Fox Talbot's invention of the calotype process (which used filmic "negatives" and printed "positives," thereby theoretically enabling the reproduction of a single image) of the 1840s, to the introduction of cartes-de-visites in 1854 and their huge popularity in the ensuing decades. All of that history is essential to contextualizing the technological advancements in the 1880s that bear most directly on the cultural moment that I am engaging. As Tagg relates, developments in both the technology and the market of producing photographs made image-making into a mass enterprise. Dry and half-tone plate technologies, which were vital in the production of photographic images, intersected with the invention of the Kodak camera in 1888, with its user-friendly flexible film and winding mechanism. Additionally, it became possible to print high quality photographs on regular paper, and photographs started appearing in great numbers in popular periodical publications. These three technologies made images cheap, fast, and easy to reproduce. Tagg argues that these technologies resulted from and created a shift in the marketplace of images, wherein photographs became commodities that reflected and produced a rising middle class, and structured social relations between individuals vis-à-vis the ideologies that became attached to the photographic representation of bodies (40-58).

[13] Throughout this dissertation, I refer to Wells, Winnemucca, and Wong as representative figures for their larger communities, as constructed by racial membership, class, gender, tribal or national affiliation, etc. I choose to treat these three activists as representative even while having significant concerns about the problematic politics around representative figures. Thus, they are allegedly thought to speak for a particular group of people, usually imagined to be identical to one another, and voiceless save for their one representative. This is a flawed construct. I, however, refer to Wells, Winnemucca, and Wong as representatives of their larger communities throughout this dissertation because this was the role that they themselves spoke of inhabiting—usually as a rhetorical device—and that they were given by their audiences.

[14] My analysis here is informed my Laura Mulvey's arguments about women in cinema as spectacles and as objects of the male gaze. See her article "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (1975).

[15] It is worth noting that while Shawn Smith relies on the photographic archive, she also traces the valences of vision and image in literature and other non-image-based

text. Her example provides a methodological inspiration for analyses in this dissertation.

[16] Elin Diamond is playing here on a term that visual theorist Laura Mulvey coined in "Visual Practices and Narrative Cinema." In this essay Mulvey famously argues that in contemporary narrative cinema, the visual presence of a woman on screen is there to serve the male gaze. She maintains that the woman's image creates a visual spectacle that connotes what she calls a "*to-be-looked-at-ness*," which, for the female object of desire, functions as recognition of the role of the male gaze in the construction of her subjectivity (8-16).

Chapter 1: ***Seeing [Im]Morality:***
Ida B. Wells's Critique of American Modernity

The Fair and the Pamphlet

In June of 1893, Ida B. Wells returned from a successful anti-lynching speaking tour in England to the United States to protest the treatment of African Americans in the Chicago World's Columbian Exposition. Wells worked with friend and mentor Frederick Douglass and several other prominent black intellectuals to produce a pamphlet to challenge the Exposition's failure to represent African Americans, to highlight African American achievement since emancipation, and to expose the persistent subjugation of and violence against African Americans throughout the nation. Wells chose the Exposition as a platform for her messages not only because of its mass appeal, but also because of the outrage she felt when she saw that the wealth, progress, and innovation championed at the Exposition had been achieved on the backs of black slavery and labor. Wells believed that the spectacular nature of the exhibits at the Exposition were linked with the horrifying spectacles of racial violence occurring contemporaneously throughout the South.

In this chapter, I analyze Ida B. Wells's protest against the Exposition in *The Reason Why the Colored American is Not in the World's Columbian Exposition* (1893).[1] Of Wells's rhetorical strategies in the chapters she authored, I pay special attention to her use of visual images, arguing that she included lynching photography

not just as documentation of the appalling violence against black men, but also to contrast the spectacle of American progress in the Exposition with the spectacle of lynched black bodies, with the intention of exposing the racial violence at the core of American modernity. To date, scholarship about the pamphlet has tended to take its message at face value, as a critique of the lack of representation of African Americans at the Exposition and as an assertion of African American contributions to and rightful place in American society.[2] My reading detects a far more radical argument in the chapters that Wells penned: Rather than simply making a case for African American inclusion in the fair, Wells critiques the very discourses of American modernity that the Exposition promulgated, highlighting how modern capitalism is connected to the criminal subjugation of racial others, and how lynching as a systemic, normative, and widely accepted practice undermined the values of freedom, liberty, and equality supposedly at the heart of American national identity.

Wells's argument draws on the textual forms, conventions, and ideologies associated with late nineteenth-century modernity.[3] *The Reason Why* is a polyvocal, multi-generic text that mirrors the displays in the Exposition itself. The pamphlet, about one hundred pages in length, is written by Wells, Frederick Douglass, Irvine Garland Penn, and Ferdinand Barnett.[4] The pamphlet begins with a short preface, titled "To the Seeker after Truth," which Wells wrote and had published in German and French as well as in English. Frederick Douglass wrote the Introduction, Wells produced three chapters ("Class Legislation," "The Convict Lease System," and "Lynch Law"), Penn contributed a chapter titled "The Progress of the Afro-American since Emancipation," and Barnett wrote a chapter titled "The Reason Why." In this

analysis, I focus exclusively on Wells's contributions to the pamphlet, especially on her chapter titled "Lynch Law." I occasionally refer to the pamphlet as Wells's cultural production, not to erase the contributions of the other co-authors, but to highlight Wells's self-proclaimed ownership of the document as a whole. It was she who raised the funds for its publication, wrote the majority of the text, edited the pamphlet in its entirety, owned its copyright, managed its sales, and personally handed out 10,000 copies of it on the floor of the Haitian Pavilion in the Exposition.

Of those 10,000 copies, very few have survived. In 1999 historian Robert Rydell republished the pamphlet for the first time and contextualized its content with a comprehensive introduction to the political struggles that mired the original printing and the larger backdrop of unequal and imperialist racial representation within the fair. Rydell's edition of *The Reason Why* remains the most authoritative version of the pamphlet, and it is widely available today. Despite this availability and the popularity of Ida B. Wells in recent academic scholarship, *The Reason Why* remains relatively obscure, perhaps because it is a bricolage of multiple voices and textual forms. *The Reason Why* defies the conventions of genre, as it contains images, graphs, charts, excerpts from statutes and bylaws, and contributions by multiple authors. As such, it does not fit neatly into the norms of contemporaneous literary production by African American writers, and its arguments far (and at times awkwardly) outreach the pamphlet's stated goal of critiquing the lack of African American representation at the World's Columbian Exposition.

In this chapter I am most interested in examining how Wells employed visual images as exhibits of her arguments, manipulating the epistemological valences of

sight and visuality. As I point out in the Introduction, one feature of American modernity was its orientation toward visuality, which was the sense widely thought to best convey objective and rational universal truths.[5] In *The Reason Why* Wells included two photographic images of lynched black men. Rather than supplying the photographs as sensational evidence of criminality, which is how such photographs were used in their original contexts, Wells subverts the spectacle of the photographs by using the relationship between her text and the reappropriated images to redirect the viewer's gaze. By doing so, Wells demands that her audience members see the unjust and brutal dismemberment of black bodies by white savages instead of seeing the justified punishment of savage criminals who had threatened white civilization, as the original discourse around the images suggested. In other words, in the strategic framework of Wells's argument, the images reveal *white savagery*, which directly opposed the arguments about race and civilization promulgated by the pseudo-scientific displays at the Exposition, thus undermining the triumphant narrative of white progress offered there.

An implicit argument in this chapter is that Wells's various forms of cultural production—from her written texts to her use of visual images—are interconnected and are therefore best analyzed in relationship to and in the context of one another. Throughout her career as a journalist, and especially in her anti-lynching work during and after the Exposition, Wells's appearances, speeches, and performances were visual texts that functioned in conversation with her writing and were critical to the success of her anti-lynching work. Wells became a public figure in a cultural moment when women and African Americans were becoming more active in the public sphere,[6] but

just as Wells herself was a liminal figure—liminally situated in the social roles regarding her race, gender, class, and sexual identities—she was operating in a liminal cultural moment between an older Victorian era and a new stage of American modernity. My broader analysis in this chapter contextualizes Wells's cultural production to explore how she navigated the limitations and constraints of public visibility that came with her race and gender roles. Wells used bodily spectacle—both the lynched body and her own body—to exploit opportunities for crafting a public presence, and to offer her audiences a new way of seeing lynching, race relations, modernity, and even the nation itself.

In the final section of this chapter I show how Wells connects the lynching photography in her pamphlet(s) to her own self-representation in photographic portraits that she circulated in her anti-lynching campaign materials. I argue that she articulated her critique against lynching in part through a strategic subversion of spectacle and by questioning the reliability of visual images. Wells's strategy involved both adducing and destabilizing the "science" that informed the widespread ideology that African Americans were savages. Thus, throughout her cultural production she staged her own virtuous black body in juxtaposition to the spectacle of immorally murdered black bodies in order to arouse public sentiment against lynching.

African American Representation and the "Exhibitionary Complex" of *The Reason Why*

The World's Columbian Exposition of 1893 was a cultural spectacle of unprecedented proportions. Held to commemorate the 400th anniversary of

Christopher Columbus's (accidental) landing in North America, the fair was designed to showcase, to American citizens and to the world, a national identity founded on consumption, scientific advancement, and imperial power. As many scholars have argued, the Exposition's vision was an overtly racialized one. Built in what is now Chicago's Jackson Park, it was divided into two main sections: the White City and the Midway Plaisance. The White City contained numerous buildings of exhibits—Horticulture, Manufacturing and Liberal Arts, Art, Machinery, Agriculture, Electricity, Transportation, etc.—which, taken together, displayed advancements in industrial and human sciences—advancements that were imagined/performed as markers of *white*, or Anglo-Saxon, progress.

The symbolic valences of the exhibits in the White City were reinforced by the exhibits of living people at the Midway, who were arranged in a hierarchy of civilization, as per the vision of the Exposition's Department of Ethnology. The Midway featured non-white people and their allegedly authentic ethnic customs and natural habitats, on display both for scientific education and for bawdy entertainment. Along the Midway, people were arranged according to prevailing ethnological assessments of their qualities of civilization and savagery; the group thought to be the most savage, the Dahomeyan people of Africa, performed at the very end of the linear arrangement (Rydell, *All the World's a Fair* 60-66). The Midway featured such titillating spectacles as gypsy dancers, Oriental men with camels, and representatives of Native tribes from the recently acquired territory of Alaska.[7]

While African American spectators attended the fair, they were conspicuously missing from the White City and the Midway.[8] This absence is emblematic of the

highly contentious politics of if and how African Americans would participate in the commissions overseeing the fair and/or be represented in the exhibitions.[9] As Rydell notes in *All the World's a Fair*, no African American served on any of the various committees that governed the expositions, no African American women were included in the Board of Lady Managers, and very few African American exhibits made it through the selection process (52-53). To quell growing anger with the Exposition among black communities, the fair organizers finally agreed to designate a "Jubilee Day," or "Colored People's Day," and arranged to have free watermelon for black attendees, a condescending move that referenced entrenched and inflammatory ideas about racial inferiority and was, in turn, used by white publications to further mock African American attendance at the fair.[10] Frederick Douglass, who was participating in the Exposition in his capacity as the United States minister to Haiti, saw the day as an opportunity to critique the fair from within: his speech about the achievements of African Americans in the face of discrimination was openly critical in the context of their exclusion from the Exposition. Wells, on the other hand, furious at how the Exposition sanctioned the kind of racism that had its most violent articulation in the pervasive lynching of African Americans in the South, wanted blacks to boycott the whole thing.[11]

As co-author and editor of the pamphlet, Wells positioned *The Reason Why* as the primary articulation of that boycott, and in contrast to most of the discourse in the black press (and even to what the title of the pamphlet suggests), the pamphlet as a whole is not limited to addressing/redressing lack of African American representation at the fair. Wells oversaw the production of the text to reveal the capitalist economy of

racism and to expose lynching as central to, rather than an aberration of, that economy. Wells also created the pamphlet to fill the absence of African American participation in the narrative of American progress and civilization and to serve as evidence of African American social, cultural, and political contributions to modernity.

Wells and her co-authors originally intended to publish the whole pamphlet in English, German, French, and Spanish and to circulate it internationally. Their goal was to tarnish the public image of the United States so as to undermine the nation's use of the fair to establish a new international prominence as a means of contextualizing a brand new campaign of international imperialism. In the end, Wells and Douglass raised only enough money to print French and German translations of Wells's short preface. Alongside acting as a strong statement of unity and progress within the nation, the Exposition was meant to articulate the identity of the nation to the world and to carve a space in the global theater for the United States as a new imperial power.[12] In contrast, it was Wells's aim to undermine the reputation of the nation, by circulating her critique of the relationship between racial violence and American modernity to the same international audience as the one that the fair was targeting.[13]

In his introduction to the pamphlet, Rydell argues that *The Reason Why* remains an important artifact because "it provides insight into the different strategies that African Americans developed to counter the racism embedded in a cultural event that functioned as an engine of American nationalism" and "makes clear that struggles over cultural representation" were as imperative then as they are now (xxxix). With Rydell's arguments for the relevance of the pamphlet as a jumping off point, I proceed

to analyze the textual strategies that Wells adopted and to theorize their relationship to the form that the event itself took. I start by suggesting that in addition to targeting an international audience, Wells constructed the form of *The Reason Why* both to mirror and to contrast with the displays at the Exposition, producing a document that was spectacular and multi-textual, just like the event itself.

It may have been Douglass who conceived of the form of the pamphlet: According to Mia Bay, one of Wells's biographers, he advised Wells that their pamphlet should offer "an exposition, by paintings, drawing and written accounts of lynchings, hangings, burnings at the stake, whippings and all southern atrocities" for distribution to visitors at the Columbian Exposition" (qtd. in Bay 132). Indeed, the pamphlet's individual chapters did function as individual exhibits, featuring a composite of statistical evidence, testimonial, and persuasive rhetoric within the same convention of modern scientific discourse as that featured at the Exposition.

The spectators at the Exposition were a vital part of Wells's campaign and the interventions she was attempting to make in public opinion, and by extension, in public policy. Wells first addresses this issue of spectatorship by drawing attention to what the attendees of the fair were *not seeing*. In her Preface to the pamphlet, she writes that visitors to the Exposition will "naturally ask: Why are not the colored people, who constitute so large an element of the American population, and who have contributed so large a share to American greatness, more visibly present and better represented in this World's Exposition?" (4). Wells's use of the word "visibly" here suggests that she was aware of the power of visual representation in shaping historical narratives and cultural discourses. Her emphasis on a *visible presence* underscores the

Exposition's choice of visual spectacle for its format; it also foregrounds the visual strategies that Wells adopts in her contributions to the pamphlet.

Interestingly, in the Preface Wells appears to be *endorsing* a narrative of "American greatness," which is directly counter to her arguments in the chapters "Class Legislation," "The Convict Lease System," and "Lynch Law," where she systematically dismantles that ideology as a myth predicated upon the violent legal and extralegal suppression of African American subjects. Her strategy here in supporting and then refuting the dominant narrative of American exceptionalism is indicative of a methodology that Wells uses throughout *The Reason Why*: her arguments, both explicit in the content and implicit in the form of the text, rely upon the ideologies that she attempts to dismantle. Wells addresses the failure of the Exposition to include African Americans in its vision of progress only as a way of framing her more comprehensive condemnation of the kinds of injustices and racial violence that the Exposition is complicit in hiding and furthering.

In the chapters that follow the Preface, Wells catalogs African American contributions to American modernity and excoriates the failure of the nation to uphold the promise of "equality and justice for all." She claims that the pervasive representations of black criminality that are inherent in both the lease convict system and in press accounts of lynchings obscure how African Americans have been subjugated by an enduring system—both legal and extralegal (though publicly sanctioned)—of enslavement and extortion. Furthermore, as she points out, this system works hand-in-hand with capitalist development, a precipitating factor and key feature of the kind of American modernity celebrated at the Exposition.

On the heels of her treatment of "Class Legislation," Wells exposes the injustice of "The Convict Lease System." This was a common incarceral practice, in which African American men and women were convicted of petty or fabricated offenses and jailed, after which their bodies and labor were "leased" out to employers under abhorrent conditions and for no pay. Wells argues that the convict lease system for African Americans in the South represented an extension of the conditions of slavery. She connects this system to the economic profitability of "class legislation" and to the widespread practice of lynching, thereby completing her picture of the complex structural network of oppression of African Americans that lies at the foundation of so-called American progress. Wells argues that class legislation, the convict lease system, and lynching all enforce black docility and disenfranchisement under a system of brutally articulated white supremacy. For Wells, the shift from slavery to capitalist forms of labor that similarly subjugated African Americans is both a quintessential, everyday experience of late nineteenth-century modernity, and a blow to the dominant epistemological links between modernity and progress as proffered by the Exposition.

I have summarized Wells's arguments as a necessary step for approaching my primary interest in this chapter: to engage *how* she constructs her argument in a document that both mirrors and contrasts with the "exhibitionary complex" of the Exposition. Therefore, while the content of Wells's writing is certainly ripe for further analysis, I would like to move now to the visual valences of Wells's text and her use of lynching photography in her chapter titled "Lynch Law."

Showing "The Inhumanity of the Case:" Wells's Visual Argument against Lynching

Wells's chapter titled "Lynch Law" is an assemblage of multiple textual forms and voices: it contains visual diagrams and graphs, bulleted and numbered text, long excerpts from news coverage of lynchings, and quotes from victims of lynchings. The short chapter also contains two visual depictions of lynchings: the reproduction of a postcard (front and back) that bears a photograph of a lynched body on the front and a message to the original recipient of the postcard on the back, and the sketch of another lynching scene, rendered from a photograph of the event. Wells's incorporation of these textual forms is a sign of the complexity of her argument. Lynching, she writes, is most prevalent in the Southern states that resort to the convict lease system. It has two countervailing results: not only does it unjustly terrorize African Americans into submitting to cruel white supremacy, it also radically undermines the Exposition's message that the United States has a free, just, and equitable society.

Wells's argument goes further, revealing how the complex network of the criminal (in)justice system—made up of publicly elected officials and governmental systems, religious groups, business interests, and the periodical press in every corner of the South—conspires to ensure white supremacy and profit by robbing African Americans of their rights. To plead her case, Wells employs the same strategy as those who promulgated lynching: she uses visual evidence. That evidence—including graphs, photographs, bulleted text, etc.—relies upon dominant ideologies regarding the evidentiary or truth-telling properties of visual information, especially

photography. Wells reframes the visual meaning of photography, however, to provide evidence of white savagery rather than of black criminality.

The first images that Wells reproduced in "Lynch Law" are of a postcard that was originally addressed to Judge Albion W. Tourgee, a white lawyer who was an advocate of African American equity in the South. In *Crusade for Justice*, Wells states that he lived in the South during Reconstruction and wrote a book about his experiences there from the point of view of a Northern white man. Wells also notes that at the time that he received the postcard, he was the editor of a weekly column in the *Inter-Ocean*, in which he "touched almost exclusively upon the civil and political conditions of the Negroes in the South and other parts of the country. Because he was recognized as the Negro's best friend the colored men of Chicago named [a] club for him" (120-21). In this context, it seems clear that the postcard was sent to him by Southerners to chastise him for his anti-lynching advocacy.



Figure 1.1: “Scene of lynching at Clanton, Alabama, August 1891”



Figure 1.2: Inscription on the back of the photograph titled “Scene of lynching at Clanton, Alabama, August 1891”

The savagery of the image is what is evoked most powerfully in Wells's recontextualization and recirculation of it. In Figure 1.1, the partially dismembered body of the lynching victim is foregrounded; and the photograph prominently features the light pole used for the hanging, the strung-up body, a crowd of men, and children in the crowd—details that are startling in their generic quality. These details embody the conventions of what came to be an entire genre of lynching photography, and lynching photographs are startlingly similar to one another.[14] These generic conventions reveal what Jacqueline Goldsby calls "the cultural logic" of lynching. In *A Spectacular Secret*, Goldsby writes, "anti-black mob murders [were] a networked, systemic phenomenon indicative of the trends in national culture" (5). Rather than interpreting lynching as an anomaly, a product of antiquated racism, or an exception to the rule of benevolent democracy in America, Goldsby believes that lynching has a congruent relationship to the social and political realities of modernity. She reaches this conclusion after reading what is usually obscured in images of lynching spectacles: the signifiers of modernity, which she postulates as evidence that the lynching ritual was at the heart of American progress.

Several signifiers of modernity are present in the image above. The fact that the man is strung from a light pole is particularly significant in placing the scene within a practice of modernity rather than outside of it. The technological advancements that gave the United States electricity were featured prominently in the Exposition. Indeed, as Trachtenberg points out, many fairgoers were in awe of the way that the Exposition grounds were lit up at night (209). This same scholar reminds us that the architecture of the Exposition, which was designed to showcase the

technological and philosophical principles of American modernity, was also appearing in towns across the United States. Big steel bridges, public conveyances, light posts, and ornately designed public squares were all relatively recent additions to American towns and cities. Goldsby notes the tendency of white mobs to feature these signifiers of modernity in the spectacle when lynching their victims, which, they argue, exposes how congruous lynching and modernization are. In the lynching spectacle, the murdered black body symbolized the threat, the thing outside modernity, whereas modern fixtures such as the light post, the bridge for hanging, and the railroad car for transporting audiences to the execution, were instrumental in removing the threat. As these two scholars and others have maintained, the lynching spectacle constructed the victim outside of modernity, and the act of lynching as an articulation of progress.[15]

In *The Reason Why*, Wells's inclusion of the photographic postcard depicting a lynching scene (and a sketch depicting another) is a dramatic reconstruction, a reversal of spectacle, wherein the spectacular object, the violated body, signifies the perversion of justice. Under the lynching photograph from the front of the postcard, Wells includes the caption, "Scene of Lynching at Clanton, Alabama, Aug. 1891" (Fig 2.). On the next page of the pamphlet, she reproduces the text on the back of the photograph, which she notes is a "Fac-simile of Back of Photograph" (40-41). The inscription, which is hard to decipher, reads, "This S.O.B. was hung at Clanton, Ala. Friday Aug 21st/91 for murdering a little boy in cold blood for 35 cents cash. He is a good specimen of your 'black Christian hung by White Heathens.' With compliments of The Committee." It seems reasonable to assume that the Southern "Committee" of white men who ordered, oversaw, or condoned the lynching in the picture sent this

image to Judge Tourgee in New York both to criticize his anti-lynching position, and to terrorize him with a horrifying image and veiled threat of violence.

The Committee's message to Judge Tourgee reveals the ideologies that they adhered to in supporting the murder: their use of the term "specimen" to refer to the victim, which dehumanizes the lynching victim and renders him a criminal type, recalls the biological language of the Exposition. The image of his violated body then serves as the evidence of his criminality. The Committee's reference to the Christian/heathen dichotomy implicitly addresses the developmental sequence devised by anthropological theorists, as displayed on the Midway, where participants were arranged according to their supposed levels of savagery. As Christianity was ideologically linked with civilization and progress, The Committee's sarcastic reference to the lynching victim as "Christian" interpellates him as a heathen, or a savage. With this, the Committee firmly refutes arguments about African American progress since the end of slavery. The Committee's text imitates the recital of charges against the victim, which is an ironic echo of standard courtroom procedure, whereby the accused is informed of the crime of which he is accused. The irony, of course, is that this victim never appeared in court for his alleged crime.

This is how the fascinating work of the photographic documentation of the lynching spectacle operated: in the original context of lynching photography, victims were performatively constructed as guilty of the accused crime, as criminals, by the very act of the performance of the ritual, and particularly by the photographic documentation of the body. In *Lynching and Spectacle*, Amy Louise Wood traces the relationship between lynching, modernity, and visual culture: She argues that lynching

was both a revolt against and a performance of modernity, and that the new technologies used to make lynching spectacular and to circulate sensational images of lynching were critical to giving the performance public meaning (5-10). Wood's analysis underscores that it was the cultural production around lynching, which commodified the spectacle of violence and participated in and perpetuated the sensational dissemination of a public narrative, that had the most powerful effects on both white opinion of racial violence and black perceptions of the pervasiveness of the threat to their lives.

The ubiquity of the lynching threat in the Southern (and, to some degree, Western) United States is symbolized by the fact that the man in the image is anonymous; and, though Wells relates a number of anecdotes about specific cases of lynchings in the content of her chapter, this photograph does not appear to correlate specifically to any of those cases. The message on the back of the postcard, however, resonates with many of her anecdotes of African American men and women falsely accused of crimes and lynched without the slightest bit of evidence to prove their guilt. The context of her stories of unjust and unethical lynchings recontextualizes The Committee's narrative about the victim having killed a white boy over the mere sum of $0.35. Wells's insertion of this explanation of the man's crime into her larger signifying context lets the improbability of that scenario speak for itself.

Wells uses the anonymity of the man, who stands in for every man who was strung up, and the universality of the scene to extend its applicability to the cases she discusses in detail. While alluding to the pervasiveness of lynching, Wells is simultaneously gesturing toward and manipulating the supposedly universal,

objective, evidentiary properties of photography. Here we spot Wells's complex relationship to photography. On one hand, her reproduction of the photograph suggests that she was critical of the dominant ideology that considered photographs to exhibit objective truths, in this case the alleged truth that the lynching victim was a criminal who had murdered a white boy over pennies. In the larger construct of her argument, however, Wells implies that the image fails to capture the most important truth: that African American men and women were being murdered all over the South because of racial prejudice and greed. She contests the very premise of the photograph, which was commissioned to document the delivery of so-called justice to an African American criminal.

At the same time, however, Wells manipulates the supposedly objective, universal properties of photography to support her own argument. She relies on the fact that the photograph is documentation, though she alters the narrative of what it serves to document. The only comment that Wells makes in the text of "Lynch Law" about the photograph reads as follows: "The cut which is given here is the exact reproduction of the photograph taken at the scene of the lynching at Clanton, Alabama, August 1891. The cause for which the man was hanged is given in the words of the mob which were written on the back of the photograph, and they are also given" (38-39). Wells's assurance to her reader that the image is an accurate reproduction echoes the dominant discourse around photographs, which is that they were forms of objective knowledge and could provide reliable evidence of objects, events, people, and their properties. The use of the passive construction by Wells in her repetition of "is given" reinforces the construction of objectivity and impartiality

around the presence of the photograph in her text. It also obscures her active role (her inclusion of the image) and renders the photograph as part of the evidence in support of her argument. Yet I find it interesting that she feels the need to assure her reader of its accuracy, which might suggest some that there was ambivalence among her audience in the larger cultural discourse about the reliability of photographs.

Since one of Wells's key rhetorical strategies was manipulating the conventions of photographic genre and form, it is worth discussing that this is a reproduction of a *postcard*, which has relevant conventions separate and apart from those of lynching photographs. By the 1890s, the generic conventions of postcards were well established: They were frequently sent as private correspondence to document a special excursion, event, or attraction. The image on the front of the postcard typically provided evidence of where the sender had been or what they had experienced. Ellen Strain, in "Exotic Bodies, Distant Landscapes: Touristic Viewing and Popularized Anthropology in the Nineteenth Century," comments: "The sights of the world, converted into spectacle by artists and photographers, could be purchased by Europeans and Americans in the comfort of their own cities . . . World fairs featured postcards so that the visitor could take home a bit of exotica, and mail-order stereoscopic cards of the globe's people and places provided another form of home-viewing" (76). As Strain mentions, these postcards frequently featured images of exotic others, constructing a touristic perspective in which racialized subjects became commodity objects for the viewing pleasure of a bourgeois class. The World's Columbian Exposition offered for sale countless postcards and image souvenirs, many of which pictured racial spectacles from the Midway. Postcards were uniquely modern

forms of communication, and both depicted and were made possible by some of the technological, social and cultural changes that modernity entailed.

