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**American Indian Culture and Research Journal**

**Title**

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**Permalink**

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/4th0f2c0>

**Journal**

American Indian Culture and Research Journal , 30(1)

**ISSN**

0161-6463

**Author**

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**Publication Date**

2006

**DOI**

10.17953

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Peer reviewed

# “I leave it with the people of the United States to say”: Autobiographical Disruption in the Personal Narratives of Black Hawk and Ely S. Parker

MICHELLE H. RAHEJA

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In Craig Womack’s *Red on Red: Native American Literary Separatism*, Jim Chibbo carries on an epistolary dialogue with his pal Hotgun in a humorous, trickster-inspired Creekified English (or Anglicized Creek) vernacular following each chapter. In these conversations Chibbo takes literary critics (including his alter ego, Womack) to task for work that maps non-Indian theories onto indigenous texts in ways that imply that indigenous writing is inferior. Quoting the trickster figure Rabbit, Chibbo responds to a suggestion that it’s impossible to write a “Red book”: “Only if you believe white always swallows up Red. I think Red stays Red, most ever time, even throwed in with white. Especially around white. It stands out more.”<sup>1</sup> In other words, Chibbo privileges indigenous epistemologies even as he places them in sometimes pleasurable, sometimes vexed dialogue with “white” critical practices.<sup>2</sup>

In the past decade scholars such as Womack have paid increasing attention to examining tribal literatures, histories, and ethnographies through indigenous lenses.<sup>3</sup> These practices seek to bridge gaps between the kind of critical, often abstract, work we do as indigenous academics and the communities that produce the texts we write about. What Womack and others suggest isn’t an outright rejection of Western research methodologies and any attendant engagement of indigenous voices with the West. Rather, they stress how attention to indigenous narrative strategies enables scholars to tease out what indigenous philosophies and aesthetics might look like when translated into and produced in English, circulated through the print medium, and subjected to the scrutiny of a universalizing humanistic gaze. This scholarship

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illustrates how “Red stays Red,” even in the face of oppression, historical change, and the emergence of innovative ways of storytelling, not in some static, essentialist way that draws on fixed notions of tradition but in a way that understands “Red” to be vibrantly alive and in dialogue with multiple contemporary contexts.

One of the most powerful ways indigenous narrative engages with this process of what Linda Tuhiwai Smith terms “decolonizing methodologies” is through autobiography.<sup>4</sup> This essay demonstrates how American Indian autobiographical narratives work to construct a sense of American Indian subjectivity for competing communities—indigenous and white—by simultaneously promoting and protecting tribal knowledge. As scholars of autobiography have noted, self-life narratives are spaces where competing, shifting, and complementary notions of the self meet and create new subjectivities in between fiction and the putative facts of the historical archive. Autobiography is a story we tell about ourselves to stave off, supplement, or refute the stories others might tell about us. And in American Indian contexts autobiography is an acknowledgment of the ongoing presence of colonialism (most are published in English), as well as the vitality of the oral tradition (many draw on the discursive traditions of the writer’s community).<sup>5</sup> American Indian autobiographies also deconstruct this binary opposition between oral and written narrative by showing their interrelatedness.

To read the complex, shifting subjectivities these autobiographies construct, this essay suggests attention not only to the stories they tell but also, and especially, to the ones they do not: it suggests a reading strategy attuned to the silences and disruptions embedded within them. Reading silences is an oxymoronic and tricky reading practice at best, with its competing imperatives of speaking for others and listening for where others opt *not* to speak for themselves. Yet despite the complexities of this approach, I suggest reading American Indian autobiographies, all published in dialogue with white literary practices, in one way or another require this kind of awareness of silence. What is left unsaid and the kinds of disruptions produced in American Indian autobiographies often reveal more about indigenous resistance, colonial hegemony, and tribal self-life narrative than what is on the page.

In what follows I argue that thinking critically about how intentional rhetorical silences operate in Indian personal narratives can suggest ways of reading indigenous formulations of the self and the carefully rendered aspects of tribal knowledge contained within published texts. These texts, published well over a century ago, utilize these silences strategically to “stay Red” even while engaging with the white-controlled literary and publishing practices of their day. To make this argument, I focus on two texts: the Sauk warrior Black Hawk’s “as-told-to” *Life of Black Hawk* (1833) and one of Seneca sachem and military secretary Ely S. Parker’s unpublished speeches from 1878. These texts, I suggest, illustrate three significant ways rhetorical silences are deployed and the ways these discursive strategies subtly nudge attention to their subjects’ indigenous identities and loyalties: to protect tribal military and cultural secrets, to nudge audiences to think critically about colonial imperatives regarding both textual production and uneven power relations,

and to articulate a newly emergent indigenous subjectivity. This subjectivity, I argue, inhabits the seams that separate the traditional, tribal forms of self-life narration and canonical American autobiography.

“A SECRET MISSION, WHICH I AM NOT, AT PRESENT, PERMITTED TO EXPLAIN”: BLACK HAWK AND THE DEFERRED AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Black Hawk (1767–1838), the shorthand English name of Ma-ka-tai-me-she-kia-kiak (or Black Sparrow Hawk), fought battles against a US Army that was determined to remove the Sauk from their homeland at Saukenuk, a community on the Rock River near Rock Island, Illinois. After his capture by the US Army he began to fight against his rival Keokuk and further forced removals using discourse rather than armed struggle. Black Hawk inscribed his life story in an effort to escape being silenced by or spoken for in the historical record at the close of the so-called Black Hawk War of 1832.<sup>6</sup> Ironically, though, he also employs silences and deferrals in his autobiography to signal particular moments in which the self-life narrator desires to resist an intrusive gaze, to withhold ethnographic information that might be potentially punitive to his community, or to refuse to provide details that the narrator intimates may serve only to satisfy the reader’s curiosity. The withholding of information in the text also reveals the sometimes vexed relationship between the narrator and his editor(s).

Any discussion of Black Hawk’s autobiography is bound to be complicated because Black Hawk did not speak or write English, preceded us by more than 150 years, and produced a collaborative text. While the Sauk military and political figure solicited his autobiography in 1832, when he was incarcerated at the close of the so-called Black Hawk War, his amanuensis, Antoine LeClaire, was a French Canadian/Potawatomi interpreter employed by the US government who spoke and wrote English as a fourth language.<sup>7</sup> LeClaire’s manuscript, which is no longer extant, was given to John B. Patterson, a newspaper editor from Oquawka, Illinois, who published the autobiography but most likely never met Black Hawk, although Black Hawk reportedly approved Patterson’s text.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, any attempt to discern where Black Hawk’s voice starts and where it ends is problematic.

“As-told-to” or collaborative projects between Native American-speaking subjects, tribal community members present at such exchanges, translators, transcribers, and white amanuenses constitute one of the most prevalent forms of Native American autobiographical articulation. As a relatively recent subgenre unique to postinvasion Native American discourse, these texts defy easy classification. In addition, they raise compelling issues about authenticity and agency because it is difficult to attribute definitively any thread of conversation within the text to any one particular collaborator, especially in the absence of an extant manuscript.

