

**Complaining but not Forsaken:
Native American Women and Romantic Complaint**

By Millie Godfery

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Abstract

Although Romantic poetry is touted for its melancholic and introspective nature, the presence of complaint poetry in this period has been paid little attention by scholars. Embracing an aesthetic of lament, the mode's primary intention is to amplify the speaker's grief and / or protest to a given circumstance or event, privileging the subjective "I" as the central voice of the poem. More commonly known as a mode used by early modern male poets to imagine the grievances of the opposite sex, this thesis considers a poetics of Romantic complaint, looking at two distinct, but intimately connected groups of writers. Chapter one identifies three British Romantic poets – William Wordsworth, Robert Southey, and Felicia Hemans – to discuss why they adopted complaint to literarily (note not literally) place themselves in the shoes of the Other: the "forsaken" Native American woman. Simultaneously sympathetic and reprehensible under the British feminine model, this Romantic Indian woman figure embodied the simplicity and "spontaneity" idealised by these British poets, who thereby fabricated her lamenting voice to complement their poetic projects of ballad and song restoration in the name of creating an identifiably British national literature. The mode of complaint and the voice of the Romantic Indian woman are thus argued to be integral to the formation of Romantic poesis, this chapter emphasising how, by appropriating the voice of the female Other, these poets attempted to establish a sense of British literary identity.

Redressing the fictionalised portraits cast by these British-authored complaints, this thesis then turns to the poetry of actual Native American women writing during and after the Romantic era. Paralleling (although not descending from) the female-authored, female-voiced complaints of early modern women in Europe, the demotic, woeful rhetoric of complaint becomes a similarly powerful tool for a number of Native American women, whose work offers a diverse range of laments from land loss and cultural displacement, to the death of children and the experience of motherhood. Chapter two of this thesis concentrates on a body of complaint poetry by Bamewawagezhikaquay, or Jane Johnston Schoolcraft, a central figure in both Native American and Romantic literature in America. Building on the arguments I make here, chapter three then expands out to offer case studies of the complaints written by four Native women: E. Pauline Johnson (Kanien'kehá: ka or Mohawk); Ruth Margaret Muskrat (Cherokee); Zitkala-Ša (Yankton Sioux); and Mabel Washbourne Anderson (Cherokee). Acknowledging the centrality of rhetorical sovereignty and kinship to

the lives and writings of these women, this thesis determines a way of accessing their English-written poems via the frame of Romantic complaint. In doing so, we can consider a tradition of female-voiced complaint that is not necessarily self-conscious in its construction, but nevertheless vital to how we think about and study Native American literature, women's writing, and, of course, Romantic literature.

Introduction

A Commodified Mode: Complaint's Aesthetics

*Ah, nature! here forever sway
Far from the haunts of men away
For here, there are no sordid fears,
No crimes, no misery, no tears
No pride of wealth; the heart to fill,
No laws to treat my people ill.*

Jane Schoolcraft, "Lines written at Castle Island, Lake Superior," 1838, 11-16.

*Ollanahta, all day by thy war-pole I sit, —
Ollanahta, all night I weep over thy grave!
To-morrow the victims shall die,
And I shall have joy in revenge.*

Robert Southey, "Song of the Chikkasah Widow," 1799, 41-44.

"Lines written at Castle Island, Lake Superior" and "Song of the Chikkasah Widow" are two poems that contribute to what this thesis considers a tradition of Romantic complaint. Both centred on the female voice, they augment popular complaint poetry conventions, adopting a series of postures conventional to the mode: each poem observes moments of solitary retirement and meditation on woe, embracing an aesthetic of tears – the Chikkasah widow "weep[s]" over Ollanahta's "grave," and Schoolcraft finds recourse in nature, away from "crime," "misery," and "tears" – to relay experiences of grief that are identifiably feminine. However, while side by side these two passages appear similar in both aesthetic and tonal expression, their similarities end there. Where "Song of the Chikkasah Widow" is written by British Romantic poet Robert Southey, it is Ojibwe woman Bamewawagezhikaquay, or Jane Johnston Schoolcraft, who authors "Lines Written at Castle Island" and assumes the role of poet-speaker, contrasting the imagined Chikkasah widow who is ventriloquized in Southey's male-authored complaint. Both Romantic in style, what we have are two very different engagements in the mode: Schoolcraft's Native American female-authored complaint alongside Southey's British male-authored, female-voiced complaint, a distinction perhaps not immediately self-evident, but nevertheless vital to our understanding of the mode and the era of Romantic poetry.

What is complaint and what does it look like through the pens and mouths of different writers? Although the mode has garnered increasing attention in recent scholarship on early modern poetry, its capacity extends beyond this literary period, as this thesis will prove by looking at complaint in the Romantic poetry of both British and Native American writers. By definition, complaint operates as a literary mode, privileging tone and feeling – that is, mournful, melancholic tone and feeling – as one of its main conventional signifiers (Ross and Smith 4). Moreover, literary complaint is typically female-voiced, performing a set of topoi which bolster an aesthetic of feminine woe located in the voice and body of a lamenting woman (2-3). This sub-genre, the *female-voiced* complaint, has a diverse history of male and female authorship, effecting complaints of different intention and affect, particularly as women poets adopted the mode to protest socio-political problems and alter the archetype that their male contemporaries proliferated.¹ This thesis identifies complaint's capacious modal qualities and looks to add them into Romanticism's toolkit, identifying British and Native American uses of the mode between 1798 and 1922 as a way to communicate and interpret a period of rapid change, socially, politically, culturally, and, of course, literarily. Diverse engagements in the mode are revealed, the juxtapositions and parallels observed creating an impressive body of Romantic complaint attuned to mode, genre, representation, and aesthetics. The placement of, say, Schoolcraft's and Southey's poetry alongside each other becomes a model for how we consider complaint in the Romantic era, and our approach to Romantic studies itself.

I chose Romantic poetry as the focus of this thesis not only because scholarship on complaint in this literary era is lacking, but also because this period evidences a point where complaint's modal malleability is put to the test under the circumstances of globalisation. In particular, the transatlantic relationship between Britain and North America offers rich engagements with the mode, its conventions amenable to the new set of transcultural conditions implicating writers of both British and Native American descent. Via this cross-examination, we are obliged to recognise the demotic potential of this mode, looking at engagements in complaint that expand out and beyond a specifically European context. Particular aspects of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century British "poiesis" (Maureen McLane's term for the "making of poems, poetic apparatus, historical essays and ethnographic reveries on poetry") come to light via this study, as I locate the complaints

¹ Ross and Smith's descriptions of complaint as a mode, and female-voiced complaint as a sub-genre of that mode, informs my own definitions in this thesis, and I use both "mode" and "sub-genre" interchangeably when referring to female-voiced complaint (2-3).

voiced by the “cultural type” of the “Romantic Indian” within the British canon (McLane 7; Fulford 12).² It is not serendipitous that the three British poets of this study – William Wordsworth, Robert Southey, and Felicia Hemans – were each concerned with consolidating traditional ballad and song genres into an identifiable national literature, while, at the same time, writing Native American-voiced complaints which grappled with the female indigene figure homogenised in travel and scientific narratives. Moreover, the mode’s presence in the English-language poetry of Native American women from this period and beyond also helps to reveal one possible way of reading these works as adjacent to British Romantic literature, which, alongside the Bible, flooded across the Atlantic as a tool to educate, assimilate, and “civilise” Indigenous people. Exploring the voicing of complaint by *real* Indigenous women (rather than the fictitious creations of poets back home in Britain), this thesis looks to retrospectively determine a vein of Native American poetry that augments a tradition of complaint. Aesthetic similarities between these poems and the British Romantic and early modern complaints are recognised and discussed, establishing a set of formal conventions for the Romantic engagement in this mode. Of course, many differences also occur, and I identify these under the consolidated term, “Native American Romantic complaint,” as explained here and in chapters two and three.

Although I want to refrain from understanding complaint as a solely European mode (a position reductive of its vivacity in the hands of female Native American poets), it is helpful to provide a brief overview of its history in Europe to contextualise the position from which Romantic poets became familiar with it. The following section lays out the historical parameters of complaint; it denotes how the British Romantics inherited the tradition and also considers how the Native American complaints authored by women offer some parallels with the development of complaint in early modern women’s poetics. Following this, my introduction will mark the adoption (and adaption) of complaint in Britain by three Romantics, identifying the changing circumstances of empire and the literary movement towards ballads as effecting the mode’s re-emergence, before moving on to explore what complaint might look like in the Native American literary tradition and why it might be useful to think of it operating here.