While a postcard is circulated between one party and another under the pretense of privacy, usually with a personalized message on the back, it is a public document. As Joe Moran writes in *The New Statesman*: "In his book *The Post Card*, the French philosopher Jacques Derrida argues that postcard messages are a strange mixture of the public and private, circulating 'like an open but illegible letter.' The message is written casually and can be viewed by anybody, including the postman; but the sender often writes in private codes and assumes knowledge shared only with the recipient" ("Hello I'm There and You're Here"). The lack of an envelope means that its messages—both the images on the front and the inscription on the back—are open; further, postcards were often displayed by the recipient for others to view, whether in the private or the public domain. Moran's point is that the postcard is foremost a material object, "a message with no inherent content, sent for its own sake" ("Hello I'm There and You're Here"). The case of lynching photography complicates this argument: The lynching postcard renders horrific images of brutalized bodies within the convention of the picturesque, the touristic, the mundane. At the same time, the gravity of the scene destabilizes the conventions around postcard exchange.

The sending of the postcard is the process by which the commodity object depicting the exotic location or racialized other becomes a possession of the recipient. By reproducing this lynching postcard, Wells intervenes in the circulation of a commodity item and thereby critically disrupts the process by which the image—and the subject of the lynched body itself—becomes an object for ownership, or private

property. She takes the public/private lynching postcard, constructs a critical narrative around it that disrupts the visual discourse of its meaning, and redistributes it—*for free*—to ten thousand fairgoers. By not charging for the pamphlet as one would for a souvenir or a postcard, Wells defies the process by which the violated bodies of black lynching victims become objects for sale. Furthermore, Wells's redistribution of the lynching postcard as a free keepsake for fairgoers buttresses her implicit argument that the evidence of black criminality supposedly offered by the lynching image can just as persuasively allude to *white* lawlessness and savagery.

Wells made her intervention with *The Reason Why* at the height of the lynching epidemic in the United States. In 1892, just a year before the World's Columbian Exposition, white mobs lynched more African Americans in the South than any other year. Lynching was a critical and pervasive threat for Southern blacks and a familiar ritual of white supremacy for Southern whites. As Leon Litwack writes in "Hellhounds," the introduction to James Allen's collection of lynching photographs titled *Without Sanctuary*, "In the 1890s, lynching and sadistic torture rapidly became exclusive public rituals of the South, with black men and women as the principal victims" (12). Litwack notes that in the 1890s lynching took an average of 139 lives each year, and 75% of the victims were black (13).

The pervasiveness and shocking brutality of the lynching of African Americans during this era have shaped the legacy of the term: today, the word "lynching" is synonymous with racial violence against black men in the South. Lynching as extralegal vigilante justice,[16] however, has a longer tradition in the United States, and was frequently administered throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth

centuries against Native Americans, Mexicans, Asians, and whites in the West and Midwest.[17] As Christopher Waldrep notes, "Nineteenth-century Americans often considered a killing, carried out or sanctioned by a community, to be both a lynching and legitimate. Lynchers often saw themselves as law-enforcers, even when they acted outside the law" (2). Waldrep here is referring to the ideologies that legitimated the murder of African American men and women. In the South, the law that the perpetrators were defending was that of white supremacist social order, with the result that white perpetrators of lynching accused African Americans of rape, murder, theft, insolence, or nothing at all.

As multiple scholars have argued, the motivations for lynching, the scenes of lynching, and the discourses about lynching all feature a fetishization of the racialized body as an object of both fear and desire. White mobs displaced their anxieties about the changes in American society, politics, and culture that came with late nineteenth-century modernity onto the lynching victim.[18] In *Ida B. Wells-Barnett and American Reform, 1880-1930*, Patricia Schechter writes, "In the 1890s, the black body became American culture's primary object of fears about social disruption and disintegration" (84). What Schecter references here regarding "social disruption and disintegration" is a new social order that called traditional notions of authority and community into question. American progress brought momentous changes in the South: the emancipation of African American slaves, the incorporation of former slaves as citizens, Reconstruction efforts aimed at securing black economic independence, and a whole host of other programs and policies that demanded some semblance of equality for African Americans. As Wells details in *The Reason Why*, Southerners responded

by dismantling Reconstruction efforts, instituting Jim Crow policies, and engaging in a campaign of terror and violence to keep black Southerners disenfranchised and utterly dehumanized. This struggle was mapped onto the very bodies of African Americans in terms of the literal violence that their bodies endured, and what their bodies came to symbolize for white supremacists.

Schechter's emphasis on the "black body" echoes my point that the scientific taxonomies of bodies and the social, political, and cultural meanings that arose from those distinctions is primarily a function of visuality. The Exposition staged black and "blackened"[19] bodies as indicative of varying degrees of civilization, which corresponded to the tone of the skin and the visual characteristics of a subject's bodily features. Outside of the Exposition, what black and brown bodies signified underwent a dramatic shift in this era in the American South: In the antebellum period, they represented a material investment for white slave owners, so that, while corporal punishment was common, extralegal punishment was rarely lethal.[20] The discourses justifying slavery suggested that bondage was a form of tutelage by which African subjects could become civilized and learn how to be Americans. In the postbellum era, however, emancipated bodies newly endowed with rights —theoretically, anyway— posed a threat to the order of white supremacy. As a result, the discourse shifted: without having to justify slavery, ideologies about blackness constructed African American subjects within the discourse of savagery, marked by criminality and sexual deviancy. The racial spectacles at the World's Columbian Exposition provided a powerful platform for disseminating these ideologies, as the Exposition was an

attempt to celebrate the achievements of the era while assuaging the anxieties that accompanied its dramatically shifting social, political, and economic relations.[21]

While the Exposition staged racial spectacles as evidence of these discursive constructions, nowhere in the fair's officially sanctioned exhibits was lynching addressed. Wells's insertion of lynching imagery in her pamphlet protesting the Exposition suggests that she saw a link between the bodies on view in the exhibits and the pictures of lynched bodies in the South. The connections that Wells draws between lynching photography, such as the images that she reproduces in the pamphlet, and the exhibition of non-white people in the Exposition are multi-fold: first, Wells's inclusion of lynching photography implicitly suggests that she saw a correlation between the racial domination of all non-white bodies on display at the Exposition and the lynchings of African Americans in the South. Second, Wells sought to rectify the *absence* of images of African American bodies in the Exposition with the *presence* of lynched African Americans. Wells boldly fills the representational void with an image that highlights the racial subjugation of African Americans by providing evidence that the rhetoric celebrating American exceptionalism and progress within the fair was untenable in the face of such horrifying, unjust, and systemic violence against African Americans.

"A Representative of Her Race": Wells's Performance of Victorian Femininity

Wells's use of lynching photography—and her anti-lynching cultural production in general—are best considered in the context of her self-representation in the public sphere. Wells's anti-lynching arguments circulated alongside her own body

and her image, and the reception of her anti-lynching arguments was inextricably tied to her public image. Wells's audience tended to be more sympathetic to her cause when they perceived her to be of virtuous character, which they determined by evaluating the visual markers of her bodily representation. No doubt sensitive to this reaction, Wells staged representations of herself to combat the ways that a visual archive of African American subjects was becoming a powerful tool in the repression of African Americans socially, politically, and economically. Her photographic portraits are therefore part of a counter-archive that manipulates the visual signifiers of race, class, and gender identity to provide evidence for African American equality. Specifically, Wells staged her image as self-possessed and respectable in opposition to the photographic representation of the utterly debased lynching victim.



Figure 1.3: Wells, c. 1893



IDA B. WELLS BARNETT, CHICAGO, ILL.
Editor *Conservator*.

Figure 1.4: Wells, c. 1897

These two portraits of Wells, the first taken in or around 1893, the second in 1897, obey the conventions of bust portraiture.[22] Both images display Wells's head and shoulders, with her head tilted at an angle to the right of the frame. Both use studio lighting to illuminate all or part of her upturned face. In both, her gaze, averted from the viewer, is directed outside of the frame. Both images use light, fading, and shading to soften Wells's features and to blur the distinction between her body and the background. These details signify a rational, enlightened individual who, according to the conventions of the genre, was respectable and worthy enough for a portrait. The illumination on Wells's face not only highlights her head, the center of rationality and character according to nineteenth-century biological sciences; it also alters her skin tone in relation to the shaded backdrop in both images. In the first photograph Wells's face is dramatically lit, set in contrast to her dark attire and the grey mottled surface in the background. Her face appears especially bright and light, offset by the darkness of her neck and the shading of her cheek. In this image, Wells appears somber, which seems appropriate in the context of her arguments about the horror of lynching. Her demeanor, which looks (literally and symbolically) enlightened, helped to establish the credibility of her arguments.

The second portrait conveys a more complex facial shading: Wells's face on the right side of the image is lighter than the grey backdrop, while it is notably darker than the backdrop on the left side. In my interpretation, the color of Wells's skin in both images is constructed to appear light, but not "white." The photographer's tour de force of making Wells's skin appear light would have made the staging of her Victorian femininity more palatable; and the light skin would have imbued her image

with the sort of virtue, respectability, and rationality that was traditionally reserved for white women *and* that was absolutely imperative for the success of her work in the public sphere. Wells's apparel in both images features the adornments of Victorian dress, including the ornamental neck detail in the first image, and the faintly perceptible ruffles at the neck and bust in the second image. Both images fade or blur at the edges of Wells's person; and, to borrow language from P. Gabrielle Foreman's reading of a similar portrait of novelist Emma Dunham Kelley-Hawkins, "the bust-like image loses the precision that underwrote the era's faith in photography's truth-telling capacities and evidentiary promise" (252).[23] This observation links back to my discussion of the evidentiary force of lynching photography and suggests a fascinating tension in how Wells manipulated photography's "truth-telling capacities."

In the previous section of this chapter, I argue that Wells's inclusion of a lynching postcard in her pamphlet *The Reason Why* both relied on and subverted the dominant belief that photographs objectively documented material realities. I analyze how Wells recontextualized the lynching postcard into a World's Columbian Exposition "souvenir;" it was in this reappropriation of the image that Wells was able to reveal the shocking horror of racialized violence at the very core of American modernity. Wells is performing a similar feat here. In posing within the conventions of middle-class portraiture and wearing the attire of a Victorian lady, Wells relied on the evidentiary properties of the image to convince her audience that she *was* as she *appeared*: a self-possessed subject. A respectable woman. Yet, at the same time, several cues in the photograph, such as the varied shading in Wells's facial tones and the blurring of her body into the background, gesture to the constructedness of the

photograph even as it is asserting its so-called evidentiary properties. The ambiguity of Wells's skin tone particularly destabilizes the dominant ideologies that race was biologically fixed, static, and knowable through visual codes. It is precisely through the destabilization and uncertainty produced by these images that Wells is able to create the space necessary for her activist identity: that of an *African American* lady.

With these photographs and others that she commissioned throughout her campaign, Wells contributed to a growing counter-archive of images produced by African Americans who looked to the power of photography to craft personal and political subjectivities in this era. Shawn Smith and Maurice Wallace note in their introduction to *Pictures and Progress* that "photography helped to adjudicate the meaning of freedom . . . the technologies of photographic vision and the cultural meaning of photographs were themselves advanced, if asymmetrically, by the very questions of freedom, racial and otherwise, that emancipation de-philosophized" (3). Smith and Wallace emphasize that, for black subjects at this time, photography was a *practice* that enabled them to develop identities in the context of making claims on new legal, political, and socially recognized American identities. They write, "For many African Americans, photography served not only as a means of self-representation but also as a political tool with which to claim a place in public and private spheres circumscribed by race and racialized sight lines. The photograph became a key site through which a new identity could be produced and promulgated" (5).

Frederick Douglass, Wells's mentor and co-author in *The Reason Why*, was one of the leading voices on the political power of photography in the hands of black

subjects. As Smith and Wallace detail in their introduction, Douglass gave multiple lectures on photography and was optimistic about the technology as a tool for racial uplift; Douglass imagined that self-portraits could offer black subjects a way to see themselves objectively, to understand their own interior selves, and to critique themselves. He likewise imagined that representations of black subjects in photographs could help white viewers see African American men and women as fully formed and self-possessed subjects deserving of equality and inclusion in the nation (6-8).

Douglass's assessment of the power of photography for African American social and political progress came out of the larger epistemological meanings associated with photography, which I discuss in the introduction to this dissertation, and earlier in this chapter. He saw that honorific photographs of black subjects could circulate in mass culture alongside and counter to pervasive demeaning representations of African Americans in popular periodical literature. The evidentiary qualities uniquely ascribed to photography could make photographic images—much like the ones that he, Wells, and their contemporaries were producing—quite powerful in combating racial stereotypes and negative attitudes about race among the ruling class. It is in this context that Wells commissioned portraits of herself like the ones I included above, and circulated them as a part of her larger campaign against lynching.

Wells represented herself onstage and in photographs to combat popular ideologies that black subjects—and especially black women—were outside a narrative of modernity. As Deborah Willis argues in "Picturing the New Negro Woman," in the late nineteenth century, representations of African American women fell into two

veins: private family photographs for albums, and public images of black women as mammies or prostitutes. In her analysis of photographs of "New Negro" African American women from the 1890s to the 1920s, Willis notes that the dominant images of black women that circulated publicly during that time were degrading and dehumanizing racist caricatures (227, 243). These images both reflected and reinforced a racialized social hierarchy that dictated that black women were not, and could never be, subjects and citizens in their own right. In this context, a black woman was never a lady.

Relying on the portrait's power to both reflect and structure social relations, Wells inserted herself into the visual field through multiple, commissioned portraits over her lifetime. She took care to stage herself against the prevailing images of black women, depicting herself instead within the conventions of (white) middle-class Victorian femininity. As John Tagg writes, "The portrait is . . . a sign whose purpose is both the description of an individual and the inscription of a social identity. But at the same time, it is also a commodity, a luxury, an adornment, ownership of which confers status" (37). Tagg goes on to elucidate how the photographic portrait was instrumental in the rise of the middle class and the lower-middle class in the realm of public and cultural representation.

Prior to the photographic revolution of the late nineteenth century the middle and lower-middle classes, and particularly minority racial subjects within those classes, could not afford to have their portraits made; nor were they considered appropriate subjects for visual representations of themselves. As Tagg explains, half-tone plate technology and revolutions in paper printing in the 1880s made both the

process of sitting for a photograph quicker and cheaper, and the reproducibility of photographic images also cheaper and more easily executed by the novice photographer (48-51). These technological advancements allowed members of the middle class to be visually represented; they participated in the visual field as subjects and as consumers of images. As Tagg explains, "The production of portraits is, at once, the production of signification in which contending social classes claim presence in representation, and the production of *things* which may be possessed and for which there is a socially defined demand" (37). In the two images of Wells, above, she claims her presence in the public sphere as a subject worthy of representation, and she produces cultural texts that circulate as commodities in support of her anti-lynching crusade. The elaborate visual trappings of her Victorian bust portraits conveyed that Wells was both an African American woman *and* a respectable, refined lady. As many theorists of racial representation in this era argue, the very act of sitting for an honorific photographic portrait was a form of resistance.

As I discuss in the introduction to this dissertation and earlier in this chapter, a visual scientific archive had made visible the taxonomic thinking that informed the human sciences of criminology, anthropology, and biology and the rise of institutions such as the prison, the school, and the asylum. Photographs of African Americans in the late nineteenth century appeared most frequently in the following contexts: the fetishized documentation of "African types" for scientific knowledge, the mug shots of alleged black criminals, and even the circulation of images of lynching victims. In "The Body and the Archive," Alan Sekula argues that the institutional use of photographs, such as the mug shot and the publication of taxonomies of "criminal

types," defined a "social terrain of the other," a visual articulation of deviancy against which the normalcy of the middle class identified itself.[24]

The connections that Sekula draws between the repressive mug shot and the honorific photographic portrait can be usefully applied to why Wells might have positioned her photographic portrait in relation to the lynching photograph as she did. Sekula argues that the repressive mug shot and the honorific photographic portrait form an interdependent system of representation wherein the criminal body and the bourgeois body are defined in opposition to each other. The suppression and dispossession of the criminal body is in contrast to what Sekula calls the "possessive individualism" of the subject in the typical bourgeois photograph (6). In this scheme, the image of the lynching victim represents the repressive photographic practice, while the portraits of Wells represent the honorific practice. Yet, we need to look deeper to discern Wells's creative stance when it came to her use of the visual in service of her political campaign. Then, as we apply Sekula's arguments about the formation of a (white) middle class against visual representations of a (black/brown/other) criminal class to Wells's manipulation of the signifiers of visual technology, we can see that Wells actually intervened in this visual epistemology and challenged the discourses that equated blackness with criminality.

Sekula notes that the bourgeois photograph conferred a "possessive individualism" on the subject in the image, which contrasted with the dispossessed status of the criminal in the institutional photograph. That Wells claimed a "possessive individualism" for herself in the larger context of the social, political, and cultural dehumanization of black subjects in this era was a remarkable intervention in itself.[25]

As Shawn Michelle Smith argues in *Photography on the Color Line*, photographic counter-archives of middle-class African Americans, such as the portraits of Wells, "contested the conceits of biological racialists invested in 'Negro inferiority,' it also challenged a popular legacy of racist caricature that singled out the black middle classes for derision" (80). Smith's study uses the album that W. E. B. Du Bois staged at the Paris Exposition of 1900 titled *Types of American Negroes* as a lens through which to recover the visual valences of "the color line" at the turn of the century. She maintains that albums such as the one by Du Bois "trouble the normative, assumed transparency of authorized institutional knowledge. But Du Bois' albums employ other visual tactics as well; they also reproduce the sentimental and commodified forms of the middle-class portrait to contest the conflation of African Americans under the visual signs of criminality or biological inferiority" (9-10).

The "visual tactics" that Wells used to position herself firmly within the middle class provide a striking example of the importance of photography at the service of developing a visible black middle class in the public sphere. By the same token, her strategic use of photographic practices allows her to intervene in the narratives originally associated with lynching images and popular, demeaning representations of African Americans by re-configuring them so that her audiences could see an alternative history. Finally, Wells further extends her rhetorical uses of visuality to encompass how she fashioned her own body and subjectivity within the objectives of her campaign. By staging her body within the conventions of Victorian womanhood in photographic portraits, she presents visual evidence of her own

righteousness and integrity and, by implication, the righteousness and integrity of her arguments.

As I argue throughout this chapter, Wells intervened in lynching discourses through a manipulation of the epistemologies attached to visuality: throughout her cultural production, she staged arguments that were highly visually coded to critique lynching (and discrimination against African Americans generally) as simultaneously an exception to and imbricated within narratives of American progress. Wells's anti-lynching campaign served to mirror the intertextuality of the exhibitionary complex within the dominant sphere, most notably in the context of the Exposition, where she literally staged one of her boldest and most significant political interventions to underscore her critique of American modernity. There, for the entire world to see, she used the very representational frameworks that were regularly used as tools in the oppression of and violence against African Americans, but in her hands they shed light upon the violence inherent in so-called American progress and civilization.

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[1] For the rest of the chapter, I refer to the pamphlet as a whole as *The Reason Why*, as opposed to Ferdinand Barnett's chapter within the document, which bears the same name.

[2] For example, in "Picturing the New Negro Woman," Deborah Willis writes, "The small pamphlet focused on the racist displays and segregatory nature of the exposition" (237). In point of fact, the pamphlet addresses the displays within the Exposition, or indeed any aspect of the Exposition, very little. Mia Bay characterizes *The Reason Why* similarly when, in reference to the organizers's refusal to represent African American women, she writes, "The actions of Palmer and many other exposition officials ensured a thoroughly white world's fair, which may be another reason why Wells remained adamantly committed to a pamphlet protesting the fair's exclusion of African Americans" (157).

[3] See the Introduction to this dissertation for a discussion of my uses of the terms "American modernity" and "late nineteenth-century modernity."
[4] Two years after the publication of the pamphlet, Wells married newspaper owner, journalist, and civil rights leader Ferdinand Barnett. In this chapter, I refer to Wells by her maiden name rather than her married name, as she was not yet married when she published *The Reason Why*. Even after her marriage, Wells frequently referred to herself by her maiden name in connection to her work in the public sphere.
[5] See my discussion of the epistemology of visuality in the Introduction to this dissertation.
[6] Barbara McCaskill and Caroline Gabhard call this period "Post-Bellum, Pre-Harlem" in their book of the same name. They situate the time as containing the "Women's Era" and "Uplift," monikers; their scholarship (as well as mine) is devoted to recovering the innovativeness and vitality of cultural production in that time, to refute the dominant idea that this cultural moment was a nadir for African American cultural production.
[7] See scholarship about the World's Columbian Exposition by Robert Rydell, Shawn Smith, Rosemarie Bank, and Alan Trachtenberg.
[8] One exception to the lack of African American presence came in the form of Aunt Jemima, a character conceived by the Quaker Oats Corporation to market their new instant pancake product at their commercial display in the White City. An archetypal mammy figure, Aunt Jemima was played by Nancy Green, a former slave who worked at the display flipping sample pancakes and entertaining customers with fictitious stories evoking nostalgic Southern plantation life. The caricature of the mammy first appeared during the Reconstruction in Southern plantation fiction, a genre marked by its nostalgia for the so-called peacefulness and security of slavery. Visually, the mammy was a stout, very black woman in a kitchen dress and a kerchief. She was barefoot, sexually undesirable, rather dumb, and totally devoted to the white family she served. She was a docile, grateful slave who enabled white familial relations and posed no sexual threat to the white female head of house. Of course, the reality is that female slaves who labored as domestics inside plantation homes were frequently objects of sexual desire for white men, and as their property, were sexual objects for their pleasure
[9] In 1896, just two years after the close of the Exposition, the landmark Supreme Court case *Plessy v Ferguson* sanctioned "separate but equal" public accommodations for African Americans, legitimating segregation and Jim Crow disenfranchisement and terror campaigns in the American South.
[10] The popular periodical *Puck* ran an illustrated cartoon and accompanying poem called "Darkies Day at the Fair" that imagined black fairgoers—depicted as blackface caricatures—as so distracted by free watermelon that they forget to follow through with the planned celebratory events. Other illustrations in widely distributed popular publications used racialized stereotypes to undermine African American interest in the fair by representing black presence as antithetical to the fair's themes of progress and industry: Rydell notes that a series of cartoons that appeared in *Harper's Weekly* "ridiculed blacks' aspirations to advance in American society as well as their

intellectual ability to comprehend the lessons of the fair" through the fictitious illustrated saga of a bumbling black family at the fair (Rydell, *All the World's a Fair* 53).

[11] The rift between the two leaders was representative of the larger divide among black leaders/journalists about whether to attend or boycott. The idea for the special day came from a delegation of African American leaders from Boston, yet prominent black newspapers such as the Indianapolis *Freeman* and the Washington *Bee* protested not only "Jubilee Day," but also Wells's and Douglass's plans for the pamphlet (Bay 158-59). Wells includes in her autobiography some interesting tidbits about Douglass's participation in the fair and his reception among white attendees. She notes, though, that his fame as a well-respected reformer led whites to stop him at every turn in the fair, shake his hand, and compliment him. She ultimately concedes in her autobiography that she was wrong to condemn his participation in Jubilee Day, as she found his speech at the Exhibition to be an important intervention there.

[12] See Rydell's arguments about the national and global functions of the World's Columbian Exposition (*All the World's a Fair* 38-42).

[13] Wells notes in her autobiography, *Crusade for Justice*, that the pamphlet did indeed receive international circulation. She writes, "It is very interesting to record that echoes from that little volume have been received by me from Germany, France, Russia, and faraway India" (117). In her discussion of *The Reason Why* in her autobiography, Wells indicates that she was pleased with the circulation and the resonance of the pamphlet's protest in the public sphere.

[14] See the discussions by Amy Louise Wood and Jacqueline Goldsby about the generic conventions of lynching photographs (*Lynching and Spectacle* 85-88; *A Spectacular Secret* 246).

[15] See the discussions by Amy Louise Wood and Jacqueline Goldsby about the relationship between lynching and modernity (*Lynching and Spectacle* 10-15; *A Spectacular Secret* 5-6).

[16] The definition of lynching is difficult to articulate simply, as it has a complex history, and its meaning manifests very differently throughout history, and for different populations. Most simply defined, lynching is extralegal punishment—usually lethal—enacted against an accused person or persons by a group of people. Lynching victims suffer the punishment for the crimes of which they are accused in public and outside legally sanctioned judicial proceedings. As I discuss later in this chapter, the majority of the victims of lynchings were African Americans in the Southern United States.

[17] In this chapter, I focus on lynching conducted in the South against black men, and to a lesser extent, women, because that specific geographic and racial history was Ida B. Wells's primary concern. Maintaining this focus may unfortunately corroborate blindnesses in scholarship about lynching, which has been preoccupied with black male victims in the South, to the expense of full acknowledgement of lynching that targeted Chinese, Native Americans, and Mexicans in the West and Midwest. For more information about the lynching of other racial groups in the American West and

Midwest, consult the scholarship of Ken Gonzales Day, Clive Webb, and William Carrigan.

[18] As Amy Louise Wood argues, "The particular urgency and intensity with which white southerners lashed out at alleged black criminals stemmed from fears and anxieties that modernization generated" (6).

[19] I borrow the term "blackened," which attempts to register the dissonance between the constructions and meanings of racial identity and the so-called biological roots of racial identity, from Daphne Brooks and Linda Frost. In a layer of symbolism, the term here also recalls that in common practices of lynching, bodies of African American victims were frequently burned.

[20] Lynching may also be connected to slave codes, which gave white owners absolute rights over their properties and made them judge, jury, and executioner to their slaves, who were considered to be the property of slave owners. Hence, lynching may have been a kind of mental holdover from this longstanding legal framework.

[21] See Robin Weigman's chapter titled "The Anatomy of a Lynching" in her book *American Anatomies* (81-114). Also, Hazel Carby has suggested that, in the post-Reconstruction period, white men stabilized their own identities through enacting mastery over black male bodies in rituals of lynching, which could also be viewed as an act of control over white women (*Reconstructing Womanhood* 110-12). In "The Sexualization of Reconstruction Politics: White Women and black Men in the South after the Civil War," Martha Hodes argues that during the era of racial slavery, sexual relations between white women and black men were relatively tolerated. But with the instability of racial categories that ensued, post-emancipation white men forbade white women, who were imagined to be the carriers of white identity, from consorting with black men. Punishing black men for real and imagined relations with white women—or for simply daring to speak to white women—became, then, a public narrative and a performative ritual that not only demonstrated white mastery over the black body but also over the identity and future of the race (402-17).

[22] As John Tagg, Alan Sekula, John Berger, and Shawn Smith note, the photographic bust portrait was adapted from a genre of European painting dating back to the seventeenth century. The portrait was a sign of class status: typically, only notable public figures (usually men) had their portraits painted. With the photographic revolution of the late nineteenth century, the portrait was democratized, rendered more easily accessible to the middle and lower-middle classes. But the markers of refinement, of social standing, still dominated the genre.

[23] My interpretation of these visual cues is largely informed by P. Gabrielle Foreman's reading of the images of former African American novelist Emma Dunham Kelley-Hawkins portrait and texts in her essay "Reading/Photographs: Emma Dunham Kelley-Hawkins's *Four Girls at Cottage City*, Victoria Earle Matthews, and The Woman's Era." Foreman's essay reads Kelley Hawkins's images alongside her book *Four Girls at Cottage City* to explore "how and why race—and specifically 'blackness'—continues to matter in cases of 'black(ened) women' who unsettle familiar methods of reading corporeal and cultural race-based identity" (250).