On the one hand, collaborative autobiographies have been heralded as authentic records of Native American subjectivity because they are narrated by individuals whose first language is not English, who haven’t attended boarding school or attained literacy in a European language, and who have

lived most of their lives at a remove from the influences of white culture. On the other hand, the texts are usually framed, written, and published by white editors whose cultural biases filter into the narrative in sometimes subtle and complex ways.<sup>9</sup>

As H. David Brumble has observed, the role of the editor is a vexed one. Brumble defines two editorial strategies—that of the “Self Conscious Editor” and that of the “Absent Editor.”<sup>10</sup> Self-conscious editors explain or consciously allude to the method of autobiographical transmission in the text. For example, Lucullus McWhorter’s work with the Nez Perce warrior Yellow Wolf in *Yellow Wolf: His Own Story* (1940), includes questions the editor posed to Yellow Wolf, as well as Yellow Wolf’s and his colleagues’ reactions to the autobiographical project. The work of self-conscious editors, moreover, relies less on a chronological imperative, attempts to come closer to capturing the oral narrative experience of the interviews, and is less stylistically polished than the work of absent editors.

Although Brumble notes that the absent editor is “the most venerable and the most widespread editorial strategy” (75), absent editors obscure the layered matrix of transmission of tribal self-narration. “It is the measure of the success of the Absent Editors in general,” Brumble writes, “that generations of readers have taken these books at face value, that they have believed the fiction that there is no fiction” (81). Absent editors such as Patterson, who published both versions of Black Hawk’s autobiography—the *Life of Black Hawk* (1833) and a revised and lengthened version, *Autobiography of Black Hawk* (1882)—present themselves as transparent screens through which the authentic and unadulterated voice of the Native American speaker passes.<sup>11</sup>

For example, Patterson writes in the advertisement to the 1833 edition that “he does not . . . consider himself responsible for any of the facts, or views, contained in it—and leaves the old Chief and his story with the public, whilst he neither asks, nor expects, any fame for his service as amanuensis.”<sup>12</sup> Here Patterson elides his own editorial manipulations of the text, as well as those of LeClaire. Patterson’s mock humility here is an obvious fiction as he was ultimately responsible for rendering Black Hawk’s speech and LeClaire’s manuscript into a published text, and it is possible to examine the literary structure of the *Life of Black Hawk* as solely Patterson’s invention and intervention. For example, italicized words appear throughout and serve to interpolate an oral dimension into the text. At various points in the autobiography italicized words serve to highlight irony, important figures, or terms marked as specifically “Indian” (*Great Spirit, medicine man, braves, village criers, peace party*) and to heighten the drama of a particular scene. These italicized words have an authenticating effect. They signal to the reader that the text is a specifically Indian one and attempt to elide problems of translation from one language to another, the oral to the written. Although each word is written in English, they are marked as alien words on the page through italicization. This has the effect of making the words intelligible (any reader of English can grasp their meaning and is led to believe that Sauk speech has been translated accurately) yet also uniquely “Indian” (because the words are italicized, the reader can assume that they have been translated from the Mesquakie-Sauk language).<sup>13</sup>

In addition, some sentences can be discerned as entirely Patterson's intervention, despite his disclaimer that he was a transparent screen through which Black Hawk's words passed: "When I called to my mind the scenes of my youth, and those of later days—and reflected that the theatre on which they were acted, had been so long the home of my fathers . . . I could not bring my mind to consent to leave this country to the whites" (107). It is highly unlikely that Black Hawk remembered events in florid metaphors borrowed from the world of the stage.

Patterson also undoubtedly organized the logic of LeClaire's manuscript into paragraph form. Therefore, Patterson may have imposed a logic on Black Hawk's narrative that was differently constructed than the oral form. The narrator explains that "many of our people, instead of going to their old hunting grounds, where game was plenty, would go near the settlements to hunt—and, instead of saving their skins to pay the trader for goods furnished them in the fall, would sell them to the settlers for whiskey!" (96). This statement is immediately followed by a separate paragraph that describes the death of Black Hawk's son as a result of disease: "About this time my eldest son was taken sick and died" (96). In oral narrative these phenomena—the encroachment of white settlers on Sauk territory, the introduction of alcohol, and the increase in new diseases in the Sauk community—may have been more explicitly linked. But it is impossible to know exactly where either LeClaire's or Patterson's interventions on the text are because neither collaborator's manuscripts are extant.

Much criticism surrounding Black Hawk's autobiography revolves around this question of competing voices. Neil Schmitz, for example, attempts to divine what he terms Black Hawk's "defiant, litigious, maledictory" discourse from Patterson's narrative attempts to confine and contain the Sauk politician's speech through the employment of conventional literary form.<sup>14</sup> But although it is necessary to delineate both the historical context and mode of production of a text, the important issue is not to engage in endless and ultimately futile attempts to find the Rosetta Stone containing the key to deciphering the "real" Indian voice in the text.

The narrative voice of *The Life of Black Hawk* is undeniably the aggregate result of a collaboration among three speaking and writing subjects. This tripartite narrative voice is constituted by language, which is not to say that the narrative voice, the autobiographical "I" of the speaking subject, "Black Hawk," is solely the effect of language. As is the case with Native American autobiographies, these literary practices are sometimes linked ineluctably to an entire social and cultural nexus. Collaborative autobiographies construct a sense of American Indian identity for competing communities—indigenous and white—but ultimately these "as-told-to" texts create a new subjectivity, a new narrative understanding of American Indian self-storytelling that is produced through indigenous and white filters. Jerome Bruner contends that "a life is created or constructed by the act of autobiography," and it is certainly the case that in as-told-to autobiographical contexts the self that is created comes into being through collaboration, but that doesn't make the speaking subject any less an "authentic" self than one created solely by the autobiographer's

own hand.<sup>15</sup> While Sauk oral storytelling traditions describing Black Hawk's life might contradict some of the information contained within the *Life of Black Hawk*, they wouldn't diminish the forceful narrative personality created within its pages. Neither would access to LeClaire and Patterson's original manuscripts render Black Hawk's "transparent self" any more legible.

Black Hawk, therefore, remains an elusive subject in between the "real" bodies of the writing-speaking subjects Black Hawk, LeClaire, and Patterson and the realm of the imagination and memory. Although it is difficult to say where Black Hawk's voice is in the text, reading where it isn't is, paradoxically, clearer. He markedly resists intrusions on what he considers private and domestic space throughout the narrative. Silence functions in his autobiography to signal particular moments in which the self-life narrator resists an intrusive gaze and meets the autobiographical project on his own terms.

By withholding or endlessly deferring autoethnographic information, Black Hawk manipulates and destabilizes readers' expectations at the same time that he inserts elements of indigenous epistemology and storytelling conventions into the text.<sup>16</sup> As Black Hawk states in his translated and transliterated dedication page, he intends to relate his life story in order "to vindicate [his] character from misrepresentation" (35), yet despite Patterson's editorial interventions, there are two significant ways in which Black Hawk resists intrusions on what he considers private, domestic space. One mode of resistance is enacted through withholding information, particularly information that he may have considered intrusive on his cultural practices and beliefs, and the other is through undermining the overdetermined popular image of the warrior in defeat.<sup>17</sup>

For example, in speaking of his clandestine messages to his Ho-Chunk/Sauk counselor, Wabokieshiek, or the Prophet, Black Hawk states, "Communication was kept up between myself and the Prophet. Runners were sent to the Arkansas, Red river and Texas—not on the subject of our lands, but a secret mission, which I am not, at present, permitted to explain."<sup>18</sup> Black Hawk enigmatically intimates that the issue of land encroachment and appropriation, a theme saturating most of the narrative, was not the subject of his correspondence with the Prophet.