I. Complaint’s Origins: From Ovid to Wordsworth

² See Fulford pp. 12-15 for his discussion of the term “Romantic Indian.”

Ovid's *Heroides* has been identified as the mode's central founding text, offering a series of epistolary laments all voiced by abandoned mythical women (Smith et.al. 350). Engaging with the Roman elegy, Ovid looked to upset the subjectivity held by the traditional poet-speaker of this genre by providing a clear distinction between the poet and the (imagined) subjective "I" of each woman character (Jacobson 5-6). In these epistles, Ovid is not the poet-lover – the traditional "I" in erotic elegy – instead transferring subjectivity over to his female characters and therefore altering the premise of elegy to produce a model for the male-narrated, female-voiced complaints which were then emulated through the medieval, early modern, and Romantic literary periods. Moving away from the erotic elegy, *Heroides* looked to impart a distinct sense of duality through the coexistence of objective authorial engagement and the individual perspective of each imagined female narrator. Re-centring the female voice in myth, the first-person narrative is returned to the likes of Briseis, Dido, Medea, and other Greek heroines, who recount their tales of woe and protest regarding mistreatment by men.

Although it was Chaucer who employed the term "complaint" to classify and affiliate laments in the fourteenth century, it was not until the 1590s that the male-authored, female-voiced complaint became a prolific mode in the British literary scene (Kerrigan 5; Ross and Smith 3). Adopting particular aesthetics exemplified in *Heroides*, these complaints – popularised by the likes of Edmund Spenser, Michael Drayton, William Shakespeare, and more – consolidated a specific set of conventions and postures which determined "secular, amorous female-voiced complaints" in line with these Ovidian terms, observing the templates of amatory loss and transgression to convey feminine experience (Ross and Smith 2-3). These features, which are central to this thesis's identification and comparison of complaint in both British and Native American Romantic poetry, included prosopopoeia, apostrophe, tearful aesthetics, and the lamenting woman trope. The women of the early modern complaints often moved from solitary retirement, to meditations on woe, to final recourse in God, and were almost always situated in these passive, devotional roles – particularly if they were male-authored (1-2). As we will see, the introduction of non-white women into the complaint mode challenges and sometimes awkwardly conforms to these expectations, as the British Romantic poets looked to reconcile the uncanny Native American women of travel literature with the ideal European women modelled in the conventional male-authored, (white) female-voiced complaints.

This literary history of complaint, admittedly very masculine, is useful to demarcate given it is this tradition that the British Romantics inherit, adapt, and alter in relation to their

own poetic agenda. The same cannot be assumed of complaint in the writings of Native American women. Although all five of the Native women in this thesis received English instruction via Romantic and earlier British literary traditions, there are other, more obvious, reasons why this mode becomes a primary source of expression. At this point, parallels can be observed between complaint in Native American women's writing and the writing of early modern women, whose use of the mode has become increasingly documented by early modern scholars.³ Given that little work has been done on complaint, let alone *female-authored* complaint, in the Romantic era, this body of work provides an interesting point of comparison with the complaints of Native women.

Complaint does not descend into the writings of either Native American or early modern women via the same classical humanist education afforded to early modern and Romantic male poets. Ross and Smith note that, as early modern women's education was "prevalently religious," it was from the Bible and other religious commonplace books that complaint lyrics drew their inspiration (5). This identification of female-authored complaints with religious education also resounds in the background and work of the Native American women examined, all of whom received an Anglophone education in the context of religious instruction. This connection is one to keep in mind throughout chapters two and three, although the important distinction here is that while English women were taught their own culture and literature through a biblical framework, Indigenous women were assimilated into a foreign culture and literature via Christianity. Despite the assimilatory intentions of early British colonisers, however, these women demonstrate the influences of Christian *and* Indigenous spiritualities informed by their own tribal epistemologies, their complaints at times explicitly addressing the tension between these two forms of knowledge.

Parallels can also be made between the contexts in which early modern and Native American women poets circulated their writing. Schoolcraft, for example, published some of her work, but largely participated in manuscript and epistolary cultures, records of which reveal a large correlation between her poetry and the mode of complaint. In early modern contexts, manuscript and letter writing practices linked women – traditionally excluded from the public sphere – in a "sympathetic" circle where poetic, religious, and political ideas could be expressed (Ross and Smith 7). The complainant of the female-authored lament thus takes on a very different tone to the isolated, overheard female speaker of male-authored

³ Scholarly attention to complaint poetry in the early modern period has been growing since John Kerrigan's *Motives of Woe* (1991). The first edited anthology of early modern female-authored complaint poetry was published in 2020 by Sarah C. E. Ross and Rosalind Smith.

complaint, and textual signifiers like the use of an echo were often used to allude to this greater community of listeners (Ross, “Complaint’s Echoes” 185-6). As I will examine in the second and third chapters, this is true of Native American complaints authored by women, not just because their gender *and* race barred them from participating in mainstream transatlantic literary culture, but, more importantly, because the fundamental practices underpinning their cosmological and kinship practices saw concepts of community integrate differently into their writings in both English and their mother tongue.

The importance of complaint in Romantic poetry has eluded scholarship until now, even in the case of Wordsworth’s titular reclamation of the mode in his “The Complaint of the Forsaken Indian Woman.” This is perhaps due to the relatively recent consolidation of complaint as its own mode. Allister Fowler’s text, *Kinds of Literature* (1982), which lays the terms for modes as “adjectival,” inflecting formal structure with tone and feeling, enabled complaint to be seen as synthesizing both form and content via the particular tones of grief, lament, anger, longing, and despair. Moreover, until Stuart Curran’s *Poetic Form and British Romanticism* (1990), Wordsworth’s notion of “spontaneous” feeling informed a significant resistance in Romantic scholarship to the idea of genre theory as influential on British Romantic poetics (*Preface* 126; line 115). As Curran reflects, this perception of Romantic literature as solely concerned with rejecting the “facile means of taxonomy,” reduced the chance for generic contestation and comparison to flourish (8). The same attention by early modern scholars to decoding the taxonomy of complaining alongside elegy, tragedy, epic, and pastoral poetry has been missing from Romantic studies (Ross and Smith 3). This thesis surveys how complaint came to be paired with the ballad genre. As poets like Wordsworth, Southey, and Hemans heralded the ballad for its capacity to communicate immediate and spontaneous emotion, complaint – in its affordance of impassioned first-person lament – was a natural mode to pair with this poetic project. Given that oral literature remained an integral part of Native American communication and a constant source of interest and contestation for British imperialists, the choice of the Romantic Indian cultural type as a subject of complaint was an attempt by the British Romantics to convey ideal autochthonous expression.

II. British Romantic Complaint

Where Ovid’s experiments with erotic elegy signalled the beginnings of complaint as a mode, the Romantic preoccupation with balladry created a new set of circumstances to which it was to be adapted. The early eighteenth century saw balladry and folk traditions gain a place

within literary discussions, as these forms were argued to be more “authentically” British than the regimented decorum of contemporary literary culture – a defence most famously proposed by Joseph Addison’s essays in *The Spectator* (1711) (Greenblatt 31). From the 1770s onwards, an influx of material calling for a revival of this genre appeared, with two especially foundational texts – Thomas Percy’s *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1765) and Joseph Ritson’s *Historical Essay on the Origin and Progress of National Song* (1783) – accounting for both theoretical discussions and catalogued access to traditional ballads. This renewed interest in ballad and other folk literatures occupied Wordsworth, Southey, and Hemans; all three poets spent significant time in their writing careers working to restore and refine the connection between oral and written tradition, a restoration motivated in part by reading about oral-based Indigenous cultures.

Wordsworth’s experimentation with the ballad genre was particularly influential, as his and Coleridge’s publication of the *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798 worked to formulate a poetics which augmented the simplicity of folk balladry while simultaneously revising the supernatural and pseudo-antiquarian trends which had come to dominate mid-1790s British ballad culture (Jacobus 209). In this collection and in the later 1800 edition, Wordsworth made critical distinctions between traditional folk balladry and his new genre of lyric balladry. Where the folk ballad prioritised action and situation over the presentation of feeling, providing the “bare essentials of the narrative action” without any inclusion of the particular “nuances of thought and feeling,” the lyrical ballad of Wordsworth’s invention worked against this tradition to subordinate “external” action to “feeling” (Page 296). Two poems within this collection, “The Complaint of the Forsaken Indian Woman” and “The Mad Mother,” take up this focus on individual thought and feeling through the auspices of complaint, which places the subject (moreover, the subject’s *voice*) at its centre, enabling the aims of the lyrical ballad to be recognised. It is arguably these two poems which, within the poetic experiments of the *Lyrical Ballads*, maintain the strongest resemblances to the traditional ballad, given their subjects are situated in sublime, even supernatural contexts in order for them to be recognisably “Indian” to British readers (Jacobus 196-202, 211). Through the use of prosopopoeia, however, Wordsworth prioritises the individual thoughts, moreover complaints, of his Indian women, ensuring them as exemplary subjects of his newly formed genre, the lyrical ballad.