Foreman argues that Kelley-Hawkins's texts and photographic practices share many of the traits and strategies of contemporaneous African American cultural producers.

[24] Sekula writes that through photography, sciences "were instrumental in constructing the very archive they claimed to interpret" (11). What Sekula does not address specifically but that has a direct bearing on my study is that the middle class reader of these texts is put into the role of the scientific observer and interpreter of information or knowledge that is supposedly detached from that observer. The observer is therefore rendered as empirical and objective. Middle class observers assumed this same role in the World's Columbian Exposition and when sharing or circulating lynching photographs.

[25] Wells, of course, was not the only African American to be featured in honorific portraits or to pose for pictures that conferred a middle- or upper middle-class status. Among Wells's female contemporaries, Anna Julia Cooper and Frances Harper had similar portraits taken. In addition, Deborah Willis's studies on late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century black photography contain many examples of African American subjects posing with such material objects as homes, cars, fur coats, and other objects that confer a dignified and "respectable" class status on the sitters.

Chapter 2: *The Indian Princess Testifies: Rhetoric and Reform in Sarah Winnemucca's East Coast Tour (1883-84)*

The Transcript in the Basement

In January of 1880, Sarah Winnemucca,[1] her brother Natches, and her cousin, Uncle Jim, traveled from Humboldt, Nevada, to Washington, D.C., to meet with Secretary of the Interior Carl Schurz and President Rutherford B. Hayes about the dire situation of the Northern Paiutes. In December 1878, nearly 500 members of the tribe had been forcibly marched from the Malheur reservation in Oregon to the Yakama reservation in Washington as punishment for their alleged role in the Bannock War.[2] The 350-mile march in the middle of winter was brutal; elderly and infant members of the tribe died from exposure along the way. Once at Yakama, the Northern Paiutes were met with hostilities from the Yakama tribe and neglect from James Wilbur, the reservation agent there. The Paiutes were destitute. Winnemucca was in Washington D.C. to request that her tribe be restored to Malheur. While conditions at Malheur had not been much better than at Yakama, Winnemucca emphasized that it was important for the tribe to be reunited with family members living on other reservations in the region, and to be close to their ancestral homeland.

The Winnemucca family left Washington, D.C., believing they had achieved their goal: they had a letter from Secretary Schurz with orders that those among the Northern Paiutes who wished to do so should be allowed to reunite with their families at Malheur. But the orders were never fulfilled, and the tribe's situation worsened. So

Sarah Winnemucca returned to the East in 1883 to continue advocating for land rights for her tribe. This time, she traveled at the invitation of sisters Elizabeth Peabody and Mary Peabody Mann, two Bostonian reformers who had taken up the Indian cause with great enthusiasm. Winnemucca stayed with the Peabody sisters and penned her autobiography, *Life Among the Piutes: Their Wrongs and Claims* (1883), which Mary Mann edited and Elizabeth Peabody published. In 1883-84, Winnemucca delivered more than 300 lectures across the eastern United States and commissioned multiple studio photographs, which, along with her autobiography, were available as memorabilia at her events and by catalog. Her lectures were tremendously popular, and her book and campaign memorabilia sold well.[3] Within a year, Winnemucca had become a regular fixture in the national press and a central figure in debates about federal Indian policy and reform.

Today, Winnemucca is widely known as the first Native woman to write and publish an autobiography, and considerations of her performances as an Indian Princess, a public persona she cultivated throughout her campaign, have dominated the contemporary scholarly debate about her textual production. Still, while Winnemucca was famous as a writer, speaker, performer, and national celebrity, she was foremost an activist. The culmination of her campaign underscores this: After an exhausting lecture circuit, Winnemucca returned to Washington, D.C., this time with a delegation of reformers and with the full attention of the national press, and on April 22, 1884, she testified before the Congressional Subcommittee on Indian Affairs. As stenographers documented her testimony before the Subcommittee members, and as the reformers and news reporters looked on from the audience chambers, Winnemucca testified about

the abuse her tribe had suffered at the hands of corrupt Indian agents and negligent federal officials, and asked that the tribe be granted a permanent deed to Fort McDermit, a large parcel of land near their ancestral home, which had formerly been used as a U.S. Army base. All of her writing, lecturing, and interviews—all of the publicity she generated with her campaign—was part of an effort to gain so much national support that in this second trip to Washington, D.C., she and her demands would be impossible to ignore. With her testimony, Winnemucca's role in history was further established: she also became the first Native woman to testify before members of the United States Congress.

My interpretation of the events that transpired during and after the hearing suggest that, despite Winnemucca's best efforts, the Subcommittee members ignored her demands, just as Secretary Schurz and President Hayes had placated and ignored her the first time she traveled to Washington, D.C. The federal government did eventually turn the land at Fort McDermit over to the Northern Paiutes, but not until three years after the testimony. Furthermore, the tribe did not get permanent deed to the land until 1892, a year after Winnemucca's death. It is unclear why the federal government waited so long to intervene on behalf of the Northern Paiutes, unless this was simply due to the government's malfeasance in all matters Indian at the time. Ironically, in ignoring Winnemucca's Subcommittee testimony, contemporary scholars of American Studies have unwittingly perpetuated the historical erasure and structural neglect that haunted her political work during her lifetime: in the archive of knowledge that has accumulated around Winnemucca's decorated and contested public career, the testimony receives barely a passing mention.

My contention in chapter is that, in failing to consider the testimony, scholars have overlooked the most politically significant moment in Winnemucca's public career. This reveals a larger gap in the academic debate: In the somewhat circular conversation about Winnemucca's textual production and self-representations, scholars have insufficiently responded to the question of *why* Winnemucca conducted her campaign in the ways that she did. In my assessment, Winnemucca made decisions throughout her campaign in the East in order to do the impossible: to stand before members of Congress, those who actually had the power to change the circumstances of the Northern Paiutes and other tribes living in total destitution, and to stage her appeal in a way that maximized her chances of enacting real political change.

If Winnemucca's writing, speeches, interviews and studio portraits were all part of a coordinated political campaign that culminated in her testimony before the Congressional Subcommittee on Indian Affairs, then why has no one analyzed the testimony? One probable reason is that, for the last twenty years, the unique transcript of the testimony was buried in a basement in the Humboldt Country Museum in Winnemucca, Nevada. No copy is found in any official congressional archives,[4] as Mona Reno's thorough annotated bibliography on Winnemucca indicates.[5] This transcript serves as the foundation for my analysis of Winnemucca's rhetorical performances throughout this chapter, which examines the production and circulation of Winnemucca's multiple forms of cultural texts throughout her tour of the East Coast in 1883-84, culminating with the Subcommittee testimony.

I start from the premise that governs the methodology used throughout the dissertation: that Winnemucca's multiple forms of texts—oral, written, and visual—are

distinct yet interrelated rhetorical performances. It is only by analyzing the relationships among those performances that we can gain a comprehensive perspective on how Winnemucca staged her interventions throughout her campaign as a whole. This multi-disciplinary, multi-textual methodology does more than allow us to engage with Winnemucca as an individual agent: it also makes visible the larger public sphere in which she and her campaign operated. To this end, I analyze the transcript of the Subcommittee testimony alongside her autobiography to reveal how Winnemucca increasingly mapped her critiques of the violence of American imperialism onto the language of the Indian reform movement. Next, I shift to Winnemucca's rhetorical manipulation of themes of knowing and knowledge in the Congressional testimony, connecting this to her larger critique of Anglo Saxon epistemologies of modernity during her Eastern campaign. Finally, I link the Subcommittee members' concerns about Winnemucca's authenticity toward the end of the hearing to her uses of visual spectacle as a means to create a legible public persona for her white audiences.

Winnemucca's audiences—from the women who sponsored her, to those who attended her lectures and bought her autobiography and other campaign memorabilia, to the politicians who heard (and ignored) her requests for policy change—were largely identified as progressive, humanitarian reformers with regard to the "Indian question." Her most famous supporters, such as Harriet Beecher Stowe, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Senator Henry L. Dawes, all identified with reform groups, such as the Indian Rights Association and the influential Lake Mohonk Friends of the Indian. These groups, collectively speaking, wanted to resolve the national crisis around the destitution and violence plaguing Indigenous tribes living in the United States by

"killing the Indian to save the man."[6] The reformers worked to destroy tribal bonds through various regimes of forced assimilation, including Christian conversion, boarding school education, wage labor, and capitalist accumulation.[7] A hallmark piece of reform legislation was Senator Dawes' Allotment Act, which was signed into law in 1887, but which was already guiding policy during the years of Winnemucca's campaign. The allotment system was intended to replace the reservations, which the reformers thought encouraged savagery. In line with this new system, land administrators subjected Indians to a strenuous regime of agrarian land cultivation and reallocated community resources so as to build nuclear Native families, all in an effort to help "civilize" American Indians through the disciplining contract of potential land ownership.[8] As I will discuss later in the chapter, Winnemucca's position with regard to the reformers' mission was complex: while she appeared to endorse allotment, she fiercely resisted the destruction of tribal bonds and sovereignty and was an outspoken critic of the violence of American colonization of Indigenous land and peoples.[9]

My analysis of the Subcommittee transcript is intended to steer the conversation away from whether Winnemucca's political commitments were assimilationist or resistant, and toward how Winnemucca's rhetorical play with the politics of knowledge reveals the openings and foreclosures she faced as a woman of color and an activist in the dominant public sphere. Shedding some light on the Subcommittee transcript forces us to contend with complicated questions about both Winnemucca as a public figure and the scholarship that has accumulated around her. In the testimony and in her other cultural production, how did Winnemucca assert herself as a knowledgeable and known subject? How did she manipulate what her audience knew or thought they knew

about her and about the Northern Paiutes? And perhaps most importantly, how do her multiple and contradictory uses of rhetoric[10] challenge what we think we know about her, or force us to grapple with what is unknowable? Winnemucca's verbal exchanges with the Subcommittee, in particular, get to the root of contemporary arguments about Winnemucca's history, agency, and subjectivity, all of which I locate as products of rhetorical performances that she designed to obscure rather than reveal what is knowable about her and the Northern Paiutes.

There is a considerable and contested archive of knowledge around Winnemucca, though that archive is necessarily incomplete.[11] Much of the scholarship about her since her work was recovered by feminist academics in the 1970s has been stuck vacillating between the reductive binaries of assimilation/resistance, counterfeit/authentic, white/Native, literary/oral, individual/collective, etc. As Andrew McClure points out in his essay "Sarah Winnemucca: [Post]Indian Princess and Voice of the Paiutes," she is the subject of much "political unease" regarding her role as intermediary between white and Native cultures and her political position with respect to religious conversion, education, and land allotment (29). For example, in *American Indian Women, Telling Their Lives* (1984), Gretchen Bataille and Kathleen Mullen Sands argue that Winnemucca's *Life Among the Piutes* is "heavily biased by her acculturated and Christianized viewpoint" (21). Bataille and Sands point to Winnemucca's support of assimilation and allotment, and her family's eager capitulation to white demands, as evidence that Winnemucca was whitewashed. Similarly, Noreen Lape has argued that in her liminal position as an interpreter and cultural intermediary, Winnemucca could not "disengage herself from the false

language forced upon her by the White government" (266). And in her early, innovative analysis of Winnemucca's self-representations in studio portraits, Joanna Scherer concludes that because of Winnemucca's use of the Indian Princess person, she was limited to being a "collaborationist and a helpmate" to white imperialists, and that this constituted a "detrimental public relations strategy." Scherer writes, "Rather than strengthening her credibility [the Indian Princess role] may well have undermined it by presenting an image that was incompatible with her political message" (196). Taken together, though these studies are diverse, they all posit that Winnemucca's textual production was overdetermined by the language and demands of white imperialists. They use her appropriations of oppressive white rhetoric and demeaning myths about Native Americans as evidence of an inauthentic personal ideology or as an indication of political failure.

Predictably, those who have accused Winnemucca of assimilationist politics have inspired an opposing faction to argue for Winnemucca's resistant politics. Catherine S. Fowler, one of the first scholars to write about Winnemucca, laments in her introduction to *Life Among the Piutes* that critics have often characterized Winnemucca as a "tool of the military" who exerted little agency over her own words. Fowler argues that scholars should see Winnemucca as a complex subject, as an extraordinary woman "of two worlds," who made the best decisions she could for her tribe under impossible circumstances (4). Those who have heeded Fowler's call have appropriated the "woman of two worlds" trope for its other possibility: to gesture toward Winnemucca's "hybridity" or "liminality" in staking their claims for Winnemucca's *resistance* to white imperialism. Cari Carpenter and Gioia Woods have

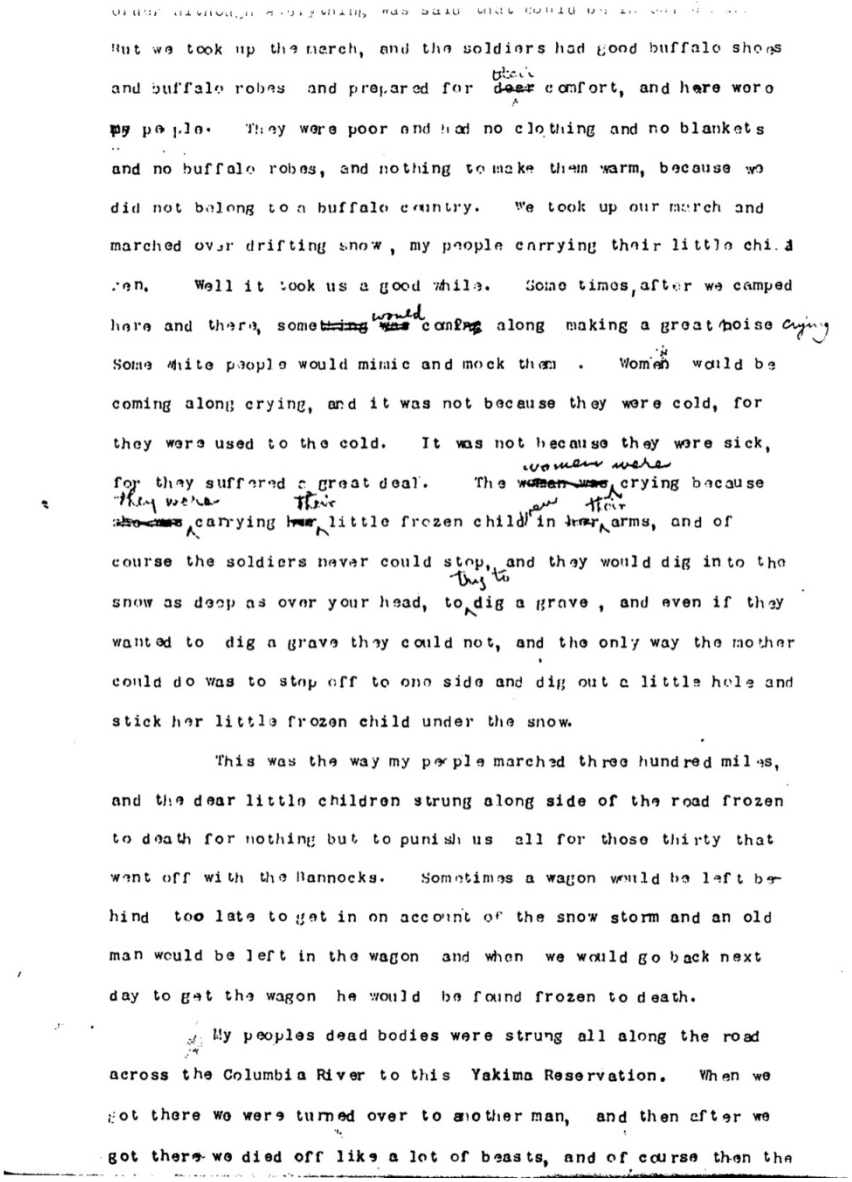
challenged assumptions that Winnemucca's self-representations were either uncalculated expressions of an essential "self" or constituted capitulation to white demands. Their work has offered analyses of Winnemucca's multiple cultural alliances to counteract claims that she was inauthentic, a sellout, and a cultural traitor. Despite their compelling argument that Winnemucca was a forceful critic of American imperialism, their models of hybridity unwittingly tend to invoke and naturalize essential racialized or cultural characteristics. This tendency can reify popular scholarly constructs: the opposition between "savage" and "civilized" cultures, links between cultural affiliation and visual embodiment, and the metonymic function of racialized subjects in the dominant public sphere.

With this chapter, then, as I make a conscious turn away from the binaries that have historically framed the scholarly conversation about Winnemucca, I draw from recent work that engages her cultural production as rhetorical performance. Carolyn Sorisio's recent article about Winnemucca's rhetorical construction of a public image intervenes in the uncritical acceptance by most scholars of the notion that Winnemucca always staged herself as an "Indian Princess." Using periodical reviews of Winnemucca's public appearances, she is able to establish that Winnemucca harnessed the power of newspapers to shape public sentiment by performing myriad roles that ultimately challenged and destabilized the normative roles for American Indian women (4-5). Malea Powell's articles on Winnemucca's rhetorical play with Indian women's normative roles ply the same ground. In her autobiography, Powell maintains, Winnemucca "represents herself as a participant in the kinds of Indian-ness that would have appealed to her late-nineteenth century reformist audience" ("Princess Sarah" 64).

Following on this premise, Powell argues that Winnemucca created a "public/textual 'self'" through which she authenticated herself as a civilized Indian and authorized herself as a fit representative of her tribe. Powell's sophisticated analyses of Winnemucca's performances seek to recover her as a calculated, crafty—and certainly resistant—rhetorician; Powell "listens" to Winnemucca's texts to hear how Winnemucca used "dominant discourse as a practice of survivance" ("Sarah Winnemucca Hopkins" 72).

While Sorisio and Powell have produced generative scholarship on Winnemucca's rhetorical performances, they have failed to account completely for the role of her political objectives in her creation of a "public/textual 'self.'" It is in this regard that the Subcommittee transcript takes on its value as a critical archival resource. In documenting Winnemucca's rhetorical performance at the culmination of her political campaign and in the moments in which she was most able to enact intervention in the legislative arena, it offers a rare window into her verbal exchanges with federal politicians and legislators; and those exchanges make Winnemucca's rhetorical strategies visible in new ways—not just during in the testimony, but throughout her campaign. That moment of visibility is nothing, if not troubling. The Subcommittee testimony troubles what we think we know about the Northern Paiutes, about Winnemucca, and about testimony and self-representation in this era broadly.

Between Wardship and Work: Winnemucca's Strategic Uses of the Rhetoric of Reform

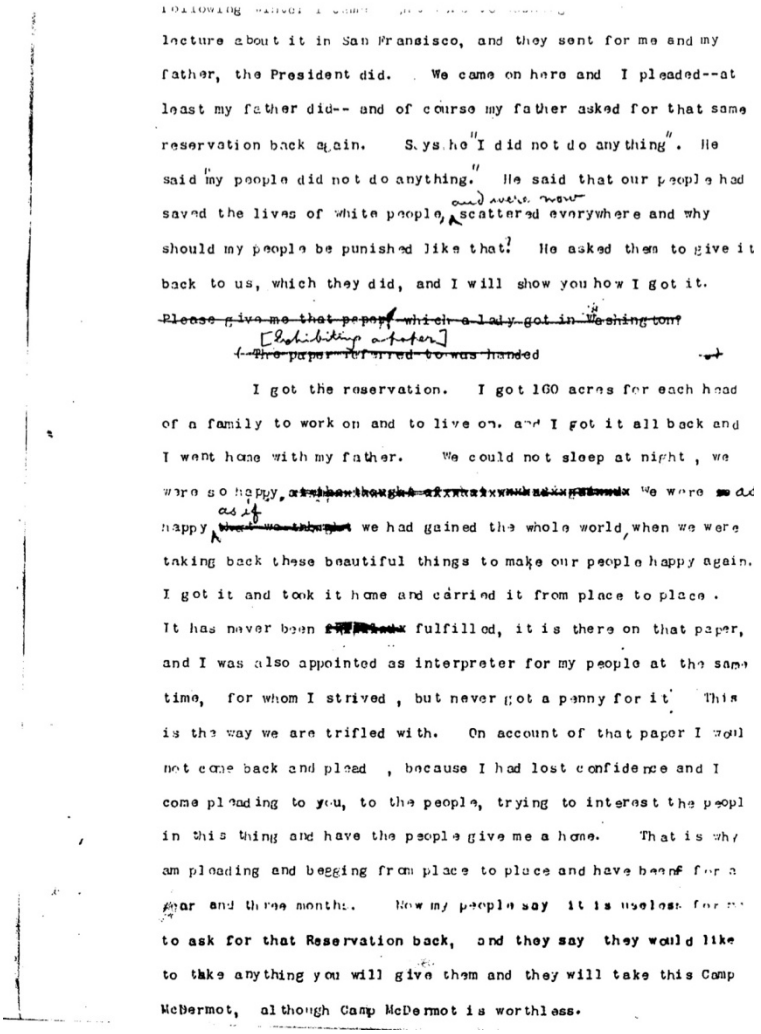


But we took up the march, and the soldiers had good buffalo shoes and buffalo robes and prepared for ~~dear~~ their comfort, and here were my people. They were poor and had no clothing and no blankets and no buffalo robes, and nothing to make them warm, because we did not belong to a buffalo country. We took up our march and marched over drifting snow, my people carrying their little children. Well it took us a good while. Some times, after we camped here and there, some~~thing was~~ women coming along making a great noise crying. Some white people would mimic and mock them. Women would be coming along crying, and it was not because they were cold, for they were used to the cold. It was not because they were sick, for they suffered a great deal. The ~~women were~~ women were crying because ~~they were~~ they were ~~also~~ carrying ~~her~~ their little frozen child in ~~her~~ their arms, and of course the soldiers never could stop, and they would dig into the snow as deep as over your head, to dig a grave, and even if they wanted to dig a grave they could not, and the only way the mother could do was to step off to one side and dig out a little hole and stick her little frozen child under the snow.

This was the way my people marched three hundred miles, and the dear little children strung along side of the road frozen to death for nothing but to punish us all for those thirty that went off with the Bannocks. Sometimes a wagon would be left behind too late to get in on account of the snow storm and an old man would be left in the wagon and when we would go back next day to get the wagon he would be found frozen to death.

My peoples dead bodies were strung all along the road across the Columbia River to this Yakima Reservation. When we got there we were turned over to another man, and then after we got there we died off like a lot of beasts, and of course then the

Figure 2.1: Page 11 of the transcript of Winnemucca's 1884 testimony before the Subcommittee on Indian Affairs. Humboldt County Museum, Nevada.



lecture about it in San Francisco, and they sent for me and my father, the President did. We came on here and I pleaded--at least my father did-- and of course my father asked for that same reservation back again. Says he "I did not do anything". He said "my people did not do anything." He said that our people had saved the lives of white people, and were now scattered everywhere and why should my people be punished like that? He asked them to give it back to us, which they did, and I will show you how I got it.

~~Please give me that paper which a lady got in Washington~~

~~[Exhibiting paper] The paper referred to was handed~~

I got the reservation. I got 160 acres for each head of a family to work on and to live on, and I got it all back and I went home with my father. We could not sleep at night, we were so happy, ~~as though all the world was mine~~ We were so glad happy, as if we had gained the whole world, when we were taking back these beautiful things to make our people happy again. I got it and took it home and carried it from place to place. It has never been ~~kept back~~ fulfilled, it is there on that paper, and I was also appointed as interpreter for my people at the same time, for whom I strived, but never got a penny for it. This is the way we are trifled with. On account of that paper I would not come back and plead, because I had lost confidence and I come pleading to you, to the people, trying to interest the people in this thing and have the people give me a home. That is why am pleading and begging from place to place and have been for a year and three months. Now my people say it is useless for me to ask for that Reservation back, and they say they would like to take anything you will give them and they will take this Camp McDermot, although Camp McDermot is worthless.

Figure 2.2: Page 12 of the transcript of Winnemucca's 1884 testimony before the Subcommittee on Indian Affairs. Humboldt County Museum, Nevada.

When I received a copy of the transcript of Winnemucca's Subcommittee testimony in the mail, I suffered from the kinds of delusions that commonly accompany archival success. I thought I had in my hands the *only* text that offered unmediated documentation of Winnemucca's speech. In her career Winnemucca delivered hundreds of lectures, but she spoke extemporaneously, without a script, and her speaking engagements were not reliably recorded. Those periodical reviews of

Winnemucca's public appearances that appear to offer transcriptions of her speeches often use a reconstructed (or invented) account from the memory (or imagination) of the reporting journalist. If I had remembered that, as Powell has argued in multiple essays, Winnemucca *never* produced texts naively, then I might have recognized immediately that the Subcommittee transcript, while itself a rich and revealing archival document, is certainly not unmediated. In "Sarah Winnemucca Hopkins: Her Wrongs and Claims," Powell points out that a common assumption among scholars of Native American cultural production is that Natives "were rhetorical innocents who had none but the straightforward intentions in the production of a text" (69). The truth was just the opposite, she asserts; she claims, for example, that Winnemucca was a crafty rhetorician, and that she created her public subjectivity, in part, as a rhetorical response to the desires and ideologies of her late nineteenth century audiences. The content of Winnemucca's testimony, therefore, is certainly not a case of unmediated speech.

The transcript is also notably, visibly mediated at the literal level of its production and circulation. The testimony was originally transcribed on two different kinds of paper, one bearing a stenographer's name, the other without the name. The copy in the Humboldt County Library appears to be the proof copy, or the stenographers's "rough draft," which was circulated among members of the Subcommittee for corrections, according to their memory of the proceeding. This proof copy exhibits hand-written corrections in at least two different hands over the stenographers's original typing, some of which may have been introduced by the Chairman of the Subcommittee, Representative Robert W. S. Stevens. The next step in the typical production of governmental records would have been for the proof copy to

be adjusted according to the corrections, reprinted, and disseminated as a clean, final copy.[12] No final copy of this testimony appears to have been submitted for federal record; this proof copy, which originally came from the private papers of Representative Stevens, appears to be the sum total of the existing record.[13]

The first half of the testimony offers Winnemucca's relatively uninterrupted account of her tribe's experiences at the Malheur and Yakama reservations. The rest of the transcript includes questions from the Subcommittee members, followed by Winnemucca's responses. Though the copy of the testimony concludes at the end of Winnemucca's response to a question by Stevens, the transcript may be incomplete, since it lacks the formal signification common in such hearings regarding the closing of the proceeding. Notably missing is any discussion regarding what the Subcommittee intends to do about Winnemucca's allegations of corruption and her request for land rights. The document's mysteries and inconsistencies underscore that transcript is a product not just of Winnemucca's speech, but also of the interventions of multiple parties who took part in and shaped its creation and its present state. Ironically, the transcript of the testimony turns out to be an unreliable source of knowledge about the event that it appears to represent officially and completely.

These observations about the transcript foreground my larger argument about the content of the testimony, namely, that the verbal exchanges between Winnemucca and the Subcommittee members reveal the extent to which Winnemucca strategically articulated her narrative and her demands to correspond to the shared concerns, values, and expectations of the politicians, reformers, and press members in her audience. Regarding the dominant ideologies among Winnemucca's audiences, it is important to

note here that most still regarded Indians as backward savages in dire need of the civilizing effects of Anglo Saxon colonization. As Roy Harvey Pearce argues in *Savagism and Civilization*, from the initial moments of colonial contact in the early seventeenth century through the late nineteenth century, European American cultural identity was predicated upon pervasive conceptions of Native savagery. Anglo Saxons defined themselves as "civilized" in opposition to Indian "savagery," and then justified their colonization of the North American continent around a variety of civilizing missions intended to eradicate that savagery.