Although it is impossible to determine the nature of this "secret mission" or to know with certainty if this statement resulted from an error in LeClaire's translation or Patterson's transcription, it remains a mysterious textual aporia. The effect of this statement and others like it in the text is to signal to the reader that Black Hawk desires to keep secret certain types of information, particularly information that could be used against him by US government agents. It also signals that he may have wanted to convey the impression that the Sauk remain a potentially destabilizing power to be reckoned with.

The narrator makes a similar move when he describes his tour of the metropolitan East. Black Hawk; his eldest son, Nasheaskuk, or Whirling Thunder; and his colleagues Wabokieshiek, Neapope, and Pamaho had all been incarcerated near St. Louis at the close of the so-called Black Hawk War. Prior to the Indians' release from prison, US military officials escorted them through fast-growing principal urban sites—Baltimore, Philadelphia,

and New York. During their tour they were often displayed before crowds of spectators, and their opinions on various events and topics were solicited. After visiting Philadelphia, Black Hawk remarks, "I witnessed a militia training in this city, in which were performed a number of singular feats. The chiefs and men were well dressed, and exhibited quite a warlike appearance. I think our system of military parade far better than that of the whites—but . . . I will not describe it, or say anything more about war, or the preparations necessary for it" (147). Thus, in between cataloging his visits to the new republic's growing cities, Black Hawk refuses to engage in a detailed comparison of Sauk and US martial practices. He not only withholds this information in order to protect the military secrets of his community from white surveillance but also refuses to present the Sauk, even in the face of amassed US military weaponry and hordes of settlers, as a culture in decline or defeat. He intimates that the Sauk will continue military practices and that aggressive US forces will not intimidate them. This is significant as a narrative device because it demonstrates that Black Hawk doesn't imagine that warfare results in absolute winners and losers but a more indigenous conception of battle that can concede of a cycle of minor victories and minor losses. As well, his comparison of Sauk and US military pageantry reads as a bit of a taunt. Narrative inscriptions of Plains and Woodlands tribal warfare reveal that battles were often preceded by various types of teasing and taunting, such as Black Hawk engages in here.

The practice of withholding information is common in tribal literature of the Americas. Indigenous speaking subjects who share their autobiographies with collaborators in the literary genre *testimonio* withhold information from their editors for a variety of reasons. For example, Nobel laureate Rigoberto Menchú, an indigenous Guatemalan activist, refuses to relate certain ethnographic details that form a core part of her identity to her editor, Elizabeth Burgos-Debray. As John Beverly points out, "There are certain things, her Nahuatl name, for example—she will not speak of: 'I'm keeping my Indian identity a secret. I'm still keeping secret what I think no-one should know. Not even anthropologists or intellectuals no matter how many books they have, find out all our secrets.'"<sup>19</sup> This statement foregrounds the sometimes antagonistic relationships underlying many such collaborative narratives, but it also points to the agency indigenous autobiographers who choose not to write their own texts express by refusing to divulge certain types of information.

Menchú's statement, like Black Hawk's, hints at the possibility that the information that speaking subjects provide may be used against them or their community in coercive and often violent ways. Doris Sommer demonstrates that "even in the act of addressing us through the literary artifice of the *testimonio*—which is built on the convention of truth telling and openness—Menchu is also consciously withholding information from her metropolitan readers, on the grounds that it could be used against her and her people by academically trained or advised counterinsurgency specialists."<sup>20</sup> Black Hawk, like Menchú more than one hundred years later and in an entirely different cultural and national context, confronted the real possibility that the very words he spoke to his interpreter might be used against him or his



followers, especially given the rifts in the Sauk and Fox community caused by the antagonism between Black Hawk and his rival Keokuk.

But fear of state power cannot adequately account for the silences, deferrals, and gaps of information in the text. These moments can also be read as Black Hawk's attempt to preserve restricted knowledge from public consumption. Perhaps Black Hawk believed that certain types of information would not only reveal potentially dangerous military secrets but could also cause spiritual or cultural damage to his community. Speaking of the balanced gender divisions within his community, Black Hawk notes, "It is not customary for us to say much about our women, as they generally perform their part cheerfully, and *never interfere with business belonging to the men!* This is the only wife I ever had, or ever will have."<sup>21</sup> While this could be a sexist intervention on the part of Patterson, scolding white women for meddling in white men's affairs, it could equally point to a Sauk belief both in a specialized knowledge available to only certain segments of the population and in a vision of gender relations based on separate but complementary roles.

Black Hawk withholds information to protect his community but also to confront his readership. In speaking of the controversial 1804 treaty that ceded Sauk and Fox lands to the United States, Black Hawk claims, "I will leave it to the people of the United States to say, whether our nation was properly represented in this treaty. . . . I could say much about this treaty, but I will not, at this time. It has been the origin of all our difficulties" (54). Black Hawk poses a rhetorical question to his imagined monolithic national readership and asks "the people of the United States" to engage in self-examination and self-criticism. In this playful inversion of the autobiographical project the narrator asks his constructed audience to place themselves in a position to account for national policies that proved devastating to Sauk and Fox communities while he attempts to efface himself, to imagine himself in the listener or reader's role, and to remain silent for the time being.

Black Hawk's last act of resistance and attempt to assert "Red" or Sauk cultural elements into the text through silence comes at the end of the narrative. While the historical figure Black Hawk may have surrendered to the US military after a brief but devastating conflict, the narrator of the *Life of Black Hawk* never envisions the Sauk people as a doomed, defeated, and vanishing nation. He recognizes that his tenure as a leader of his community is drawing to a close (he was seventy years old when he began the autobiographical project and would never again return to his homeland), but he refuses to speak his community out of existence. At the conclusion of the autobiography, Black Hawk states, "I have not the time, nor is it necessary to enter into more detail about my travels through the United States. The white people know all about them, and my people have started to their hunting grounds, and I am anxious to follow them" (153).

Arnold Krupat reads this passage as an example of a warrior "in defeat" preparing to make the transition to the proverbial happy hunting grounds, but I contend that Black Hawk attempts here to affirm a material existence outside of and more privileged than the textual production.<sup>22</sup> He desires to halt his autobiographical project in order to join his community on a

traditional seasonal migration. This decision not only privileges Sauk cultural practices over print culture, but it also demonstrates to his readers that Sauk practices continue to exist in the face of white encroachment and violence.