It makes sense to return to the original intention behind the revival of the ballad to discern why this genre is frequently paired with Romantic complaint. Wordsworth’s *Preface* overtly defends and lays out his use of the ballad as a form that derives from “a far more

philosophical language” – that of “common life” – which affords a more genuine description of “regular feelings,” something he claims that some poets, with their “arbitrary and capricious habits of expression,” fail to achieve (124; lines 72-100). It is true that the simplicity of the genre and its historical grounding in the oral traditions of Britain and wider European nations gave it a sense of authenticity and originality outside of the confined literary regulations of written poetry. As the overpopulated urban and industrial environments of British cities came to represent the ills of English society, the Romantics looked back to an earlier Britain and applauded its song and folk traditions, “coeval with mankind,” as a literary way of restoring a tradition representative of this simpler, pastoral time (Ritson 9).

It is precisely this desire for the pastoral that concurrently drew a significant British readership to the publication of Native American songs. As Tim Fulford astutely remarks:

Indian songs fascinated Britons, not least because, being oral and immediate, they were seen as unpremeditated effusions of a culture that embodied all that urban, polite, civilization lacked. (141)

The popularity of these songs secured their place within the scholarly discourse on folk balladry, demonstrating the importance of Indigenous culture in the formulation of a British literary identity. In Ritson’s *Historical Essay on the Origin and Progress of National Song* (1783), his introductory example is not in fact a British folk song, but a Native American death song, which he uses as evidence for what modern Britain had lost (ii-iv). He implores the reader to observe the “simplicity” of the song tradition “among the savage tribes of America, at present; or at least before they were civilised – perhaps corrupted – by their commerce with Europeans” (ii). Ritson’s choice of rhetoric here parallels the discourse of Wordsworth’s *Preface*; his admission of the adverse effects of colonisation on Indigenous people romanticises the simple, authentic forms of their oral literature in the same way that Wordsworth regards folk balladry as the true autochthonous form of uncorrupted Britain. The parallels between the interests of British readers, translators and writers in the Indian song, and the revival of the European folk ballad by British poets therefore suggest that they cannot be read as alienated movements, but rather as intimately connected and influenced by colonial ideology. As Britain’s role as a global empire incited a conscious recognition of its nationhood, its poets grappled with the concepts of nationality, identity, and indigeneity by returning to the historical ballad form.

Naturally, the theoretical interest (and consumer interest, for that matter) in ballad and folk literature was spurred on by particular social contexts. A new class of subjects and characters had become central to the success of this genre: those of country folk and working

class women and men. These people were often the subjects of poems by the canonical Romantics, but they also composed poetry themselves, as the literary sphere opened up to a new wave of writers and poets. While imperialism dominated both external and internal British politics, the expansion of working classes and colonial failures witnessed in the 1780s – the loss of British control over America, corruption in India, and the instability of the slave trade in the West Indies – resulted in what Curran identifies as a “national self-questioning” and a “turning [of] expansionist culture back on itself” (14). Theoretical texts such as Thomas Paine’s *Rights of Man* (1791-92) and Mary Wollstonecraft’s *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), looked critically at the social and political structures repressing certain demographics, while working class poets such as Robert Burns, Ann Yearsley, and John Clare configured a new literary audience representative of “a vital autodidact culture” (Rose 38; McEathron 7). “English Romantic writings,” as Jon Klancher writes, “were staged within an unstable ensemble of older institutions in crisis (state and church) and emerging institutional events which pressured any act of cultural production,” making complaint a mode attuned to capturing the fears and grievances provoked by these changes (80). Together with the ballad, the mode was used to mourn the loss of authentic (British) literature. Its formal qualities render it particularly responsive to the conditions outlined, the first-person “I” localising the voice of protest as its central feature so that, in a time of social revolution, the mode became an identifiable rhetorical expression of the literal complaints of minority people.

My choice to include the complaints of Felicia Hemans in this study is partly because she represents another important class of Romantic writers – women who made their living from writing (Reiman vii). This identity makes her use of the Native American voice an interesting, somewhat more complicated choice than that of her male contemporaries. “[S]teeped in Scott and Wordsworth,” she constructs a poetics of ballad and song recovery that, in the Romantic Indian, finds the ideal embodiment of the Romantic vision of “nations united [...] by mythic folk identities inseparable from relations the land” (Lootens, “Hemans and Home” 239). As chapter one attends to, however, Hemans is unlike Wordsworth and Southey in that her commitment to the cultivation of a British national literature dovetails a desire to create an “international poetics” (Saglia 111). In this respect, her use of Native American subjects is not done to embolden a British tradition, but rather to connect a global community – particularly a community of *women* – via story and folk tale. Appropriative as this is, Hemans’s place in this thesis is important as the female-authored, female-voiced complaints she produced over her writing career function differently to those of Wordsworth

and Southey, whilst revealing key patterns and distinctions in the female-authoring of the mode. As a woman, Hemans believed she had an obligation to represent the woes of her sex, turning naturally to complaint to do so.

III. Romanticism and Colonialism

Only within the last few decades has Romantic studies begun to consciously address the coinciding influences of colonialism and the concept of empire.⁴ It feels apt to pause at this point in my introduction and demarcate some of the ways the British Romantics were tightly bound up in the colonial project. My argument for Romantic complaint acknowledges that, as the mode was revived alongside the ballad tradition, this was in many ways inspired by the contact made with Indigenous, oral-based cultures. Moreover, the very question provoking this research from the beginning was why the mode of complaint was paired with the archetype of the Romantic Indian – what did this particular subject bring to the poetics of Wordsworth, Southey, and Hemans? In discovering the Other – “the colonised subject” – these writers involved British literature in the colonial project, affirming the study of identity, indigeneity, place, and conquest as central to the Romantic project (Fulford and Kitson 6). Literature was in no way immune to the ideological imperialism underpinning the rapid changes to Britain’s social, political, and economic structures, despite the coveted guise of apolitical naturalism that was adopted by many of the Romantics. The consolidation of Britain (and therefore the English vernacular) as the centre was occurring, and the likes of Wordsworth and other Romantics not only profited from this, but aided it, drawing colonial experiences and cultural literatures, forms, and expressions from elsewhere into Romanticism’s own epistemic framework.

Fulford and Kitson are quick to note, however, that this consolidation as it manifests in the writings of Romantics is fraught with contradictory and unstable attitudes which in many ways deconstruct the very “binary oppositions and apparent truths” produced within this era (11-12). This they attribute to the “juxtaposition of different forms of theoretical and aesthetic discourse” (12). We can think of the combining of complaint, ballad, and the appropriated Indian song genre as an enactment of this kind of juxtaposition, as Wordsworth and others drew on these different forms to consider British Romantic literature in relation to

⁴ Tim Fulford and Peter Kitson observed in their 1998 anthology that, aside from a select few texts in the 1990s, Romanticism relationship with colonialism had seen little scholarly attention.

a global body of subjects, languages, and literatures. In many ways, their work perpetuated the logic of colonialism through its capitalising on Indigenous bodies and literature. As this thesis will explicate, however, the appropriation of Native American oral traditions alongside the aesthetic and formal experiments with balladry and complaint lyrics also reveals the instability of this logic, as these acts of juxtaposition so heavily relied on the heterogeneous literary environments being explored across the transatlantic.

