William McCary, Lucy Stanton, and the Performance of Race at Winter Quarters and Beyond

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In February 1847, Brigham Young and his colleagues among the Quorum of the Twelve were treated to an unusual concert in Winter Quarters by "a Mr. McCarey," who demonstrated his talents on a flute, fife, whistle, and saucepan. Alternately regarded as "the Indian musician," "a professed Spaniard," "a half-blooded Indian," "the Choctaw Indian," and "the nigger Indian," McCary and his white wife, Lucy Stanton, had recently arrived at Winter Quarters. This vast encampment on the Missouri River was a gathering place for Mormons heading west.[1] Although McCary, a well-known

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[1]Juanita Brooks, ed., *On the Mormon Frontier: The Diary of Hosea Stout, 1844–1861* (1964; rpt., Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1982), 1:244; Willard Richards, Journal, February 26, 1847, Willard Richards Papers, 1821–54, MS 1490, Box 2, fd. 6, LDS Church History Library; Charles Kelly, ed., *Journals of John D. Lee, 1846–47 and 1859* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1984), 100–103; Robert Campbell, Journal, March 1, 1847, 56, Mormon Missionary Di-

musician across the Midwest, provided welcome entertainment to the Saints settled in the area, within just a few months, he and his wife would be cast out of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, shamed into exile, and accused of racial, religious, and sexual transgressions.

Most scholars of Mormonism and race are familiar with the "negro prophet" William McCary and his presence at Winter Quarters in 1847. The most common and persuasive interpretation of this episode is that McCary's "bizarre activities," including alleged dalliance with white women aged sixteen to sixty, were among the factors that led to a pronouncement banning priesthood ordination for black men.[2] But when McCary entered the Mormon orbit, he was not alone, nor was his "blackness" the Mormons' only concern. However, the focus on McCary's perceived African ancestry and the subsequent priesthood ban has largely obscured consideration of both performative "Indianness," by which I mean a wide-ranging set of ideas about how American Indians looked, talked, lived, and loved, and the role of his white Mormon wife, Lucy Stanton McCary.[3]

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aries, Harold B. Lee Library Digital Collections, http://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/cdm/ref/collection/MMD/id/51765 (accessed June 14, 2014), L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah (hereafter Perry Special Collections).

[2]Newell G. Bringhurst, *Saints, Slaves, and Blacks: The Changing Place of Black People within Mormonism* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1981) and Bringhurst, "The 'Missouri Thesis' Revisited: Early Mormonism, Slavery, and the Status of Black People," in *Black and Mormon*, edited by Bringhurst and Darron T. Smith (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 13–33; Connell O'Donovan, "The Mormon Priesthood Ban and Elder Q. Walker Lewis: 'An Example for His More Whiter Brethren to Follow,'" *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 26 (2006): 48–100; and Paul Reeve, *Religion of a Different Color: Race and the Mormon Struggle for Whiteness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), especially chap. 5.

[3]Patrick Polk first identified William McCary as "Okah Tubbee." Polk, "Early Black Mormons and Dilemmas of Identification," paper

Under a variety of pseudonyms, the pair went on to become famous Indian performers in the eastern United States and Canada in the late 1840s and early 1850s.[4] Their career as professional Indians was shaped in part by Mormon views on blackness *and* Indianness that intersected with broader American concerns about interracial sex and marriage. These views were rooted in and resonated with antebellum racial ideologies but were also tied to theological debates within the LDS church.

Moreover, while extant interpretations of the Winter Quarters episode have illuminated certain questions of race, gender, and Church doctrine, they have obscured others. By widening our view from the narrow question of blacks in the priesthood to include popular ideas about Indians, crises of authority and identity within and beyond the Church, and concerns about interracial sex and marriage, we can better situate the Winter Quarters episode not only within Mormon history, but also within the broader social and cultural history of the antebellum United States.

William McCary and Lucy Stanton had each experimented with playing Indian before, but their sojourn at Winter Quarters convinced them of the benefits they could derive from fully inhabiting Indian personae. Their experiences among Church

delivered at the Mormon History Association annual meeting, Sacramento, May 23, 2008; and Polk, "William McCarey (Alias Wm. Chubbee); Or The Magic Mulatto in Mormon Country," paper delivered at the Sunstone Symposium, Salt Lake City, August 9, 2008, copies in my possession.

[4]William McCary used a number of aliases including Warner McCary, William Carey, James Carey, William Chubbee, Okah Tubbee, Dr. O.K., and Chief Wah Bah Goosh. For the purposes of this essay, I will refer to him by the name he used at the moment under discussion, alternating primarily between William McCary and Okah Tubbee. Lucy Stanton also devised a variety of pseudonyms during her life, including Luceil Bsuba, Laah Ceil Manatoi Elaah Tubbee, and later, Madame Laahceil and Celeste La Salle. I will primarily refer to her here as Lucy Stanton, Lucy McCary, or Laah Ceil.

leaders vividly demonstrated the contingent nature of race, which historian Ariela Gross has observed is "not something imposed from above" but rather "created and re-created every day through the workings of community institutions and individuals in daily life."[5] The couple's subsequent performances of Indianness, shaped by their time in Winter Quarters, both reflected and constituted popular conceptions of American Indians and illuminate the interplay between race, faith, gender, and sexuality during the antebellum era.

Coming into the Fold

William McCary entered the Mormon circle in 1846 when he was baptized by Orson Hyde and married twenty-nine-year-old divorcée Lucy Stanton in Nauvoo.[6] But his journey to the Mormons' "Kingdom on the Mississippi" began far downriver in Natchez, where he was born into slavery in about 1810. Though he would later assume over a dozen aliases, as a child he was known as Warner McCary. When his owner died, three-year-old Warner became a ward of the estate. His "labor and Services, and the proceeds of the same" were designated for the benefit of half-siblings Bob and Kitty McCary, who were granted their freedom in the owner's will.[7] In later recollections, the man born Warner McCary would claim that he had been kidnapped from the Choctaws and placed in bondage. Given docu-

[5]Ariela J. Gross, *What Blood Won't Tell: A History of Race on Trial in America* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2008), 10.

[6]Untitled notice, *Voree [Wisc.] Herald* 1 (October 1846): 10. Hyde is also identified as the officiator in "A Protest of Orson Hyde, against the New Organization, at the Conference in G. S. L. City, Oct. 7th, 1860, with Editorial Notes," *True Latter Day Saints' Herald*, 2, no. 1 (March 1861): 5. However, both publications were critical of Hyde and may have overstated his role in bringing McCary into the Church.

[7]James McCary, Will, 1813, Adams County, Probate Cases, Box 27, Microfilm 5646, Estate of James McCary, Mississippi Department of Archives and History (hereafter Mississippi Archives), Jackson, Mississippi.

mented relationships between African-descended, Euro-American, and indigenous peoples in the early national South, a possible link to Choctaw ancestors cannot be dismissed.[8] Nevertheless, he was raised and regarded as a mulatto slave, hired out in a variety of trades. As a youth, he learned he could provide for himself by performing—first imitating animal sounds, then whistling tunes, and later taking up the fife and flute. He had exceptional natural talent as a performer; and after his manumission around 1840, he relied on this talent to make his way in the world as a traveling entertainer.[9]

McCary probably first met Lucy Stanton in Quincy, Illinois, where she and her three young children lived near her parents, Daniel and Clarinda Stanton, following her divorce from former Mormon Oliver Harmon Bassett.[10] The Stantons had been among the earliest converts to Mormonism in Kirtland, Ohio,

[8]See, for example, Tiya Miles, *Ties That Bind: The Story of an Afro-Cherokee Family in Slavery and Freedom* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005); Daniel F. Littlefield, *Africans and Creeks: From the Colonial Period to the Civil War* (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1979); Barbara Krauthamer, *Black Slaves, Indian Masters: Slavery, Emancipation, and Citizenship in the Native American South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013).