As Shari Huhndorf argues in *Going Native*, in addition to defining themselves against the Native "Other," Anglo Saxons also projected idealized traits about themselves onto popular representations of Indians, so that Native Americans were also thought to "embody virtues lost in the Western world" (6). In these projections, Anglo Saxons conflated Native Americans with precious and vulnerable natural resources. This gave rise to the popular tropes of the Noble Savage (the romanticized, sentimental vision of the Indian as representation of a divine state of nature) and the Indian Princess (the counterpart to the Noble Savage, an unspoiled, naturally beautiful woman, who realizes the value of civilization and ultimately sacrifices herself for the white man). Scholars of Winnemucca's rhetorical performances have devoted much discussion to her cultivation of the Indian Princess persona, and her biographers in particular have argued that the role helped validate her political authority as a representative of her tribe in the estimation of her white audiences, who may have seen Indian "royalty" as lesser corollaries to their own white political representatives. In the Subcommittee hearing, however, Winnemucca does not appear to invoke the Indian

Princess persona, nor is she addressed as such; but she does use a variety of other rhetorical tools to validate and authenticate her testimonial narrative and her representative role in relation to the content of her testimony.

Winnemucca opens her testimony strategically, by touting the value of Anglo Saxon civilization. Beginning the narrative in 1875, with the appointment of Samuel B. Parrish as the agent of the Malheur reservation, she represents Parrish as the "good father" who loved and respected his Indian "children." She claims that her tribe was grateful to have Parrish as their "father" at Malheur, as he provided them with tradesmen to teach them skills, labor assignments to cultivate their land, and a "little white Mother" (Parrish's sister-in-law) to teach them in a new school house. Winnemucca often refers to the President of the United States and to the federal government collectively as the "Great Father" and the "big Father in Washington," and she emphasizes that her tribe was willing to work for Parrish to please both him and their "Big Father" (3-12).[14]

One tactic employed by Winnemucca in her testimony, which she also adopts in her autobiography, is to refer to white men as the fathers of Northern Paiute children. Cari Carpenter, in "Sarah Winnemucca and the Rewriting of a Nation," calls attention to how Winnemucca invokes the language of benevolent paternalism in *Life Among the Piutes* to reverse popular discourses about Native Americans and represent *whites* as savages. The way Winnemucca talks in the testimony about the white administrators' positive paternal relationship to their Indian charges has a similar effect. Here, her laudatory prose quickly transitions to allegations that these corrupt "fathers"

systematically took advantage of their power and authority over the tribe, ultimately stripping the Northern Paiutes of their very humanity.

As Winnemucca testifies, during Parrish's first year as administrator of the reservation, a local settler who went by the name Judge Curry petitioned the Northern Paiutes to sell the western tract of their land. As she reports, the tribe responded by lamenting that they had already given up all of their land, and that Malheur was the only thing they had left. Winnemucca relates her tribe's complaint: "Does our father want to play with us as if we were little children?" (5). When the tribe refused to sell the land, the federal government held Parrish responsible. Parrish was dismissed, and in a move that Winnemucca includes to underscore the corruption of the appointment system for federal reservation agents, Judge Curry's brother-in-law, William Rinehart, was instated as the new agent of Malheur.

Winnemucca critiques the fact that the army officers declined to oppose Parrish's dismissal because they dared not defy "the Great Father." She deplores, too, that Parrish "turned us all over to [Rinehart], so many little children, so many women, so many old men, so many young men—we were turned over to him just the same as you would turn your stock over to a person who bought them" (6). When Rinehart set about exploiting the Northern Paiutes by profiting from the federal rations intended for free distribution among the tribe, Winnemucca testifies, the tribe repeated that they did not "want to be played with like children." They fought Rinehart; he stopped issuing rations entirely; and they began to starve (9). Eventually, desperation forced most of the Northern Paiutes to seek shelter and food in unsettled land outside the boundaries of the reservation. The narrative portion of the testimony ends with Winnemucca's

description of the tribe's forced march from Malheur to Yakama, wherein she emphasizes that the mothers, young children, and elderly members of her tribe were the ones most exposed to the harsh environmental conditions. She describes old men dying in frozen wagons and mothers being forced to march on after burying their frozen children in the snow, concluding, "We died off like beasts" (11).

Winnemucca's testimony paints a dramatic picture of the widespread abuse of Indians made vulnerable by legislated inequity, which resulted in the destruction of Indian families. Its narrative arc moves from depictions of benevolent white paternalism to critiques of the violence of white settler imperialism. Specifically, Winnemucca's representations of white administrators as kindly fathers directly foreground her complaints later in her testimony that those same administrators took advantage of tribe members as if they were children. Her grievances about white overseers infantilizing members of the tribe then quickly transition to her most scathing critique: that these "fathers" treated the Northern Paiutes as if they were beasts. The way that Winnemucca "voices" the tribe's objections to such treatment through her testimony underscores that unlike animals, they keenly registered the conditions of their own subjugation and the denial of their humanity. Winnemucca repeatedly emphasizes the familial relations between the tribe members—mothers, children, and grandparents—for one primary goal: to underscore the humanity inherent in their kinship in terms that would resonate most prominently with the Anglo Saxon reform agenda and its emphases on the sanctity of the nuclear family.

Taking her cue from *Life Among the Piutes*, Carpenter claims that Winnemucca draws her familial rhetoric for white-Native relations from Paiute origin narratives,

which depict white-Native "brotherhood" in a familial stewardship over shared land. Arguing that Winnemucca offers a complex reinterpretation of race, so that "white," "civilized," and "citizens" signify savagery and broken promises, she finds that Winnemucca "crafts the familial rhetoric of her grandfather's origin story to critique the whites'—and the U.S. government's—failure to live up to certain kinship responsibilities implicit in . . . Paiute origin [stories]" (113). Carpenter's point here may illustrate how, in the autobiography, Winnemucca draws from Native epistemologies to criticize settler imperialism. She uses Paiute origin stories as an alternative form of knowledge to disrupt Anglo Saxon ideologies about savagery and civilization in the relationships between whites and Natives.

Winnemucca adopts rhetoric that depends on familial terminology in the testimony to articulate parallel condemnations of white savagery, but rather than deriving from Paiute origin stories, her rhetoric maps directly onto dominant discourses of reform and the legal language of the status of Native Americans within the national body. First, Winnemucca's depictions of her tribe as "children" of the "parental" white administrators and the "Great Father" in Washington, D.C., directly recalls the language that Anglo Saxons used to structure Native-white relations throughout most of the nineteenth century, language that was common in both legislative policy and in the larger reform rhetoric of the movement for Indian rights. Throughout Winnemucca's campaign, Indian policy was in crisis and in flux. The 1871 Indian Appropriations Act ended federal recognition of tribes as sovereign nations, and reasserted that Native Americans were "wards" of the United States government. The bill also ended the ability of tribes to make treaties with the federal government, all of

which made it easier for the U.S. to acquire Native land. This constituted an expansion of the wardship ideologies that animated the Marshall decisions in the 1830s, including the Indian Removal Act.[15]

Around the same time, federal Indian policy started to shift from the politics of containment to those of assimilation. Francis Prucha explains that the "wardship" legislation, along with the highly publicized failures of the reservation system to confine, pacify, and sustain Indian tribes, forced the federal government to change its tactics from maintaining Natives as separate and sovereign entities on reservations, which led to the eradication of the reservations and their incorporation into the national body. With the reservation system undeniably in shambles, the Department of the Interior and the Office of Indian Affairs gradually "saw it as their responsibility to provide the means for the Indians to move from their traditional life to the white man's civilization—and to force this change upon the Indians for their own good" (Prucha, *The Great Father* 194). This shift from containment to assimilation fell under the political umbrella that is commonly known as President Grant's Peace Policy, which took effect from the early 1870s through the 1880s, until the passage of the Dawes Act in 1887.[16] The Peace Policy proposed a "humanitarian" solution to the Indian Problem: turning reservations over to religious groups, converting Indians to Christianity, forcing them to adopt white customs through labor and educational regimes, dissolving their tribal bonds, and eventually integrating them into the general body politic as citizens. In short, there was nothing peaceful about the Peace Policy. In fact, it opened a new era of colonial coercion and violence in white-Native relations.

It was during this shift from isolation to incorporation in federal Indian policy that Winnemucca took to the national stage. From our vantage point today, it is clear that her descriptions of the corruption and abuse that her tribe experienced within the reservation system nicely complemented the contemporaneous wave of anti-reservation politics. But it is her repeated emphasis on her tribe's amenability to the wardship system that marks her testimonial rhetoric as working within a white reform discourse. Moreover, it is that very emphasis that distinguishes the rhetoric in her testimony from the kind to be found in her autobiography and in other forms of her cultural production. For example, in the testimony, Winnemucca pairs her use of familial rhetoric with a repeated—insistent—emphasis on her tribe's willingness to work and learn in order to please their new "parents" and their "big Father in Washington." Winnemucca testifies, "He (Parrish) says we are willing to teach you: will you work? My people said yes. My father then was the chief of the entire people, and he says, 'yes, we have been looking for this kind of man for many years . . . no one has tried to teach us, and here we are, poor, and we are glad you have come, and we are willing to work.' He says, 'my men will work'" (3). Winnemucca goes on to describe in detail the work that the Northern Paiutes did under Parrish: clearing land, preparing irrigation, and growing crops. According to her, the tribe did not want for food or supplies at that time, and they conducted their day-to-day affairs with relatively little oversight. She insists, "We never refused work, and we were happy" (4).

Here, Winnemucca invokes what I call a reformist paradigm of "wardship and work." This paradigm anticipates and corresponds directly to her audience's vision for how the Northern Paiutes, as inherently savage subjects, should be rendered fit for the

future administration of their own land and for eventual incorporation into the national body. The reformist vision emphasized Native participation in modernity through wage labor and capitalist exchange, which was intended to facilitate their assimilation into the national body. The content of this vision is best summarized by Secretary of the Interior Carl Schurz, the very federal official with whom Winnemucca met in 1880 during her first visit to Washington, D.C., to ask that her tribe be returned to the Malheur reservation. In "Present Aspects of the Indian Problem," an essay that he published one year after he met with Winnemucca, Schurz writes,

> To fit the Indians for their ultimate absorption in the great body of American citizenship, three things are suggested by common sense as well as philanthropy: 1. That they be taught to work by making work profitable and attractive to them. 2. That they be educated, especially the youth of both sexes. 3. That they be individualized in the possession of property by settlement in severalty with a fee simple title, after which the lands they do not use may be disposed of for general settlement and enterprise. (48)

Schurz articulates the core sentiments of the reform movement as he argues that Native Americans faced a "stern" choice: extermination or civilization. He was confident that Indians were fully assimilable, as long as they were forced to work and be educated. He writes, "When the wild Indian first turns his face from his old habits toward 'the ways of the white man,' his self-reliance is severely shaken . . . he feels himself like a child in need of leading-strings . . . He is overcome by a feeling of helplessness, and he naturally looks to the 'Great Father' to take him by the hand and guide him on. That guiding hand must necessarily be one of authority and power to command confidence and respect" (48). Here Schurz echoes the legal and ideological rhetoric of the "wardship" policy as he articulates the principles behind the administrative tactics that

Parrish, the agent at Malheur of whom Winnemucca speaks so highly, employed in his training of the Northern Paiutes.

Winnemucca's representations of her tribe's contented wardship and labor under their "Great Father" mirrors the language and ideological content of Schurz's and other reformers' plans for the "ultimate absorption" of Indians "into the great body of American citizenry." Her detailed descriptions of the kinds of agricultural labor and education they received under Parrish at Malheur were critical to establishing the Northern Paiutes as subjects who, if not already possessing the attributes of modern civilization, were willing to learn those skills in order to become civilized. Winnemucca represents her tribe's narrative history within the framework of wardship and work to offer support for her argument that they should be eligible to receive a permanent deed to administer their own land at Fort McDermit.

In what is perhaps the most remarkable evidence of Winnemucca's rhetorical skill, the Subcommittee's extensive interrogation of her following her narrative testimony reveals that Winnemucca's repeated emphasis on Northern Paiute wardship and work under benevolent white administration *directly* anticipated the Subcommittee's concerns about the Paiutes' fitness for a future outside the reservation system. Throughout the question and answer portion of the proceeding, the Subcommittee members were preoccupied with whether or not the Northern Paiutes did work, what kind of work they could do, and whether or not they were inclined to continue working. Stevens inquires if the Northern Paiutes would be able to successfully cultivate the land at McDermit, and he asks multiple questions about the irrigation ditch the Paiutes built under Parrish's administration: how big it was,

whether it was usable, who was using it; he wants to know what other kinds of work the Northern Paiutes did for Rinehart, asking if they planted "potatoes, turnips, cabbages and so on;" he inquires whether they grew grain while Rinehart was agent. The questioning continues: Stevens asks, "Do you think if your people were given this Camp McDermo [*sic*] reservation or some other reserve that they are inclined to attempt to do any work and try to be self-sustaining?" (15-24). The Subcommittee's obsessive emphasis on the issue of labor and the cultivation of land throughout their questioning explains why Winnemucca so ardently emphasizes that the Northern Paiutes were happily working at Malheur earlier in the testimony: she anticipated their questions.

She also knew that their questions were disingenuous. Over the course of her year in the East, Winnemucca had switched her campaign strategy from petitioning that the Northern Paiutes be returned to Malheur, to asking—as she does in the testimony—that they receive the deed to Fort McDermit. The Malheur land in Oregon was arable, and it was relatively easy to grow crops there, which is what made it so desirable to settlers. Winnemucca reasoned that since the McDermit land in Nevada was not arable—very few crops could grow in the middle of the desert—it would therefore be less desirable to white settlers and more viable as a permanent home for her tribe. As she states in the testimony, "My people say it is useless for them to apply for [Malheur] because they well know that no reservation that is worth anything has ever been restored to Indians anywhere. But send them to Camp McDermot [*sic*] . . ." (15). Chairman Stevens follows up in his interrogation: "If your people should be allowed to go upon [McDermit] they have the means to support themselves in homes and open up

their farms, and could they be self sustaining . . . ?" (15). His line of questioning here is dishonest. Given his experience on the Subcommittee, he would have known that no crops could grow on the land at Fort McDermit; he knew that the Northern Paiutes were entirely destitute and without the supplies to erect homes and open farms, and he knew that it was absolutely impossible for them to be self-sustaining as required by the terms of allotment (which demanded that they erect homes with nuclear families and cultivate land) in that location.

While Winnemucca's concern that the Northern Paiutes might fail at sustaining themselves at McDermit accounted for her requesting at least two years of federal assistance to help them make the transition, her primary goal was that the tribe retain sovereignty and insularity from settler colonialism. Throughout her testimony she represented her tribe as amenable to, and even desirous of, a subordinate relationship to white administration. By acknowledging the need for federal assistance, she could avoid directly contradicting the guiding Indian reform principles of wardship, while at the same time downplaying her goals for sovereignty. The same balancing act marks her other cultural production. For example, in *Life Among the Piutes*, Winnemucca contextualizes her multiple references to the "Big Father in Washington" within a narrative that exalts familial relations between the members of the Paiute tribe, her own father (Old Winnemucca), and the "Spirit-Father" in the heavens.

As Carpenter notes, many passages in *Life* assert Paiute equality to whites and sovereignty from whites. In the chapter titled "Domestic and Social Moralities," Winnemucca maintains, "We have a republic as well as you. The council-tent is our Congress, and anybody can speak who has anything to say, women and all" (53).

However, when Winnemucca is actually standing before members of Congress, she makes no mention of the Paiutes having a republic, congress, or sovereign government of their own. This must have been a deliberate omission. In order to make her demands viable in the space of the Subcommittee hearing and within the framework of Indian reform, throughout her testimony she had to downplay her insistence on her people's sovereignty in favor of her emphasis on their role as subordinate partners to white reformers in their quest for civilization.

Winnemucca's shifting rhetoric between her autobiography and her testimony underscores the complexity of her position in the Indian reform movement: while she appeared to back the reformists' goals, her objectives were frequently in conflict with theirs. Her experience with corruption, abuse, and neglect in the reservation system had convinced her that reservations were inherently flawed and therefore against the best interests of Native tribes. The reformers were also in favor of ending reservations, but for different reasons: they saw reservations as enabling the kinds of tribal bonds that prevented Indian subjects from becoming civilized. In addition, whereas Winnemucca saw land allotment as a means to preserve tribal integrity and sovereignty by warding off the constant threat of settler imperialism, the reformers saw it as a way to break up tribal communities and force Natives to adopt the hallmark traits of Anglo-Saxon modernity: agrarian cultivation of land, capitalist formations of labor, and nuclear familial arrangements.

Winnemucca's scathing criticism throughout her testimony of the reformist language in Schurz's tract on the "Indian Problem" illuminates the contrasting visions of white-Native familial relations. I have already noted that Schurz depicts the Indian

as a helpless child "in need of leading-strings," who will look "to the 'Great Father' to take him by the hand" (16-17). Winnemucca, on the other hand, argues that, in treating them like helpless, naive children, these "Great Fathers" savagely abused their power and committed egregious violence against Native families under the guise of attempting to civilize them. And her emphasis is that the Paiutes are *not* children: she asserts that they are rational subjects with a strong sense of morality and an in-depth understanding of the political workings of American modernity. The fact that Winnemucca couches that virulent critique of American colonization in an overall framework of an endorsement of the imperialist regimes of "wardship and work" underscores the complexity of Winnemucca's rhetorical maneuvering.

Winnemucca designs her testimony to look like a window into the history, experiences, and conditions of the Northern Paiutes; but it is more like a mirror, purposely reflecting favored reformist ideologies back to her Anglo-Saxon audience. As such, Winnemucca's manipulation of the rhetoric of Indian reform becomes an interrogation of the entire genre of the testimony.[17] Winnemucca's testimony comes out of her position as a witness, as a knowledgeable informant about a dire situation that, according to the consensus of the majority, desperately required federal intervention. I have already established, however, that this testimony does not correspond to an "authentic" or straightforward narration of facts. What, then, does her rhetorical manipulation of the discourse of reform suggest about how she was using the genre of the testimony to achieve her political goals?

As Proma Tagore argues, testimonials do more than offer an historical record; they also articulate resistance against "various and interlocking forms of violence and

Othering." Testimony is used "first as a process of witnessing and accountable listening, then as a form of historical memory, and finally as a mode of subaltern resistance and agency." Thus, for Tagore, testimony can amount to political intervention—it can serve not just to document, but also to create resistance to violence and oppression (6-7). Winnemucca's appropriation of the rhetoric of reform in her testimony, therefore, may not constitute "authentic" discourse according to the rubric used by many scholars to assess Native American narratives. Her rhetorical maneuvering, however, certainly constitutes an expression of subaltern resistance and agency in a profoundly significant moment of political intervention. Her interaction with Congress involves using the genre of testimony not merely as a window to allow her audiences to understand the experiences of the Northern Paiutes, but also as a mirror to reveal the violent mechanics of American modernity.

Winnemucca: Known, Knowing, Unknowable

In the space of the Subcommittee hearing, Winnemucca used her rhetorical skills to play with the normative relations of power and knowledge between herself and her Anglo Saxon audience of politicians, reformers, and members of the press. As a celebrity representative of her tribe, she was a widely known public figure; and as a witness to the circumstances of her tribe's suffering, she was a knowledgeable subject. The Subcommittee members, on the other hand, adopted a position of ignorance about those circumstances. This is not surprising. If they had admitted knowing about the abuses of the Northern Paiutes at the hands of the corrupt agents whom they had appointed to manage the reservations, and they were exposed as complicit in that

longstanding abuse and corruption, then they would be admitting to the moral turpitude of their entire reform (colonizing) project. Under the circumstances, Winnemucca's position as knowledgeable in contrast with the Subcommittee's position as ignorant overturned the norm. The Anglo Saxon reformers for once were prevented from constructing themselves as the bearers of knowledge, obliged by their superiority and their moral sympathies to impart that knowledge (the gifts of modernity) to the Indians. This was so even though they saw the Indians as beneath them on a continuum of racial hierarchy and constructed them, due to their alleged primitivism, as unknowing.

Winnemucca's opportunity to suspend normative power relations through her testimonial, however, was limited: the Subcommittee members retained (and exercised) the authority to interrogate her, assess her truthfulness, and invalidate the urgency of her testimony. In the end they wielded their power by withholding the actions necessary to right their wrongs and end the suffering of the tribe. Winnemucca was also always subject to the regulating gaze of her audience of reformers and reporters, who had the power to represent her testimony in the press in ways that undermined her political goals, something that they did frequently.[18]

Throughout her testimonial narrative and in the verbal exchanges with the Subcommittee members, Winnemucca rhetorically manipulated themes of knowledge and knowing to mediate the forces aligned against her. For example, in the section of the testimony about Rinehart, the agent who replaced Parrish at Malheur, Winnemucca hesitates to mention his name. This is a notable detail, especially since she readily names every other individual in her story up to that point. One of Chairman Stevens's first questions to Winnemucca, underscores this point: "What was the name of that

agent, who was the brother-in-law of a Judge in Oregon?" Winnemucca responds, "I think you must all be acquainted with it," and then adds, "Mr. Rinehart" (10). It is possible that the question was purely a formality: because Winnemucca's oral narrative was being transcribed, he may have needed her to utter Rinehart's name to ensure that it would be properly included in the stenographer's record. Winnemucca's response, however, suggests that the Chairman was less concerned about the integrity of the record than about asserting for the record a position of ignorance regarding Rinehart and the horrendous conditions about which Winnemucca was testifying.

Winnemucca's response refuses the possibility of ignorance, and she also she indicts not only Stevens, but also all the other Subcommittee representatives, for *knowing*. Her implication here is if they recognize Rinehart's name based solely on her description of his crimes at Malheur, then they must know who he is and what abuses he has perpetuated. In this rhetorical intervention, Winnemucca asserts herself not only as a knowing subject, but also as one who knows that they know. In other words, she suggests that the Subcommittee members are lying.

Winnemucca's charge here incites a protracted exchange between her and the Subcommittee members about Rinehart along two points of contention: whether Rinehart truly committed grievous misconduct as Winnemucca alleges, and whether the Subcommittee members were knowledgeable about Rinehart's misconduct before the hearing. For example, when Winnemucca explains that Rinehart put the tribe to work clearing non-tribal government land rather than their own reservation and paid them meager wages out of the reservation store, Stevens quickly follows up to state for the record that Rinehart was "a very generous man" (17). Stevens's point that

Rinehart's payment to the Northern Paiutes of one dollar per day, per tribe member, out of the reservation store constitutes generosity implies that he interprets that Rinehart gave money to the tribe that was intended for his personal profit. Stevens implies that Rinehart was not obligated to pay the Paiutes for their labor. This contradicts the formal reformist position, which suggested that Indians should be paid for their labor—especially labor they performed on land other than their own reservation—in order to familiarize them with white capitalist forms of monetary exchange. Stevens's comment also disregards Winnemucca's extensive testimony about Rinehart's schemes to force the tribe to buy their rations from his reservation store, not to mention the numerous ways he misused federal resources for his own profit. In short, Stevens characterizes Rinehart as "generous" for paying the Paiutes for their labor with their own money, when, as Winnemucca clearly illustrates, his conduct was indicative not just of a lack of generosity, but of blatant immorality, particularly within the framework of the ethics of humanitarian reform.

Another Subcommittee member, identified in the transcript as Mr. George,[19] denies any knowledge about the state of affairs that Winnemucca has described and implicitly affirms Rinehart's innocence:

> I wish to state here, as this statement will be taken down, that this is the first time I have ever heard any complaint made in my state against either Col. George B. Curry (previously referenced as Judge Curry) who is the United States Received of Public Lands, or against Major Rinehart who was formerly Indian agent there, and I have never before heard that neither of these gentlemen had any of the lands in this reserve. (20)

George adds later, "I simply say that what has been stated here in regard to Major Rinehart is news to me" (23). By self-reflexively noting that his statement "will be taken down," he is cleverly using the official nature of the transcription to simultaneously construct and provide evidence of the truthfulness of his statement. He declares a position of unknowing here to exonerate himself, and by extension, the Bureau of Indian Affairs or other responsible agency, of any culpability regarding Rinehart's alleged actions. In sum, as he constructs himself as "innocent" and therefore inculpable, he sets his word and Rinehart's public reputation against Winnemucca's own in an attempt to discredit the veracity of her testimony.

In all likelihood, however, he was lying; and Winnemucca challenges him by deftly countering that Rinehart's misconduct was "common knowledge" (as opposed to her own proprietary knowledge). She argues that the newspapers in Walla Walla, San Francisco, and Portland "made so much noise" about Rinehart's greed and abuse that he was eventually removed from his post as agent and appointed as a shopkeeper on the reservation (17), adding later in her testimony, "I certainly know from living two years in Walla Walla and being in San Francisco and Portland that people never ceased to talk about Major Rinehart and his doings" (23).[20] Winnemucca also points to the public scandal that ensued as a result of her exposé of Rinehart in her autobiography, which is a significant part of how she became such a well-known spokeswoman for her tribe. The fact that that scandal was a central organizing event throughout her Eastern campaign makes it an important part of how she earned the invitation to testify before the Subcommittee.

When the Subcommittee invited her, they probably did so with some knowledge of what she would say, based on their likely familiarity with the content of her lectures and with her petition, which had been circulated several times in Congress before the Subcommittee hearing.[21] She testifies, "It is not a hidden thing that I am saying. I have published a book to which there was great opposition . . . [Rinehart] tried to choke that book out of press in Boston, but my friends . . . had my book published which I am not ashamed to give to every man in the world to read." She reiterates at the end of this statement, "I am not ashamed" (21). Her arguments here represent George as either grossly incompetent for failing to stay abreast of the national news regarding an agent in his state, or as a manipulative liar. Either way, she denies all of the Subcommittee members the excuse of ignorance with regard to the events that led to the hearing and occasioned her testimony.

Winnemucca's account of how the regional and national press reacted to her conflict with Rinehart is accurate: Rinehart and his associates did indeed try to shame Winnemucca out of publicly exposing him, and he tried to sabotage her campaign by targeting the integrity of her character. In an effort to block Winnemucca's first visit to Washington, D.C. in 1880, where she made her initial request to Secretary Schurz and President Hayes that her tribe be returned to Malheur from Yakima, Rinehart sent a letter to the Bureau of Indian Affairs. In it he accused Winnemucca of "the vices of drunkenness, gambling, and common prostitution;" alleging that she "could be bought for a bottle of whiskey" and that she was a "notorious liar and malicious schemer" (qtd. in Zanjani 206-07). In fact, he was the malicious schemer: besides wishing to protect his own reputation as an Indian agent, he simply did not want the Northern Paiutes

returned to Malheur. He had worked hard at making conditions so miserable there that they were forced by starvation and exposure to leave the reservation, which made the tract of land his brother-in-law wanted conveniently unoccupied. Having the tribe return would have been a nuisance to Rinehart, and it would have foiled his plan to facilitate the private sale of that land.