A newly established vogue for travel narratives from America and other colonies was particularly influential of the Romantic obsession with indigeneity and the concept of the Other. Popularised in the 1770s, these texts were partly responsible for the somewhat “formidable” approach poets like Wordsworth took to introducing, citing, and footnoting their poetry in order to validate their knowledge on colonial matters (McLane 45). Moreover, these travel narratives also intrigued the British Romantics with their depictions of Indigenous people. On the one hand, the narratives assimilated and homogenised the Romantic Indian within a series of stereotypical categories – the forsaken, the savage, the uneducated, the noble etc. This created a false sense of “ethnographic authority,” something McLane highlights as the invoking of authority “not simply over one’s experience but rather over one’s experience *as culturally symptomatic or characteristic*” (194, italics in the original). By typing these Indigenous figures within certain literary parameters, they could be contained, lending themselves to the aesthetic aims of the Romantic poets. On the other hand, these travel narratives did something particularly nuanced, representing objective and official records via the personal, subjective accounts of the traveller-narrator. These troubled the aforementioned categories by representing complex and unpredictable portraits of individual Native Americans (Fulford 61). As Fulford astutely observes, travel literature provided

no solidified orthodoxy, no sole agreed way of regarding colonizer / Indian relationships. Instead – and literary writers seized upon this – there was a contest of rhetorics with single narratives... [negotiating] relationships that shifted unpredictably from binary opposition of civilised to savage, at one extreme, to practical kinship at the other. (73)

Recognising the falsity of the Romantic Indian stereotype(s) did not alleviate the perceived “ethnographic authority” the British poets felt they held over their Indigenous subjects, although their careful handling of travel narratives did invoke a sense of intimacy, which complaint was then used to convey. As this mode is defined by a formal preoccupation with the voice of the first-person “I,” it lent itself well to the interrogative desires of the Romantic poets.

Returning to Fulford and Kitson's considerations of Romantic poetry's contradictory and complicitous role in the colonial project, it is important to reiterate the ways in which Indigenous literatures and languages influenced British poets. Gauri Viswanathan, writing in regards to seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Indian / British relations, suggests Britain maintained a "guise of a liberal education" to excuse coerced schooling of Indigenous people – a stance held across all its colonies (17). And yet, Jace Weaver reflects, the transatlantic relationship between Britain and America was a "multilane, two-way bridge," a phrase Kevin Hutchings recalls to highlight the reciprocity which defined many of the exchanges between British and Indigenous people (Weaver 511; Hutchings 14). The consolidation of English at the centre was therefore occurring at the same time as conceptions of literature were expanding and questions were being raised around literary form, what counted as literature, and who had access to it. An example of this is highlighted in a letter that Walter Scott received from his brother Thomas in 1814, in which Thomas relays an encounter with Mohawk chief Teyoninhokarawen John Norton:

What do you think of a man speaking the language of about twelve Indian nations, English, French, German, and Spanish [...] having written a history of the five nations, and a journal of his own travels, now in London ready for publication, and being at the same time an Indian chief, living as they do and following all their fashions. For, brother, you ask doth he paint himself, scalp, etc. etc.? I answer yea, he doth [...] It surely is a strange circumstance that an Indian chief should produce a literary child. (Scott 345-6)

To imagine a Native American producing a literary text was antithetical to political narratives of Indigenous people as simple, savage, and uncivilised; yet these assumptions were challenged by the transcultural interactions like the one detailed above, as Europeans came into contact with real Native Americans who challenged the Romantic Indian narrative "conjured up in the pages of [white] authors" (Fulford 12).

Nevertheless, even Scott's image of Norton relies on an English conception of literature as written, physical, and structured within a print culture identifiable with European literary standards. This remains true of contemporary interpretations, which continue to privilege the written word: literature is the "familiarity with letters or books," moreover the "knowledge acquired from reading or studying books, esp. the principal classical texts associated with humane learning" (*OED* 1). The restorative quests of the British Romantic poets to revivify ballad and song traditions are therefore, this thesis highlights, complicated and somewhat paradoxical. As the act of documenting and translating old ballads and Native

American songs meant transforming the oral into the written, these texts were seemingly “improved” by their codification into written English, despite the intention being to applaud these traditional forms for their natural simplicity. Complaint particularly enables this move, as prosopopoeia emulates the immediacy of the speaker. Thus, in accommodating the new subject of the “living reciter,” the Romantics turn the “native informant, the oral source” into an *object* of (rather than the subject of) ballad discourse (McLane 46). The objectified Indigenous woman of the British Romantic complaint is therefore confined to the aesthetic desires of the colonial mind. She becomes stagnant, a tool aiding a poetic project of recovery, never mind the appropriation and rhetorical imperialism inflicted on her and her people.

What, then, does this all this mean for the British Native American complaint? I find Creek scholar Craig Womack’s metaphor of orality as “authentic” and written literacy as “contaminated” a useful way of conceptualising the emergence of this mode within the poesis of British Romantics (15). Writing that it is this exact binary which continues to harm the legitimacy of Native intellectual history, Womack’s use of “contaminated” is inflected with several meanings: it functions as a potent, ironic substitution for the word “civilised,” and also encapsulates the western desire for and fascination with an *uncontaminated*, “authentic” oral tradition. This desire justified the colonial mindset in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Britain, which sought to “contaminate” Native America with liberal education while also reproducing the “authenticity” those cultures embodied. Fixing on the Native American woman as a subject of true and contemporary indigeneity, Wordsworth, Southey, and Hemans all found a subject they could test their Romantic poesis on, borrowing from the oral culture she represented and moulding her to voice the laments of an ideal – though uncanny – creature of nature and simplicity. Themselves dismayed by the loss of natural British environments due to industrial pressures, complaint was a natural mode of poetic expression for these three poets, and the Native American woman was an obvious subject to voice these laments given her proximity to land loss and genocide could be dramatised to reflect the problems back home in Britain.

IV. Native American Romantic Complaint

At this point, the ascension of complaint into the writings of Native American women seems only natural; not simply in its literal sense, as Indigenous tribes across America took to paper to protest and petition losses of land and sovereignty, but also aesthetically, as British Romantic poetry flooded across the Atlantic to be used (alongside the Bible) for formal

instruction. Chapters two and three are devoted to Native American female-authored, female-voiced complaints in order to trace the sub-genre's transatlantic exchange into the mouths and pens of the very women whom British poets back home attempted to voice. The intention behind this thesis structure is twofold: the primary responsibility of this research is of course to bring to attention the mode of Romantic complaint (specifically its sub-genre, female-voiced complaint), as it is constructed under colonial conditions. This research leads us to appreciate the importance of complaint as a rhetorical tool in the hands of Native American women. As I will reveal, their poems are contestations against the narratives figuratively constructed by white men and women who, both spatially and situationally, were far removed from the context of female Indigeneity in a colonial environment. In doing so, I am requiring a space for these writers within the Romantic canon.

The emergence of complaint in the written traditions of Native American women occupies a "middle ground" formed out of both European and tribal-specific traditions.⁵ Just as the mode transfigures throughout British literary history, it does so in the poems of Native women, emerging in their English-language laments of personal, religious, and political expression. Key tropes of male-narrated, female-voiced complaints are either rejected – there is often no need for prosopopoeia or apostrophe in the subjective "I" of these female-authored complaints – or experimented with to acknowledge the specific tribal epistemologies which grant an Indigenous worldview. Often, for example, the "I" of the traditional complaint mode becomes the first-person plural pronoun "We," a conscious engagement in the form which – as implied through this rhetorical positioning – becomes indicative of a collective Native American sovereignty. It is these formal conventions which I am defining as "Native American Romantic complaint."

Moreover, the grounding of Native American literature in oral history means that complaint emerges organically through customary traditions of vocalised protest and petition. Whereas the British Romantics adopt the mode to accompany the restorative oral purposes of balladry, complaint flows naturally into and from the pens of Native women conscious of the vocal influences their maternal ancestors held within tribal politics (Kilcup 2). Unlike for the British Romantics then, the connection between complaint and ballad is not a motivation informing the poetic projects of the Native American women in this thesis. Whether these women poets thought of their work within a cultivated poesis is less important to this study,

⁵ "Middle ground" is White's term used to describe French and Algonquin relations in the *pays d'en haut* region, although I use it here to emphasis the metaphorical meeting of European and Indigenous literary thought in Native American Romantic complaint (2011). See Chapter 2.I for more discussion of this term.

although the marginalised positions they held as Indigenous women and as writers hindered their ability to partake in a literary community that was aesthetically (rather than politically) driven.⁶ What their writing testifies to is the experience of colonisation, from the position of the colonised. Complaint is a mode that offers one way of reading their Romantic poems, too often dismissed as assimilatory and sentimental, in relation to the converging Native American and British literatures which they are born out of.

How nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Indigenous poets wrote about topics common to the Romantic period, such as love, nature, family, land, and politics, affirms them within the tradition but also requires careful observation. Their cultural epistemologies locate them in relation to these topics in ways that European settlers found inconceivable, and that contemporary Romantic scholars have struggled to identify as anything but assimilated expressions of British Romantic poetry. Robert Dale Parker warns us of this, noting that “even poems that might sound like routinely Romantic evocations of the landscape take on specifically Indian meaning,” advocating particular kinship values specific to Native American cosmology (*Changing* 17). While British Romantic poets emulated similar expressions to develop a sense of natural spirituality grounded in nature, the relationship between Native American women and their environments takes roots in tribal-specific kin relations and cosmologies. Colonial invasion and the palpable dispossession of people from their land thus become the centre of many of the complaints in chapters two and three, as the women reflect on the effect this has on kinship relations and the other aforementioned topics common to the Romantic aesthetic.

Perhaps most ambiguous to non-Indigenous readers of these poems is the complex ancestral relations Native American nations, and particularly their women, had with the land. Diplomatic representation by female tribe members perhaps best demonstrates this, given women held significant sovereign power in most Native American tribes prior to their displacement under an Anglo-American patriarchal government (Kilcup 2). A 1787 letter addressed from Katteuha, The Beloved Woman of Chota,⁷ to Benjamin Franklin demonstrates this, as Katteuha conflates her female connection with nature in a diplomatic appeal for the protection of Cherokee land:

⁶ See Kilcup 5-6 for a discussion of aesthetics and politics as it relates to Native women's writing.

⁷ The Cherokees bestowed two distinct titles, “Beloved Woman” and “War Woman,” on female members of the tribe who had earned deep respect for a particular reason. Perdue comments on the relationship between these two titles: “Some sources use the terms *War Woman* and *beloved woman* interchangeably, and they may have applied to the same women. But Cherokees distinguished between pre- and postmenopausal women, and evidence suggests that beloved women were elderly while War Women were of indeterminate age. War Women probably became “beloved” when they passed menopause” (39, italics in the original).

Brother, I am in hopes my Brothers and the Beloved men near the water side will heare from me. . . . I am in hopes if you rightly consider it that woman is the mother of All — and that woman Does not pull Children out of Trees or Stumps nor out of old Logs, but out of their Bodies, so that they ought to mind what a woman says, and look upon her as a mother — and I have taken the privelage [sic] to Speak to you as my own children, and the same as if you had sucked my Breast. (181)

This image of women as sacred and nature as sacred infiltrates diplomatic expressions by Native American women, just as it does their poems. Their ancestral connection to the land orients their poetic and rhetorical projects in a completely different way to the British Romantics, although the convergence of this literary period with the colonisation of Native American people certainly reveals parallels between Indigenous epistemology and the aesthetic developments in Romantic poetry. What is clear is that these women are not writing to reclaim a connection that has slowly faded away. Rather, they are writing to defend and preserve their sovereignty, whether this be through the implicit descriptions of a pastoral, Romantic landscape, or through the explicit criticisms of removal. Ojibwe / Dakota scholar Scott Richard Lyons's term "rhetorical sovereignty," meaning the "right of *peoples* to determine their own communicative needs," becomes instrumental in these critical discussions, and chapter two will spend time decoding this as a theoretical framework used to understand Native American Romantic complaint (449, *italics in the original*). By enabling a restoration of literary agency through the tool of voice, complaint from the pens of Indigenous writers becomes an affirmation of sovereignty, amalgamating the stories, histories, prayers, and songs that are rooted in the lived experiences of Native American people.

V. Hierarchies and Priorities: Moving Forward

When talking about the placement of books on her bookshelf, Māori scholar Alice Te Punga Somerville introduces the idea of hierarchies and priorities, inviting a sense of consciousness to academic processes of reading, researching, and writing (646). Before moving forward, I want to pause and take stock of this notion, not just as it relates to my own bookshelf, but more so to the unconscious assumptions and orderings that may be present in my writing.

I am not an Indigenous woman of America. As a wahine Pākehā, privileged within the colonised context of Aotearoa, it is important I acknowledge the ethical questions white researchers should anticipate when drawing Indigenous studies into Western academia

(Hessell 9). Mine is done with the intention of broadening Romanticism – I am thinking here of Te Punga Somerville’s suggestion that academics commit to the act of “widening, lengthening, and perhaps rearranging” our “bookshelves” – and I come at the writings of both British and Native American poets from the position of a settler scholar in the field of Romantic studies (649). It is in my best interest and through continuous re-evaluation that I try to avoid the “rhetorical imperialism” that defines much of western discourse on Indigenous scholarship (Lyons 458).

The irony of this project will be explicit here. In my critical discussions of complaint as a vehicle by which British Romantic poets imagine Indigenous women, and Native American poets then reclaim to reassert the sovereignty rhetorically damaged by the former representations, there is potential for me to become complicit within the same binary. This is why, where possible, I draw directly from Indigenous scholarship – particularly scholars of specific Native American nations – and disperse these discourses within my discussion of British Romantic complaint. This is to minimise any dichotomous opposition, itself just as harmful to Indigenous rhetorical sovereignty and furthermore contrary to the intention of this research: to include Native American poetry within the discourse of Romanticism. If I am to be critical of the erasure of Indigenous people not only politically and socially, but rhetorically via the works of British Romantic poets and Romantic scholars, I must also be critical of the “burdensome representational weight” of my own words, dislocating any sense of comfort I have in the ignorant and careless way white people have monopolised words without recognition of their “hard, jagged layers of colonialist misunderstandings” (Justice, *Why* 6).

My coinage of the phrase “Native American Romantic complaint” thus evidences some problems, or at the very least requires further attention. Given this study draws on the work of Native American women from numerous nations, it comes with the risk of homogenising the different experiences and epistemologies bolstered by each tribe, an issue which has long occupied scholarship on Indigenous literature. Chapter three sees me draw on Karen L. Kilcup’s argument for a Native women’s literary tradition as affirmation of the usefulness of cross-tribal literary comparisons like the ones this thesis observes, something that Chadwick Allen (Chickasaw) advocates in his claims for “trans-Indigenous” studies, which “conceive a “politicized” discussion of aesthetics not exclusive to the “autonomy, self-determination, and sovereignty” of specific nations but expanded to the global Indigenous” (Kilcup 1; Allen, *Trans-Indigenous* xxi). Here, Allen places himself in contrast to Craig Womack, whose foundational text *Red on Red* (1999) argues for the importance of finding

“Native literature’s place in Indian country, rather than Native literature’s place in the canon” (11). Both invaluable approaches to Native American literary studies, I have chosen to follow Allen’s and Kilcup’s methodology, partly given my “outsider” status as a settler scholar, but also because the thematic and aesthetic patterns across the complaints of the five women studied in this thesis have a considerable amount to offer both Native American and Romantic studies.

Although this thesis begins with Wordsworth, Southey, and Hemans, I want to refrain from any implication of hierarchy. Rather, this serves the practical purpose of demarcating the progression of complaint from early modern poetry into British Romantic poetry, and then to Native American poetry, marking the distinctions between the fictitious women of the British-authored, Native-voiced complaint, and the female-authored “Native American Romantic complaint”. This is not to suggest that similar traditions do not exist in pre- and post-contact tribal literatures. Here, my argument is limited to complaint in its English context, although this space still offers salient opportunity for exploration. To do so, an expansion of what is traditionally identified as the Romantic period is required, a conscious decision which enables the temporal and literary “lengthening” of our perceptions of Romanticism and what and who it privileges. Here, I draw from Manu Samriti Chander, who argues that this periodisation of Romanticism confines it to an “era of European cultural history” (12). I wish to define Romantic literature in terms of its reciprocity with colonial and transnational exchange, making clear the strong links between these two events. To consider the acts and consequences of colonisation to be confined to one era is harmfully presumptive, and thus it would be naïve for me to consider Romantic poetry in the same way. By approaching Romanticism as a style utilised by communities of writers across the globe to define and place themselves in relation to the world, to globalisation, to the colonisers and colonised, the definition of this style is broadened. This more inclusive definition of Romanticism in turn enriches not only the way we read Indigenous literature, but also the works of those who are pre-established in the canon.