Ironically, however, despite Black Hawk's refusal to engage in the rhetoric of the vanishing Indian, what was articulated in the text was less important in the end than the representation of a defeated warrior. Long after Black Hawk was displayed in the East to large crowds of eager spectators (the sight of Black Hawk's party often attracted more people than President Andrew Jackson's speech tour scheduled at the same time), Patterson wrote and staged a play in 1883 based on the autobiography. In it he himself impersonated Black Hawk, proclaiming, "I will personify an Indian character in the piece myself."<sup>23</sup> As David Murray argues, American Indian autobiographies "have been produced for, and shaped by, the cultural expectations of a white readership, but the Indian speech is present in a dramatic context which has the result of making it already overdetermined for the white reader. As a result the speakers are 'framed,' so that *what* they are saying is actually less important than the fact and manner of their saying it."<sup>24</sup> Although this may be true, I hope that more recent studies of Black Hawk's text, such as this one, demonstrate that Black Hawk was not entirely without agency in a text filtered through so many non-Sauk voices. In his case, where displayed object collided with self-soliciting autobiographical subject, the narrator chose to resist representation, to hide from view that which was considered private. Yet by the very act of alluding to a private or secret space and then withholding information about it, the narrator of the autobiography enacts a complicated performance, one that suggests another reality and history. However, by paying attention to the silences and deferrals in the text, it is possible to perform a reading of the autobiography that suggests Black Hawk wielded some control over the narrative performance and attempted to insert an indigenous rendering of self-life narration into the text.

"WELL WHO IS GE[NERAL] P[ARKER]. HE MAY ANSWER FOR  
HIMSELF IN A VERY FEW WORDS": ELY S. PARKER  
AND SENECA AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Well, who is General Ely S. Parker? Although his name has faded in the public memory outside of Six Nations communities and Native American Studies departments, Parker (1828–95), the English name chosen by Do-ne-ho-ga-wa (The Door Keeper), the Tonawanda Seneca sachem who served as Ulysses S. Grant's military secretary during the Civil War, held positions of power in the US government unmatched by Indians even by twenty-first-century standards.<sup>25</sup> Parker was, as biographer William H. Armstrong calls him, a "warrior in two camps"—born during a period of rapid change for the dual nations to whom he claimed allegiance—Seneca and the United States—and ready to take up arms, both the pen and the sword, to defend them.<sup>26</sup>

Both Black Hawk and Parker understood the power of print circulation in the dominant culture. One of the ironies of comparing these two individuals, however, is that Black Hawk wasn't literate in English but wanted to see his

story in print, whereas Parker could write very well in English but did not publish many of his writings, choosing instead to address audiences through the medium of oratory. Like Black Hawk, however, Parker refuses autobiographical transparency and transmission by declining to relate intimate details of his life story.

As a controversial figure in the Seneca community—hailed as a hero by some and considered a traitor by others—Parker’s reasons for his autobiographical silence may not be as clear as Black Hawk’s. Black Hawk certainly needed to guard against any form of ethnographic knowledge that could open doors to violence in his community, and he was unequivocal in his allegiance to a single community. Parker, as Seneca sachem and guardian of the Western Door of the symbolic Iroquois longhouse, was invested with the responsibility of protecting his community from the dominant culture, yet he also served in the US military.<sup>27</sup> On the surface a study of Parker’s life would indicate that he abdicated his responsibilities to the Seneca Nation by attempting to simultaneously serve two governments in conflict with each other. Yet his unpublished autobiographical speeches indicate that in his role as public speaker Parker protected Iroquois intellectual and philosophical traditions by refusing to capitulate to the expectations of his white interlocutors.

Parker was born into an important Tonawanda Seneca family well versed in Iroquois traditions. During his lifetime he served as translator, Seneca sachem, engineer, Ulysses S. Grant’s military secretary during the Civil War, and the first indigenous Commissioner of Indian Affairs. As well, he became acquainted with many of the important figures of his day: Henry Clay, Dolly Madison, Mathew Brady, Daniel Webster, and Presidents Polk, Pierce, Buchanan, Lincoln, Grant, and Johnson. As an orator he was in great demand, both among the Seneca and non-Indians.<sup>28</sup>

Although some of Parker’s texts have been published, including his draft of General Robert E. Lee’s surrender at Appomattox, most remain unpublished, including his work on Iroquois culture, a challenge to Lewis Henry Morgan’s *League of the Ho-de-no-sau-nee, or Iroquois* (1851).<sup>29</sup> Most of the meager scholarship on Parker has been written by historians and is biographical in nature. The bulk of his texts have remained largely forgotten, particularly by literary critics.

Yet these speeches are important for several reasons. Because scholars have called into question the authorship of early American Indian writers, claiming that their texts were often either heavily edited or were written primarily by non-Indian editors, it is crucial to read speeches, such as Parker’s, that were not only written by the author himself but contain editorial interventions in the author’s own hand. Not only is it clear that Parker penned his own speeches in his elegant handwriting, but he also carefully edited them prior to delivery. These unpublished speeches are crucial because they demonstrate how Parker reimagined the autobiographical project to suit his own needs. I don’t mean to suggest that Parker’s text produces a more “authentic” Indian subjectivity than Black Hawk’s as he had more control over the mode of production of his speeches, but to argue that both Black Hawk and Parker work within an emergent indigenous autobiographical form that relies on

silences and deferrals and is in dialogue with dominant discourses. And in the case of Parker his text is not only in dialogue with dominant discourses, but it is also produced from a complicated position of authority both within and without the dominant culture.

Understood within Parker's early nineteenth-century context, American Indians, particularly those whose homelands lay east of the Mississippi, were imagined to be either extinct or doomed. Indians were simultaneously bodies that didn't matter to the dominant culture, whose ideology of progress and civilization would become codified as "Manifest Destiny" by the 1840s, and the core part of a powerful iconography that helped define American identity vis-à-vis Europe and the indigenous communities encountered. They were thus rendered both invisible in narratives created by a nation that needed to make their physical disappearance a reality to stake land claims and highly visible in popular culture as the most salient representation of "Americanness." Within this context the disconnect between the putatively proassimilationist events of Parker's life and his strident oratorical defense of American Indian culture and politics isn't as jarring as it might seem at first glance. Perhaps Parker staged a very complicated performance during his lifetime by acquiescing to certain racist programs instituted by the US government, shaping them to the best of his ability in the interests of Indian communities during his tenure as Commissioner of Indian Affairs, while at the same time presenting more politically charged speeches that disrupted the pervasive Social Darwinist theories about the myth of the vanishing Indian that surrounded him.<sup>30</sup>

Arthur C. Parker writes in the biography of his great uncle that Ely S. Parker "is the only American Indian who rose to national distinction and who could trace his lineage back for generations to the Stone Age and to the days of Hiawatha. First and last he was an Iroquois."<sup>31</sup> For Arthur Parker, maintaining allegiance to two competing nations was not impossible, nor did it create cultural schizophrenia because his life narrative could be folded into a prophetic dream his mother had about her son and could thus partake of a Seneca worldview that privileges dreams and their interpretations. According to Arthur Parker, Elizabeth Parker (Ga-ont-gwut-twus) visited a dream interpreter about a vision she had while pregnant with her son: "A son will be born to you who will be distinguished among his nation as a peace-maker; he will become a white man as well as an Indian. He will be a wise white man, but will never desert his Indian people, nor 'lay down his horns' (sachem's title). . . . His sun will rise on Indian land and set on white man's land. Yet the ancient land of his ancestors will fold him in death."<sup>32</sup> The dream foretold that Ely Parker would inhabit two seemingly incompatible worlds yet that he would do so in order to defend Seneca homelands. The dream posits him as "a new person, drawing power from Indianness and Americanness in combination," according to Philip Deloria.<sup>33</sup> And concomitant with this new identity was an emerging form of autobiographical narration that attempted to yoke together a Seneca and white subjectivity.