Three years after Winnemucca's first visit to Washington, D.C., Rinehart continued his campaign against Winnemucca, even trying to impede the publication of her autobiography. In addition, he commissioned a slanderous review of her in the *Council Fire*, a periodical journal; it alleged that Winnemucca was "so notorious for her untruthfulness as to be wholly unreliable" and that she was a "common camp follower," or a prostitute who served U.S. soldiers (qtd. in Canfield 204). In response to these allegations, the Peabody sisters solicited letters of recommendation affirming the integrity of Winnemucca's character to be included in the appendix to *Life*, and they were able to raise the funds to publish the book in spite of Rinehart's efforts to censor it from such supporters as John Greenleaf Whittier and Mrs. Ralph Waldo Emerson (Canfield 206). The subject of Winnemucca's conflict with Rinehart sparked headlines during those years across a variety of publications and geographic regions.[22]

Winnemucca's struggle with Rinehart underscores how her political success was never free from the challenges and limitations that came with being visible in the public sphere as a politically active Native woman. Her mention of her autobiography and her repeated insistence in the testimony that she "wasn't ashamed" provides an opportunity to read across her cultural production during this period in order to elucidate how she dealt with the everyday dilemma of her existence. Winnemucca

chose to cultivate a visual persona that on the one hand counteracted the dominant ideology according to which only a shameful Indian woman would stake out a public platform such as hers, and that on the other offered "evidence" to her audience of her integrity of character. Using the technologies of representation throughout her campaign, she was able to manipulate the larger ideologies of race and authenticity that were attached to photography. Arranging the regimes of racialized spectacle around dominant representations of Native Americans in white popular culture, she could render herself as a knowable subject to her viewing audiences while at the same time destabilizing regimes of knowledge that were based on codified visions of racial identity. These visual texts helped to counteract the aura of impropriety that haunted her campaign, and ultimately, that followed her into the Subcommittee testimony.



Figure 2.3: Sarah Winnemucca, Boston, 1883. Photograph by Elmer Chickering.



Figure 2.4: Sarah Winnemucca, Baltimore, c. 1883-84. Photograph by Charles Busey and Fayette Streets.



Figure 2.5: "Princess Sarah Winnemucca—Daughter of Chief Winnemucca," c. 1883-84. Photograph by Latto.

The three photographs above, all professional studio portraits that were probably taken during the year long period that Winnemucca toured the Eastern states, show remarkable consistency in her attire, staging, and self-representation. The similarities not only correspond to conventions of the era in photographic portraiture, but also suggest that Winnemucca maintained a sustained, strategic rhetorical strategy

regarding how she wanted to appear in the public sphere. As Canfield notes, Winnemucca and her sponsors commissioned photographs such as these in support of her campaign (201). That the photographs circulated in conjunction with her book and lectures forms an important contextual detail with regard to how Winnemucca's viewing publics might have interpreted the photographs. These images did not circulate in a vacuum: Winnemucca disseminated her cultural texts together, and the very arguments that she makes in her lectures, book, and testimony—such as her claims about Rinehart's abuses of her tribe—connect to the arguments implicit in her visual self-presentations in the photographs.

Just like the transcript of the testimony (and every cultural text that Winnemucca ever produced), the photographs are highly mediated: the images simultaneously reflect the photographer's vision of Winnemucca and Winnemucca's own vision of herself. Scherer notes that in studios such as the ones in which these portraits were produced, photographers frequently staged, dressed, and positioned their subjects. Judging by the fact that Winnemucca appeared in similar dress and positioning, regardless of the photographer, studio, or date of production, Scherer argues that Winnemucca had a great deal of editorial say about her photographic representations (179). What interests me about them is how Winnemucca used the dominant rhetorical conventions that governed the photography of Indians in her own self-staging, just as she used dominant reform rhetoric to stage her arguments in her testimony. What emerges from these seemingly unrelated texts is Winnemucca's coordinated rhetorical appropriation of white imperialist ideologies in support of what was ultimately an anti-imperialist political campaign.

Besides conjuring a kind of visual citation of her "Indian Princess" persona (note the affectation of a crown), her images also subtly invoke a vision of the "vanishing Indian"[23] reminiscent of Catlin and Curtis and a kind of staginess and drama akin to the Buffalo Bill style images of the Wild West. In all three photographs, Winnemucca poses in an environment evocative of the wilderness, which visually reinforces the widespread conflation between Indians and "nature." The last two photographs contain a hazy effect that calls up the "vanishing Indian" myth.[24] Winnemucca's costume in all three photographs—with buckskin, beading, and fringe—turn Winnemucca into the very vision of how white audiences thought an "authentic" Native woman should appear.

Winnemucca wore that costume for most of her public appearances and lectures, and she probably wore it to the Subcommittee hearing as well. While the hearing did receive some press,[25] reporters fail to mention how she appeared on that day, though they had frequently described her visual appearance in media coverage of her previous public lectures and engagements. An article titled "The Princess Winnemucca" in the *Chicago Daily Tribune* (September 27, 1884) provides some insight into how that costume became the centerpiece of Winnemucca's public image. As the journalist reports, Winnemucca's dress on the reservation among the Northern Paiutes would have been made of "about the poorest stuff that could be found anywhere," and would have been unfit for the climate in the East. All that aside, her "real" Northern Paiute clothes would not have satisfied her Eastern audience's expectations regarding her appearance. The article continues,

> When Sarah determined to lecture in Boston, it was agreed that, in order to highten [*sic*] the effect . . . the ladies insisted that she must wear some aboriginal costume, and, thinking that she was short on money, they presented her with a fanciful suit of buckskin and flannel, trimmed with beads and feathers, and a head-dress topped off with beautiful plumes. She was delighted with the regalia, and always wore it when appearing in public. (16)

The *Boston Evening Transcript* prints a similar report on Winnemucca's attire on stage: "a dress of buckskin . . . trimmed with an abundance of sparkling beads and wampum. At her side hung a little bag of damask velvet, embroidered with a figure like a Cupid. On her head was a sort of crimson crown, ornate with stars and brilliants, while armlets and bracelets adorned her arms and wrists" ("Princess Winnemucca on the Treatment of Indians," May 3, 1883).

As the *Chicago Daily Tribune* notes, this ornamental style of dress did not remotely correspond to traditional clothing for Northern Paiute women. This underscores one of the central paradoxes of Winnemucca's public career: in order to be perceived as authentic, she had to visually reflect her audience's wildly exaggerated conceptions of Indian-ness. So she donned a costume and ornate accessories and "played Indian." Without her rhetorical appropriations of dominant visual constructs, Winnemucca likely would not have had a public platform for her political goals, for, as Powell argues, otherwise she would have been "impossible to see" (66).[26] If Winnemucca had campaigned in other attire, such as her tribal clothes or the Victorian clothes her sponsors occasionally purchased for her, the discordance between how she appeared and how she "should" have appeared might have undermined her political momentum among her viewing public.

Winnemucca also had to cater to her audience's desire to see *entertaining* images of Indians because she faced some stiff competition in drawing crowds to her engagements. As Carolyn Sorisio notes, Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show arrived in Boston in the spring of 1883, at the exact time that Winnemucca joined the Peabody sisters there (20). Buffalo Bill's show, which quickly set the visual standard for the appearance of Natives in public, depicted elaborate and fictitious frontier scenes for scores of eager American audiences: these Indians were either bloodthirsty savages defeated by brave white settlers and army officers or noble savages doomed to extinction by the inevitable spread of American civilization. Photographers such as Gertrude Käsebier photographed the Sioux actors who starred in Buffalo Bill's troupe wearing their costume regalia.[27] These kinds of representations dominated the realm of public visibility for Indians during Winnemucca's campaign; and, as Sorisio argues, Winnemucca "competed with [Wild West] shows for audiences (in attendance and in the media) and also for control of the image of American Indians presented to non-Natives" (20). While Sorisio distinguishes between a low-brow audience that was likely to attend a Wild West show and a higher-brow audience that was more likely to attend Winnemucca's lectures, my sense is that the allure of racialized spectacle frequently cut across those kinds of distinctions among American publics.[28] Additionally, the ideological impulses behind the Wild West shows and the reform movement as a whole were ontologically similar: both ultimately supported the humane preservation of the primitive race through conquest and assimilation.

As a tool in representing Native Americans to white audiences, photography powerfully participated in the conquest of Natives. As I discuss in my chapter on Ida

Wells's uses of lynching photography in her anti-lynching pamphlets, photographs were largely understood to be markers of objective truths, especially in revealing racialized characteristics that allegedly corresponded to interior essences, or immutable character traits belonging to the races. In his introduction to *Excavating Voices: Listening to Photographs of Native Americans*, Michael Katakis explains that photographs of Native Americans were used to stabilize racial meanings for the development of the anthropological and biological sciences, and for continued Westward expansion in the name of Anglo Saxon progress and civilization (3-5). The images constructed representations of Native savagery in opposition to white civilization while at the same time serving as evidence of that opposition. It is the repetitiveness of certain photographic conventions and citations in representing Native subjects that determined how American audiences came to *know* Indians. It was by sharing many of those same citations and conventions that Winnemucca's studio portraits came to join a large archive of popular images of Native Americans.

Winnemucca's use of these photographs in support of her political campaign for Northern Paiute land sovereignty suggests that she was rhetorically manipulating photography as a means of knowledge production and colonialism. Taking my cues from Shawn Smith's *Photography on the Color Line*, I read against the conventions within which the photographs were created, and contextualize them within the goals of Winnemucca's larger political campaign, to interpret the portraits as also constituting a counter-archive. Winnemucca created these photographs to resemble popular images of Native Americans, but she altered or "signified on" the racial meanings inscribed in them, and in doing so, disrupted the colonial gaze.[29] First, there is evidence in the

photographs that Winnemucca resists the totalizing, objectifying effect of the colonial fantasy even as she participates in creating it. In Figure 4, Winnemucca's gaze is leveled directly at the camera, which establishes her as a self-conscious subject with agency—she is, in fact, gazing back. Her right foot is positioned in front of her left, as if she is walking toward the camera, suggesting a forward motion that (not accidentally) corroborates an ideological framework of progress. Winnemucca is walking out of the wilderness into the space of the viewer, out of a nostalgic past into the future. While she averts her gaze slightly in the other two photographs, according to the standard convention for portraits, she asserts her face and bodily presence in the foreground of this image to establish a presence that undermines the "vanishing" myth.

The fact that Winnemucca made herself into a subject worthy of multiple studio portraits echoes her repeated assertion in the Subcommittee testimony that she was not ashamed of her public mission to expose corruption and to better the conditions of her tribe. Most photographic images of Native Americans in mass circulation were created by white photographers for the documentation—nostalgic, scientific, entertaining, or otherwise—of the racial "Other," in support of dominant ideologies of biological inferiority and imperialist conquest. Winnemucca's purpose was different. She created her photographic images for self-promotion within the context of an anti-imperialist political campaign; these photographs reference the conventions of honorific portraiture as much as they do the dominant conventions of representing the "savage" Indian. All the while they are rendering her legible as an "authentic" Indian and offering her a persona within accepted roles for Native Americans, they are simultaneously providing evidence of her integrity of character, and constructing her

transcendence beyond those roles. In none of the three images does she look guilty of drunkenness, gambling, and prostitution: Since "squaws" associated with such vices would never have appeared in honorific portraits like the ones commissioned by Winnemucca, the photographs of her constitute visual evidence of her worthiness as a public representative.

Ultimately, while the photographs that Winnemucca commissioned as a part of her larger campaign did not prevent her Subcommittee testimony from being haunted by questions of her integrity, they did help construct her public subjectivity as a representative of her tribe and activist in the larger context of the Indian Reform movements. Winnemucca's rhetorical play with photography mirrors her rhetorical strategies in her writing and testimony; she uses the ideological conventions of each textual form, such as the objectivity that was supposedly inherent in photography, or the presumed innocence and truthfulness of testimony, as a key part of her rhetorical interventions. This strategy made her arguments more legible to her audience members, and by appealing to her audience's familiarity with generic conventions, she increased her chances of political success. But her manipulation of those conventions was also unsettling to her audience, for it subtly called into question the stability and reliability of those textual forms.

Winnemucca's rhetorical strategies gesture to the problems of cultural representation and the role of representative technologies within American modernity: As she manipulates her self representation in photographs, she calls into question the objectivity of photography, particularly with regard to its function in documenting the conditions of tribal life and the attributes of Native American bodies for the official

archives. As she carefully crafts her narrative about the Northern Paiutes and their dealings with corrupt reservation agents—and boldly alleges that the Subcommittee members are lying—she unmasks the whole convention of the Congressional testimony as fraudulent. Ultimately, as she appears to reveal herself in photography and oral and written narrative, she obscures what is knowable about her and her tribe.

My analysis of the Subcommittee transcript alongside Winnemucca's other forms of cultural production shows that her increasing appropriation of white reform rhetoric throughout her East Coast campaign illuminates more about the constraints and conditions for Indian participation in the dominant public sphere than it does about Winnemucca's subjectivity or the history and experiences of her tribe. Of course, her position in public was predicated upon her being a knowledgeable informant regarding the experiences of her tribe and a knowable, or recognizable, representative of her people. Behind the scenes, though, she manipulated the regimes of public representation and visibility to gesture to the trouble with the politics of knowledge—not just regarding the national debate about Indian policy, but also regarding the technologies of modern representations themselves.[30] This, I argue, is an essential part of Winnemucca's critique of American imperialism: that the forms of modernity that reformers pointed to as evidence that U.S. society was superior, progressive, and "civilized" were, instead, manipulable, thoroughly unstable, and inherently violent.

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[1] A note on terms: Throughout this chapter, I refer to Sarah Winnemucca Hopkins by her maiden name. Her name is not to be conflated with that of the town of Winnemucca, Nevada, whose archival resources I discuss briefly elsewhere.

Winnemucca belonged to a band of the Northern Paiutes called the *Cui Ui Ticutta*, or the Cui-Cui (fish) Eaters, who were historically located around Pyramid Lake, CA, and who roamed the regions of eastern California, western Nevada and southern Oregon. The spelling for the tribal name "Paiute" was not standardized until the twentieth century; I use this spelling unless I am referring to an historical document that uses an alternative spelling, such as in the title of Winnemucca's autobiography, *Life Among the Piutes: Their Wrongs and Claims*.

[2] The Bannock War describes a brief series of armed conflicts between members of the Bannock tribe and the United States army in 1878. The federal government starved the Bannocks on their reservation (much as it starved the Northern Paiutes at Malheur); out of desperation, the Bannocks raided the food stores of white settlers, and the U.S. army was called in to meet the Bannock resistance with violence. A small band of Northern Paiutes (no more than 25 members) joined the Bannocks and took up arms against the United States as a protest against their similar situation.

[3] Gae Canfield, Winnemucca's first biographer, writes that audiences could attend one of Winnemucca's lectures for twenty-five cents, purchase a copy of *Life Among the Piutes* for one dollar, and buy a photograph of Winnemucca for an additional fifty cents. Canfield also notes that subscribers to various periodicals and catalogs could order Winnemucca's autobiography and photographs by mail, but she does not specify which periodicals or catalogs offered Winnemucca's texts (211-12).

[4] Special thanks to University of California, San Diego Librarian Annelise Sklar for helping me search federal records for the testimony and for patiently answering my questions about how congressional hearings are documented and where the records are located.

[5] The story of my recovery of the transcript is perhaps significant regarding its larger implications about archival work and historical memory in our contemporary era of the decimation of public resources. The Humboldt County Museum, which allegedly held this transcript did not respond to my inquiries; it did not have an acting director, it was short staffed, and it had reduced hours of operation. Like countless museums, libraries and community centers across the nation, recent rounds of crippling budget cuts left the museum nearly shuttered. But I persisted: After failing to make contact with the museum, I contacted the Humboldt County Library, a librarian there forwarded my request to a member of the Humboldt County Historical Society, who then circulated my inquiry back to an affiliate of the museum, who kindly responded to my request, unlocked the museum, located the transcript in a box in the basement, and sent me a copy. Thanks to Barbara Powell, the Humboldt County Historical Society Officer who first fielded my inquiry to the museum; Leanne M. Autrey of the Humboldt County Library; and Judy Adams of the Humboldt County Museum.

[6] Col. Richard Henry Pratt founded the Carlisle School Indian Industrial School, a boarding school for Native youth, in 1879; Pratt famously that his mission was to "kill the Indian to save the man." Carlisle administrators would (oftentimes forcibly) separate Native American youth from their families and subject them to a violent system of cultural reinstruction: students were stripped of all markers of their Native identities, they were converted to Christianity, they were taught Anglo Saxon values

and instructed in trade labor. As Pratt articulated, the school's goal was to destroy the student's tribal identity and bonds in an attempt to "civilize" that student. See Ernest Stromberg's essay "Resistance and Meditation: The Rhetoric of Irony in Indian boarding School Narratives by Francis La Flesche and Zitkala-Sa" for a concise history of Pratt's vision with the Carlisle school (95-109).

[7] As I discuss in the Introduction to this dissertation, these objectives aptly characterize how discourses of modernity worked in white-Native relations at the time. Ideologies of modernity dictated that Anglo Saxons were at the top of a racial hierarchy (savage races at the bottom and civilized at the top), and that it was the manifest destiny of the Anglo Saxon race to bestow the gifts of modernity on lesser populations through domestic and international imperialism. The conquest of Native Americans is just one facet of how American imperialist civilizing missions played out in the late nineteenth century.

[8] For a comprehensive discussion of the Dawes Allotment Act, see Nicole Tonkovich's *The Allotment Plot*; Tonkovich emphasizes, "The numbers of acres lost to allotment, how much money changed hands in the process, and the means by which Natives became citizen-owners of lands on which their ancestors had lived for centuries are vexed and dismal topics. These abuses happened because the federal government approved a law designed to extinguish entire cultures" (8).

[9] For more information on the Indian reform movements, please see Francis Prucha's *The Great Father* and Frederick Hoxie's *A Final Promise*: *The Campaign to Assimilate the Indians, 1880-1920*.

[10] See my note about my uses of the terms "rhetoric" and "rhetorical" in the Introduction to this dissertation.

[11] As Reno documents in her introduction to the annotated bibliography, the Winnemucca archive is strewn across the country, in federal, state, county, and Native records, in every format imaginable. No wonder, then, that even with Reno's precise bibliographic information, the Subcommittee transcript was difficult to locate. It is worth noting that for years, scholars have been debating big claims about Winnemucca's subjectivity and textual production while using only a fraction of the available texts by and about her to generate and support their assessments. Archival research on Winnemucca is substantially easier now with Reno's bibliography (and with the relatively recent availability of online archives), but the chronic dilemmas of the archive—documents in shuttered institutions, missing documents, disappeared documents, unsorted and untagged documents in the basement—underscore how challenging this kind of scholarly work is. The fact that Winnemucca's testimony—a critical moment not only in her career, but also in the history of the nation—was omitted from the Congressional Record underscores the larger problem that scholars continue to face in recovering the voices and texts of those who spoke out against injustice and inequity: frequently, these are the texts that have been "disappeared" from the archive entirely.

[12] Thank you to Nicole Tonkovich for the observations about the corrections and contextual information about how the transcripts circulated in the Subcommittee between draft copies and the final copy.

[13] The transcript is preceded by a letter, dated September 20, 1992, from Robert C. Stevens, the great-grandson of Committee Chairman Robert W. S. Stevens, addressed to Gae Canfield, Winnemucca's first biographer. It appears that Canfield requested the transcript from Stevens's personal family archive and then gave the copy to Humboldt County Museum. The transcript totals twenty-four sheets of legal paper, measuring 8 ½ by 14 inches.

[14] The page numbers I use in citing the testimony correspond to the handwritten numbers on the copy of the transcript.

[15] The justification that allowed the federal government to remove Native tribes from their land was based on the idea that as administrators of Native "wards," federal agencies such as the Bureau of Indian Affairs (which was created in 1824 as a division within the federal War Department) could best assess what was in the interest of Native Americans.

[16] Prucha argues that while the Peace Policy was developed in the 1860s, it did not take effect until the early 1870s (*American Indian Policy in Crisis* 30-43).

[17] Proma Tagore's *The Shapes of Silence: Writing by Women of Colour and the Politics of Testimony* provides useful background on how critics have historically engaged with testimonials as literary and political cultural forms. Tagore's definition of the testimony as a genre stems from John Beverly's findings that testimony and bearing witness have always been imbricated with questions of truth, evidence, and authenticity. This corresponds with George Yúdice's definition of testimony as "an authentic narrative, told by a witness who is moved to narrate by the urgency of a situation (e.g., war, oppression, revolution" (qtd. in Tagore 7). The verb "testify" means to "to bear witness to; affirm as fact or truth; attest; to give or afford evidence of in any manner; (Law) to state or declare under oath or affirmation, usually in court." The act of bearing witness particularly informs the meaning of testimony in both the legal and religious senses of the word. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, to testify is to affirm the presence of God in one's life. In a court of law, testimonies enabled victims and witnesses to declare solemn facts, or to offer evidence, under penalty of perjury.

[18] See, for example, "Princess Winnemucca," *Chicago Daily Tribune* (September 27, 1884); "A False Princess," *Daily Nevada State Journal* (January 25, 1885); "Another Lying Indian Story" *Boston Daily Globe* (February 22, 1885).

[19] This Mr. George emerges as a discussant toward the end of the testimony without being referenced in the opening credits. It is unclear whether he is a member of the Subcommittee. Given the context of his statements, he is a federal or state administrator responsible for the region that includes Malheur. The governor of Oregon at the time was a George Earle Chamberlain; the records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs do not show a Mr. George among the superintendents.

[20] Powell notes in "Princess Sarah" that Rinehart's behavior is considered one of the major causes of the Bannock War (68).

[21] Winnemucca's petition for her tribe to be restored to Malheur, which noted Rinehart's abuses, was included in the appendix to *Life*, and, according to the Congressional Record, was circulated by Representatives from Massachusetts twice in 1883 and three times in 1884 before her Subcommittee testimony.

[22] Reno's annotated bibliography includes information about the Rinehart's battle with Winnemucca in the periodical press.
[23] Artist George Catlin was formative in creating the representational genre of Native Americans with his paintings in the 1830s: he traveled west to capture the appearances of Natives and their ways of life, which he felt was threatened by westward expansion. Catlin believed that Natives possessed a pure essence of nature and represented them with props, costumes, and poses that emphasized them as "noble savages" (*George Catlin and His Indian Gallery*). The genre that Catlin helped create for the visual representation of Native Americans reached its culmination in the early twentieth century with photographer Edward Curtis's release of *The North American Indian* (1907). That volume featured nostalgic portraits of antiquated, pre-modern looking Indian subjects whom Curtis himself meticulously dressed in costumes. Curtis's images not only cited the "noble savage" construct, they also popularized the construct of the "vanishing Indian," or the ideology that conflated Native American subjects with western American landscape and posited that they were both destined to "vanish" in the inevitable expansion and progression of Anglo Saxon civilization. In this way, Curtis's photographs position Native Americans as a part of a nostalgic American past in order to express anxiety about an uncertain future.
[24] Lee Clark Mitchell's *Witnesses to a Vanishing America* provides a thorough explanation of the "vanishing Indian" myth (93-188). Also see my note above about how the myth was symbolically referenced in Native portraiture and photography.
[25] See, for example, "Pleading for Her Race; The Princess Winnemucca before the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs," *The Atlanta Constitution* (April 23, 1884); "An Indian Princess Pleading," *Nevada State Journal* (May 7, 1884); "Princess Winnemucca Speaks: An Eloquent Appeal from an Indian Woman for Justice to her People," *Washington Post* (April 23, 1884).
[26] The requirement to appear "authentically" Native throughout her political campaign was in part reflective of what public roles were available to Winnemucca. As Powell argues in "Princess Sarah," Winnemucca had two limited and limiting choices: to be a princess or a squaw (65-67). Winnemucca selected the princess option more often than not, for as the degraded opposite of the idealized princess, the "squaw" was associated with drinking, gambling, and prostitution. Not accidentally, those are the very behaviors which Rinehart attributed to Winnemucca in order to discredit her and obstruct her political goals.
[27] In *Tender Violence*, Laura Wexler analyzes Käsebier's photographs of Buffalo Bill's actors, which she took from 1898-1912 (194-98).
[28] The world's fairs are an example of this kind of mass cultural appeal. At the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893, "high brow" displays of American modernity and technological progress appeared in the White City alongside bawdy "low brow" ethnic entertainment on the Midway; and across the street, Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show pitched its tent and performed. All these spectacles shared the same audiences.
[29] For more context about how the photographic archive can encompass a counter-narrative, see the introduction to Smith's *Photography on the Color Line*. My

discussion here also draws from Amy Louise Wood's arguments about the counter-narrative of lynching photography.

[30] By this, I am referring to how technologies of representation, such as developments in photography and the increasingly powerful periodical press, were used to support ideologies of scientific racialism, and ultimately, wide scale imperialist regimes against Native Americans and other people of color. See the introduction to this dissertation for a more complete discussion of the relationships between technologies of representation and imperialism during this era.

Chapter 3: ***Chopsticks, Irish Potatoes, or Krupp Guns: Wong Chin Foo's Spectacular Performances of Chinese American Citizenship***

Wong Chin Who?

On April 18, 1898, Wong Chin Foo[1] appeared in a Chicago court in his capacity as the president of the Chinese Equal Rights League. According to the *Chicago Daily Tribune*, an attorney named W. D. Carlisle was suing Wong and the League for $154, for services for which Carlisle claimed he had provided to them,[2] but for which he alleged he was not paid. During the short trial, while Carlisle and Wong were discussing "an international problem," the following conflict ensued:

> Carlile [sic] and Wong attempted to settle their differences "out of court," but failed to leave the courtroom before beginning. Carlile is said to have made some remark to his adversary, which the little man resented, returning the fire with statements to the effect that Carlile was a scoundrel, a rascal, a yellow dog. This resulted in a blow which settled just over Wong's left eyebrow. [Wong] drew back and, reaching under the tails of his peaceful-looking frock coat, produced a one-ounce rapid-fire gun, which he trained upon the hull of the advancing enemy. The enemy tacked to port and into the arms of the bystanders. ("Fight in a Court" 12)

Wong did not fire any shots; the bailiff wrested the gun from him as chaos erupted in the courtroom. The journalist who reported on the incident for the *Tribune* writes that Carlisle made a derogatory remark toward Wong, which prompted the altercation, whereupon Wong brandished the weapon at Carlisle. The journalist's use of the coded phrase "international problem" suggests that just before Carlisle insulted Wong the men had likely been quarreling over the "Chinese question," the charged debate about

the legal rights and social roles of the Chinese in the United States leading up to and during the Exclusion Era.[3] The journalist concludes the article by noting that this "grave breach of decorum" earned both men a sentence of ninety days in jail, which was reduced to thirty days after pleas for leniency came from the packed court auditorium. Wong reportedly complained that his sentence was going to keep him from organizing the Chinese exhibit at the Trans-Mississippi and International Exhibition in Omaha, which was due to open later that year. A subsequent *Chicago Daily Tribune* article notes that Illinois Governor John Riley Tanner pardoned Carlisle; there is no mention of a pardon for Wong, so it is probable that he had to serve the entire sentence.[4]

One might wonder what Chinese American man in his right mind would pull a weapon on a white attorney in a courtroom in the late nineteenth century, or indeed at any moment in history. One possibility is that Wong was not actually in his right mind. In fact, his very colorful career was peppered with allegations that he was totally insane. It is notable that this incident occurred just before Wong disappeared from public life, when some speculated that he was succumbing to illness or alcoholism.[5] A second possibility is that Wong was so committed to the cause of Chinese American equality that he was willing to die for it, or kill for it, or at least appear to be willing to kill for it. Still another explanation for his seemingly rash behavior is that he was a performer who had made a career of staging public stunts, which—much like this incident—he crafted both to intervene in anti-Chinese discourse and to offer evidence for Chinese enfranchisement. The research and analysis in this chapter supports all three interpretations of Wong's courtroom actions.