[9]Many secondary sources contend that McCary adopted an Indian persona because he was a fugitive slave. However archival records indicate that his half-brother/owner initiated steps to free him in 1839 and he was recognized as a "free man of color" in Mississippi by 1843. Robert McCary, P. Atty. Almon Baldwin, 1839, Deed Book BB, Microfilm 5351, and Excerpt from Board of Police Minutes, Microfilm 5322, Mississippi Archives.

[10]Oliver Harmon Bassett initiated the divorce proceedings. Lucy's perspective on the split remains unknown, but her daughter Semira later suggested that religious differences underlay the break-up. Adams County (Illinois), Clerk of the Circuit Court, Chancery case files, 1827–54, Microfilm 1839548, LDS Family History Library, Salt Lake City; Semira L. Wood, "An Abridged Sketch of the Life of Semira L. Wood Written March 24th 1881 Springville, Utah," 1, in Charles William Mitchell, Biographies (1835), Perry Special Collections.

in the early 1830s, and had migrated to Missouri in mid-1838, but were expelled along with the rest of the Latter-day Saints during the racially charged Mormon War.[11] The family then settled in Quincy, where Daniel Stanton later became stake president.[12] As they were pushed from place to place by growing and sometimes violent anti-Mormon sentiment, the Stantons and other early Mormons may have recognized a similarity between themselves and Native Americans forced to vacate their eastern homelands during the same era, as diasporic peoples whose fates were intertwined.

While a variety of antebellum denominations were interested in American Indians, largely as potential converts, the centrality of Indians to Mormon theology is distinctive.[13] One

[11]While the Mormon war, like all such conflicts, had many causes, I am particularly interested in how accusations of abolitionist sentiments and "Indian tampering" influenced local anti-Mormonism. See J. Spencer Fluhman, *"A Peculiar People": Anti-Mormonism and the Making of Religion in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 53; Ronald K. Walker, "Seeking the 'Remnant': The Native American during the Joseph Smith Period," *Journal of Mormon History* 19, no. 1 (Spring 1993): 15. On race and the Mormon War, see also T. Ward Frampton, "'Some Savage Tribe': Race, Legal Violence, and the Mormon War of 1838," *Journal of Mormon History* 40, no. 1 (2014): 175–207.

[12]Lyndon Cook, *The Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith: A Historical and Biographical Commentary of the Doctrine and Covenants* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1985), 156–57. Kettley, Garr, and Manscill note that the Quincy stake was short-lived since many Mormons left to follow Joseph Smith to Commerce, where he established Nauvoo. Within one year, the stake had been reduced to an "ordinary branch" numbering only seventy members. Marlene C. Kettley, Arnold K. Garr, and Craig K. Manscill, *Mormon Thoroughfare: A History of the Church in Illinois, 1830–1839* (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 2006), 108.

[13]Mark Lyman Staker, *"Hearken, O Ye People": The Historical Setting for Joseph Smith's Ohio Revelations* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2009), 81–82.

modern scholar has gone so far as to describe the Book of Mormon as not merely a "record of the 'Lamanite' or Native American people," but also a "manifesto of their destiny."[14] In addition, some early Mormons, who themselves experienced persecution and repeated displacement, may have also considered recently removed Native people as a sort of "spiritual kin."[15] Despite the fact that Mormon migrants were among the beneficiaries of Indian removal—frequently living on land recently emptied of its indigenous inhabitants—the often coerced or forced migration of Mormon converts interestingly mirrored the region's contemporaneous expulsion of American Indians.[16]

When the first Mormon missionaries arrived in Ohio, the state had recently expelled most Native peoples living there. Between 1817 and 1825, twenty-five treaties separated tribes from their lands, including those belonging to the Shawnee, Seneca, and Delaware nations. From the 1820s through 1850s, a period that included the passage of the Indian Removal Act in 1830, the United States signed another eighty-six removal treaties with tribes between New York and Mississippi.[17] Some of these

[14]Walker, "Seeking the 'Remnant,'" 3.

[15]Jared Farmer, *On Zion's Mount: Mormons, Indians, and the American Landscape* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2010), 16. Joy Porter echoes these characterizations, asserting that Indians, as well as Masons, held a special place in Joseph Smith's "spiritual imagination" and referencing the widespread antebellum discussions about Indian origins (in relationship to the biblical account of Genesis) as an important influence on him. Porter, *Native American Freemasonry: Associationalism and Performance in America* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011), 96–97.

[16]See, for example, Elias Hutchings, "Autobiography, ca. 1842," 30, Perry Special Collections.

[17]On these removals, see John P. Bowes, *Pioneers and Exiles: Eastern Indians in the Trans-Mississippi West* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007); James J. Buss, *Winning the West with Words: Language and Conquest in the Lower Great Lakes* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2011); R. Douglas Hurt, *The Ohio Frontier: Crucible of the Old Northwest, 1720–1830* (Bloomington: University of Indi-

groups were already refugees from earlier episodes of dispossession. The Delawares, among whom the earliest Mormon missionaries made their first inroads and from whom Lucy Stanton would later claim descent, were relocated no fewer than seven times.[18] Following in the footsteps of these recently removed Indians, American migrants, including some who would convert to Mormonism, poured into the Ohio country along newly opened roads and canals.

The uniquely American phenomenon of "playing Indian" accelerated alongside these episodes of Indian removal during the 1830s. As Christopher Smith details in his "Playing Lamanite: Ecstatic Performance of American Indian Roles in Early Mormon Ohio" in this issue, young Lucy Stanton participated in the practice along with her sisters in Kirtland.[19] While some Amer-

ana Press, 1996); David W. Miller, *Forced Removal of American Indians from the Northeast: A History of Territorial Cessions and Relocations, 1620–1854* (Jefferson, N.C.: Macfarland, 2011). The broader literature on Indian removal is considerable. See, for example: Ronald N. Satz, *American Indian Policy in the Jacksonian Era* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1974), 2002; Tim Alan Garrison, *The Legal Ideology of Removal: The Southern Judiciary and the Sovereignty of Native American Nations* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2009); Francis Paul Prucha, *The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indians* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995); Lucy Maddox, *Removals: Nineteenth-Century American Literature and the Politics of Indian Affairs* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

[18]On Delaware dispossession specifically, see Bowes, *Pioneers and Exiles*. On the abbreviated Mormon mission to the Delawares, see Parley P. Pratt Jr., ed., *The Autobiography of Parley Parker Pratt, One of the Twelve Apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Embracing His Life, Ministry and Travels, with Extracts, in Prose and Verse, from his Miscellaneous Writings* (Chicago: printed for Pratt Bros. by Law, King & Law, 1888), chap. 8.

[19]Rayna Green asserts that playing Indian is "one of the oldest and most pervasive forms of American cultural expression." Green, "The Tribe Called Wannabe: Playing Indian in America and Europe," *Folklore* 99 (1988): 30. Other important work on the phenomenon in-

ican men donned Indian attire in fraternal society meetings with faux native names and inventive ceremonies, the Stanton girls distinguished themselves with ecstatic glossolalia that including "speaking Injun" in the early 1830s.[20]

They were not the only ones who got "the power" and played Indian. Convert John Corrill witnessed examples of tongue-singing that he was later informed were in "Indian dialects" previously unknown to the singers.[21] Another observer recalled that some Kirtland faithful "claimed to have a special mission to the Indians, and they went through all sorts of Indian performances," saying that he had seen them, "in pantomine [sic] tomahawk and scalp each other, and rip open the bowels and tear out the entrails."[22] Black and white men and women experimented with bodily spiritual practices that included fervent prayer, states of unconsciousness, leaping and falling, and mimicking Indians or what they thought to be Indian behavior.[23] To express their "unique empathy" for the Lamanites, they also sang Indian-inspired songs, like "The Indian's Lament" and "The Red Man."[24] Thus, long before meeting McCary, Lucy Stanton was already inclined to think

cludes Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1998). See also Shari Huhndorf, *Going Native: Indians in the American Cultural Imagination* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2001); Alan Trachtenberg, *Shades of Hiawatha: Staging Indians, Making Americans, 1880–1930* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2004); S. Elizabeth Bird, ed., *Dressing in Feathers: The Construction of the Indian in American Popular Culture* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1996).