Chapter 1. The Forsaken Women of British Romantic Complaint

Complaint's "breadth, flexibility, and responsiveness to cultural change" are the precise qualities that account for its reappearance in British Romantic poetry (Smith et. al. 343). Accommodating the Romantic poesis of Wordsworth, Southey, and Hemans, the mode enabled the kind of responsiveness needed to redefine poetry in relation to Britain's new position as an empire. Accompanying the ballad, which itself reappeared to assist the formation of an "authentic" national literature, complaint aided the voicing of a new poetic vision heavily influenced by the colonial context surrounding Britain. The marking of rhetorical Otherness plays an important role in this distinction, and it is therefore unsurprising the extent to which Indigenous people, particularly women, appear in the British Romantic complaint. This chapter draws on the poetry of Wordsworth, Southey, and Hemans to consider the poetics of complaint as aiding their contributions to a British literary identity. It looks critically at why all three poets chose to adopt the voices of imagined Native American women to explore the authenticity and orality they desired British poetry to embody, questioning the place of their Native American-voiced complaints in the revivification of a British ballad tradition. Extensive work could be done to provide a broader picture of complaint in the Romantic era, particularly on Wordsworth's rural female vagrants and Hemans's deserted white women, whom are dispersed throughout the *Lyrical Ballads* (1798) and *Records of Woman* (1828). My work, however, focuses on the British Romantic complaints which choose Native American women as their subjects, adopting these voices as symbols of current wide-scale destruction of culture and land, which, in the eyes of Wordsworth in particular, had already occurred in rural Britain.

I. Wordsworth, Indigeneity, and his Forsaken Women

The implicit irony in this establishment of an "authentically" British literature is that one of the ways this was managed was via the rhetorical appropriations of Indigenous literatures. Wordsworth and Coleridge's *Lyrical Ballads* (1798) is heralded as one of the more influential examples of a poetic project determining a new direction for Britain's literary identity. It is striking, then, that the collection includes two examples of distinct Otherness marked by the use of female-voiced complaint: Wordsworth's "The Complaint of the Forsaken Indian Woman" and "The Mad Mother." These complaints may at first seem somewhat out of place against the pastoral scenes of the British countryside which dominate the collection. And yet,

as Fulford argues, “freedom in nature reaches its apogee” through these Indigenous women, as their complaints embrace the bodily distress and isolation experienced upon their estrangement from civilisation (178). It is therefore via these two complaints that the crux of Wordsworth’s own ideal autochthonousness is realised.

Although each of the poets considered in this chapter attempts to embellish the one-dimensional caricatures of Indigenous women posited in travel narratives, Wordsworth’s chosen epithet – “Forsaken” – sums up the stereotypical Indian woman who, for all her cultural differences, cannot seem to escape the isolated aesthetic of the British female complaint. In “The Complaint of the Forsaken Indian Woman,” attempts are made to reconcile the uncanny Native American woman, whose “Indianness” places her outside conventional femininity, with the formal aesthetics of the male-authored, female-voiced complaint. Wordsworth locates his female character in a context unfamiliar to British readers – she has been left to die by her tribe after falling ill. And yet, the lament which ensues is characteristic of the British complaint, as the woman bemoans her desertion and the loss of her child. Attributing the complaint to a travel account from Samuel Hearne’s *A Journey from Prince of Wales’s Fort in Hudson’s Bay to the Northern Ocean* (1772), Wordsworth can be seen to be operating exactly within the context outlined in the introduction; informed by Romantic and colonial zeitgeists, he sets the formal expectations for his poem within the title and acknowledges the travel account from which the poem is drawn.

Despite the lament’s titular identification with the mode, it has received little critical attention as a Romantic complaint. My reading of the poem suggests, however, that Wordsworth’s conflation of the female-voiced complaint with Hearne’s travel account was his solution to the problems faced when placing the uncanny female indigene figure within a particular aesthetic / narrative category (Fulford 166-7). For Hearne and other travel writers, the natural sublime offered a framework to encode sympathetic, idealised narratives of Native American women. Desiring to add to this, however, Wordsworth uses complaint to penetrate deeper into the psychological workings of the Romantic Indian woman whom Hearne aestheticised (172). The Romantic sublime backdrop works to complement the traditional setting of the female-voiced complaint, all the while retaining a sense of Otherness. Pastoral to the point of primitiveness, Wordsworth’s woman is “forsaken” by humanity and deserted in the wilderness to face her peril.

This environment is particularly true of “The Complaint of the Forsaken Indian Woman.” The unnamed lamenter is alone, her wish – “Before I see another day, / Oh let my body die away” – rhetoricised through prosopopoeia, with no answer to be found and no

comforting ear to overhear her remarks (1-2). “[T]he northern gleams” (3) torment her sleep “in rustling conflict” (5), accentuating the sublime, natural environment she has been left in. She is “alone” and without “fear,” suggesting her acceptance of the compromised state she has been left in (20). This stance is maintained for the first two stanzas, to the effect of the poem appearing to fit within the death song sub-genre (albeit in a somewhat feminised form), as the woman offers a final monologue in the face of death. However, just as Wordsworth has acquainted his British audience with the stoic language typical of this sub-genre, a dramatic change in tone recalls the conventions of the British female-voiced complaint. Rhetoric familiar to the mode is evoked, as the woman cries “Alas! Ye might have dragged me on” (21), condemning her tribe’s abandonment and her own mental weakness, revealing that she “too soon yielded to despair” (23). This shift in tone highlights her doubts and regrets, as she “grievously” (26) mourns being left behind, now realising that her “limbs [are] stronger” than she thought (25).

This abrupt tonal change unhinges the complaint and does something to locate it more comfortably within eighteenth-century cultural expectations of femininity. It is at this turn, in a sense, that the “Indian” of this narrative *becomes* female, particularly in the fourth stanza as her maternal lament is emphasised. “My Child!” the woman exclaims, “they gave thee to another, / A woman who was not thy mother” (31-2), before proceeding to bemoan the severing of her “helpless child” from her (40). This maternal lament draws the Indian mother into a dialogue reminiscent of the female-voiced child-loss complaints popular in early modern poetry, although the association of this imagined Indigenous woman with white women’s expressions of grief renders her Otherness in tension with British cultural expectations of the mode. Wordsworth’s construction of an Indian woman via complaint therefore encounters a huge problem regarding representation, one that both Southey and Hemans also face. How can the female indigene be the primary voice of a complaint in a way that is both culturally synonymous with British readers and simultaneously distinct, or Other; and *why* does this matter? What “The Complaint of the Forsaken Indian Woman” reveals is that by maintaining this dualism Wordsworth can highlight the imagined sublimity of his Native woman, thus epitomising her as the ideal subject of the ballad form. Playing around with the familiar and foreign scenes in which he locates his “forsaken” woman, Wordsworth’s emphasis on the mother’s distress at the loss of her child enables her to become familiar to a British audience, despite being situated from a specifically Native context.

Given the male-authored, female-voiced complaint fosters a sense of interiority through its use of prosopopoeia, Wordsworth adopts this mode to humanise his speaker in the eyes of his British readers. The moments of fear and remorse she displays are accepted as natural and her maternal lament (which appears to be the main reason for these emotional expressions) constructs her as a devoted mother. The poem concludes in stoic resignation, however, restoring her primary position as the Other. While she admits that she would die with a “happy heart” (67) if she “once [more] could have [her child] close” (66), the final couplet offers no exclamations of woe, instead simply acknowledging:

I feel my body die away,

I shall not see another day. (69-70)

This returned emphasis on the sublime uncanniness of the complainant affirms her as the epitome of authenticity, her acceptance of social seclusion and death emblematic of true Indigeneity, despite its unfathomableness to British readers. Holding both her familiarity and foreignness in the same complaint, Wordsworth explores “Indianness” / Indigeneity through resonances of death, alienation, and madness, locating this as the space where “unique, uncommodified identity” lies (Fulford 178). The association of the authentic, Indigenous self with these scenes of loss and alienation Other these women, while also enabling the complaint mode to feature as a productive space for expressing autochthonous lament within Wordsworth’s ballad project.

If we accept the speaker of Wordsworth’s “The Mad Mother” to be a Romantic Indian woman, then this complaint offers a similar expression of Indigeneity through loss and madness. In a letter to John Kenyon, Wordsworth reflects that his speaker could be “either of these islands, or a North American,” suggesting that, “on the latter supposition, while the distance removes her from us, the fact of her speaking our language brings us at once into close sympathy with her” (24 Sept. 1836; 293). The framing narration introduces the complainant, a woman characterised with “wild” eyes, a “bare” head, “coal-black hair,” and “rusty stain[ed] eyebrows” (1-3). Her foreignness is emphasised through these adjectives and via the admission that she has come “far from over the main” (4), the stanza concluding with the detail that “she talked and sung... / in the English tongue” (9-10). The inclusion of this aspect of the woman’s character suggests this is potentially unexpected, contributing to her Othering in relation to Wordsworth’s British readers. In this respect, Wordsworth draws specifically on the rhetoric of distance and sympathy, invoking the dualism of familiarity / foreignness which I highlight at play in “The Complaint of the Forsaken Indian Woman.” The “mad” mother can be taken as an ideal Indigenous subject in her ambiguity because she

moves freely between two worlds. While multiple cultural signifiers imply her “North American” Otherness, she – alongside her fellow “forsaken” Indian woman – is simultaneously at home with the British female vagrants present in the *Lyrical Ballads*.