At first, it may seem difficult to reconcile Wong's outlandish behavior in that Chicago courtroom with his impressive list of professional accomplishments. From 1873, when he settled in the United States, until the time when he disappeared from public record in 1898, Wong dedicated his career to countering anti-Chinese discourse and organizing for social and political equality for Chinese people living in the United States. In the mid-1870s he conducted an extensive national lecture tour, and in the early 1880s he started the first Chinese-language newspaper in the Eastern United States.[6] A few years later he helped to organize and fund Chinese exhibits at the Chicago World's Fair (1893) and the Trans-Mississippi and International Exhibition (1898). Wong founded one of the earliest Chinese Voters' Rights Leagues in the United States, and he's even credited with coining the term "Chinese American."[7]

In *Chinese American Voices*, Judy Yung, Gordon Chang, and Him Mark Lai introduce Wong Chin Foo as one of "the most prolific writers in the English-language press among Chinese in America" (70). Indeed, Wong wrote sardonic yellowface satire,[8] scathing political critiques of American social and political institutions, informational essays about Chinese customs and culture both in the United States and China, and original short stories adapted from Chinese fiction/folklore, among other pieces. From the 1870s through the 1890s, his texts were regularly featured in such popular American periodicals as *Harper's Weekly*, *Scientific American*, *Life*, *The Cosmopolitan*, and *Chautauquan*. To judge from the wide circulation and mass readership of the periodicals in which Wong was published, one could surmise that he had a large and diverse readership in the United States. Wong's readers even included one of the most recognizable figures in American literature, Mark Twain. In "A

Connecticut Yankee in the Court of Wu Chih Tien," Hsuan Hsu finds passages in Twain's personal writing that suggest that *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* was influenced by key scenes from Wong's serialized short story titled *Wu Chich Tien*, published in *Cosmopolitan* in 1889.[9]

Those living in the United States at the time who were not familiar with Wong from the periodical texts he authored may have learned of him from the numerous news articles that reported on his lectures, political activities, business ventures, brushes with the law, and the various incidents, accidents, and stunts in which he was involved in the late nineteenth century. A survey of press coverage devoted to Wong reveals that when he was not writing periodical texts, he was working as an editor, publisher, businessman, lawyer, interpreter, translator, cultural events broker, public speaker, political organizer, physician's assistant, and federal inspector. In these roles, he regularly appeared as the subject of articles in the *Chicago Daily Tribune*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and other national and local newspapers during the decades when he was publicly active. Influential Chinese families in New York and Chicago either looked to him as a representative and leader, in which case they supported his efforts at political enfranchisement in the larger body politic, or they resented him and his controversial, outspoken political positions, and especially his campaign to rid Chinatown of opium and gambling.[10] As tiny, mediated windows into Wong's ambitions and activities throughout his career, the corpus of articles that Wong wrote and that journalists wrote about him suggests that he was extraordinarily prolific, significantly varied in his interests and agendas, and absolutely central to the

long cultural and political struggle for Chinese American legal rights and social equality.

What may be as astonishing as the diversity and productivity of his career is that, for as (in)famous as Wong Chin Foo was in the late nineteenth century, he is relatively unknown today. In fact, it is likely *because* Wong's career was so diverse that he has "fallen through the cracks" of the historical narrative of the Chinese in America. Until very recently, the little existing scholarship on Wong Chin Foo was as scattershot as his career. For example, as I noted earlier, Judy Yung, Gordon Chang and Him Mark Lai provide a brief introduction to Wong Chin Foo in advance of their reproduction of his essay titled "Why Am I a Heathen?" (1887), one of the very few texts of Wong's currently in print. In her short essay "Transnationalism and the Transformation of the 'Other,'" Mae Ngai notes Wong Chin Foo's endorsements of the Chinese Village display in the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition. For their part, Sucheng Chan and K. Scott Wong include Quinsong Zhang's essay about Wong and the formation of the Chinese Equal Rights League in *Claiming America*. Ronald Takaki peppers *Strangers from a Different Shore* with snippets of Wong's periodical texts about Chinese laundries and cross-racial liaisons between Chinese men and white women. In her work on race, spectacle, and the American "Urban Picturesque," Carrie Tirado Bramen performs an insightful analysis of Wong's informational guides to New York's Chinatown and Chinese food, published in *The Cosmopolitan* in 1888. Those who have done geographically-specific work on the Chinese in New York and Chicago—such as John Kuo Wei Tchen, Kenneth T. Jackson, David S. Dunbar, Bruce Hall, and Arthur Bonner (New York), and Huping Ling and Adam McKeown

(Chicago)—refer briefly to Wong's various activities in those cities, which were his primary places of residence throughout his tenure in the United States. Most recently, Scott Seligman published the first comprehensive biography of Wong, titled *The First Chinese American*.[11]

While Seligman's biography offers the most cohesive consideration of Wong Chin Foo's life and career to date, the scholarship thus far dedicated to Wong does not constitute a sustained or coherent conversation about his work, nor does it offer a framework for contextualizing and interpreting the diversity of his production. Hsuan Hsu, who has published some of the most in-depth research and analysis of Wong's writing, offers some explanation as to why Wong has escaped scholarly attention, despite his remarkable achievements.[12] In his essay titled "Wong Chin Foo's Political Writing and Chinese Exclusion," Hsu suggests that Wong is largely forgotten today because his "work does not fit comfortably into the current geographical or formal frameworks of Asian American cultural history, which have tended to privilege west coast centers of publication and protest as well as the literary genres of fiction and autobiography" (83). Hsu characterizes Wong as a writer "without a definitive genre, a consistent voice, or a unified audience—a writer forced by circumstances into a versatile but uneven practice of transcultural *bricolage*" (85). Invoking Viet Nguyen's argument that Asian American authors and activists frequently adopted flexible strategies to address political and ethical dilemmas, Hsu suggests that the body of work that Wong produced was so heterogeneous because it needed to be flexible enough to adapt to the ephemeral nature of periodical print culture, and perhaps as

importantly, to counter the multiple, shifting discourses that vilified Chinese immigrants during the Exclusion era.

In this chapter, I borrow from Hsu's idea of "transcultural bricolage," though I extend my analysis beyond Wong's periodical texts. I shift focus to consider how the bricolage of his lectures and other public appearances constitute an extension of the kinds of flexible rhetorical strategies he used to counter racializing discourses about Chinese immigrants in a variety of political and cultural arenas, from courtrooms to international exhibitions. To this end, I have chosen press accounts of three of his public appearances, at different junctures in his career: an early lecture in the apartment of a prominent New York Theosophist in 1877; a debate he staged with the infamous anti-Chinese labor organizer Denis Kearney in 1887; and, finally, that aforementioned scene in the courtroom, wherein he brandished a weapon against a white attorney in 1898. This sampling of Wong's work—in the beginning, middle, and end of his career in the United States—shows that above all, he was a *performer* who tailored his multiple forms of cultural production to interact with and intervene in the shifting and nebulous realm of popular representations of Chinese immigrants.

I use the related tools of performance studies and visual and rhetorical analysis to engage with Wong's lectures and public appearances. This allows me to elucidate how he appropriated the regimes of racialized spectacle to combat the cultural, social, and political manifestations of anti-Chinese discourse. Writing about the origins of the Chinese Equal Rights League, Quingsong Zhang claims: "Wong believed that cultural misunderstanding was the origin of anti-Chinese sentiment. His approach was to educate Americans about the essence of Chinese culture, traditions, and customs"

(44). In 1876 alone, Wong gave more than eighty lectures, as an article in *Harper's Weekly* puts it, to "explain away certain misapprehensions concerning his country and people which prevail among the Americans" (Zhang 44). Wong's efforts to correct American "misapprehensions" about the Chinese by staging interventions in the realm of culture—through public lectures and widely circulated periodicals—suggest that he was keenly attentive to the relationship between cultural representation and political status for Chinese immigrants. It is evident, too, that he found cultural production to be a significant site of resistance to and negotiation with the larger discourses that structured Chinese American subjectivity.

My analysis of a talk that Wong delivered in the New York apartment of Theosophist Helena Blavatsky will illustrate how Wong staged himself within the larger visual regime of Orientalism and exhibition. This will be followed by a discussion of the debate Wong held with Denis Kearney, wherein he challenged Kearney to a duel to the death. Throughout my analysis, I show how the spectacles that Wong created invoked *violence* against anti-Chinese rhetoric. All three spectacles are the work of a consummate showman: the absurdity of the situations he created kept him in the press, which gave him and his causes public visibility. His methods of performative combat, however, also undermined dominant perceptions that Chinese immigrants were passive in the face of racist cultural representations and political policies.[13] In fact, Wong's invocation of violence provocatively challenged and underscored the violence of Chinese exclusion itself. His use of the threat of violence amounted to a performative rhetorical strategy, which subtly played with regimes of race-based spectacle by destabilizing widespread notions that physical appearance

corresponded to an essential racial constitution. Wong threatened violence partly to contest prevalent representations in the public sphere of the bodies of Chinese men as alien, effeminate, or animal-like—in other words, altogether unlike the kinds of bodies eligible for national incorporation. Wong's arguments for legal incorporation, then, necessitated that he challenge the widespread emasculation of Chinese men, and one strategy that he used to do this was to create spectacles around duels and weapons, which resonated distinctly with the American preoccupation with masculinity as a condition of citizenship.

My arguments about Wong and his work throughout this chapter cannot escape the contradictions inherent in his career. One tension that emerges from the sites, or objects, of my analysis is that much of Wong's cultural production, such as his performances, lectures, public speeches, debates, and other appearances, is ephemeral. Second- or third-hand reports of those events—by (mostly anonymous) journalists, and then only when the events were actually covered in the press—provide the only access to them. In effect, the text of the news article serves as a proxy for the text of the performance itself. Such articles attempt to bridge historical or geographic distance between the reader and the event; the reader could be in a different town than the one in which the lecture took place, or could be reading about the lecture a day or week (or more than a century) later. Through meticulous description, the journalist tries to "recreate" the event so that readers can "see" and "hear" the performance. What articles about Wong's performances actually offer, however, is far more than a retelling of an historical event. They reveal a profound conflation between Wong as a

subject, his rhetorical strategies, and the larger discourse in which he was attempting to intervene.

This complex melding of subject/agent, rhetoric, and discourse constitutes an additional tension throughout this chapter. In my analysis, I attribute intentionality and agency to Wong as a subject, as an actor who staged himself strategically, as a performer who crafted his rhetorical weapons consciously. My decision to mark Wong's agency recalls Lisa Lowe's affirmation that Asian immigrants "are agents of political change, cultural expression and social transformation" (*Immigrant Acts* 9). At the same time, Wong's self-construction as a public figure was a product of, was conditioned by, and was in response to the larger discourses of race, class, gender, religion, and nationality that structured what it meant to be a Chinese immigrant at that time. The articles that serve as objects of my analysis make these contradictions clear: in any account of Wong's public appearances, there is the spectacle of the object of fascination—his Chinese body—on stage; there is the spectacle of the event itself; there are conflicting accounts of what may or may not have been said; there are the impressions, investments, sympathies, and political proclivities of the reporting journalist; there are the multiple threads of a larger debate about Chinese culture, labor, and citizenship. There is no clearly definable or knowable subject named Wong Chin Foo. Just as Wong frequently blurred fact and fiction in his periodical writing and accounts of his own history, he himself is frequently indistinguishable within the fictions that are the conditions of his visibility in public.

Still, I maintain that recovering Wong's texts and engaging with the cultural production that he created throughout his campaign is a worthy enterprise. In effect,

recovering Wong from the margins of history enacts some of the imperatives set forth by foundational scholarship in critical Asian American studies. Just as Hsu suggests in "Wong Chin Foo's Political Writing and Chinese Exclusion," Wong has remained in obscurity because he only tangentially interacted with the geographical and generic centers of Chinese American cultural production. Most studies of the Chinese in America during the nineteenth century focus on their labor, community formations, and political organization in the American West; Wong was based primarily in New York and Chicago. Likewise, scholarship on nineteenth-century Chinese American literature traditionally deals with conversion and autobiographical narratives; Wong wrote neither, though he published multiple texts that criticize evangelical Anglo Saxon Christianity and promote Confucian ideals in what could be seen as a broad response to popular Chinese conversion narratives.[14]

One centralizing mission within critical Asian American studies is to trouble longstanding disciplinary boundaries and find new analytic lenses that make figures like Wong and his work legible. There are some studies, largely written after a wave of neoconservative attacks on ethnic studies in the 1980s, dedicated to asserting the centrality of Asian American experiences to the so-called mainstream American experience. Now, in a new—or recycled—moment of neoconservative efforts to eliminate the history (and bodies) of ethnic minorities in the United States, the imperatives of these studies remain relevant. Just as this foundational scholarship seeks to pull Asian American experience from the margins of American history, I attempt to rescue Wong from the margins of Asian American studies.[15]

In this chapter, I set out to recover the story of a man who, despite his remarkable accomplishments in the struggle for Chinese American political rights and social equality, has been largely forgotten in the dominant historical narrative. Along the way, I made an unexpected discovery: for a man who thrust himself in to the public sphere over and over again, and who based his career on visual display, exhibition, and spectacle, he is nearly impossible to see. As I learned to navigate the tensions between Wong as a subject, Wong as an object, Wong as a rhetorical device, and Wong as an effect of larger discourse, I found that perhaps what is most significant about Wong's work is not what it reveals about him, but rather what it reveals about the dimensions of the national debate about Chinese American rights in the United States, and the conditions of activism visibility in late nineteenth-century American modernity.

Elegant and Curious Bric-A-Brac: Wong Chin Foo and the Exhibitionary Complex



Figure 3.1: Wong Chin Foo, *Harper's Weekly*, May 26, 1877. Woodcut from a photograph by Rockwood.

Early in his career, amid a national lecture tour that he conducted as a "cultural ambassador" for Chinese immigrants living in the United States, Wong appeared as a featured guest speaker in the New York apartment of Madame Helena Blavatsky, the highly eccentric and influential founder of the Theosophy movement.[16] According to a lengthy review in *The New York Times*, on the evening of April 29, 1877, Wong gave

a lecture on "China and the Chinese Religion" to an audience of Theosophists, the press, and assorted members of New York City's cultural elite. For this appearance, Wong was billed as a Buddhist monk, a "native missionary . . . on the errand of converting the 40,000,000 Christians of this country to Buddhism" ("The Buddhist Religion"). In reality, Wong was neither a Buddhist nor a missionary. The pretext for his speech, which he likely circulated himself to generate interest and a bit of scandal,[17] was a jab at the missionary zeal of evangelical Christians, who in the last half of the nineteenth century were ardently working in China and the United States to convert "heathen" Chinese to Christianity.[18] The irony of the pretext for Wong's appearance foreshadowed his criticisms of the Christian church and, as the reporter quotes Wong as saying, the church's role in "slandering and vilifying the intelligent classes of China by representing them to be a degraded and idolatrous people" ("The Buddhist Religion"). To Wong's audience in Blavatsky's apartment, and to the audience who read about his appearance a day later in the press, the lecture was as much an opportunity to view the spectacle of Wong Chin Foo on stage as it was to learn about the Chinese religion.

This section of the chapter uses Wong's appearance in Blavatsky's parlor—and the press coverage of that appearance—as a lens through which to understand how Wong performed within the larger exhibitionary complex that informed how "foreign" bodies were interpreted in the dominant public sphere. In the introduction to this dissertation, I defined the exhibitionary complex as the function by which a mass viewing public became "subjects of knowledge" through the power to command and arrange things and bodies for public display (Bennett 119). Here, I analyze the

intersections between Wong's appearance at this lecture, the characterizations of his appearance in the press, and the larger history that informs what his appearance signified to his audience. While my analysis here is primarily of one lecture, my research suggests that this lecture—and the article devoted to the lecture—is representative of many similar lectures that Wong gave on this particular tour, and in later tours, around the country, in a variety of venues. In my analysis of *The New York Times* article, I use language that consciously draws attention to the anonymous reporting journalist, who evidently attended the lecture, and who acts as the invisible, mediating presence, the filter through which *The New York Times* readers "saw" Wong and were able, by proxy, to experience the lecture after the fact. Indeed, throughout the course of Wong's career, those who learned of him and his work via the volume of press coverage devoted to it must have far outnumbered those who saw him live.

As I discuss in my analysis of Winnemucca's and Wells' work in the public sphere, and in the introduction to this chapter, one of the tensions that arises when analyzing public performances (especially those that occurred before the advent of video technology) is that they are inherently ephemeral, that is, impossible to access, capture, or recreate after they are finished. Nevertheless, the fact that Wong's performances were frequently, painstakingly "captured" in the press means that readers who accessed the performance via press coverage became Wong's audience, whether that occurred one day later, or more than 130 years after the event. In the article about the Blavatsky lecture, the reporter helps facilitate the reader's participation as an audience member by setting the proverbial stage for Wong's visual appearances, mimicking the experience of attending the lecture by allowing readers to

"see" Wong before they "hear" what he has to say. The reporter describes the scene of Wong's lecture as follows: in Blavatsky's parlor was a "miniature tiger's head imbedded over the door, a miniature crocodile swinging from the ceiling, and elegant and curious bric-a-brac . . . In the ante-room where guests were first conducted were figures of elephants, mystic triads, and other ornamental symbols" ("The Buddhist Religion"). Up to this point, the reporter's description of the setting is reflecting the eccentric tastes of Blavatsky herself, who, as a Theosophist and "mystic," was a famous fringe figure in New York City at the time.[19] As the reporter transitions to Wong, however, the account of the setting similarly transitions in function, providing a seductively curious Orientalist[20] backdrop for Wong's own bodily appearance.

Hence while the setting of the scene serves initially to illustrate Blavatsky's eccentric taste, ultimately it serves to contextualize Wong's exotic foreignness. As the reporter moves on to describe Wong himself, perched among the "elegant and curious bric-a-brac," the interplay between the description of the setting and the description of Wong's bodily performance bears the hallmarks of exhibitionary racial spectacle. The reporter's choice words about Blavatsky's furnishings as "elegant" and "curious" lead directly to his impressions of Wong himself. In Blavatsky's parlor, Wong sat, dressed in "a dark suit, not unlike that of the ordinary Chinaman, though of richer material and more elaborate make." After describing Wong's gold jewelry and ornamentation, the reporter continues, "He appeared to the audience as a young, courteous, and well-bred Mongolian of about 26, with a thoughtful cast of features and an expressive countenance. He was graceful in his movements, perfectly self-possessed, and comported himself throughout with as much tact and propriety as though he had been

a ‘society man’ of years’ standing” (“The Buddhist Religion”). The journalist’s unveiling of the scene in Blavatsky’s apartment underscores Wong’s status as an object to be looked at, a spectacle of ambiguous difference/otherness amid a sea of curiosities that lend an aura of authenticity to his presence in New York.

The content of the reporter’s description is marked by a tension between respectful deference and the careful maintenance of difference. In Blavatsky’s parlor, Wong probably appeared much as he is depicted in the sketch at the beginning of this section (Figure 3.1), which was created just a month after he spoke at Blavatsky’s, during his larger national lecture tour. The deference that the reporter shows toward his primary subject appears to be inspired by that subject’s performed class status, which elevates his social status. The reporter draws his conclusions about Wong’s socio-economic class by assessing the “richness” of the fabric of his attire, his gold accessories, and the “tact and propriety” with which he conducted himself. He concludes that Wong is “well-bred” and as cultured as “a ‘society man’ of years’ standing,” though the comparison suggests that Wong could not actually *be* a society man of years’ standing, by virtue of the fact that he was a Chinese immigrant. He just *acted* like one. Wong’s apparent wealth was notable because it defied representations of Chinese immigrants as poor, dirty, uncultured, and savage “heathens.” Indeed, the representation of the “heathen” Chinese immigrant, with all its negative associations, was quickly becoming the dominant stereotype in the 1870s, cultivated and circulated through editorials, political cartoons, advertisements, and many other forms of media, often in the very publications in which Wong appeared.[21] Wong was remarkable to the reporter and to his audience partly because he was an unabashed “heathen” (he was

decidedly not a convert to Christianity) who, by performing the role of an aristocrat, defied all of the negative associations of the term.

The terminology used to describe Wong's physical features reflects the widespread belief in late nineteenth-century modernity that physical bodies, especially those of racialized minorities, conveyed the essential characteristics/traits of those individuals or their racial group. In the Introduction to this dissertation, I referenced Shawn Michelle Smith's arguments in *American Archives* and *Photography on the Color Line* to describe how physical characteristics became ideologically linked to essentialized character traits, particularly with regard to people of color and those regarded as foreign. That ideology was instrumental in rendering the various sites of the exhibitionary complex—from the museum, to the international exhibition, to the lecture hall—not just mass entertainment, but also mass *instruction* for audiences who learned to interpret stable racial meanings from what they understood as stable biological markers of racial difference. *The New York Times* reporter's description of Wong contains language that directly reflects these beliefs. To the reporter and audience, Wong's "cast of features" and "countenance" bore the visual markers that signified his racial identity as a "Mongolian." Calling Wong's features "thoughtful" and "expressive," both positive attributes, the reporter's description stands in contradistinction to dominant representations of Chinese immigrants as "inscrutable." The description of Chinese people as inscrutable came from racist representations of Chinese faces as indistinguishable or expressionless; for audience members who were conditioned to "read" the essential characteristics of the Chinese in the "countenance," the stereotype was self-fulfilling.[22] That the reporter characterized Wong as

"expressive" is therefore notable in this context. Throughout his career, representations of Wong linked his bodily features as they were presented on stage to his purported characteristics and attributes. For those who condoned his messages, his body was read and interpreted positively—as "graceful," "elegant," "intelligent," "bright," "expressive," etc. In turn, for those who condemned his ideological messages, his body betrayed his insidious nature.[23]

Wong's positioning of himself in Blavatsky's parlor as an exotic foreigner, seated amid exotic foreign objects, echoes a clearly delineated history of Chinese goods and bodies as spectacles. What we see in this relatively short, deceptively simple description of Wong's appearance at the lecture actually reveals a complex negotiation between what Wong cultivated in his performance as an activist and agent for change, and the dominant framework for how the Chinese were represented and interpreted by American audiences in exhibitions that long predate Wong's work. When Wong took the stage in Blavatsky's apartment—and when he spoke in larger, more public venues tours over the years—he entered into a broader context of representational meaning which equated Chinese bodies first with objects of curiosity, and later, with foreign threat.

Early on in the history of the exhibitionary complex, displays of Chinese bodies emphasized markers of bodily difference and cultural distinctiveness as spectacle. In 1834 Afong Moy was the first Chinese woman to appear in the United States. Modeling attire popular among Chinese women, she was the main attraction in a foreign costumes display at the American Museum of New York City. In the 1850s, P.T. Barnum featured seventeen-year-old Pwan-ye-koo, whose attire and physical

characteristics—especially her "fairy feet"—inspired fascination among the masses that flocked to Barnum's traveling shows.[24] Reports of Wong's early appearances in the United States, such as the talk he gave in Blavatsky's parlor, betray the same kinds of fascination at his physical presence on display, and especially at the signifiers of his race and class identity. Just like Wells and Winnemucca, when Wong took the stage as an ambassador, activist, and cultural interlocutor, he was simultaneously—inescapably—a visual spectacle.

The characterizations in the press of Wong's bodily performances, especially in the 1870s, show that the larger discourse about the presence of Chinese immigrants in the United States was in transition. The framework that John Kuo Wei Tchen outlines in *New York Before Chinatown* offers a foundation for understanding how Orientalism, visual exhibition, and the political oppression of Chinese immigrants were all closely intertwined and shifting in the era in which Wong worked. In his book, Tchen identifies three overlapping periods of American Orientalism: patrician, commercial, and political, arguing that the 1870s marked a transition from more benign forms of patrician and commercial Orientalism to an overtly virulent form of political Orientalism. Patrician Orientalism of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries created "cultures of distinction:" amid the absence of a sizeable population of Chinese immigrants, wealthy Americans demonstrated their cosmopolitanism by collecting imported, "exotic" Chinese goods and displaying those items in their domestic spaces (3-24). Blavatsky's private collection of exotic, orientalist goods in her home could have been one such case, though her collection was not specifically Chinese.

The commercial Orientalism of the mid-nineteenth century came out of an intersecting rise in capitalism and urban development, alongside an increase in immigrant bodies in New York City and a new marketplace for all things Chinese. Orientalist representations mapped onto larger cultures of racial exhibition and spectacle, wherein the markers of difference drew visual fascination, and wherein markers of foreignness were set in opposition to the markers of American modernity and progress.[25] It is important to note that sites of commercial Orientalism tended to offer "cultural tourists" feelings of pleasure and enrichment while at the same time serving the cultural, political, and legal workings of Anglo Saxon superiority by maintaining structures of racial difference and depoliticizing sites of racial struggle. In spite of all that—or maybe because of it—Wong was a dedicated practitioner of commercial Orientalism. He included in his periodical texts guides to Chinatowns and Chinese eateries, drawings of Chinese ladies' fashions, and yellowface satire; he participated in Chinese exhibits in two international expositions; he catered to spectacle in his work on stage. Employing the forces of commercial Orientalism was, in fact, one of the primary methods by which Wong gained access to the public arena.

The final stage of Orientalism in Tchen's framework, political Orientalism, accounts for the ways that racial discourses again shifted, patently and violently vilifying the Chinese in battles over labor, immigration, and equal rights. This was the harbinger of the Exclusion Era, a time when "the fascination with Chinese goods and values had been eclipsed by attitudes of fear and loathing . . . Chinese New Yorkers were increasingly represented as abject opium-smoking, rat-eating criminals who threatened public virtue" (Tchen xxiii). Wong's work alone evidences that these three

stages of Orientalism did not occur in three neatly delineated time periods. In the 1870s, the period of convergence between commercial and political Orientalism, for instance, Wong began his career using spectacle as a method of intervention, to combat the forces of political vilification and the ideologies of Chinese Exclusion.

Herein lies the tension between Wong-as-object and Wong-as-agent. In Blavatsky's apartment, Wong may have been an object of visual fascination for his audience, but from that position amid her "elegant and curious bric-a-brac," he delivered a scathing condemnation of the Christian church and its role in vilifying Chinese immigrants. As the *Times* reporter points out, Wong's lecture clarified misconceptions that Americans held of Chinese immigrants and of followers of Buddhism and Confucianism. He argued that "heathens" do not actually worship idols, that they worship an Almighty god with more reverence and awe than Christians, and that they are "an honest and industrious people, in all walks of life." In contrast, Wong represents Christians as immoral burglars who disrespect their own kin. The reporter sums up Wong's speech as follows: Wong's "reason and conscience revolted at the idea that the followers of Buddha . . . who worship the one, all-powerful and omnipresent Creator, as much as ever Christians did, and who practiced far better morality than the majority of Christians, should be roasted for all eternity for not trampling on the faith of their fathers at the command of foreign priests" ("The Buddhist Religion"). Wong's arguments here, as conveyed by the reporter's accounts, interact with the visual spectacle of the staging of his body by challenging audience perceptions.

As is evident in the way in which he performed his class status in Blavatsky's parlor, Wong's performance of racial difference was calculated to counter myths and stereotypes about Chinese immigrants. He used the delivery of his material and the content of his lectures to destabilize the expectations that came with his bodily performance. For example, Wong was predominantly a proponent of assimilation for Chinese immigrants; however, he took the stage in traditional Chinese attire, and then challenged his audience's expectations, surprising them when he spoke fluent English. While using his own object status to challenge fixed beliefs about Chinese immigrants, he embodied a fluidity in identity as a self-proclaimed "Chinese American," which undermined the biological determinism that structured debates about race, nation, and citizenship at the time.