[20]Reuben P. Harmon, "Statement," in Arthur Deming, ed., *Naked Truths about Mormonism: Also a Journal for Important, Newly Apprehended Truths, and Miscellany* 1, no. 2 (Oakland, Calif: Deming & Co., April 1888): 1, copy in LDS Church History Library.

[21]Corrill quoted in Dan Vogel and Scott C. Dunn, "'The Tongue of Angels': Glossolalia among Mormonism's Founders," *Journal of Mormon History* 19, no. 2 (Fall 1993): 4.

[22]Staker, *Hearken, O Ye People*, 83.

[23]John Whitmer and Josiah Jones quoted in ibid., 85.

[24]Michael Hicks, *Mormonism and Music: A History* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 210–11.

of herself in relation to Indians in ways that informed both her faith and identity. In addition to these tendencies, she would later claim that she felt personally called to "do good . . . to a fallen people," a mission revealed to her in a childhood vision.[25]

While some early Mormons had actual, face-to-face encounters with indigenous people in their homelands or in exile, Mormon imaginings of American Indians also borrowed freely from popular representations found in novels, reform tracts, sensational newspaper accounts, and political rhetoric. As was apparent in the Kirtland practices, they were influenced by romantic and melodramatic depictions of Native peoples as violent but redeemable savages who were worthy of pity and conversion. In their migrations from western New York to central Ohio, Missouri, and Illinois between 1830 and 1846, the Mormons were walking in the footsteps of the "vanishing race." But, as noted above, they and other Americans were also beneficiaries of Indian removal policies. Indeed, as Philip Deloria has noted, popular racial imaginings of Indians during and after the removal years often appeared in "simultaneous languages of cultural fusion and of violent appropriation."[26] Perhaps to mitigate their complicity in the crimes of settler colonialism, early Mormons participated in an emergent tendency among non-Native people in former Indian lands to associate themselves with Indians, as real or "substitute ancestors . . . in a presumptuous reconstruction of American kinship."[27] For antebellum Americans, including

[25]Laah Ceil Manatoi Elaah Tubbee, *A Sketch of the Life of Okah Tubbee: Alias, William Chubbee, Son of the Head Chief, Mosholeh Tubbee, of the Choctaw Nation of Indians, Okah Tubbee* (Toronto: Henry Stephens, 1852), 75.

[26]Deloria, *Playing Indian*, 5.

[27]Werner Sollors, *Beyond Ethnicity: Consent and Descent in American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 124–25. Joseph Roach describes this practice as "surrogation," which, in the context of Mardi Gras Indians, works to mitigate absences created by colonization through cross-cultural performance. Roach, *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance* (New York: Columbia University

Mormon converts like the Stantons, ideas about Native Americans were thus important in multiple and overlapping registers that were sometimes simultaneously made manifest in missionary ambitions and racial masquerade.[28]

When Lucy Stanton and William McCary met, he probably also had experience performing Indianness, drawing on childhood experiences with Choctaws in the South, stories heard during his time as a militia musician, and the same popular representations that influenced Mormon views. Stanton later recalled that, from the first moment she saw the "Indian brave," she knew he would be her husband and he quickly charmed her family with his talents.[29] Whether or not others in the Church accepted him as such, Hyde's willingness to baptize William McCary and marry the pair apparently rested on his perception of McCary as an Indian. Hyde allegedly regarded the newcomer as a "Lamanite prophet" who would carry the Mormon message to the western tribes.[30]

By their own description, the courtship between Lucy Stanton and William McCary was brief. Within one day after meeting, the "brave" asked Stanton to marry him. Thinking his hasty proposal was a joke, she coyly replied, "O yes," and her family, which had assembled to meet the stranger, shared a good laugh. Drawing forth a flute, he then played a tune for them, followed by another played on the "sauce-panana," an instrument he had invented after having a dream about its construction. In his dream, a mysterious voice commanded him to create an instrument from a saucepan and to use it to unite scattered flocks of sheep, whom he interpreted as Indians, "driven by the pale-

Press, 1996), 6, 14.

[28]For a useful overview of Mormon ideas about Indians in this period, see Walker, "Seeking the 'Remnant,'" 1–33.

[29]Tubbee, *A Sketch of the Life of Okah Tubbee* (1852), 76. The reaction of Lucy's parents, Daniel and Clarinda Stanton, to the hasty courtship was not detailed in the autobiography, nor have I discovered other records conveying their perspective on these events.

[30]Ibid., 73–78.

faces." "If I could visit them with some simple instruments of music," he concluded, "the harmony might melt the savage heart, and unite the broken and wasting tribes."[31]

Being an Indian was thus McCary's entrée into the Mormon world. It was an identity that had already inspired the fascination of many early converts and was a tool for demonstrating his usefulness to the Church.[32] He may have also hoped that it deflected the accusations of African American ancestry—based on physical characteristics—that would eventually plague him and conceal his past as a slave. For Lucy Stanton, acting Indian had also been foundational to her experience of Mormonism. In addition, being married to a converted Indian provided her with a practical way to do good to the "fallen" Lamanites, a mission to which she later claimed to have been divinely directed.[33]

By the spring of 1846, William McCary was performing as "Mr. Carey, the Indian flutist" for a temperance event in Quincy. Shortly thereafter, he and his wife went to Cincinnati. They reportedly established a small church in the center of the city and attracted about sixty followers.[34] During this brief sectarian experiment, Lucy McCary adopted a Native persona, naming herself "Luceil Bsuba," and claiming to be a Delaware Indian. According to local papers, their signature blessing, which they bestowed on the congregants, professed their authenticity as Indians—but in distinctly Mormon language, promising followers that they would have eternal life, since their names were "written in the Lamb's Book of Life."[35] Although Lucy McCary had ex-

[31]Ibid., 73–78.

[32]Reeve makes a similar observation in *Religion of a Different Color*, chap. 5.

[33]Tubbee, *A Sketch of the Life* (1852), 75.

[34]Untitled notice, *Weekly Reveille* (St. Louis, Mo.) May 4, 1846, 3; "Millerism Outdone," *Cincinnati [Ohio] Commercial*, October 27, 1846, 2.

[35]*Cincinnati Commercial*, November 17, 1846, 2. Stanton's patriarchal blessing does not appear in the only compendium of such blessings from the Kirtland era but the collection is not comprehensive. See

hibited an interest in Indians since childhood, this was the first time she fully performed a Native identity and it was deeply influenced by her faith.

In their public performances of Indianness, the McCarys were hardly alone. In addition to the growing practice of playing Indian, Native figures were common on the antebellum stage, including theatrical characters, orators, dancers, and musicians.[36] For example, at the same time that McCary and his "Delaware wife" were establishing their Indian act, popular Anishinaabe orator George Copway was on a lecture tour through the Northeast. In fact, the three of them would later share the stage.[37] Professional Indians capitalized on antebellum audiences' desire for trivia on the vanishing race. Spectators wanted to witness brief, entertaining snippets of ethnographic detail ("Indian traits and customs") largely calculated to highlight differences between Indians and white Americans and mourn the decline of "the red man." Topics included "Indian courtship" or "How Indians get their names," and could also be found in periodicals and popular literature, including the composite autobiography the McCarys would later produce.[38]

As part of a growing "imperialist nostalgia," removed Native peoples—like the Choctaws and Delawares—had emerged as popular objects of both pity and charity.[39] Performing as

H. Michael Marquardt, ed., *Early Patriarchal Blessings of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, (Salt Lake City: Smith-Pettit Foundation, 2007).