Wordsworth’s comment to Kenyon is also strikingly cognizant of the effect prosopopoeia and the mode of complaint has on readers, as the introduction of the mother’s voice in stanza two brings us closer to her and the reasons for her lament. Addressing the baby in her arms, the mother cries “Sweet babe! they say that I am mad” (11) and then proceeds to beg her child, “have no fear of me” (16). If the speaker’s ethnicity is left ambiguous, however, the conditions of her child are even more unclear, for although she assures the baby it is as “safe as in a cradle” (17), readers are driven to speculate if the emphasised “alone[ness]” (6) of the woman is in fact furthered by the deceased state of the child. It is likely, given Wordsworth’s devout interest in travel writing, that this poem is formed from several accounts of Indigenous motherhood, including, perhaps, Charlevoix’s descriptions of some Native women keeping “the dead Bodies of their Children whole Years” (Charlevoix 274; Fulford 176).⁸ While the mother of this poem never acknowledges that her child has passed away, the continued emphasis on her madness suggests that the death of her beloved baby is one of the potential reasons for her derangement.

Wordsworth’s complainant is thus forbidden from filling any traditional role; it is unclear whether she is a loving mother dedicated to her child, or a crazed woman, hysterical after its death. This makes the identification of “The Mad Mother” as a complaint more complex. Certainly, bemoaning complaint rhetoric dominates the poem, affiliating it with the traditional aesthetic of the early modern mode. Although the mother assures the child that her “heart is glad” and she is “happy,” her tone is woeful, and her dialogue interspersed with cries of “Oh” and “Alas” (12-13). It is, in fact, the woman’s madness which disguises at the same time as it evokes her complaint. Readers can only suspect that the excessive display of love she shows for her child conceals a lament for its death and the abandonment by her partner, as she cries for her “babe” to “suck [...] oh suck again” (31) and demands “Oh! Love me, love me, little boy!” (41). The woman seems unable to fully articulate her loss because she is overcome by madness, and yet the presence of this bereavement weaves its way

⁸ Fulford also suggests that Wordsworth could have been inspired by an account in Hearne (1795), of the attempt by a young Tłıchq (“Dog-ribbed” in Hearne’s account) woman to conceal her child from an opposing band of Athapuscows by bundling it in her arms (172).

throughout her lament, as she repeatedly tries to console herself by asking for her child's love – a demand it appears is never fully satisfied.

What is clear is that despite the mother's declarations of affection, she is crazed by numerous afflictions, many of which Wordsworth locates in her body, giving the lament a sense of physicality typical of the female-voiced complaint. It is these ailments – the "fire" (21) that burns in her brain and the "fiendish faces" (23) that hang from her breasts – which perhaps prompt her suicidal declaration, as she reassures her child to "not dread the waves below, / When o'er the sea-rock's edge we go" (43-4). Although her son and her duty to him apparently "[save]" her "precious soul," the matricidal theme introduced here revokes the familiarity Wordsworth's British readers may feel towards the mother, as these signifiers of her uncanny and savage nature reinstate the foreignness of her madness (48). Matricide and suicide are not uncommon in early depictions of Native American women by Romantic poets: later I discuss Hemans's "Indian Woman's Death Song," which similarly characterises an abandoned Indian woman choosing to end her and her baby's life.

As a pair, Wordsworth's two poems establish some of the terms by which British male-authored, Native female-voiced complaints operate, demonstrating a conflation of early modern conventions with Romantic aesthetics and contemporary travel narratives to exemplify the female indigene as "ideal" in her Indigenous Otherness. Reading them as complaints offers several opportunities for Romantic studies: it encourages scholarship concerned with the Romantic construction of a national British literature to consider the poems voiced by non-British subjects as integral to this project, and it demonstrates the capacity of the mode to reflect the colonial implications woven throughout this period of writing. I am, therefore, arguing against Bidlake's reading of these poems as examples of "hidden dialog," a term drawn from Mikhail Bakhtin, which suggests the language of monologue implies a second silent interlocutor who offers an implicit, possibly alternative, viewpoint or "unanswered question" (Bidlake 189). Bidlake argues that "hidden dialog" is used by Wordsworth to add multiple conflicting voices to the characters' dialogues, enabling them to transcend the passive, "abstract emotion[s]" which women in traditional complaint poetry are reduced to (Langbaum qtd. in Bidlake 191). While both poems Other their subjects to challenge the traditional female lamenter's passivity, Wordsworth's use of complaint is done not solely to model the ideal European woman, as early modern male-authored complaints aspired to do (Kerrigan 26). Certainly, in the female vagrant / peasant maid of his *Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth identifies his ideal creature of nature; however, his choice to voice the laments of two Indigenous women expand beyond these aesthetic, moralistic

functions to instead typify his poetic concerns with balladry, orality, and nature, configuring a Romantic British literary identity by playing with the familiarity and foreignness of the stereotyped female indigene. Rather than reading these two poems as if there is silent interlocutor present, scholars should treat them as instances of complaint, as prosopopoeia is used to achieve a simultaneous sense of subjective interiority and objective authority. Transposing the female indigene into the British female-voiced complaint, Wordsworth codifies his “forsaken” Indian women within the decidedly British poetic project of the *Lyrical Ballads*, using complaint as the mode by which balladry and Indigeneity can be broached.

II. “The unappeased Spirit in anger complains!”: Southey, the Indian Song, and Complaint.

The song, excluded from Stuart Curran’s analysis of British Romantic genres for its “amorphous” quality, was a form to which Southey devoted a significant amount of his antiquarian project, as he, alongside Wordsworth, engaged in a recovery and revival of a British national literature (12). His collection, “Songs of the American Indians,” published first as a series in *The Morning Post* between August and October 1799, offers an interesting representation of the Indian song genre operating alongside complaint. In this section, I argue that the mode is used to locate the one representation of Indigenous “femaleness” within the capacious generical and aesthetic practices observed in this collection. “Song of the Chikkasah Widow,” the final poem in this group, relies on the mode of complaint to relate the widow’s song to the expectations of British readers, as her furious cries of revenge are coded, like those of Wordsworth’s women, as both familiar and foreign. By reading this song through the mode of complaint, we can break down the authoritative intention behind Southey’s decision to include the voice of an Indian woman in a project dedicated to affirming his antiquarian poesis.

Similarly to Wordsworth, Southey eagerly engaged with travel literature. His reviews of travel narratives were often published in periodicals and he kept detailed commonplace books which gathered travel-related material from the likes of James Adair, George Vancouver, and John Carver, collating a large section devoted to “American Tribes” (Jarvis 157; Warter 522). Driven by the 1790s zeitgeist of orality and balladry, Southey’s engagement with this material not only stemmed from a place of personal interest (Southey at one point desired to immigrate to America) but served to satisfy a preoccupation with Indigeneity and appease an editorial anxiety around accuracy and objectivity (Jarvis 158;

McLane 181). While his “Songs of the American Indians” were published without the supplementary details of editorial footnotes or introductions, other poems – such as the epic *Madoc* (1805) – document Southey’s prolific engagement with these travel narratives, evidencing his attempts, like Wordsworth, to legitimise his ethnographic knowledge. What is striking about “Songs of the American Indians” (and particularly indicative of this editorial process), is Southey’s identification of each song in relation to a specific tribe or nation: the Wyandot (Huron), Peruvian, Araucana, and Chickasaw (Chikkasah) people. It must be noted that this attempt at accuracy is bound up in a time where British conceptions of sovereignty did not often translate in their understanding of Native American nationhood. Southey’s act of identification here is, rather, an endeavor to validate his own knowledge, meaning that certain identifications homogenise (as with the Peruvian Indians) and are rhetorically imperial (the attribution of Huron – the European term – to the Wyandot people). Nevertheless, Southey’s editorial decision is one that, on the whole, other Romantic poets ignored. By attributing each song to a particular nation, Southey looks to validate his own authority as the “lyricist” for Native Americans, using his ethnographic practice to do so (McLane 108).