A Duel to the Death: Wong Chin Foo Stages American Masculinity

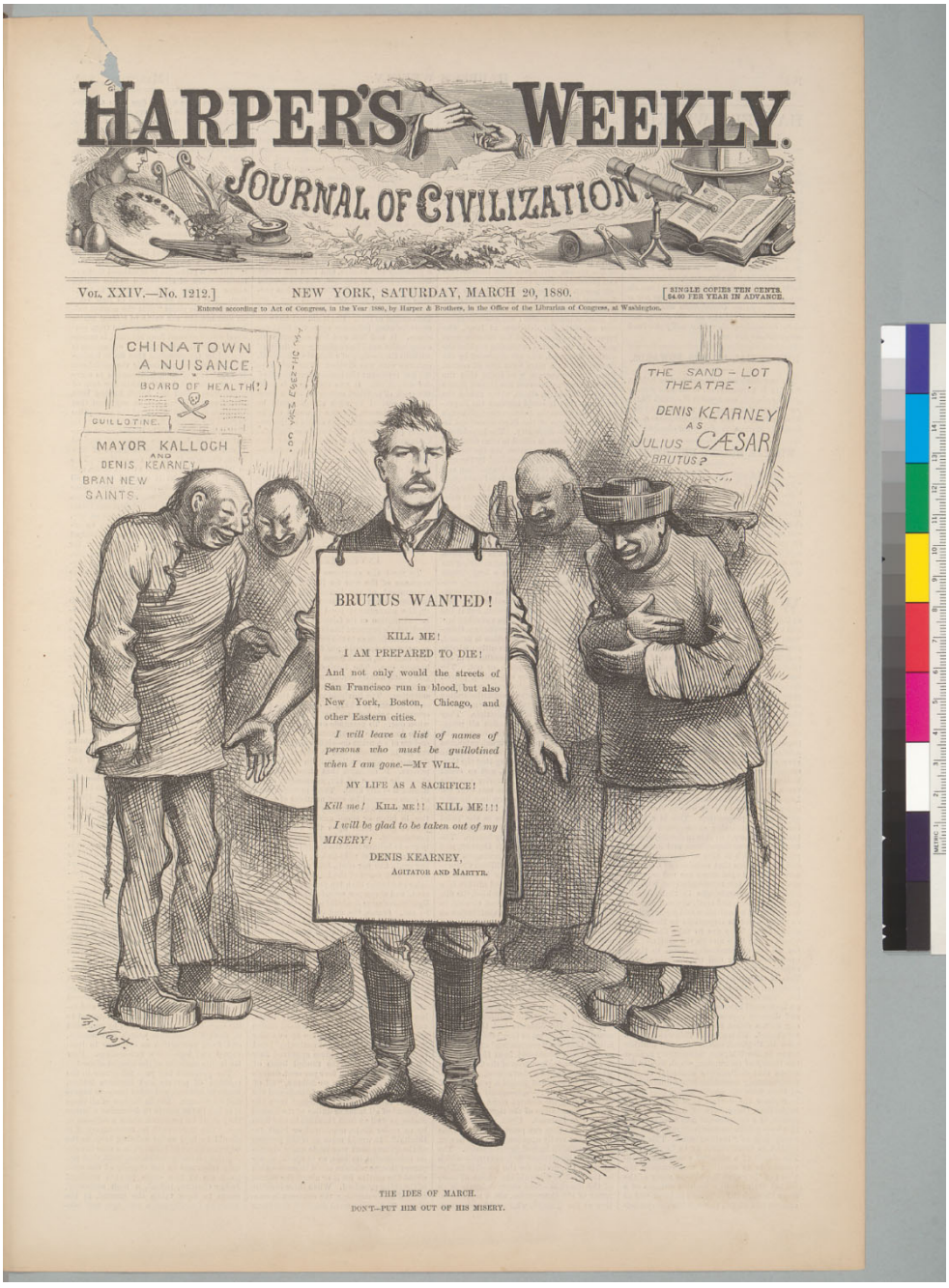


Figure 3.2: Denis Kearney, "The Ides of March: Don't Put Him Out of His Misery" *Harper's Weekly*, May 20, 1880.

On the national stage, Denis Kearney was one of the most recognizable mouthpieces for anti-Chinese sentiment. "A demagogue of extraordinary power," Kearney rose to prominence in the late 1870s as a leader in the Workingmen's Party, a California-based labor organization that coalesced around an explicitly anti-Chinese platform (McClain 79). Kearney gave "sand-lot" speeches around the nation, urging his audiences to "vote the moon-eyed nuisance out of the country," and ending each rant with the rallying cry, "The Chinese must go!" (McClain 80). Alongside other anti-Chinese labor groups, Kearney's party disseminated the argument that Chinese "coolie" labor was undercutting the American workforce. According to them, Chinese laborers were rapidly replacing (male) Anglo Saxon laborers, driving down wages and lowering standards of living. It was a persuasive argument to the many Americans growing anxious about shifts in the labor market due to new technologies, economic recession and inflation, the spread of capitalism, the growing influence of large companies, and increasing numbers of immigrants in the workforce.[26] Widespread anxiety over shifts in the United States' economy fueled anti-Chinese sentiment, giving Kearney a national platform to continue disseminating his beliefs into the 1880s.

When the Workingmen's Party collapsed in 1880, Kearney found himself without membership in any reputable organization, so he traveled around the country as an independent lecturer to garner public support for the Mitchell Bill, soon to become the Chinese Exclusion Act. However, while Chinese immigrants were increasingly targets of virulently racist representations—by Kearney, in popular discourse, and in the press—Kearney's zealous crusade against the Chinese also made

him a target of ridicule. An Irish immigrant, Kearney was often disparaged in the press for being Irish, and for the hypocrisy of his anti-immigrant sentiments. After the debacle of the Workingmen's Party collapsed, Kearney's haranguing style and brutish presence onstage earned him the reputation of being a buffoon, as the political cartoon from *Harper's Weekly* (Figure 3.2), included at the beginning of this subsection, illustrates. In the image, Kearney stands, stern-faced, arms open as if welcoming crucifixion, wearing an announcement board that reads:

> BRUTUS WANTED! KILL ME! I AM PREPARED TO DIE! And not only would the streets of San Francisco run in blood, but also New York, Boston, Chicago and other Eastern cities. *I will leave a list of names of persons who must be guillotined when I am gone*. —MY WILL. MY LIFE AS A SACRIFICE! Kill me! Kill Me! KILL ME!!! *I will be glad to be taken out of my MISERY!* DENIS KEARNEY, AGITATOR AND MARTYR. (see Figure 3.2, capitalization in the original)

In the image, advertisements above Kearney's head present him as a self-fashioned "saint" and as "Julius Caesar." The artist depicts several monstrous-looking, sneering Chinese men flanking Kearney to the sides and rear. The rendering of the men laughing behind Kearney's back vaguely suggests a conspiracy, but the nature of that conspiracy is unclear. While they could be plotting Kearney's demise, it is more likely that the artist is suggesting that Kearney is *such* a joke that even the Chinese—his targets—laugh at him. Their abstract, misshapen bodies in the background appear to offer "evidence" in support of Kearney's anti-Chinese argument, even as it ridicules Kearney himself. The image captures a sort of paradox. Kearney was enjoying tremendous success as an anti-Chinese lecturer, and the arguments he promulgated were gaining real political traction in the form of increased popular support for

Chinese exclusion. At the same time, however, Kearney was widely ridiculed for his exaggerated self-fashioning as a hero and a martyr.

If *Harper's Weekly* was inviting someone to put Kearney out of his misery and to fulfill his wish for martyrdom, Wong was happy to take up the challenge. In 1883, he was traveling between New York and Chicago, working as an editor and journalist, and leading two campaigns: one against opium and gambling in Chinatowns in New York and Chicago, and the other against the Chinese Exclusion Act.[27] Wong responded to the news of Kearney's East Coast lecture tour with a public invitation to Kearney. As the *Chicago Daily Tribune* reports, Wong challenged Kearney to an old-fashioned duel to the death over the topic of Chinese immigration and labor. The journalist who interviewed Wong on the proposed event for The *Chicago Daily Tribune* reported that Wong offered Kearney his choice of weapons for the duel: "chop-sticks, Irish potatoes, or Krupp guns." Wong allegedly said, "If he don't want to fight I will offer to hold a discussion with him on the labor question so that the public can have a chance to form an opinion" ("Denis Kearney Shocked"). Obviously, Wong was seeking an opportunity not only to confront Kearney face-to-face in order to counter his racist rhetoric, but also to use Kearney's discourse as a platform to disseminate his own arguments for Chinese inclusion and equality in the forum of a public spectacle.

Kearney may have (rightly) suspected that Wong would outperform him on stage—or perhaps he feared that Wong was a better shot with a Krupp gun than himself. For whatever reason, Kearney dismissed Wong's invitation and declined the event. The article in the *Chicago Daily Tribune* mockingly "consoles" Kearney for

being "jeered at by the Central Labor Union, 'sat down on' by the Park Commissioners, and as a last insult . . . challenged by Wong Chin Foo, the Chinese-American, to a mortal combat" ("Denis Kearney Shocked"). According to the article, Kearney declined Wong's challenge in the most venomous terms: "I'm not to be deterred from this work by the low blackguard vaporings of Chin Foo, Ah Coon, Kee Yah, Hung Fat, Fi Feng, or any other representative of Asia's almond-eyed lepers. If Chin's letter had been couched in respectful language I would have answered it. No doubt he's a smart fellow, this cockroach Chinaman, but the penitentiary is full of smart fellows." The article suggests that Wong was undeterred by Kearney's insults; it notes that he sat in his New York office smoking a cigar and reiterated his commitment to confronting Kearney on the Chinese question.

Even though Wong's challenge to Kearney did not immediately materialize into a duel or a debate, it does offer some insight into Wong's rhetorical strategy for publicly countering negative discourse about Chinese immigration, labor, and citizenship. His offer to fight using "chopsticks, Irish potatoes, or Krupp guns" cleverly repurposes racist rhetoric into a distinctly American form of masculinity and violence. With his reference to chopsticks and Irish potatoes, Wong is mimicking the absurd flattening of racial identity in popular discourse by invoking representative cultural objects—chopsticks for the Chinese man, and potatoes for the Irish man. In effect, Wong's reference subtly equates the two opponents by drawing on equally menial objects to represent the men's food cultures. The reference is also a reminder that *both* Kearney and Wong are "others" in mainstream Anglo Saxon American culture. Furthermore, if chopsticks represent the Chinese, and potatoes represent the

Irish, then Krupp guns represent the Americans. While Krupp guns were German-made, they were widely used in the United States artillery in the late nineteenth century; and they invoked arms power, steel, and militarism.[28] Wong's invocation of a weapon here as symbolic of American identity gestures toward the violence of dominant American culture at the time.[29]

Wong's choice of a ritual "duel to the death" introduces another rhetorical intervention: in his challenge, he appropriates a distinctly class-based form of American masculinity, one grounded in the need to use violence to ensure the preservation of honor. While dueling had its roots in medieval Europe, it was still practiced there and in America from the mid-eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth century as a (potentially deadly) performance personal or political integrity, usually in the face of insult or provocation. In the later nineteenth century, dueling was also used to settle scores in the absence of formal law on the American frontier.[30] In her introduction to *Affairs of Honor: National Politics in the New Republic*, Joanne Freeman notes that duels were typically invoked among gentlemen belonging to the upper, or aristocratic, class, and were always conducted between equals. As Freeman explains, traditionally, "only equals could duel; inferiors had to be beaten with a cane or publicly proclaimed (posted) as scoundrels" (xxii). In this context, Wong's invitation to Kearney to duel was a double absurdity: duels had been widely outlawed in the United States since the Civil War and were long out of fashion. But even more strategically, in challenging Kearney to a duel, Wong was asserting himself as both an aristocrat and an equal to Kearney. The rhetorical content of Wong's invitation was loaded, and astute readers of

the *Chicago Daily Tribune* would not have missed the symbolic valences of his comedic challenge.

In the context of Chinese Exclusion, Wong's challenge works not only to interpellate a specific identity for himself as the challenger, but it also highlights the enormous stakes of the larger debate. In asserting himself as an American gentleman willing to fight for the political ideals of Chinese-American equality, Wong proposed an "honorable" kind of violence (the duel) to gesture toward and to contrast with the increasingly horrific violence against Chinese visitors and residents across the nation. In popular cultural memory, and in the dominant historical narrative of the late nineteenth century, Chinese Exclusion consisted primarily of discriminatory legislation and widespread racist cultural representations of Chinese immigrants living in the United States. However, as Jean Pfaelzer meticulously documents in her book titled *Driven Out: The Forgotten War Against Chinese Americans*, the campaign to rid the country of Chinese immigrants was quite literally *enacted* in the last half of the nineteenth century, in the form of "roundups," purges, or mass expulsions of Chinese. Pfaelzer finds that over 200 roundups occurred in various towns and settlements across the American West and Pacific Northwest between 1850 and 1906, with the majority occurring in the 1880s and '90s, or after the Chinese Exclusion Act. The Chinese referred to the campaign as *Pai Hua*, or "the driven out."

Pfaelzer recovers documentation from newspaper articles, letters, testimonials, and court cases that detail how, over the course of half a century, in towns like Tacoma, Washington, or Truckee, California, Chinese residents were periodically forcibly expelled *en masse*. They were often literally dragged out of their homes and

businesses, rounded up, beaten, and left on the outskirts of town, with nothing in their possession and nowhere to go. Many were killed: some died in their homes after refusing to leave, some died on the street at the hands of angry mobs, some were lynched, others died of disease and exposure after being forced out. Entire Chinese communities were burned to the ground. Pfaelzer emphasizes that this violence occurred at the hands of the many, rather than the few. She writes:

> The Driven Out was spurred on by Irish and German immigrants fearful of job competition and by destitute, unemployed white migrants from the East Coast who felt betrayed by the false promises of new industry. [. . .] The roundups were also led by mayors and governors, judges and newspaper editors, wealthy timbermen and ranchers willing to betray their need for cheap labor in order to mark their common whiteness and to stitch together the raw communities that were quickly emerging in the fields, at river junctions, in fishing ports and lumber towns. (xiii-xiv)

Pfaelzer notes that these roundups of Chinese immigrants mirrored the removal campaigns that targeted Native Americans, and that such articulations of extralegal "justice" were common methods of establishing a distinctly racialized rule of order across the nation. Ultimately, Pfaelzer's study serves as a powerful reminder that when we reference "Chinese Exclusion" or "The Exclusion Era," we aren't just referring to a cluster of racist laws and cultural practices that targeted people of Chinese descent who were living in the United States—we are referring to a *war* that displaced and dispossessed thousands of Chinese immigrants. As Pfaelzer finds throughout her research, this war was not just "forgotten," but was actively suppressed in the historical narrative of the Exclusion Era and of the United States as a whole.

In this context, Wong's challenge to Kearney matches violence with violence; his stand against Kearney's violent rhetoric was calculated both to show the stakes of

the debate and to combat the myth that the Chinese passively accepted such violence. As many scholars of Asian American history have asserted, as Pfaelzer documents in *Driven Out*, and as Wong's career as a whole demonstrates, Chinese immigrants fought back using every legal, social, and cultural channel available to them. Wong did eventually get his chance to fight back against Kearney. Four years after Wong's challenge, in 1887, Kearney returned to the East Coast; this time he accepted Wong's invitation to discuss Chinese labor and citizenship, though he refused to do so on an entirely open, public platform. As an article in the *Chicago Daily Tribune* details, a "shrewd theatrical man" booked the debate in a small editorial room of the *World* (a periodical), staged the showdown as a battle, arranged for a referee, charged admission, and took money for bets on the winner. In this way, the debate was billed much like a sports competition, or more specifically, a sparring match.

The *Tribune* article, titled "Wong Chin Foo and Denis: The Sand Lots Orator and the Mandarin Meet," offers a multivalent perspective; first, it gives a blow-by-blow of the event itself. Since there is no other known record of the event, the article is also the only available insight into the rhetorical strategies that Wong used in debating Kearney. Yet the article's account of the debate does not constitute a reliable transcript. As is true of the *New York Times* article that featured Wong's appearance in Blavatsky's parlor, it was an anonymous journalist who evidently attended the debate and reported on the event, infusing the story with his personal perspective on the investments, perspectives, and ideologies that governed the larger sociopolitical discourse about Chinese immigration, citizenship, and labor. Also, because the event was staged and billed as a racial spectacle—a Chinese man fights an Irish man over

the "Chinese question!"—the article shows how closely intertwined socio-cultural-political discourse was with racial spectacle.

The *Tribune* journalist's reporting style reveals that he was indeed invested in the event as spectacle. The contrast between the visual appearances of the two men on stage was the pretext for that spectacle, as entertainment and as instruction to the viewing (and reading) public.[31] Much like a modern sportscaster, the reporter describes the bodily characteristics of each man on stage as he details the unfolding of the debate, or what he repeatedly refers to as "intellectual combat." For example, toward the beginning of the article, the reporter describes Kearney as "broad-shouldered, deep-chested, and muscular, with a broad, round head set solidly on a thick, brawny neck." He notes that Kearney's "hands are broad and thick and his fingers stubby," and that his "short-cut brown hair and bristly little red mustache heighten the pugnacious aspect created by his broad, low forehead, slightly turned-up nose, wide mouth, and square chin." The emphasis on Kearney's "thickness," his broad frame and muscular build, points to his strapping masculinity, while the mention of Kearney's "low forehead" and "slightly turned-up nose" may have subtly suggested dim-wittedness and conceit.[32]

The reporter goes on to describe Wong, as "about five feet two inches high, slender and agile as a greyhound." He adds that Wong's "features are distinctively Mongolian and his hands are long and slender. He seemed what a sporting man would call a little fine; that is, there wasn't an ounce of superfluous flesh on his slender frame, and his black eyes were snappy and sparkling" ("Wong Chin Foo and Denis"). Here, the reporter's wording—describing Wong as "slender" and "fine"—

characterizes him as effeminate. The two men are depicted on stage as foils to each other: if Kearney was "built like a man," then Wong was built like a woman. In addition, Wong's "snappy and sparkling" eyes signified to the reporter that he was intelligent and quick-witted, while Kearney's deep-set eyes, buried behind his "chubby cheeks the color of ripe cherries," signified his intellectual density.

The reporter's emphasis on the men's contrasting physical statures and on what that suggested regarding Kearney's manliness in opposition to Wong's femininity is part of the larger gendered discourse that marked the debate over Chinese labor. In 1902, The American Federation of Labor published a tract titled *Meat vs. Rice. American Manhood against Asiatic Coolieism. Which Shall Survive?* The pamphlet, which was issued to the United States Congress in support of the renewal of the Chinese Exclusion Act, was published just after Wong retired from public life. It perfectly captures the rhetoric that propelled the anti-Chinese platform and that Kearney invoked in every lecture he gave on the subject. Fomenting "yellow peril" hysteria, it conjures up an invasion of hoards of Chinese slave laborers, who allegedly poison American towns and cities by importing crime, corruption, disease, filth, and heathen idolatry.[33] The pamphlet maintains that Chinese laborers depress the United States' economy, undercut wages for white American laborers, and are inassimilable because they retain allegiance to their home country. Yet *Meat vs. Rice* frames the "Chinese Problem" not just in terms of race, religion, and culture; as the subtitle suggests, it stakes out a distinctly gendered argument as it pits the Chinese man against the "more manly" American man.

In "Anxious and Ambivalent Representations: Nineteenth-Century Images of Chinese American Men," Floyd Cheung analyzes representations of Chinese immigrants in a range of texts, from visual representations in political cartoons, to narrative representations in yellow peril fiction, to representations on stage in plays that dealt with the Chinese Question. In all of these representations, he finds the same theme/threads of discourse in rendering Chinese American men as simultaneously emasculated and threateningly masculine. As Cheung argues, both the pro-Chinese and anti-Chinese platforms/camps had a stake in emasculating Chinese men. Accordingly, employers invested in Chinese labor "stressed that Chinese earned wages and thus were not slaves; however, they accented their laborers' putatively natural and servile mien. Essentially, employers needed to sterilize Chinese will and all signs of such will, such as revolutionary fervor and sexual desire, in order to make their use appear benign" (294).

The opposing camp used similar rhetorical devices to support a contrasting argument. As Cheung argues, "Most Euro-Americans desired only one-way intercourse with China: through trade, the United States in the 'masculine' role was to exploit a passive and 'feminized China'" (296). In political cartoons, yellow peril narratives, and stage productions that dramatized Chinese invasion fears, Chinese men appeared as small, weak, effeminate figures that were more equal to women than to strapping, masculine American men. As Cheung emphasizes, however, frequently these texts simultaneously suggested that Chinese men—despite their alleged feminine weakness (or maybe because of it)—still posed a threat. Frequently, these same texts rendered Chinese men as insidious little monsters, criminals, or pests. "Pacific

Railroad Complete," a political cartoon that appeared in *Harper's Weekly*, is a case in point:



Figure 3.3: "Pacific Railroad Complete" *Harper's Weekly*, June 12, 1869.

The image depicts a Chinese man arm-in-arm with a beautiful Anglo Saxon woman just after the completion of the railroad, which he had built. As Cheung points out, the styling of the Chinese man, with his smaller stature, long queue, and flowing garments, emphasizes his equivalence to the woman, who is imagined as being of similar size, with a ponytail and flowing dress. At the same time, however, the image expresses ambivalence and anxiety, to use Cheung's words, by imagining this

effeminate Chinese man usurping American masculinity by conquering the labor market—and desirable American women (295-97).

As a recognizable public figure, Wong was subject to these very anxieties and ambivalences. At the most basic level, Wong's rhetorical strategies were frequently predicated upon countering negative stereotypes of the Chinese. When periodicals and product advertisements invoked the myth that Chinese people eat rats, he published an offer of $500—an outrageous sum at the time—to anyone who could prove it. No one took him up on the offer.[34] When the argument that the Chinese could not assimilate into the United States became a major touchstone in the discussion about Chinese Exclusion, Wong was publishing arguments for citizenship rights for *assimilated* Chinese Americans. In a sense, then, Wong's performances amounted to a vibrant response to the myth that the Chinese were weak, passive, and docile, and to the mainstream emasculation of Chinese men. By invoking a distinct brand of American masculinity, Wong directed his public appearances to serve as evidence that Chinese men were indeed fit for American citizenship.

In light of this, the article about the on-stage contest between Kearney and Wong takes on wider significance. In fact, the trajectory of the debate, which touched on a number of key concepts--slavery, assimilation and citizenship, contamination and invasion—mapped onto the larger discourse about Chinese labor and citizenship. It unfolded as follows: Kearney asserted that all Chinese workers in the United States were actually slaves, and Wong refuted that. Wong referenced the fact that he was a naturalized citizen of the United States,[35] and Kearney denied that as sheer impossibility. Wong referred to America's founding fathers as "our forefathers,"

cleverly inserting himself as a natural heir to a legacy of rights-based equality; and Kearney was enraged. When Wong accused Kearney of bigotry, he denied it, but then digressed into ranting about the "unclean habits of the Chinaman." As the reporter recalls, Kearney "launched out into a torrid description of the big Chinese procession he saw in San Francisco, where thousands of men marched behind a 'fat, greasy Joss,' to whom they offered 'baked snails, roust (sic) rats, cats, dogs, and diseased pork." Kearney continued, "I've seen Chinamen around rat-pits again and again waiting for the dead rats. They're a peculiar people. They might stay here a thousand years, and they'd never assimilate" ("Wong Chin Foo and Denis"). Wong wraps up the debate by claiming, "There are 2,000 Chinamen like me in New York who eat, dress, and live in all respects like Americans," a claim that links to Wong's political position that *assimilated* Chinese men should enjoy equality and full citizenship rights. Wong then invited Kearney to debate him in public, and Kearney declined, stating that a public debate would draw attention away from the Exclusion Act, and that he wouldn't debate Wong because Wong wasn't his equal. According to the article, Wong allegedly retorted, "Far be it from me to call such as you my equal," effectively ending the debate.

The discussion did not get violent—not physically, anyway. Neither Kearney nor Wong pummeled the other with chopsticks, potatoes, or guns. But, to heighten the spectacle and to reinforce the theme of "combat," the reporter suggests that it *might* have come to blows, or it *nearly* came to blows. According to the reporter, Wong maintained his composure throughout the debate, "coolly," "wrathfully," "briskly," or "cheerily" responding to Kearney's arguments, and only showing his provocation

when “little spots of red burned on his sallow cheeks.” Kearney, on the other hand, having become “angry,” “exclaimed,” “shuffled around,” and “shouted violently and shoved his chair back” as he bristled. At one point, the journalist writes, “The men quit talking and regarded each other furiously. Wong glared. Denis glared. Both glared. Fiercer and fiercer grew the glances, and it seemed as if Celestial and sand-lot blood must surely flow” (“Wong Chin Foo and Denis”). Ultimately, blood did not flow. According to the referee, echoed by the consensus of the audience, Wong put up the better fight, out-argued Kearney, and clearly won the debate.

Wong, however, was not winning in the larger cultural debate; and the stakes were mounting in the form of increasing anti-Chinese violence, legislation, and cultural representations. In the space of Wong’s debate with Kearney, the rhetoric of national belonging was imbricated with not just racial identity, but also visual spectacle, masculinity, and violence. As Dana Nelson and Gail Bederman have argued, this was true on the national stage as well. In *Manliness and Civilization*, Bederman traces the evolution of American masculinity from the Civil War to World War I to show how masculinity became the touch point for a number intersecting nationalist discourses. As Catherine Stimpson succinctly summarizes in the introduction to Bederman’s study, “The best man was white. He was also the apex of civilization, the greatest achievement of human evolution, progress, and history. Literally embodying the survival of the fittest, he deserved to rule the globe and its various species” (xi). Here Stimpson is articulating the dominant discourse, the standard against all men—especially men of color—were held during this time. Bederman’s first chapter particularly discusses how this ideological construct of white

masculinity became means by which men of color, particularly African Americans, were racialized with regard to social and public policy.

Hence when Wong faced off against Kearney on stage, or brandished a gun at a white attorney in a Chicago courtroom, he was responding to violence with violence. He was also performing American, "manly" violence as an immigrant and American citizen who was determined to be legible within and against the dominant paradigm of American masculinity. He was crafting a body of work that encompasses his own body, his writing, his lectures and his performances to combat the forces of anti-Chinese political and cultural sentiment. And, he may have been more than a little out of his mind. Ultimately, Wong is an ambiguous figure. His shifting political commitments, his outlandish behavior, and his dizzying array of exploits and adventures make it difficult to engage with, categorize or assess the contributions he made throughout his prolific career. If anything, the body of work he left is a testament to the demands on subjects like him who were active in a public sphere that highly mediated opportunities for cultural and political intervention.

The fact that Wong's body of work "does not fit comfortably into the current geographical or formal frameworks of Asian American cultural history" (Hsu 83) is as reflective of Wong's career as it is of the frameworks for Asian American cultural history. Wong's rhetorical practices suggest that he strategically worked within and against the constructs for public visibility for Chinese men in order to stage his arguments against Chinese exclusion, and for the enfranchisement of Chinese American citizens. The diversity of his performative work underscores how *uncomfortable* it was for him and subjects like him to stage political work within the

exhibitionary complex of the late nineteenth century. The fact that he still doesn't fit comfortably in our contemporary historical and scholarly narratives suggests that we still have a lot of work to do to make room for confounding and important figures such as Wong. His relatively untouched body of work constitutes an opportunity to push the boundaries of the scholarly conversation and find new ways of understanding both Chinese American cultural history and the history of activism in the United States. Finally, and perhaps as importantly, the boldness of Wong's career, and the unrepentant criticism with which he treated American racism and imperialism, constitutes an invitation (or demand?) to contemporary scholars to be as bold, innovative and as critical as he was in our own political work.