[36]Among others, see Berkhofer, *The White Man's Indian*; Rosemary K. Bank, "Staging the 'Native': Making History in American Theatre Culture, 1828–1838," *Theatre Journal* 45 (1993): 461–86; Joshua David Bellin and Laura L. Mielke, eds., *Native Acts: Indian Performance, 1603–1832* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011).

[37]"Tabernacle," *New York Herald*, March 9, 1848, col. F.

[38]Bank, "Staging the 'Native,'" 461–86.

[39]Renato Rosaldo describes "imperialist nostalgia" as a paradox: "In any of its versions, imperialist nostalgia uses a pose of 'innocent yearning' both to capture people's imagination and to conceal its com-

Indians could provide the McCarys with both an audience and an income. Perhaps the temperance event in Quincy was a test run. A civilized Christian Indian couple, presented in "bold relief to the mind of the philanthropist," could solicit contributions to help relieve the "melancholy" plight of their red brethren.[40] The pair may have also felt that Lucy's performance as an Indian could help them avoid unwanted attention that a black-white or Indian-white union might attract. Such a strategy, the necessity of which would be confirmed at Winter Quarters, could both protect their relationship and fill the collection plate.

Whatever their ambitions, by the beginning of 1847, their church in Cincinnati had fallen apart. As one observer put it, "The Black Indian has blown out, and all his followers here are ashamed."[41] Within a month, the pair turned up in Winter Quarters. At the end of February, "William McCairey the Indian musician" gave his first concert for the assembled Saints.[42] It provided a welcome diversion for a community that had suffered great hardship through the winter snows, seeing many of their number perish from disease and malnutrition.[43]

"McGarry . . . a half blooded Indian," as John D. Lee called him, impressed Church president Brigham Young, who concluded that the musician could be of use to the emigrant companies, provided McCary would listen to counsel. Young declared, "His skill on the flute cannot be surpassed by any musician that I have ever heard," and he instructed Church leaders to "use the

plicity with often brutal domination." "Imperialist Nostalgia," *Representations* 26 (1989): 108.

[40]Tubbee, *A Sketch of the Life* (1852), 4.

[41]"Extract of a Letter to President Strang," *Zion's Reveille* (Voree, Wisc.) February 25, 1847.

[42]Brooks, *On the Mormon Frontier,* 1:244.

[43]Stanley B. Kimball, *Heber C. Kimball: Mormon Patriarch and Pioneer* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 145; see also Richard E. Bennett, *Mormons at the Missouri: Winter Quarters, 1846–1852* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2004).

man with respect."[44] Lucy McCary couldn't keep up her Delaware persona in Winter Quarters, since she was among her own people. But she did not shrink from their attention, instead distinguishing herself as a person of influence, largely through her enigmatic Native spouse.

Indeed, through all of these episodes, Lucy McCary was a visible and vocal participant. She most likely introduced McCary to many of the Saints she had known in Ohio, Missouri, and Illinois. She was apparently present at McCary's public appearances throughout the late winter and spring; and based on her later role as his pseudo-agent and manager, she may have helped arrange the performances. She was at his side when he first met Brigham Young and the apostles and appeared with him again when they were summoned to address rising concerns about their actions. And she almost certainly provided him instruction in Mormonism, since he was not literate and thus could not read the scriptures. Yet her role in this pivotal moment has been largely overlooked, despite evidence that she played a prominent role in shaping her husband's Indian persona (as well as her own).

Meanwhile, William McCary practiced his Indianness. Once while visiting Brigham Young's home, he became annoyed by noisy children and wondered aloud "how people could talk easy when others were talking & playing in same room." Adopting a tone that was both indignant and ethnographic, he informed Young that "amongst Indians . . . 'children were not allowed to talk or make any noise, you may be amongst 100 Indians from 1 year old to 10, or from 10 to 15, or from 15 to 20, & you will not hear a word, neither any noise. But you may hear a Cambric Needle drop on the ground.'"[45] The statement probably reflected McCary's legitimate irritation, but it also resembled the sort of "traits and customs" trivia that his listeners might have both expected and desired. It also makes clear that McCary was

[44]Kelly, *Journals of John D. Lee*, 100–103.

[45]McCary quoted in Campbell, Journal, 56.

practicing his Indian identity both on and off stage, seizing even informal opportunities to convince the Saints of his authentic Indianness, quite apart from any claims to status as a religious leader or prophet. And while it seems likely that the McCarys could have had at least occasional contact with Omahas, Otoes, and other native people in the area, the pair probably learned as much about how to "act Indian" from other Mormons as from the Indians themselves.

McCary's musical talents and Indian traits were not the only reason he generated a buzz in Winter Quarters. In the spring of 1847, Church secretary Willard Richards indicated: "Heard report that the Nigger Indian McCarry was holding private meetings over the River. first entering into a Covt. of Secresy."[46] Perhaps McCary was attempting to reconstitute the Cincinnati church or experiment with another form of sectarian invention. Indeed, a number of schismatic meetings and "kinds of religions" sprang up in Winter Quarters that spring and summer. One diarist recalled that the Twelve were alarmed enough about the fractious activities that they delivered a "warning [to] the people against those who may rise up and try to lead off parties."[47] The McCarys' little movement may have been of particular concern, however, because it transgressed not only emergent doctrinal, but also racial and sexual, boundaries.

Although it is difficult to determine consensus on how William McCary was regarded by the Mormons he first met in Illinois, from his first appearance in Winter Quarters, there was widespread disagreement about his race. And the marriage between racially indeterminate William McCary and Lucy Stanton, "a white woman," did not pass without notice.[48] A number of scholars have pointed out that interracial sex between white women and black or Indian men was not uniformly condemned

[46]Willard Richards, Journal, March 8, 1847, LDS Church History Library.

[47]Brooks, *On the Mormon Frontier*, 1:244.

[48]Campbell, Journal, 56.

in the early national and antebellum United States.[49] But popular antebellum attitudes toward such pairings suggest a "climate of anxiety" that demanded greater attentiveness to the boundaries between the races.[50] Interracial marriage in particular was increasingly met with disapproval or worse. At the time that McCary and Stanton were married in Nauvoo, Illinois, state laws held that marriage between blacks and whites was punishable by fines, whipping, and prison.[51] Despite an apparently tolerant attitude toward the participation of blacks in the Church's earliest years, the Mormons at Winter Quarters likely shared some of these broader antebellum antipathies toward interracial marriage, and McCary himself would claim that his union with a white woman was the primary reason his Mormon neighbors began to turn against him.

SCHISMS AND SENSUALITY AT WINTER QUARTERS

Fears about fractious sects and concerns about interracial marriage were not the only issues raised by the McCarys' schismatic movement, however. One observer recalled that William McCary "had converted a good many to his kind of religion" and

[49]On the frequency of and reaction to interracial unions from the colonial period through the mid-nineteenth century, see, for example Kathleen M. Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs: Gender, Race, and Power in Colonial Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); David Henry Fowler, *Northern Attitudes towards Interracial Marriage: Legislation and Public Opinion in the Middle Atlantic and the States of the Old Northwest, 1780–1830* (New York: Garland, 1987); Martha Hodes, *White Women, Black Men: Illicit Sex in the Nineteenth-Century South* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1997); Charles F. Robinson II, *Dangerous Liaisons: Sex and Love in the Segregated South* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2003).

[50]Gross, *What Blood Won't Tell*, 30.

[51]Peggy Pascoe, *What Comes Naturally: Miscegenation Law and the Making of Race in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 22–27. She cites the 1845 Illinois law on 329 note 44.

noted that he was "in favor of holding his meetings of the men and women separately." It appeared that "his teaching to the men and to the women was entirely different," implying spiritual—and perhaps sexual—transgression.[52] When the McCarys were called to appear before Brigham Young and Church apostles in March 1847 to answer for their actions, they deflected any suggestion of apostasy and sexual indecency by accusing their Mormon neighbors of gross racism and disrespect.