As well, by using the term *peacemaker*, the interpreter renders Elizabeth Parker's son a modern-day hero akin to the original Peacemaker who, along with Hiawatha and Jikohnsaseh, brought together warring factions under the

principles of the Great Law of Peace and led to the founding of the Iroquois Confederacy.<sup>34</sup> In this interpretation Parker would not only become one of the many complicated nineteenth-century Indian figures whose complex lives straddled two or more worlds, but he would also fulfill a role that promised to bring two conflicting nations together peacefully, allowing both to remain autonomous and independent, just as the original Peacemaker had intended with his message. Read within an Iroquois philosophical and political tradition, this dream, according to Mohawk scholar Audra Simpson, “aligns beautifully with the notion of *Kahswentha* [Two Row Wampum], of two vessels that should not interrupt each other’s passage even though they share the same water.”<sup>35</sup> Simpson imagines Parker symbolically “shining the chains between the two vessels, rather than a ‘hybrid’” figure and that Parker serves as a kind of intellectual forebear to contemporary Iroquois scholars because this work of bringing into dialogue two very different ways of viewing the world and at the same time respectfully maintaining these differences is what all Iroquois intellectuals, scholars, and diplomats do.

Clearly the jury is still out on determining what role Parker would eventually fulfill. John C. Mohawk, a Seneca scholar, claims in a PBS biography on Ely S. Parker that “in order to be accepted [by the dominant culture] he had to abandon every single element of his identity.”<sup>36</sup> Mohawk adds in an interview for the film:

I agree with the general thrust, that I sensed to be the case of the people at Tonawanda, and at Cattaraugus and Allegheny too, that they don’t generally see Ely Parker as a kind of role model. I can understand that. Because I think he’s more a character in American history in a way than he is in the consciousness of the Indians. And that’s because he more or less . . . went away from home and did all this stuff away from them, and he never really kind of came back and said, well, I’m back and I’ll do something here. And who knows what he should have done. I don’t want to be that judgmental of him. Those were tough times, I wouldn’t have wanted to live through those times.<sup>37</sup>

Like Black Hawk, whose rivalry with Keokuk split the loyalties of his community, Parker remains a fascinating figure whose life story and writings create crucial dialogue around identity politics, sovereignty, and responsibility in Six Nations communities in particular and Indian country more generally.

Parker’s writings reflect the pressures of dual loyalties and his ambivalence about his powerful position in two conflicting communities. At times he employs autoethnographic rhetoric in the service of correcting misrepresentations of Indians and stating his political beliefs on various issues relating to Indian affairs. For example, in an 1885 draft of a lecture on Indian clans and naming practices he writes, “The idea that tribes or bands of Indians are governed autocratically [‘by a chief’ inserted in pen] is an absurdity.”<sup>38</sup> Parker critiques popular misconceptions of Seneca culture by providing his audience with just enough material to clarify misrepresentations but without providing too much detail.

He argues, as well, in an 1885 letter to his friend Harriet Maxwell Converse, that allotment of Indian lands would be catastrophic.<sup>39</sup> Parker anticipated the disastrous 1887 Dawes Severalty Act (also known as the General Allotment Act) during his three-year tenure as Commissioner of Indian Affairs (1869–71) by submitting a four-point plan aimed at ameliorating what he saw as a corrupt and morally bankrupt system of exploitation. Included in his plan were the abolition of Indian traders, establishment of permanent reservations from which Indians could not be removed nor the land sold through allotment or treaty, and the creation of a committee of ombudsmen who would attempt to settle disputes nonviolently. In the face of what seemed to be inevitable genocide Parker conceived of a government-appointed system that would facilitate assimilation on Indian terms.

On the other hand, he expresses a paradoxical relationship to indigenous people in his writing. While serving as indigenous liaison with the US government, he wrote a letter to John Rawlins, secretary of the War Department, in 1867, claiming, “these hostile Sioux will not come to terms and they should be promptly & severely punished.”<sup>40</sup> Parker clearly advocated diplomacy over warfare and believed armed struggle against the US Army to be futile. For Parker, resistance required a more cautious approach, one in which Indian nations assumed enough of the characteristics of the dominant culture to both maintain as much of their traditional homelands as possible and register dissent from white hegemonic institutions.

Even more puzzling, especially to a twenty-first-century reader, is his stance on indigenous sovereignty. In an 1878 lecture Parker describes what he views as

the absurdity of the United States Government making treaties with the Indian tribes of the country, tribes that number all the way from 500 souls to 25,000. They have [“all” inserted in pen] been declared the wards of the government, and they all live within its jurisdiction, and yet these dependent people are treated as though they were independent, sovereign nations. Every contract or agreement made with them . . . is subject to the same form and ceremony of consideration, ratification and proclamation as is a treaty with Great Britain, France, or any other great independent power. I perhaps ought to be the last person to find fault with such a condition of things. I suppose that I ought to be very proud [“I ought to swell out as a turkey cock” inserted in pen] that with a few hundred ignorant Indians at my back, I can consider myself the head of a strong, independent sovereignty, and treat with the great United States as if I were Russia, or Germany or China or Japan. But I have no such feeling. On the contrary I am humiliated. For I know too well the great wrecks of violated treaties that are strewn in the historical pathway of the U.S. I know too well that a violation of a treaty on the part of the Indians means their [“forcible expulsion from their homes and their” inserted in pen] extermination. . . . The advantages and the power of execution are all on one side.<sup>41</sup>

Ever the pragmatist, Parker saw firsthand the results of treaties created under coercive and violent conditions. Individual Indians often signed treaties under duress and without the knowledge and consent of community members. Parker points to a contradiction in discourse surrounding treaties and indigenous sovereignty that still sparks debate. On the one hand, as he notes, treaties are delusional in that they invest Indian nations with symbolic and imagined autonomy but clearly favor the United States or some other colonial power. Indian nations are recognized by the United States as independent nations in order to divest them of land and power. Moreover, treaty making along the lines that Parker describes requires indigenous communities to conform to Western notions of jurisprudence and does not permit much room for dialogue between indigenous and Euro-American forms of legal knowledge and practice.<sup>42</sup> On the other hand, treaty making does recognize the “nationness” of indigenous communities and is one of the only means contemporary Indian communities have to gain federal or state recognition and to argue for the meager promises made in these overwhelmingly unhonored negotiations. Parker’s solution is to think of Indian nations as “domestic, dependent nations,” along the lines of Vine Deloria Jr. and Clifford M. Lytle’s formulation, and to point out the hypocrisy of the United States in making treaties with nations it clearly doesn’t consider equals.<sup>43</sup>

Yet even while discussing the Seneca clan system and government, Parker does not offer his audience restricted knowledge. For example, he writes:

The Council of Civil Sachems enacted decrees regulating the hereditary offices, consanguinity among the several tribes, marriage customs, the method of distributing property (which by the way was never very much among them) and the manner of sending and receiving ambassadors to and from other tribes. . . . Marriages [underlined once in pencil] in the same division of the tribes by its members was not allowed. The males were compelled to seek wives among the females of some other division and vice versa. The blood of the children [“in all cases” inserted in pen] followed that of the mother [“in all cases” crossed out in pen].<sup>44</sup>

Parker translates Seneca ideas into English words (*ambassadors* and *division*, for example) and employs the past tense when speaking of the Seneca, but he is careful not to divulge any information that could be considered taboo or harmful to his community. The use of the past tense is troubling here because it seems to reinforce notions of the “vanishing Indian,” yet Parker could be making a distinction here between the kinds of ethnographic information Morgan was outlining in his study of primarily precontact Iroquois institutions (the matrilineal clan system) and the contemporary state of Iroquois affairs, which was obviously impacted by the dominant culture and which Parker represented. Parker is careful not to write about continuing traditional practices in his community and even avoids discussing his own life story at length. This could be a kind of narrative prophylaxis, shielding his present-day community from inquiry by refusing to discuss contemporary cultural practices. Here

Parker might be portraying his contemporary community as assimilated and distinct from generations past in order to allow forms of traditional practices to continue without outside knowledge or intervention.