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[1] Wong Chin Foo (Pinyin: Wang Quingfu) kept his name in the Cantonese style, with the surname first and his given name second. He also went by *Wong Sa Kee*, *Wong Sakhe*, *Wong Yen Ping*, *Huang Ching Foo*, *Ah Wong*, and *Charlie Wong* (Seligman xvii).

[2] Wong Chin Foo and several other Chinese businessmen founded the Chinese Equal Rights League in New York City in 1892. The League was formed in opposition to the Geary Act, which constituted a 10-year renewal of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, with the additional requirement that Chinese immigrants register with the government and obtain certificates of residence, or face deportation. Wong outlined the goals of The League in a pamphlet that the League published and distributed in 1892, which specifies that the League sought to repeal the immigration ban, secure citizenship rights for American-born Chinese, and eliminate the government registry.

[3] The federal government passed The Chinese Exclusion Treaty in 1880, which granted the government the authority to "regulate, limit or suspend" Chinese immigration (but not "absolutely suspend" it), when that immigration was perceived to be "affecting or threatening" the interests of the country. It's worth noting that the treaty was passed, "because of the constantly increasing immigration of Chinese laborers to the territory of the United States, and the embarrassments consequent upon such immigration." The verbiage of that treaty paved for the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, which barred "skilled and unskilled laborers and Chinese employed in mining"

from entering the country. Since most any Chinese immigrant could be considered a "skilled or unskilled laborer," it effectively "absolutely suspended" Chinese immigration to the United States. It stipulated that Chinese immigrants who entered the country prior to the Exclusion Act and who wished to leave the United States had to obtain a certificate of re-entry to return to the country. Furthermore, the act prohibited Chinese resident aliens from becoming United States citizens. The act was a political and legal articulation of longstanding and increasing anti-Chinese sentiment, which had long been articulated in the popular culture and the social assemblages of the United States.

[4] For more information about the scuffle, see "Fight in a Court" from April 19, 1898, and "Replies to Judge Gibbons" from May 17, 1898, both in the *Chicago Daily Tribune*.

[5] Such speculations are sprinkled through several periodical articles about Wong, and in an obscure remembrance of Wong titled "Wong Chin Foo—Story of a Chair," published in 1921 by Col. Charles Shepard. Shepard claims to have met Wong at the American consulate in Japan in 1872, as Wong was fleeing persecution in China, and facilitated his passage to the United States. Shepard notes that Wong "had a brilliant mind, but the 'cup that inebriates' lured him, and he succumbed ten or fifteen years" prior to the publication of the remembrance. The circumstances of Wong's death remained unconfirmed until just recently: in his new biography of Wong, Scott D. Seligman finds that Wong died in 1898—the very year of this courtroom incident—in Shandong, China, after having sailed there to be reunited with his son. Seligman speculates that Wong succumbed to illness and heart failure as a result of the travel.

[6] The newspaper, is titled the *Chinese American*, was published in New York in 1883. The three remaining copies are preserved in The New York Historical Society and in the Hoover Institution Library, Stanford University. Arthur Bonner reproduces an image of a cover page of the *Chinese American* in *Alas! What Brought Thee Hither*.

[7] See Mae Ngai, "Transnationalism and the Transformation of the 'Other,'" (59-65), and Robert Rydell, *All the World's A Fair* (119) for information about Wong's participation in world's fairs and expositions. Quingsong Zhang credits Wong with coining the term "Chinese American" in "The Origins of the Chinese Americanization Movement," (49).

[8] In her study of the representations of Chinese people in American popular music and performance during the last half of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, Krystyn Moon notes that the term yellowface usually refers to the ways that white actors portrayed Asians on stage, particularly with regard to how these actors "manifested degrading images of Chinese immigrants on the sage—images that were also appearing in contemporary political cartoons and magazine covers" (6). She notes later that just like blackface minstrelsy, yellowface provided Chinese actors access to the public sphere and opportunities to "promote the appreciation of their heritage, question racism, and gain control over images generated on the stage. [. . .] Although with mixed results, they ultimately employed a range of strategies on the stage in hopes that audiences would reevaluate anti-Chinese attitudes and their own conceptions of what it meant to be American" (8). For an example of Wong's

typographic yellowface performance, see his article in *Puck* titled "The Wail of Wong Chin Foo," published on April 17, 1885 (p. 117).

[9] In researching Twain's notebooks, Hsu uncovered a passage that, while critiquing a travelogue that ran in a February 1889 issue of *Cosmopolitan*, reads, "Pity to put that flatulence (the travelogue) between the same leaves with that charming Chinese story" (qtd. in Hsu). As Hsu argues, "that charming Chinese story" was an installment of Wong's *Wu Chih Tien*, a serialized short story that Wong claimed he translated from an ancient Chinese text, but that, as Hsu suggests, he probably authored himself. The connection between the two authors is fortified by the fact that the man who illustrated Wong' story, Daniel Carter Beard, became Twain's frequent illustrator after Twain was introduced to Beard's work from that "Chinese story."

[10] Wong earned enemies among the Chinese families in Chicago and New York for myriad causes: he faced allegations of theft from business transactions in both cities, he faced criticism of his scathing treatment of Christianity in America, he faced opposition against his position that Chinese people living in the United States should be more "Americanized," etc. For more information on Wong's position with regard to the well-established Chinese communities in New York and Chicago, see Seligman's chapter titled "A Terror to the Chinese Community" (77-88).

[11] Seligman's biography of Wong, published after the completion of this chapter, draws from the same volume of archival materials that I spent years researching. This biography will be essential to those who wish to do further work on Wong, or are interested in critically engaging with other aspects of Wong's diverse career. While I lamented that Seligman's biography appeared just *after* I finished my research, I am so grateful that it answers some of the questions that remained for me, such as where and when Wong died, and whether there are any surviving photographs of him (I couldn't locate one, which was confounding). Seligman's extraordinarily well-researched biography is an essential contribution not only to those interested in Wong's life, but also to the larger narrative of nineteenth century Chinese American history.

[12] I am indebted to Hsuan Hsu for support of my research on Wong—particularly for generously sharing his archival materials with me, and for serving as a thoughtful interlocutor as I worked through my ideas for this chapter.

[13] Sucheng Chan devotes much of her scholarly work to combating the dominant perception that Asian Americans in the United States were politically passive and failed to challenge systemic racism, oppression and imperialism during and after the Exclusion Era. For more information on this myth with regard to Chinese American activism in the nineteenth century, see Chan and K. Scott Wong's Preface to *Claiming America*.

[14] For more information on early Chinese American literature, see Xiao-huang Yin's book *Chinese American Literature Since the 1850s*. For more information on Chinese Christian conversion narratives see Jinhua Jia, Xiaofei Kang, Ping Yao's anthology titled *Gendering Chinese Religion: Subject, Identity and Body*. For more information on Wong's critiques of American Christianity, see his essay "Why Am I a Heathen" (1884). As a publicity stunt and jab at Christian evangelism, Wong traveled around

and gave lectures as a "Confucian Missionary" in 1896; for more information on that tour see "Confucius His Text" in the *Chicago Daily Tribune*, December 14, 1896.

[15] My work in this chapter draws on the key concepts and theories of these key studies. Gary Okihiro uses the ideas of "margins" and "mainstreams" to interrogate the manifestations of Orientalism over centuries of Euro-Asian contact, locating the desire and repulsion inherent in Orientalism at the core of the cultural, legal, and social relationship that Anglo Saxons established with Asian immigrants. Like others, Okihiro emphasizes gender and class in the formation of Asian American identities. Ronald Takaki stresses the *subjects* at the heart of Asian American history, using the small lens—the stories of everyday experience, struggle, and livelihood—to allow us to see the larger picture in new ways while offering a window into the profound diversity and connectedness of what we refer to as Asian American history. And throughout her volumes on Chinese American historiography, Sucheng Chan has been consistent in her insistence that we build our historical narratives from the diverse array of cultural production left behind by Asian Americans. In her preface to *Chinese American Transnationalism*, Chan urges scholars to continue to search for untapped sources that illuminate the diversity of Chinese American experiences, and never to lose sight of what our theoretical frameworks reveal about the complex facets of those experiences (x-xiii).

These scholars all provide compelling arguments for why the difficult work of recovering forgotten texts and figures like Wong is an important ongoing project. Meanwhile, the theoretical framework that Lisa Lowe outlines in *Immigrant Acts* offers tools for how to engage with the complexity of key concepts like race, citizenship, culture, subjectivity, and agency, all of which are essential for understanding Wong's cultural production. Lowe starts with identifying a tension in the position of Asian Americans vis-à-vis the nation: they were needed for their labor, but they were excluded from citizenship and reviled in national culture. Rather than being a case of failed assimilation, Lowe argues, Asian Americans have turned their struggles with national belonging into articulations of contestation, resistance, and negotiation. For Lowe, Asian American cultural production explores alternative subjectivities grounded in the political practices of decolonization; that cultural production, she argues, "is the material site of struggle in which active links are made between signifying practices and social structure" (22).

Lowe's work is especially useful in grappling with the tensions between agency, subjectivity, and discourse in Wong's work. Lowe draws from Omi and Winant's formulation that race is a social, economic, and legal construction, rejecting essentialisms that suggest that there is any universal or shared Asian American identity. Rather, she elucidates how Asian American subjectivities are born of "*acts* of labor, resistance, memory, and survival, as well as the politicized work that emerges from dislocation and disidentification" (9). The title of Lowe's text underscores her demarcation of immigrants' agency as active both in their own lives and in the larger cultural, social, and political structures that condition those lives. At the same time, however, Lowe's analysis largely eschews an engagement with identity formation and individual agency in favor of an analysis of textual agency. Lowe argues that "the life

conditions, choices, and expressions of Asian Americans have been significantly determined by the U.S. state through the apparatus of immigration laws and policies, through the enfranchisements denied or extended to immigrant individuals and communities, and through processes of naturalization and citizenship" (7). This contradiction that Lowe identifies between agency and structural determination informs my analysis of Wong throughout the chapter.

[16] Theosophists seek information about humanity, divinity, and the universe through the active interpretation of signs in nature. The branch of Theosophy founded by Helena Blavatsky ain the United States in 1875 emphasized the discovery of a "hidden science" (the occult) through metaphysical means. For more information on Blavatsky and Theosophy, see her texts titled "Isis Unveiled" and "The Secret Doctrine." For information on Blavatsky's relationship with Wong Chin Foo, see "The Fate of the Occultist," the *World*, May 6, 1877.

[17] *The New York Times* article suggests that Wong's identity as a Buddhist monk has been "erroneously" reported, but it is likely that he misreported himself, given that he posed as a Buddhist monk at various points in his career.

[18] In *A History of the Expansion of Christianity*, Kenneth Scott Latourette notes that Hudson Taylor's China Inland Mission, founded in 1865 and one of the largest and most active missionary foundations in China, counted over 600 missionaries and over 5,000 communicants by 1895 (363).

[19] *The New York Times* reporter's representation of Blavatsky herself reveals thinly veiled derision. The reporter compliments Blavatsky on her reception of guests with "true French courtesy," as she balanced a "delicate paper cigarette . . . deftly between the forefinger and thumb of her left hand." Bvlatsky, however, was neither French, nor widely regarded as delicate or deft. At the time, many readers would have regarded Bvlatsky as an imposter and a fraud.

[20] Edward Said's definition of Orientalism is applicable here. Said notes that Orientalism is a "style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction bade between 'the Orient' and (most of the time) 'the Occident.'" Said emphasizes that this distinction has served the West in "dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient" (2-3). I reference Jack Tchen's scholarship on Orientalism with regard to how Chinese American bodies and objects were discursively constructed in the nineteenth century American public sphere later in this chapter.

[21] Josephine D. Lee, Imogine L. Lim and Yuko Matsukawa's anthology, titled *Re/Collecting Early Asian America*, contains important critical essays about early Asian American cultural history. As they write in their introduction to the volume, "Any historical recollection of early Asian America must address the prevalence of the racial stereotype in public representation. From the mid-nineteenth century onward, caricatures of "Orientals" as inferior, alien, deviant, subservient, and threatening have dominated popular representations of Asians in American culture" (9). The essays they include in the volume collectively reveal the anxieties inherent in these stereotypical representations, and connect the cultural history to the social and

political frameworks that have shaped Asian American experience in the United States for nearly two centuries.

[22]The alleged inscrutability of Chinese faces is derived from the discourses of biological racialism, and from the "yellow peril" construct, which was popular in the periodical literature of the era before and during Chinese exclusion. Colleen Lye provides a genealogy of "yellow peril" in Asian American representations in the first chapter of her book, *America's Asia*. She defines "yellow peril" as "a particular combinatory kind of anticolonial nationalism, in which the union of Japanese technological advance and Chinese numerical mass confronts Western civilization with a potentially unbeatable force—regardless of whether this specter is meant to encourage a U.S. policy of aggression or accommodation" (10). Lye traces the construct specifically to the literature of Jack London and George Kennan, though it's worth noting that "yellow peril"—in its visual and written forms—were pervasive in the periodical literature at the time in which Wong was working.

[23] For example, see "Wong Chin Foo Preparing for a Pig-Tail Theatre . . .," a critical editorial about "the clever little Chinaman" and the "schemes which have been seething in [his] brain" (1). The scheme in question here is Wong's plan to open a Chinese theater in Chinatown, New York City.

[24] For more information, see Mary Louise Buley Meissner's fascinating essay, "On the Road with P. T. Barnum's Traveling Chinese Museum: Rhetorics of Public Reception and Self-Resistance in the Emergence of Literature by Chinese American Women," in *Representations: Doing Asian American Rhetoric* (218).

[25] This connects to the tensions of late nineteenth-century modernity that I discuss in the Introduction to this dissertation. Capitalist development and the increasing presence of immigrant bodies in American cities both precipitated and indicated the changes associated with modernity. At the same time, bodies and objects that appeared to be "foreign" were incorporated into the regimes of modernist spectacle, and were staged in opposition to so-called authentic (Anglo Saxon) American-ness.

[26] See my discussion of Trachtenberg's *The Incorporation of America* in the Introduction to this dissertation.

[27] Eighteen eighty three was an especially busy year for Wong: he started a couple of business ventures, narrowly dodged an assassination attempt (due to his campaign against powerful figures in New York's Chinatown who were involved in opium and gambling), and "disappeared" later in the year for a bit. See Seligman's chapters "The Chinese American" and "Wiping Out the Stain" (89-110).

[28] For a comprehensive history of Krupp guns, see *Krupp: A History of the Legendary German Firm*, by Harold James.

[29] As I discuss more at length a bit further in this chapter, this violence is perhaps best articulated in the "Driven Out" campaign that American cities were waging against Chinese American communities at this time. Jeanne Pfaelzer's work documents this relatively unknown history, wherein thousands of Chinese residents were forced out of their homes and businesses—literally driven out of the municipalities and counties under the threat of lynching—in tides of anti-Chinese waves that swept the country before and during the Exclusion Era. Wong would have undoubtedly known about this

widespread practice. Also, as an astute and critical observer of American culture, he would have linked the violence that Chinese Americans faced at the time with the United States' violent imperialist campaigns against other groups both at home and abroad.

[30] For more information, see PBS's "Politics and Pistols: Dueling in America" and "The History of Dueling in America," a section of the American Experience series.

[31] For more context about the instructional value of dominant racial exhibitions, see my discussion in the introduction to this dissertation.

[32] Smith's discussion in *American Archives* of how bodily characteristics were ideologically linked to character/personality traits informs my analyses and interpretations throughout this section.

[33] See my discussion of "yellow peril" above.

[34] See Seligman's "Everything but Rats and Puppies: Wong Chin Foo Introduces Americans to Chinese Food" (72).

[35] Wong was naturalized as a United States citizen in Michigan in 1874, well before the Chinese Exclusion Act made such citizenship illegal. His naturalization documents are archived by the Grand Rapids Historical Commission and are published online on their website.

Conclusion*: Seeing is Not Knowing*

One could argue that despite the significant gains of the progressive era and the civil rights era and everything between and since, the nation is no more incorporated, to borrow Alan Trachtenberg's term, than it was in the last three decades of the nineteenth-century. Wells, Winnemucca and Wong might be shocked to see the ongoing lynching of young black men at the hands of violent and lawless police officers, played out in cities across the United States, and in endless loops of cell phone footage on the nightly news;[1] accounts of Native American tribes still fighting for reparations and the right to self-determination, living on reservations with rates of poverty, illness and violence that far exceed national averages;[2] recent articles in periodicals about the widespread discrimination that Chinese Americans still face in all sectors of public life.[3] While this snapshot is reductive and does not sufficiently address the complex push-pull of progress and stagnation with regard to the nation's history of race relations, it is striking that the very battles that these activists fought are urgently relevant today. Wells, Winnemucca and Wong surely would not have endured such grueling campaigns if they hadn't believed that they could effect real and lasting social, political and cultural change regarding the issues to which they devoted their lives.

The point of this dissertation, however, is not to speculate about the relative successes or failures of the campaigns of these activists. Rather, this study theorizes how Wells, Winnemucca and Wong used technologies of representation to create

public subjectivities that served their arguments for reform. Across the chapters of this dissertation, I have demonstrated how these activists' social and political currency was closely related to their public appearances, particularly regarding how they performed their race, class and gender identities. I have found that while Wells, Winnemucca and Wong often conformed to the normative conventions that governed how they could participate in the public sphere, they also made bold interventions in the field of public vision regarding how their audiences saw them and their causes. To make those interventions visible, in each chapter I have situated moments in these activists's campaigns against the backdrop of the larger public sphere, which, in the late nineteenth-century, was foremost an articulation of the exhibitionary complex. Hence, this dissertation examines how these activists worked within and against the exhibitionary complex; I have shown how they adopted spectacle as a rhetorical device to craft their arguments for incorporation, and against the state-sanctioned violence that terrorized the communities they came to represent in the public eye.

I have looked to ephemeral, unconventional, frequently overlooked texts, such as pamphlets, publicity photographs, advertisements, transcripts and periodical writing to understand how these activists crafted their public subjectivities to advance their political goals. There are inherent arguments in the methodology I have employed in this dissertation: the first is that the seemingly disparate texts that I have analyzed are actually connected to one another in how they echo and reference each other across each activist's campaign, and how they circulated in the public sphere. The premise is that engaging this breadth of cultural production offers a more nuanced and complete picture regarding the complexity of these activists' political work. Wells, Winnemucca

and Wong were not just fighting against lynching, imperialist land grabs, or immigration bans, respectively. Instead, all three were critiquing the very discourses of modernity, particularly ideologies about the inevitability and benevolence of American progress. They were critiquing a nation that was achieving international prominence through violently imperialist campaigns at home and abroad. They were critiquing new, allegedly scientific taxonomies of racial groups, and the ways in which those taxonomies informed social and legal policy about the rights of racial minorities. They were critiquing how those racial taxonomies were used to position minorities in contrast to, or outside of, dominant narratives of national progress. They were critiquing the alleged infallibility of vision, particularly the ways that those taxonomies depended upon visual signifiers of race, class and gender. The key tension lies in how these practitioners articulated those critiques by using the very technologies and ideologies that they were critiquing.

As a whole, this dissertation has foregrounded how thoroughly these activists' campaigns were imbricated with the technological, economic, epistemological and social shifts that scholars typically associate with late nineteenth-century modernity in the United States. To quote Susan Stanford Freidman, "within this context, *modernity* signifies a specific set of historical conditions developing in the West, including the industrial revolution, the conquest of and expansion economically and politically into other continents, the transition to urban culture, the rise of the nation state, and growing power of the bourgeoisie" (500). Friedman quotes Steven Harvey's assertion that beliefs in the inevitability of linear progress, the development of rational scientific knowledge, and an increasing control over nature were all at the

heart of what drove modernity (501). Freidman's point, however, is that modernity is characterized by *contradictory* impulses: Modernity is the wild proliferation of opportunity, possibility, and radical rearticulations of form, self and community. Modernity is also imperialism, totalitarianism, rational order and increasingly centralized hegemonies (494).

As I have noted in the Introduction to this dissertation, Seth Moglen similarly seizes upon the theme of contradiction to characterize modernity in the late nineteenth-century. Moglen discusses how foundational shifts in the organization of American social, political, cultural and economic life simultaneously engendered hope and anguish among the American public. The campaigns of these activists came out of this profound tension between political hope and political anguish. The forces of modernity, particularly the shifts to industrial capitalism and the colonization of non-white populations domestically and internationally, created the conditions of oppression and inequality against which Wells, Winnemucca and Wong were fighting. Simultaneously, those very forces provided the activists unprecedented access to the public sphere, avenues for emancipatory practices of identity and community construction, and the tools to expose that American modernity itself was highly contradictory and unreliable. Ultimately, these activists's campaigns can be seen as multivalent sites that articulate all of the contradictions of modernity during this era.

The cultural forms that constitute their campaigns are indications of those contradictions. While Henry James lamented the "collapse of all forms" with the rise of mass culture (qtd. in Bentley 2-3), what we see in these activists' campaigns is a also sprawling expansion of all forms: political interventions through performance,

oratory, photography, and writing, all of which circulated throughout the public sphere, and referenced and built upon one another to create layers of meaning for audiences to unpack and interpret. This proliferation of forms was one of the mechanisms of the emancipatory potential of late nineteenth-century modernity, and activists like Wells, Winnemucca and Wong seized new opportunities to create multivalent rhetorical interventions across a variety of media. In accordance with the tension that characterizes this cultural moment, however, the melding of high and low cultures that Nancy Bentley discusses in her introduction to *Frantic Panoramas* came precisely when authors, educators and intellectuals were developing an exclusionary canon of American literature.

As Meg Wesling discusses in *Empire's Proxy*, the development of an American canon of letters and literature was a colonial project, closely linked with the expansion of U.S. educational enterprises at home and abroad, the growing capitalist market of the educational and literary professions, and the nation's desire to cultivate international prestige (7). The project of American canonization was inseparable from its exclusionary politics of race, class and gender, and its function of "civilizing" minority or foreign subjects. In this context, Wells's, Winnemucca's and Wong's cultural work is and has always been distinctly anti-canonical, due to their positions in American society and culture, the anti-imperialist content of their arguments, and the mass culture qualities of their texts.

These activists's work still problematizes disciplinary boundaries, and highlights lapses in the dominant historical and cultural narratives that still inform American studies scholarship. The fact that Winnemucca's key congressional

testimony is languishing in a basement in Nevada, or that Wong, such a critical figure in the early Chinese American movement, is nearly forgotten today, underscores how much work still needs to be done. The enduring legacy of the American canon manifests today in problematic disciplinary boundaries, persistent cultural and historical myths, archival lapses, and the continued marginalization of the voices and work of women and people of color. With this study, I have joined many critical American and cultural studies practitioners who interrogate the legacy of the American literary canon and who use the tools of interdisciplinary—or anti-disciplinary—analysis to recover important texts that have been marginalized, lost or forgotten in the annals of American history and culture.

This dissertation theorizes the public sphere and the articulations of late nineteenth-century modernity in ways that might be valuable in furthering the scholarly conversation about how public subjects were racialized and gendered in this era, and how those subjects exerted agency over the creation and circulation of their public images. I have performed a relational analysis that finds parallels in the experiences of three very different activists and their encounters with the many violences of American modernity. While I have drawn from the distinct conversations in African American, Native American and Chinese American studies, I have also attempted to bridge and connect those conversations by linking them to the larger, structuring key concepts of subject-formation, visuality, and modernity. This bridging work has elucidated the "racial scripts," to borrow Natalia Molina's phrasing, that structured how women and minorities could access the public sphere in the late nineteenth century.

That access was foremost afforded through spectacle and the exhibitionary complex of the public sphere. In the Introduction to this dissertation, I identify that one hallmark of modernity was the primacy of vision and the centrality of the role of visual technologies in everyday life. The creation of mass spectacles became a cultural form in and of itself, and since mass spectacles were frequently racialized, gendered and sexualized, cultivating spectacle was one way that these activists could both acquire a mass audience, and intervene in hegemonic ideologies about identity and national belonging. Wells, Winnemucca and Wong were experts at harnessing the contradictions of modernity to serve the political and social goals of their campaigns. But, in becoming spectacles themselves in the public sphere, they constantly negotiated the fine line between agency and objectification. They never stopped battling the limiting stereotypes, conventions and conditions for their participation in the public sphere. For Wells, this meant resisting the roles most readily available to black women: that of the "mammy" and the "prostitute." So, in photographs, Wells staged herself as the very model of Victorian femininity, a role traditionally reserved for white women. Wells also circulated photographs of lynched black men and got herself thrown out of meetings for her temper—hardly proper Victorian behavior. For Winnemucca, it meant vacillating between the two most prevalent roles for Native American women: that of the squaw and the princess. Winnemucca figured that the princess was the better option, so in photographs, Winnemucca positioned herself as such . . . in borrowed buckskin costume, with props and staging that would have signaled the artifice of the construct to her viewers even as they appealed to authenticity. Wong's public work was haunted by "yellow peril" stereotypes, which

represented Chinese immigrants as inscrutable, insidious and filthy. So, on stage, Wong was careful to appear as a well-cultured, well-bred Chinese *American*. He was also quick to cause a spectacle by drawing a handgun from those fine robes, though. He was dedicated to out-manning anyone who dared challenge his claims on American citizenship.

These practitioners were clearly doing complex work. They were relying upon and undermining the dominant ideology that visual appearances—particularly those in photographs—were objective, and conveyed some essentialized truth about the character or identity of the subject pictured. Their uses of representational strategies highlight the very instability of representation itself. By extension, these three practitioners were exposing the instabilities in American modernity: while they were appealing to national progress and trying to create progress (via increased rights and equity for their respective communities), they were showing that national progress was predicated upon a kind of violence that indicted the very foundation of modern American society.

My analysis in this dissertation breaks with some of the previous scholarship about Wells, Winnemucca and Wong, as I intentionally eschew marking them as resistant or assimilative. Instead, I demonstrate that what we know or see of them—especially what we are able to access across historical distance—are *effects* of the textual representations that each figure used to create their public personas. In my analysis in each chapter, I have been attentive to the ways that each figure fought for their reputations and their rights to self-representation. At the same time, I have consistently maintained that the texts by and about each figure are heavily mediated,

and perhaps reveal more about the conditions of public visibility than they do about these figures. My analysis of Wells's, Winnemucca's and Wong's various public appearances underscores how observers can only access these figures through larger ideologies of how they could or could not appear in public. As I have demonstrated throughout this dissertation, Wells's, Wong's and Winnemcuca's public subjectivities are assemblages of their vast production of textual forms. Herein lies the irony of these activists's campaigns: while each had to appeal to a kind of authenticity based on the race, gender or sexual norms to which they aspired or resisted, their work consistently reveals that authenticity itself is an artifice. We cannot know Wells, Winnemucca or Wong. In recovering and connecting their diverse cultural production we may be able to see more of them and their work, but we must remain attentive to their consistent reminders that seeing is not knowing.

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[1] This is a reference to the recent police murders of Freddie Gray, Eric Garner, Walter Scott and dozens of other black men in the United States.

[2] *The Guardian's* 2010 article titled "Obama's Indian Problem" concisely offers an overview of the abysmal state of affairs on Native American reservations in the United States.

[3] Last year, *Voice of America* ran an article titled "Chinese Americans: Discrimination in U.S. Still a Problem, but Improving" that details enduring stereotypes and discrimination that Chinese Americans face in the United States.

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