William McCary addressed himself to the assembly as "a brother" and told them bluntly that he was being abused in Winter Quarters. He complained that Church leaders must have counseled his neighbors not to allow him into their "wigwams" and said that when he walked by, he heard, "There go the old nigger & his White Wife." He wanted to know who had sanctioned such contempt. If he had transgressed, he claimed, he wanted to learn to "walk right." But he was more interested in pointing out the prejudice he faced in Winter Quarters than in answering for his alleged sins. Referring to biblical stories of the curse of Ham and mark of Cain that provided scriptural justification for white supremacy in American Protestantism broadly and the Mormon faith specifically, he asked, "We were all white once, why av [have] I the stain now?"[53]

With his wife at his side, McCary then waded further into the murky question of his origins and focused the assembly's attention on his possible identities. First, he said, "I came in as a

[52]Nelson W. Whipple, "History of Nelson Wheeler Whipple, Pioneer of 1850, written by himself," 30, 37, Nelson Wheeler Whipple Diaries, 1863–1887, typescript by Anor Whipple, Perry Special Collections.

[53]Church Historian's Office, General Church Minutes, 1839–1877, March 26, 1847, LDS Church History Library, CR 100 318, Box 1, fd. 52, March 26, 1847–April 6, 1847, http://churchhistorycatalog.lds.org/ (accessed May 30, 2012). On the curse of Ham and the emergence of a scriptural rationale for slavery and white supremacy, see Stephen R. Haynes, *Noah's Curse: The Biblical Justification of American Slavery* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

red man & want to go out as a red man," suggesting that, despite skepticism about his religious pretensions, he was determined not to surrender his Indianness. But suppose he was *not* Indian, he proposed, still "dont these backbiters think that I [av?] feeling [even] if I was a nigger[?]" While McCary's tone before the assembly was mostly humble and contrite ("I have got baptism I am thankful for it," "if I am wrong I want to walk right"), he was nevertheless critical of his white Mormon neighbors and attributed their disrespect to racist and unchristian behavior.[54]

As he continued his oration, McCary asserted that the Mormons at Winter Quarters recognized little difference between blacks and Indians. He declared, "I'd as like to be as a nigger as [an] Indian as many think they are as [one?]," suggesting that many Mormon believers saw no difference in the two races.[55] Had the McCarys become disillusioned about the privileged place of American Indians within the Mormon faith after witnessing or hearing stories of tense interactions between Mormons and Native peoples in the vicinity? While Latter-day Saint thinking presented vague and sometimes idealized references to American Indians, the Saints at Winter Quarters were squatting on Indian land and *actual* Native people had become something of a nuisance.[56] Perhaps like other antebellum Americans, as Deloria has put it, "they desired Indianness, not Indians."[57] For an aspiring Indian prophet in their midst, such ambivalence was

[54]General Church Minutes, March 26, 1847.

[55]Ibid.

[56]During their stay among the Mormons, the Omahas were occasionally noted for their communal ethic—a value deeply shared by many of the Saints, some of whom had been original members of the "Big Family" experiment in Kirtland. Campbell noted, "When any of them got any Johnycake they would divide with each other all the time. A Bro: said of the Indians, that although it was only one potatoe they would divide it all round." Campbell, Journal, 58. But others, like Hosea Stout, regarded area Indians as "lurking" thieves. Brooks, *On the Mormon Frontier,* 1:244.

[57]Deloria, *Playing Indian*, 90.

at best dispiriting and at worst a disaster.

While this meeting is typically analyzed as evidence of emergent Mormon beliefs about blackness and the problem of both false prophecies and secret covenants,[58] it must be also considered in the context of antebellum racial performance, in which both Lucy and William McCary were experienced. What Young dismissed as a "rambling speech" was part of an act, composed of set pieces that would later appear in the McCarys' stage show and autobiography.[59] Examples include McCary's jokes about the bullfrog who calls for "more rum, more rum," repeated, if often confused, assertions about his Choctaw background, and demonstrations of his various musical talents. Although their meeting with Church leaders was private, McCary approached it as an extension of his burgeoning Indian performance. And while a meeting of the Quorum of the Twelve seems far from the popular stage, he was—above all—a performer and clearly regarded the assembled elders as his audience. Such an approach helps to liberate this moment from the annals of Mormon racial doctrine and situate it among other popular antebellum forms and forums which, as Eric Lott has contended in his study of blackface minstrelsy, were not composed of fixed referents but were instead "sites of continual reconstitution," particularly where notions of race, gender, and sexuality are concerned.[60]

As he continued, McCary increasingly focused the attention of the assembly on his body itself. He undressed, chided them for their "mock modesty," and donned his "red skin . . . costume." He invited the brethren to examine him: to feel his ribs, note his "strait hair," his sightless left eye, his apparently deaf left ear. Secretary Richards touched McCary's naked abdomen, reporting, "I

[58]In addition to treatments of this episode by Reeve and Bringhurst, see Russell Stevenson's analysis in *For the Cause of Righteousness: A Global History of Blacks and Mormonism, 1830–2013* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2014), chap. 2.

[59]Reeve, *Religion of a Different Color,* 129–30.

[60]Eric Lott, *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 92.

don't discover any thing novel."[61] McCary pointed to his wife, Lucy, saying, "Here's the odd rib." While he may have meant to imply that he was Adam reincarnate, an alter ego that he had apparently adopted before, he was also trying to prove that he was an Indian, using his "strait" hair as evidence.

Although McCary clearly invited the inspection, the scene of his nearly nude figure being touched and examined by a group of powerful white men, resonates loudly with contemporaneous images of slave auctions and "scientific" examinations of racialized bodies.[62] As such, the encounter highlights the degree to which the body was both the subject of and a site of debates about race and identity, not only among the Mormons, but beyond them as well.

Finally, McCary came to what he believed was the heart of the matter—his white wife. This, he contended, was the central objection to his presence in Winter Quarters. He declared, "So long as a White woman is so much in the way, good God why dont they give me a red woman . . . as my Wife is not ashamed I dont think you will be ashamed."[63] It is unclear whether he hoped to add a plural wife or exchange his white wife for a "red woman," but these statements combined with his earlier reference to hurtful comments about the "nigger and his white wife" imply that his marriage to Lucy Stanton was the central complaint against him or, at the very least, that he had chosen to emphasize this particular aspect of the controversy in order to distract the Church leaders from concerns about his prophesying and secret covenants.

After getting dressed, McCary continued to focus the quorum's attention on the bodily aspects of his presumed race. He pressed Young about his status, saying, "I am not a Prest., or an leader of the ppl but a common bror.—because I am a little

[61]General Church Minutes, 1839–1877, March 26, 1847.

[62]Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism*, 2d ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1986), 139–57.

[63]General Church Minutes, 1839–1877, March 26, 1847.

shade darker," thus suggesting that he could not receive priesthood ordination because of his race. But Young cut him off saying, "Your body is not what is your mission" and later averring, "We dont care about the color." Despite Young's protestations, these responses implied that he was indeed concerned with race and its place in Mormon thinking. On the question of McCary's identity, he asserted, "Its nothing to do with the blood for of one blood has God made all flesh, we have to repent c [&] regain what we av lost—we av one of the best Elders an African in Lowell—a barber." He was referring to Q. Walker Lewis, a free black man recently ordained as an elder in the Melchizedek Priesthood in Massachusetts.[64]

Young's decision to compare McCary to Lewis is particularly revealing since both men inspired controversies within the Church.[65] The statement also implied that Young thought McCary was clearly of African ancestry, despite his claims to the contrary. Mentioning Lewis's profession as a barber, the antebellum vocation most closely associated with free black men, further revealed that Young thought of the two men in similar ways.[66] While he claimed that their race was of no consequence with respect to their position in the Church, he could not help pointing it out anyway. Nevertheless, he appeared to offer McCary assurance that his race (whatever it might be) was no impediment to participation in the Church.