Parker critiques his audience's misconceptions about Indians and the US government's role in making treaties, but his manipulation of the conventions of autobiography demonstrates a more subtle disruption of his audience's expectations. In an 1878 speech Parker anticipates his audience's desire for an autobiographical narrative: "You perhaps are entitled to know to whom you are listening. . . . I must then perforce open your eyes as to who and what I am. I do this because when we read books we always want to know as much about the authors of them as it is possible to know."<sup>46</sup> Parker figures himself here as a text that can be read by his audience. By imagining himself this way, he implicitly acknowledges the ways in which texts are open to interpretation, debate, and discussion. He also anticipates his audience's awareness of the conventions of autobiography and in the body of the speech deflates their expectations: "we always want to know as much about the authors . . . as it is possible to know." Yet Parker reveals very little personal detail in the text. While readers of autobiography generally expect intimate and revealing aspects of an individual's life, the personal information in this thirty-six-page speech handwritten in pencil is scant. Parker simultaneously asks his audience to imagine him as a text but one where silence substitutes for personal information.

Switching to the third person, he further abstracts himself from the text: "Well who is GeP. He may answer for himself in a very few words. He may answer because there can be no other person who has been longer associated with the Ge[neral] than he who now addresses you, and he thinks and believes that if any body can speak with authority he can. That the Ge[neral] is an Indian you can each see for yourself."<sup>47</sup> Parker presents his audience with "the General"—a fairly well-known Native American military figure who has attracted a group of people to hear him speak—as well as an autobiographical narrator ("he who now addresses you"). Like Black Hawk's *Life*, Parker's text makes apparent the hermeneutical registers through which the personal narrative is constructed: the autobiographical subject, the narrator, the audience.

Parker must have anticipated that his audience was familiar with the kind of intimate subjectivity crafted in spiritual, ex-slave, and canonical autobiographies from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. He begins by stating that he was born to parents who "were members of the Seneca ['tribe' crossed out in pen and 'Nation' written above]," but he proceeds to launch quickly into an indictment of Euro-Americans for stealing Indian land and removing Indian communities far from their homelands under the auspices of Christianity, for chipping away at tribal self-determination, and for engaging in a "homicidal contest" (the Civil War) "with human slavery as the cornerstone."<sup>48</sup> This information is interspersed with a parallel Seneca tribal history that demonstrates how indigenous political organization and ethics are equal to those of the United States. As Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson argue in the context of women's and people of color's autobiographies, "the



colonized subject inhabits a politicized, rather than privatized space of narrative.<sup>49</sup> It is clear that Parker used this autobiographical pause as a vehicle to criticize his audience rather than to narrate the events of his life.<sup>50</sup>

Throughout the speech Parker is self-conscious of the fact that he is not fulfilling his audience's expectations. For example, he notes, "But I have wandered a long way from my story. I started to tell you of myself," and he proceeds to return primarily to a discussion of Iroquois history.<sup>51</sup> He interrupts his brief autobiographical sketch to insert, "About this time my people were becoming deeply involved in trouble with their white neighbors. As had always been the case the Indians were in the way of the march of civilization."<sup>52</sup> He then criticizes the government's plan to remove the Tonawanda Seneca westward. Throughout the narrative Parker brings to his audience's attention the fact that he is not fulfilling his self-appointed role as autobiographer, yet he refuses to provide more personal information. This has the effect of demonstrating to his audience that in a period of historical and cultural upheaval for the Seneca, the personal would be subsumed under the political.

After briefly describing how he became a general, Parker ends his autobiographical narrative—"And now you perhaps ['know' inserted in pen] as much about Genl Parker as he knows of himself"—yet he continues for another twenty-two pages, providing information about American Indians that blurs the line between Lewis Henry Morgan's theory of anthropological evolution and a pre-Boasian model of cultural relativity.<sup>53</sup> Parker's sly conclusion—that his audience now "perhaps know[s] as much about Genl Parker as he knows of himself"—is tricksterlike. Are we to understand that the Seneca Nation is a metonym for General Parker, given Parker's copious notes on Seneca history compared with the slight personal information provided? Or that General Parker is a simpleminded subject not given to much introspection? Or that Parker has outlined the broad facts of the general's life but will remain silent about Parker the Seneca sachem's subjectivity or that of Parker the writer? Perhaps he felt that he fulfilled his audience's expectations of a military subject's personal narrative but would keep his other "selves" private. He employs the vehicle of self-life narration to capture his audience's attention but throughout the lecture shifts focus back to what he really deemed important: Native American history and new ways of telling personal narrative that would weave communal stories into those of the individual.

### CONCLUSION

In the cases of both Black Hawk and Parker, where displayed object collides with self-soliciting autobiographical subject, the narrator chooses to hide that which is considered inappropriate for public consumption by suggesting that the notion of autobiography be reconsidered in an American Indian context. Yet by the very act of alluding to a personal narrative and refusing to elaborate on it, both Black Hawk and Parker are enacting a complicated performance. They employ technologies of writing to assert their voices, but they also withhold information in order to escape from closure, autobiographical containment, and rhetorical captivity at the hands of the US government and

perhaps even literary critics. In both narratives “Red stays Red,” to quote Jim Chibbo, and “stands out more,” not necessarily because of what is written but because of what is left unsaid.

## NOTES

An earlier, shorter version of this article was presented at the 2004 conference of the American Literature Association in San Francisco. I would like to thank Stephanie Fitzgerald, Jacqueline Shea Murphy, Audra Simpson, John Terrill, and anonymous reviewers for their generous and thoughtful comments and criticism on earlier drafts of this essay.

1. Craig S. Womack, *Red on Red: Native American Literary Separatism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 24. Rabbit is a trickster figure featured prominently in southeastern Indian oral narrative.

2. In this essay I use the term *American Indian* and *Native American* as interchangeable umbrella terms for indigenous people in North America, fully aware of the problematic origins of the terms and their homogenizing tendencies, because no better terms yet exist. Likewise, I use the terms *white*, *West(ern)*, and *European American* as interchangeable placeholder terms, with the understanding that these terms represent a broad spectrum of cultural histories and national/ethnic origins.