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[64]Ibid.; Bringhurst, *Saints, Slaves, and Blacks*, 90–91; O'Donovan, "The Mormon Priesthood Ban and Elder Q. Walker Lewis." Reeve provides a more elaborate explanation of the scriptural origins of Young's statements in *Religion of a Different Color*, chap. 5.

[65]Bringhurst, *Saints, Slaves, and Blacks*, 98.

[66]Ira Berlin notes, "Free Negro barbers could be found in every Southern city, and despite the proscriptive pressures free Negroes faced in other trades, the number of black barbers grew steadily during the antebellum years. By the eve of the Civil War, the trade had become so closely identified with free Negroes that an English visitor proclaimed it their 'birthright.'" Berlin, *Slaves without Masters: The Free Negro in the Antebellum South* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1974), 236.

Still not satisfied that the president spoke for all and now desperately seeking a guarantee of physical safety in Winter Quarters, McCary pressed further, "Do I hear that from all[?]" and received an "aye" from the brethren. Elder Heber C. Kimball asked him, "dont you feel a good spirit—here bro William[?]"[67] Sighing his relief, McCary replied, "Yes—thank God—there r 2 or 3 men at the end of the Camp who want to kill me."[68] While Church leaders may have been chiefly concerned with McCary's sectarian pretensions in the midst of a broader schismatic crisis, the "prophet" himself suggested that local Mormon disapproval of him was also grounded in his presumed race and his marriage to a white woman.[69]

For her part, Lucy Stanton McCary took a different approach to deflecting criticism. In the midst of the meeting, she defiantly asked Young and the Twelve whether they truly believed the Bible. She stated that while some of it had been fulfilled, some "was not translated right." Young responded by affirming that they believed in the Bible, the Book of Mormon, and the Doctrine and Covenants, as well as the redemptive power of baptism. Although the Church minutes record only this exchange, her presence at the meeting and her participation generally with her husband in Winter Quarters should not be overlooked. Indeed, despite the asymmetry of records documenting her participation in these events compared with those noting her husband's activities, Mrs. McCary was the "white woman . . . in the way."

[67]General Church Minutes, 1839–1877, March 26, 1847.

[68]Ibid.

[69]By the end of the year, Young and other Church leaders would again confront a situation involving interracial marriage when they discussed the union of "African" Elder Lewis's son, Enoch, with a white woman. This time, Young appeared much less accepting and asserted that it was against both law and nature for their "seed" to be "amalgamated." As evidence of the taint of black blood, he referred specifically to William McCary, calling him "the negro prophet" and averring that he was cast out by the Potawatomis because of his "negro blood." Young quoted in Reeve, *Religion of a Different Color*, 135–36.

In closing his testimony, William McCary tried to lighten the moment by joking, "If we dont be bel [sic] the bible, we r in a poor fix for [Stumpers]," implying that he saw little difference between the Mormons and other popular religious movements of the day. But he also took the opportunity to again mention his Choctaw ancestry and his intention to take his wife to meet his people, refocusing the apostles' attention on his identity—his Indianness—rather than allowing questions of spiritual or sexual indecency to predominate.[70]

While Church leaders were trying to sanction him or at least caution him, McCary took their guarded assurances of spiritual equality to mean that he could forge ahead with both his controversial marriage and his prophetic pretensions. By April, he had established a headquarters across the Missouri River at a place called Mosquito Creek. According to an observer, he had "induced some to follow him," by telling them that he was "a prophet the ancient of days whose hair was as wool." This continued fixation on the texture of his hair suggests that concerns about his perceived race continued to vex him and that he attempted to use scriptural (specifically Abrahamic) explanations to deflect them. The allusion also hints that Lucy's knowledge of the Bible and Mormon scriptures was instrumental in honing her husband's public persona. Despite a scathing condemnation of such schismatic sects delivered by Orson Pratt, neither William nor Lucy McCary was slowed by the rebuke.[71]

By mid-1847, the McCarys' following among the Springville

[70]General Church Minutes, 1839–1877, March 26, 1847.

[71]Brooks, *On the Mormon Frontier*, 1:244. The biblical allusion is to Daniel 7:9 in which the Ancient of Days was said to have hair like wool. Although some versions indicate that his hair was white like wool, others state that his clothing was white but say nothing about the color of the wooly hair. The McCarys apparently emphasized the latter interpretation, using William McCary's frequently mentioned hair texture to support his claim of transmigration, while simultaneously explaining away apparent evidence of African ancestry.

Branch members at Mosquito Creek had grown.[72] Despite opposition, McCary had proceeded to build his "kind of religion" with the help of his white wife. Nelson Whipple, who had converted in 1841 and worked as an assistant to Springville Branch president Samuel Williams, later recalled, "He [McCary] . . . had converted a good many to his kind of religion. It appeared that he understood the slight of hand, the black art or that he was a magician or something the kind, and had fooled some of the ignorant in that way."[73] Since no accounts survive (or have yet been located) from the point of view of the McCarys' followers at Winter Quarters, it is difficult to determine precisely what drew them to him. Considering the extraordinarily trying conditions for many people at the temporary settlement, some Mormons may have simply been desperate for the sort of change an enigmatic Indian prophet represented.

According to Whipple, the McCarys held separate meetings for men and women and swore both to a covenant of secrecy. While this separation of the sexes might be evidence of an emergent doctrine of sorts, it may have also been an effort to conceal the nature of their activities. Whipple alleged that McCary had crafted his own version of "celestial marriage" and "had a number of women sealed to him in his way which was as follows; He had a house in which this ordnance was performed. His wife Lucy Stanton was in the room at the time of the performance, no others were admitted. The form of sealing was for the women to bed with him, in the daytime as I am informed three different times by which they were sealed to the fullest extent."[74]

In recounting the experience of "one Mrs. Howard who revolt-

[72]Here I follow the chronology of the McCarys' time at Winter Quarters postulated by Reeve, as opposed to the timeline evident in Bringhurst and O'Donovan. Reeve, *Religion of a Different Color*, chap. 5.

[73]Whipple, "History of Nelson Wheeler Whipple," 30, 37, Perry Special Collections.

[74]Ibid., 37.

ed and ran when she found what the sealing ordnance really was," Whipple claimed that "Mrs. McCarry tried her best to prevent her escape from the house." As a consequence of Howard's flight, the McCarys' secret sexual covenant was revealed. Mrs. Howard "went home and told her husband, Mr. Howard of the affair and who they were that had been sealed in that way to the old darkey." Mr. Howard then called on Sessions Chase who, according to Whipple, had also been a follower of "the nigger prophet" but was unaware that his own wife had been through the sexual sealing ceremony, presumably because the men's and women's meetings were always held separately. When Chase confronted his wife, a woman "upwards of sixty years of age," she admitted as much. According to Whipple, Chase "was very much astonished at the idea and it is said that he did not speak a loud word for about three weeks that anyone knew of."[75] By mid-summer, McCary had fled to Missouri "on a fast trot." His erstwhile followers were disgraced and cut off from the Church, although all but one were later rebaptized. McCary bore the brunt of local anger; at least one Mormon father declared his intention to "shoot him if he could find him for having tried to kiss his girls."[76]

After departing from the Mormon flock, the McCarys headed east and made a remarkable decision. Their experiences at Winter Quarters convinced them that if they were going to remain together, they had to disguise their unorthodox religious practices and deal with the twin problem of his blackness and her whiteness, as they had done in Cincinnati. The solution, reflecting the broader problem of "unassemblable" American iden-

[75]Ibid.; Brooks, *On the Mormon Frontier*, 1:307.

[76]Whipple, "History," 38. Whipple attributed the threat to Ha[r]mon Cutler. While there is no reason to doubt the veracity of Whipple's account of this episode, it is worth noting that he recorded his version of events sixteen years after the fact. In addition, it is possible that the McCarys' former followers may have exaggerated the degree to which they were fooled or victimized in order to hide their shame at having participated in such sexually charged schismatic activities.

tities, was for both of them to become Indians once more.[77] They quickly devised new names and honed their act.

By the fall of 1847, they were performing in Baltimore and Washington, D.C., alongside professional Indians like George Copway. In early 1848, they published the autobiography of "Okah Tubbee, alias William Chubbee," asserting that he was the long-lost son of a Choctaw chief. Lucy McCary now went by "Laah Ceil Manatoi Elaah Tubbee," claiming that she was a Delaware/Mohawk princess.[78] They expanded their stage shows and made quite a splash on the East Coast, presenting concerts and orations before large audiences from Pennsylvania to New Hampshire, with notable runs at Barnum's American Museum and a number of fashionable venues around Boston.

In each place, they further refined and practiced their Indianness, ever reminded of the troubles at Winter Quarters. For Okah Tubbee (the former William McCary), claiming Choctaw ancestry enabled him to market himself to eastern antebellum audiences captivated by "vanishing" Indians, while suppressing suspicions of African descent that would associate him with slavery and amplify concerns about his relationship with a white woman. Laah Ceil (the former Lucy Stanton) performed a Mohawk/Delaware persona to capitalize on her audiences' (and possibly her own) fascination with Native peoples and to conceal an

[77]Deloria, *Playing Indian*, 5, asserts, "Indianness provided impetus and precondition for the creative assembling of an ultimately unassemblable American identity."

[78]The text went through three editions: Rev. L. L. Allen, *A Thrilling Sketch of the Life of the Distinguished Chief Okah Tubbee Alias, Wm. Chubbee, Son of the Head Chief, Mosholeh Tubbee, of the Choctaw Nation of Indians* (New York: n.pub., 1848); Laah Ceil Manatoi Elaah Tubbee, *A Sketch of the Life of Okah Tubbee: Alias, William Chubbee, Son of the Head Chief, Mosholeh Tubbee, of the Choctaw Nation of Indians* (Springfield, Mass: H. S. Taylor, 1848); Laah Ceil Manatoi Elaah Tubbee, *A Sketch of the Life of Okah Tubbee: Alias, William Chubbee, Son of the Head Chief, Mosholeh Tubbee, of the Choctaw Nation of Indians* (Toronto: Henry Stephens, 1852).

interracial relationship that had already cost them a great deal. Since William McCary's relationship with "white sister" Lucy Stanton had been so much "in the way," taking or *making* "a red one" could solve the problem. The birth of their son Mosholeh in 1849, just one year before the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act, again raised the stakes of racial (mis)recognition and made protecting themselves from persecution even more vital.

Taking the Indian Act on the Road

Other capable scholars have written about the myriad ways in which the "McCary episode" may have contributed to policies and attitudes on race within the LDS Church. Instead, I want to highlight the ways in which the McCarys/Tubbees' experiences among the Mormons shaped their subsequent on- and off-stage performances of Indianness.

Before and after Winter Quarters, Laah Ceil used her invented Indian identity to mediate her relationship to Mormonism. Adopting an Indian persona allowed her to fulfill her deep sense of mission to the Lamanites and carve out a special place for herself in the emergent religion.[79] As her childhood vision and early experiments with "speaking Injun" reveal, she experienced her spirituality *through* the enactment of Indianness. Presenting herself as a Mohawk/Delaware woman after Winter Quarters allowed her to preserve, but also revise, her place in the faith and its place in her life. In addition, the editions of Okah Tubbee's autobiography that she helped to prepare incorporated considerable elements from Mormon practice, including an emphasis on visions and prophecies, as well as a "patriarchal blessing" that she referred to as an Indian custom.[80] The same blend-

[79]Tubbee, *A Sketch of the Life* (1852), 75.

[80]Interestingly, the consistent emphasis on patrilineality and patriarchy in the autobiography contrasts with the long-documented practices of matrilineality and matrifocality evident in most southeastern American Indian societies during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, including the Choctaws from whom Tubbee claimed descent. The incongruous emphasis may reflect the influence of Laah

ing had characterized their religious movement in Cincinnati, where they presented themselves as Indian prophets but offered blessings and covenants derived from LDS Church practices.

Becoming Indian was also a way for Laah Ceil to disguise her faith, for which she and her family had been cruelly persecuted. For example, she used their composite autobiography to critique anti-Mormonism, which she cloaked in the terms of Indian persecution and removal. One section depicts the turmoil of Indian removal in terms that could easily have described her own experience as a young mother, forced from her home during the Mormon War, as indeed she and many other Mormons were: "Pressing her little one to her bosom, covering its little face with her burning tears . . . she moves on . . . often in her migrations to the far west, does [sic] scenes of the past crowd upon her memory." Later, she refers to divisions among the Indians about "so many different yet right ways to worship one God, all taken from the Bible," a thinly veiled reference to the schismatic controversies at Winter Quarters and beyond.[81] In the end, she was remarkably successful in passing as an Indian. She maintained her guise well after she was no longer in her husband's company, even convincing modern scholars that her "spiritual awakenings . . . dreams, and visions" were evidence of "Delaware cultural traditions" rather than Mormon practices.[82]

Ceil's Mormon faith far more than it reflects any awareness of indigenous North American kinship patterns. See Charles M. Hudson, *The Southeastern Indians* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1976). On the Choctaw kinship specifically, see Patricia Galloway, "'The Chief Who Is Your Father': Choctaw and French Views of the Diplomatic Relation," in *Powhatan's Mantle: Indians in the Colonial Southeast*, edited by Peter S. Wood, Gregory A. Waselkov, and M. Thomas Hatley (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), 249–78; and James Taylor Carson, *Searching for the Bright Path: The Mississippi Choctaws from Prehistory to Removal* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), among others.

[81] Allen, *A Thrilling Sketch*, 5; Tubbee, *A Sketch of the Life* (1852), 82.

[82] For example, in his study of the autobiography, Jonathan Brennan

The pair's public performances also frequently bore evidence of their experiences among the Mormons. While their primary act featured music, they often included brief orations, alluding vaguely to their efforts to promote Christianity among the scattered western tribes. Their experiences of performing Indianness among the Mormons also influenced their stage shows, including demonstrations of glossolalia that they said were Indian tongues.[83] More importantly, they had learned in Winter Quar-

argues: "The autobiography of Okah Tubbee and Laah Ceil demonstrates a fascinating merging of African American and Native American traditions. . . . Their autobiography shares with Native American collaborative autobiographies the use of prefatory and appendatory documentation, the inclusion of tribal histories, the narration of spiritual awakenings, conversion, dreams, and visions, especially through the Delaware cultural traditions with which Laah Ceil was familiar." However, he mistakes signs of her Mormon upbringing for American Indian religious traditions. See Brennan, "Speaking Cross Boundaries: A Nineteenth-Century African-Native American Autobiography," in his edited collection *When Brer Rabbit Meets Coyote: African-Native American Literature* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 56–57. Similarly, Arnold Krupat includes Tubbee and Ceil's co-authored narrative as an example of Indian as-told-to autobiography but asserts that it is not bi-culturally composed as were other Indian autobiographies since Tubbee and Ceil were both Indians. Krupat, "The Indian Autobiography: Origins, Type, and Function," *American Literature* 53, no. 1 (1981): 24 note 3. Even Daniel F. Littlefield Jr., who conducted the most extensive research on the autobiography to date, maintained that Laah Ceil was Delaware and possibly Mahican or Stockbridge, though he offered no evidence for these conclusions. Littlefield, "Introduction," *The Life of Okah Tubbee* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1988), xvi. The first scholar to suggest a connection between Okah Tubbee and William McCary (and by extension, Laah Ceil and Lucy Stanton) was Patrick Polk, "History That Reveals Itself, History That Names Itself," *Journal of Mormon History* 35, no. 3 (2009): 230–33. Scholars outside Mormon history are still largely unaware of the connection.