3. Of course, this tradition isn't entirely new. American Indian authors since at least the nineteenth century, such as David Cusick, Jane Johnston Schoolcraft, William Apess, William W. Warren, Zitkala-Sá, and George Copway, to name just a few, have forged new, indigenous-centered reading practices by thinking about tribal philosophies alongside Western texts. Contemporary practitioners of this tradition in North America, working primarily within the academy, include Gerald Taiaiake Alfred, Chadwick Allen, Paula Gunn Allen, Kim Anderson, Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, Vine Deloria Jr., Barbara Mann, Greg Sarris, Audra Simpson, Gerald Vizenor, Robert Allen Warrior, and Jace Weaver. One of the most salient features of the work of these contemporary scholars is the way in which their scholarship not only engages Western methodologies but also places American Indian texts in dialogue with those produced in postcolonial and transnational indigenous contexts.

4. A Maori scholar, Smith argues for a “decolonizing methodology” that serves to recuperate indigenous peoples from both the obvious and subtle structures of colonial power through narrative: “the need to tell our stories remains the powerful imperative of a powerful form of resistance” (Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* [London: Zed, 1999], 35).

5. See, in particular, the genre-defying work of Leslie Marmon Silko's *Storyteller* (New York: Arcade, 1981); and Ray A. Young Bear's *Black Eagle Child: The Facepaint Narratives* (New York: Grove Press, 1992); as well as the autobiographical bilingual poetry of Luci Tapahonso and Rex Lee Jim.

6. During the war the Sauk and Fox fought to remain at Saukenuk but were eventually forcibly removed to Iowa, Kansas, and Oklahoma. Contemporary Sauk (Sac or Asakiwaki, “People of the Yellow Earth”) and Fox (Mesquakie or Meshkwahkihaki, “People of the Red Earth”) live in central Iowa on the Mesquakie Settlement (known as the Sac and Fox Tribe of the Mississippi) and in Oklahoma on the Sac and Fox Nation near Stroud (known as the Sac and Fox Nation of Oklahoma), as well as in

smaller communities in Kansas and Nebraska (known as the Sac and Fox Nation of Missouri). For more on the Black Hawk War see Roger L. Nichols, *Black Hawk and the Warrior's Path* (Arlington Heights, IL: Harlan Davidson, 1992); and Anthony F. C. Wallace, *Prelude to Disaster* (Springfield: Illinois State Historical Library, 1970).

7. Most sources note that Black Hawk solicited his autobiography as a form of self-vindication and because of his sophisticated understanding of the power of print culture. However, Lawrence Watson and Maria Barbara Watson-Franke question whether Black Hawk solicited the work or whether some hitherto unnamed person “elicited or prompted” the work. See Watson and Watson-Franke, *Interpreting Life Histories: An Anthropological Inquiry* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1985), 2. Antoine LeClaire (1797–1861) was born to a French-Canadian trader and Potawatomi mother. He married a Sauk woman, the daughter of a chief, from whom he learned the language. He was present at the signing of the Black Hawk treaty of 1832, where Keokuk, Black Hawk’s political rival, gave LeClaire’s wife land, and where the town of LeClaire, Iowa, now stands. A wealthy man, LeClaire also cofounded Davenport, Iowa. For more on LeClaire see Jim Apry, “Antoine: Philanthropic Fiddler,” *Davenport Times-Democrat*, 29 October 1967; and Joe Sheridan, “Philanthropic Antoine: ‘He Was Davenport’s First Civic Leader,’” *Davenport Times-Democrat*, 21 February 1972.

8. Arnold Krupat, *Native American Autobiography: An Anthology* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1994), 149.

9. White editors often treated American Indian-speaking subjects unfairly and appropriated their life stories for their own personal gain, as was the case with Black Elk. It is important to remember, however, that indigenous subjects sometimes initiated and set the boundaries of the autobiographical project, as Black Hawk’s case seems to suggest. And although white editors typically solicited American Indian autobiographies, there are significant exceptions. Autobiographies featuring Indian amanuenses include William Apeš’s “The Experiences of Five Christian Indians of the Pequot Tribe” (1833), Laah Ceil Manatoi Elaah’s *The Life of Okah Tubbee* (1848), Benjamin Williams’s memoirs of Governor Blacksnake (published by Thomas S. Ablar as *Chainbreaker: The Revolutionary War Memoirs of Governor Blacksnake*), and, one could argue, Black Hawk’s, given that Antoine LeClaire first recorded it.

10. See H. David Brumble, *American Indian Autobiography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 75.

11. The 1882 revision of the autobiography, published after Black Hawk’s death, is longer, written in much more florid prose, and includes ancillary material, such as the narrative of a boy reportedly captured by Black Hawk during the war.

12. Black Hawk, *Black Hawk: An Autobiography*, ed. Donald Jackson (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 39.

13. The Sac (or Sauk) and Fox language is commonly called the Mesquakie-Sauk language.

14. Neil Schmitz, “Captive Utterance: Black Hawk and Indian Irony,” *Arizona Quarterly* 48 (winter 1992): 2–3.

15. Jerome Bruner, “The Autobiographical Process,” in *The Culture of Autobiography: Constructions of Self Representation*, ed. Robert Folkenflik (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1993), 38.

16. Mary Louise Pratt characterizes autoethnographic texts as those “in which

people undertake to describe themselves in ways that engage with representations others have made of them.” Autoethnographic texts, according to Pratt, “are in selective collaboration with an appropriation of idioms of the metropolis or the conqueror,” and they “often constitute a marginalized group’s point of entry into the dominant circuits of print culture” (Mary Louise Pratt, “The Arts of the Contact Zone,” in *Ways of Reading*, ed. David Bartholomae and Anthony Petrosky [Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 1999], 585–86).

17. The image of the defeated warrior and attendant images of the supposedly vanishing Indian have circulated since at least the eighteenth century, with the publication of Thomas Jefferson’s appendix on Logan in *Notes on the State of Virginia*, and have remained popular, as versions of James Earle Fraser’s sculpture *The End of the Trail* (1894) demonstrate.

18. Black Hawk, *Black Hawk: An Autobiography*, 106.

19. John Beverely, “The Margin at the Center: On *Testimonio* (Testimonial Narrative),” in *De/Colonizing the Subject: The Politics of Gender in Women’s Autobiography*, ed. Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992): 100–101.

20. Doris Sommer, “Rigoberta’s Secrets,” *Latin American Perspectives* 18, no. 3 (1991): 32–50.

21. Black Hawk, *Black Hawk: An Autobiography*, 73 (emphasis in original).

22. See Krupat, *Native American Autobiography*, 169.

23. Quoted in Schmitz, “Captive Utterance,” 7.

24. David Murray, *Forked Tongues: Speech, Writing, and Representation in North American Indian Texts* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 36 (italics in original).

25. Parker was called Ha-san-no-an-da (Leading Name) and later took the name Do-ne-ho-ga-wa when he was condoled as a Seneca sachem in 1851. The Seneca, or Nöd-doh-wa’ge:o:nō, are one of the Six Nations of the Iroquois (Haudenosaunee or “People of the Longhouse”) Confederacy. As the westernmost nation the Seneca are considered the “Keepers of the Western Door.” The other nations in the Confederacy are the Cayuga, Onondaga, Oneida, Mohawk, and Tuscarora. Contemporary Seneca reservations are located in what is now known as New York, Oklahoma, and Ontario, Canada.