[83]"Castle Garden," *New York Herald*, July 12, 1848, col. F; "A Negro

ters that neutralizing the threat of Okah Tubbee's blackness required both of them to be Indian. As long as he was identified as black and she white, problems could arise—particularly after the birth of their son. But if he was a "red man," then he must have a red woman, so a red woman she became.[84]

When another white woman got "in the way," Okah Tubbee and Laah Ceil again used their performative Indianness as a means of deflecting criticism related to their identities and their marital practices. One final controversial episode underscores how their experiences among the Mormons influenced their later enactments of Native personae.

In the summer of 1851, two sensational news stories threatened to expose the Tubbees. First, newspapers from New Orleans to New Haven announced that the "celebrated Choctaw flutist" Okah Tubbee was actually a "negro barber" and "a worthy rival of Barnum in the humbugging line."[85] Then, word began to spread that the "old imposter" had taken another wife—a white woman named Sarah Marlett—in a public ceremony at Niagara Falls.[86] Laah Ceil's role in this union is unclear. Was this another experiment in sexual covenants and/or a stab at plural marriage, practiced by Joseph Smith in the mid-1830s, made a for-

Turned Indian," *Daily Picayune* (New Orleans), July 8, 1851; "Okah Tubbee," *Buffalo [N.Y.] Commercial Advertiser*, August 9, 1851, 3. The Shakers were also engaged in such activities, as were other Protestant sects during the antebellum era. Erik Seeman, "Native Spirits, Shaker Visions: Speaking with the Dead in the Early Republic," paper delivered at the Society for Early American History, Philadelphia, 2014, copy in my possession.

[84]General Church Minutes, 1839–1877, March 26, 1847.

[85]News of his "true identity" was carried in more than fifty papers, but for the initial report, see "A Negro Turned Indian," *Louisville [Ky.] Courier*, June 28, 1851, 2.

[86]News of Tubbee's nuptials appeared in at least twenty papers from Natchez, Mississippi, to Manchester, England. A representative account is "Romance and Matrimony," *Barre Gazette*, September 5, 1851, 9.

mal, though secret, doctrine in the early 1840s, and announced publicly in 1852 in Utah?[87] Or was she the unsuspecting dupe of a philandering husband? In either case, stories about Tubbee's apparent bigamy were fused to questions about his race and the resulting controversy demanded a swift response.

In defense of his actions, Tubbee argued that his first union had been a marriage in the Indian fashion and did not preclude him from taking other wives.[88] One newspaper noted that he said he was married to his first wife "only for a term of years, *according to the custom of his nation*—that the time had expired, and he renounced her, as the laws of the Choctaws permitted him to do."[89] Similar references to a vague "Indian custom" of taking multiple wives appeared in a variety of other papers as the news traveled.[90] Such allusions to Indian marriage practices would have resonated with readers and audiences accustomed to reading serialized fiction about "Indian romance," attending lectures on "Indian manners and customs," and seeing performances of "Indian war and marriage dances."[91] Okah Tubbee capitalized

[87]Claudia Lauper Bushman and Richard Lyman Bushman, *Building the Kingdom: A History of Mormons in America* (1999; rpt., New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 30.

[88]"Okah Tubbee," *Buffalo [N.Y.] Commercial Advertiser*, September 1, 1851, 3.

[89]Ibid.; emphasis mine.

[90]See, e.g., "Okah Tubbee, Again," *Hartford [Conn.] Daily Courant*, September 3, 1851, ProQuest Historical Newspapers (accessed February 26, 2010); "A Romance Spoiled," *Newport Daily News*, Newport, Rhode Island, September 17, 1851, http://access.newspaperarchive.com/ (accessed June 7, 2013); "Okah Tubbee," *Cleveland (Ohio) Herald*, September 1 and 17, 1851, col. C, Gale Cengage 19th Century Newspapers Database (accessed April 13, 2011); "The Romance of a Story Destroyed," *Spectator* (New York), September 11, 1851, Readex Database, New York State Historical Newspapers, 1733–1822 (accessed June 15, 2013); "More about Okah Tubbee," *Mississippi Free Trader* (Natchez), September 24, 1851, 4.

[91]See, for example, advertisements and stories in these disparate papers: Untitled notice, *Daily Ohio Statesman* (Columbus), June 10,

on popular beliefs about Indian marital practices to explain away his apparent plural marriage, using the occasion to underscore or amplify his claims to Indianness. When the second Mrs. Tubbee filed suit for bigamy, defense attorneys argued that Okah Tubbee and Laah Ceil had never been *legally* married, echoing their earlier statements to the press.[92]

Interestingly, the growing emphasis on Tubbee's identity in the context of the bigamy case deflected attention away from Laah Ceil's identity. Rather than becoming the subject of public scrutiny, she became a pathetic figure—"a simple Indian squaw," deluded by a fast-talking "Negro" confidence man intent on taking as many wives as possible. Her claims to Indianness stood unexamined in the shadow of Tubbee's great and dangerous humbug. This was possible for at least two reasons: because she was not black and because Okah Tubbee, observers increasingly insisted, was.[93] The apparent fact of his identity concealed the realities of his wife's origins, even as it underscored the ongoing need for such concealment, suggesting the ways that antebellum notions of race were mapped onto popular cultural understand-

1851, col. C, Gale Cengage 19th Century Newspapers Database (accessed April 13, 2011); "Indian Concert," *Hartford (Conn.) Daily Courant*, May 27, 1850, ProQuest Historical Newspapers (accessed February 26, 2010); "Indian Courtship," *Democratic Telegraph and Texas Register [Houston Register]*, April 5, 1849, [1], America's Historical Newspapers, Readex (accessed November 20, 2012).

[92]*Regina v. Tubbee*; Ontario Court of Queen's Bench (Chambers); 1 P.R. 98. Westlaw Canada (accessed July 29, 2011). Interestingly, the lawsuit was also reported in "Gleanings and Sayings," *Deseret News* (Salt Lake City) December 11, 1852, 3, published by the same Willard Richards who had once felt Tubbee's abdomen in search of a missing rib. I am grateful to Connell O'Donovan for bringing this source to my attention.

[93]I explore her "unmarked" whiteness and his "marked" blackness in relation to claims of indigenous ancestry in greater detail in my book *Real Native Genius: How an Ex-Slave and a White Mormon became Famous Indians* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, forthcoming 2015).

ings of acceptable sexual and marital practices.

The Tubbees' use of the "Indian custom" defense during the bigamy controversy resonates with lessons learned in Winter Quarters. They had both dabbled in performing Indianness before 1847, but their experiences on the Missouri River led them to fully commit to these personae afterwards. It was necessary for both husband and wife to become Indians, on and off stage. When they faced exposure of Okah Tubbee's alleged African origins, surfacing in the context of another controversial union with a white woman, the couple doubled down on their Indian act.[94] Whereas involvement with "white sister" Lucy Stanton had endangered William McCary in Winter Quarters, her role as Okah Tubbee's "squaw wife" became their best defense.[95] Their individual racial identities were understood not in isolation from one another nor apart from understandings of their sexual and marital practices. Rather, these aspects of their lived experiences shaped and reshaped one another, varying in importance as they moved from place to place. Even in the era of growing LDS orthodoxy, new legal regimes of white supremacy, and emergent discourses of scientific racism, both Mormon and broader American notions of race were still in process, particularly where Indianness was concerned, and questions of gender and sexuality were very much "in the way."

[94]"An Old Impostor," *Mississippi Free Trader* (Natchez), September 13, 1851, 2.

[95]Untitled notice, *New York Times*, August 24, 1852, 8.