26. William H. Armstrong, *Warrior in Two Camps: Ely S. Parker, Union General and Seneca Chief* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1978). As a Union soldier Parker opposed the separatism of the Confederacy, and as a tribal member he defended the Seneca Nation in Washington, DC, from the age of fifteen. For more on eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Seneca history see Arthur C. Parker, *History of the Seneca Indians* (Port Washington, NY: I. J. Friedman, 1967); Anthony F. C. Wallace, *Death and Rebirth of the Seneca* (New York: Vintage, 1972); and Daniel F. Littlefield’s essay on the Seneca leaders who preceded Parker, “‘They Ought to Enjoy the Home of Their Fathers’: The Treaty of 1838, Seneca Intellectuals, and Literary Genesis,” in *Early Native American Writing: New Critical Essays*, ed. Helen Jaskoski (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 83–103. For more on Ely S. Parker’s influence on Lewis Henry Morgan’s League see Scott Michaelsen’s “Ely S. Parker and Amerindian Voices in Ethnography,” in *American Literary History* 8, no. 4 (winter 1996): 615–38; and Audra Simpson’s “Making a Tradition of the Past: Ely S. Parker, Lewis Henry Morgan and the Writing of the

Iroquois Confederacy” (working paper, copy in possession of the author).

27. The Tonawanda Reservation was imperiled in the early half of the nineteenth century, under assault by the Ogden Land Company through the 1838 and 1842 Treaties of Buffalo Creek, which stipulated that the Seneca were to be removed to lands in Kansas. Parker studied law (although as a non-US citizen and American Indian he wasn't allowed to sit for the bar) in order to argue persuasively before a Senate committee. Later he led treaty negotiations that allowed the Tonawanda to remain on their homelands and buy back two-thirds of their land from the Ogden Land Company.

28. Parker was raised in a community that deeply valued oratory and entered a larger dominant society that also appreciated elocution. His first recorded forays into public speaking were at the Cayuga Academy, a school he attended in the 1840s. He later gave speeches in a variety of venues: before the Tonawanda Seneca community, various Masonic Lodges, and Lewis Henry Morgan's Grand Order of the Iroquois.

29. Parker's work had the tentative title “History of the Government, Manners, Customs, Religion and Literature of the Iroquois Confederacy, or the Nation of Indians,” and it presented a very different view of Iroquois social, political, and philosophical traditions than Morgan's. For more on the comparison between Parker and Morgan see Michaelsen, “Ely S. Parker and Amerindian Voices”; and Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), chap. 3. Most of Parker's unpublished, handwritten work is archived at the American Philosophical Society, the Buffalo Historical Society, the Huntington Library, the Newberry Library, the Rochester Museum and Science Center, and the University of Rochester Library. The autobiographical texts I examine in this essay are from the Newberry Library's Edward E. Ayer manuscript collection.

30. In 1869 Parker resigned his commission in the US Army to take on the leadership of Indian affairs as commissioner in what would later be known as the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA). He was the first Indian to be nominated for this position.

31. Arthur C. Parker, *The Life of General Ely S. Parker* (Buffalo, NY: Buffalo Historical Society, 1919), 7.

32. *Ibid.*, 48. Although a part of the Parker family oral narrative treasury, the dream interpretation Arthur relates comes from an 1897 article Harriet Converse Maxwell wrote for the *Buffalo Express*. Maxwell, a poet, member of the Snipe Clan through adoption, and first woman ever condoled as an Iroquois sachem, was a friend of Ely and carried on a lengthy correspondence with him. According to his biographers she is responsible for his reinvigorated interest in his Seneca identity later in life. Parker himself dismissed the dream interpretation in an 1887 letter to Converse, claiming, “The vision was beautiful and heavenly divine, but . . . is too incongruous and unhallowed. Pardon me for using this last word, but it seemed to be so *apropos* to my abhorrence of being suspected a ‘child of fate’ that I could not help using it as it strikes hard at the root of the matter” (quoted in Parker, *Life of General Ely S. Parker*, 174).

33. Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian*, 188.

34. The Great Law of Peace is also known as the Gayaneshakgowa, Kaianerasakowa, and the Kaianerekowa Hotinonsionne. For more see John Kahionhes Fadden, *The Great Law of Peace of the Longhouse People* (Roosevelt, NY: White Roots of Peace/Mohawk Nation at Akwesasne, 1971).

35. Audra Simpson, electronic conversation with author, 23 October 2005.
36. Ely S. Parker (*Seneca*): *A Warrior in Two Worlds* (Rochester, NY: WXXI Public Broadcasting Council, 2000).
37. PBS, "Warrior in Two Worlds," <http://www.pbs.org/warrior/index.html> (accessed 11 July 2005); for Mohawk's quote navigate to Historian Interviews, <http://www.pbs.org/warrior/content/historian/mohawk.html> (accessed 11 January 2006).
38. Ely S. Parker, draft for a lecture on Indian clans and naming practices, 10 October 1885, Edward E. Ayer manuscript collection, Newberry Library, Chicago.
39. Ely S. Parker to Cousin Gayaneshah [Harriet Maxwell Converse], ca. 1885, Edward E. Ayer manuscript collection, Newberry Library, Chicago.
40. Quoted in Armstrong, *Warrior in Two Camps*, 124.
41. Ely S. Parker, "Speech," ca. 1878, Edward E. Ayer manuscript collection, Newberry Library, Chicago.
42. In *Linking Arms Together: American Indian Treaty Visions of Law and Peace, 1600–1800* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), Robert A. Williams contends that Native Americans conceived of treaty negotiations between European colonies and the newly emergent republic as a site of complex diplomacy and cooperation. He argues that Europeans and Euro-Americans entered the diplomatic arena with serious intent and by "adapting themselves to tribal approaches to the problems of achieving law and peace" (5). This important work points to the multivalent ways indigenous peoples could assert sovereignty through treaty negotiations. However, in Parker's experience, especially in his dealings with the fallout from the Buffalo Creek Treaty, treaties proved to be one-sided and served to divest Native Americans of land and political rights.
43. Vine Deloria Jr. and Clifford M. Lytle, *The Nations Within: The Past and Future of American Indian Sovereignty* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998).
44. Parker, "Speech," 29–30.
45. C. G. Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, recorded and edited by Aniela Jaffé (New York: Vintage, 1989), 250.
46. Ely S. Parker, "Speech," 1.
47. *Ibid.*
48. *Ibid.*, 1–2, 13. Here it is important to point out that Parker conceives of the Seneca not as a tribe but as a nation, pointing to his ambivalent position on indigenous sovereignty.
49. Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, introduction to *De/Colonizing the Subject: The Politics of Gender in Women's Autobiography* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992): xxi.
50. This turning-of-the-tables on his audience, refusing to relay personal information and instead asking his audience to think about the ongoing process of colonialism, is similar to both Black Hawk's and William Apess's self-life narrations. Yet unlike Black Hawk and Parker, in "A Son of the Forest" (1831), Apess both reveals deeply personal information, such as extreme physical and emotional abuse, and at the same time calls his white audience to task for the United States' treatment of Indians. See *On Our Own Ground: The Complete Writings of William Apess, a Pequot* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1992).
51. Parker, "Speech," 7.
52. *Ibid.*

53. *Ibid.*, 14. Parker argues alternately that Indians are at a more basic stage in human evolution than their white counterparts; have similar social, cultural, and religious institutions and therefore can be interpreted as equal to their white neighbors; and are so different that the two races cannot be justly compared.