In “Song of the Chikkasah Widow,” Southey combines his poetic project of documenting Indian songs with the formal conventions of the female-voiced complaint, resulting in a complex prosopopoeiac representation of Native American widowhood and grief. The use of the mode here is important, given it distinguishes the “femaleness” of the first-person speaker from the other four masculine songs in his collection. Particularly given British readers familiarity with the Indian death song, made popular first in travel narratives and then in antiquarian and Romantic texts, the use of complaint in this song allows the Chikkasah widow to be considered adjacent to the aforementioned sub-genre, which similarly employs prosopopoeia to represent the final battle cry of a captured or dying warrior. As the singers of these death songs are singular, stoic, hyper-masculine, and for that matter, male, the female-voiced complaint serves as the feminine opposite to this.⁹ Complaint should therefore be considered amongst the numerous forms used in “Songs of the American

⁹ Ritson glosses the text to “The Cherokee Death Song,” (later discovered to have been written by Anne Hunter, who published the poem under her own name in 1802), writing: “It is a custom with the American savages to put to death the prisoners they take in war by the most lingering and exquisite torments. These it is the height of heroism for the victim to bear with apparent insensibility. During a series of excruciating tortures, of which a European can scarcely form the idea, he sings aloud a song, wherein he strives to aggravate the wrath of his enemies, by recounting the injuries and disgraces they have suffered from him and his nation; derides their tortures, as only adapted to the frame and resolution of children; and expresses his joy in passing with so much honour to the land of spirits (ii).”

Indians,” the mode bridging the generic and aesthetic complications posed by the inclusion of a Romantic Indian who is also *female*. The widow’s lament may be composed in the form of a British ballad or Indian song, but it is female-voiced complaint which ensures this Chikkasah woman is recognisable to British readers, and to the British literary project more generally, as the poem grapples with the somewhat incompatible complaint tropes of the passive lamenting woman alongside the “savage” female indigene.

In the opening quatrain, the voice of the unnamed Chikkasah widow is introduced, immediately asserting her agency despite her grief. In self-referential nod to the complaint to follow, the widow hears the “voice” of her deceased husband, Ollanahta, inspiring her lament:

’T was the voice of my husband that came on the gale;

His unappeased Spirit in anger complains;

Rest, rest Ollanahta, be still!

The day of revenge is at hand. (1-4)

This arrival of Ollanahta’s “unappeased Spirit” affects the agency of the widow, who, at the close of the stanza, asserts the imperative for Ollanahta to “rest” and leave her to avenge his complaints. This command refines the passivity of the traditional female-voiced complaint, as Southey can be seen attempting to reconcile British expectations of female conduct with how he imagines a Native American woman would respond to the murder of her husband.¹⁰ His widow defines her lament from a promise of revenge, the complaint demonstrating an unexpected consolation in the act of “wield[ing] / The knife and fire” and hearing “the song of their [the murders] death” (6-8).

Synonymous with this expression of anger, however, is the widow’s lament, as Southey evokes an aesthetic of tears alongside the image of her violent revenge. She accepts that both “fountains of grief and of fury [will] flow,” desiring the oxymoronic “vengeance of anguish” as compensation for her loss (9-10). In this, Southey attempts to manage his British readers own expectations of savagery with the tenderness of grief, initiating a collision of the British Romantic Indian with the lamenting woman of the female-voiced complaint. The possibility for elegy is overwhelmed by the widow’s complaint, which is bloodthirsty and resolute in the “joy” that its speaker will feel in gaining “revenge” (44). Southey’s complainant is therefore notably Indian and Other for her reproachful lament, and although

¹⁰ Fulford suggests Southey was likely informed by Adair’s accounts of torture enacted on war prisoner and women’s involvement in this (Fulford 168; Adair 416-25).

rhetoric familiar to the female-voiced complaint is scattered throughout the poem, the “alas”s and “O”s of the Chikkasah widow are redundant alongside her vehement tone and vow for revenge. Both familiar and foreign in the context of complaint then, Southey locates his widow as specifically Indigenous, presenting her sorrow as familiar to British readers, while simultaneously Othering her unfeminine, “savage” response. The aestheticising of her violent nature parallels the qualities characteristic of the Indian death song’s (male) Noble Savage archetype, while Southey also grants her, via complaint, a certain expression of grief which defines her femininity in relation to British literary tradition. As a result, a new space within female complaint is created for the Romantic Indian woman, one that is not defined by passivity but agency.

In the context of Southey’s entire “Songs of the American Indians,” this female complainant assumes a different role to that of the masculine speakers of the other four songs, who are praised for representing “imagined Indians [with] more complexity and more cultural status” (Fulford 149). These poems, which offer prosopopoeiac narrations from either singular male speakers, or collective, paternal tribes, create what Fulford surmises is a reversal of the “assumptions about the superiority of British civilization,” as the male Indigenous figures of these songs become emblematic

not just of what [Britons] imagine they have lost (Edenic innocence and unity) but also of the virtues associated with Christian civilisation – compassion, dignity, the organization of reverence into ceremony and form. (149)

As Fulford sees it, community and ritual subvert the traditional Indian savage trope, as Southey places the violence of nationalistic struggle alongside tribal life; his “The Huron’s Address to the Dead,” for example, looks at the ceremonial “song of death” sung by the “Brother[s]” of a deceased warrior, one whom is characterized as having “the language of friendship” alongside a warrior’s “strength” (32-3).

“Song of the Chikkasah Widow,” read as a female complaint, sits outside of (and unnoticed in) Fulford’s suggestion that “Songs of the American Indians” depicts Indigenous people who challenge the one-dimensional “savage” trope of the Romantic Indian cultural type. Whereas the male speakers of Southey’s songs balance a particularly Euro-masculine desire that privileges heroic violence alongside civility, the Chikkasah widow cannot – as a female character – function in the same respect. Her revenge is fearsome and the juxtaposing images of her tearful lament with her violent promises render her as erratic and uncanny. Thus, while Southey’s widow defies the passivity of the early modern female complainant, it is the mode of complaint by which, as a female, she is still most clearly affiliated with.

By using the male-authored, female-voiced complaint as an interpretative framework for “Song of the Chikkasah Widow,” we can identify reasons for Southey’s inclusion of this Romantic Indian woman within “Songs of the American Indians.” For both Southey and Wordsworth, the incorporating of Indigenous women in their poetic projects demonstrates their shared identification of these subjects as exemplary of natural, spontaneous feeling – creatures true to the oral and ballad movements typifying British Romantic literature. To ensure their readers comprehend this, the Otherness of their Indian women subjects must operate alongside a sense of familiarity or cultural recognition, something that the intimacy of prosopopoeia and complaint lyrics affords. We see the same desire as early modern male poets to represent the “interpretative instability” of the female speaker, except here the mythopoetic qualities of women are enhanced on account of distance, race, and an assumed sense of rhetorical immunity (Kerrigan 12). By plucking the Indian woman out of America and placing her amongst the aesthetics of British Romantic complaint, Southey and Wordsworth familiarise her recognisably Othered voice, normalising the female indigene as part of a particularly British national literature. The mode thus functions in Wordsworth’s and Southey’s poems as a tool for bridging the gaps between the antiquarian zeitgeist of oral and ballad recovery, the colonial interests in the Indigenous woman figure, and the desire for an identifiably British literature.

III. “woman’s weary lot”: Familiarity and Foreignness in Hemans’s Indian Woman

The question which has been implicit throughout my study of British-authored Native American complaint, and which I hope to conclude with in this final section on Hemans, is one Tricia Lootens poses in *The Political Poetess*: “why Indian?” (66). What did the likes of Wordsworth, Southey, and Hemans have to gain from using the female indigene as a voice for their complaint poetry? Of course, the answers to this cannot be reduced simply to a stylistic preoccupation with oral recovery and imitation, although it is perhaps Wordsworth’s and Southey’s attraction to this project which is the overwhelming cause for their interest in the Native American voice. Certainly, Wordsworth does not adopt these complaints simply from a place of empathy or support – the plight of slaves “had ne’er / Fastened on [his] affections” (Lee 196; *The Prelude*, lines 218-19). And while Southey published a collection of anti-slavery poems and, as Fulford (perhaps slightly too enthusiastically) notes, attempted to broaden the Romantic Indian archetype in “Songs of the American Indians,” his adoption of the Native American voice remains in this same vein as Wordsworth’s. For these first-

generation Romantics, their Native female complainants epitomised the conglomeration of social and literary zeitgeists employed to define their Romantic poetics.

Dana Nelson's considerations of race in nineteenth-century writing by white women highlights the slightly more complex context of this positionality; considerations useful as I turn my focus to Hemans and her Native female complainant in "Indian Woman's Death Song." Nelson asks, are "sympathetic readings of race" by white women used "simply as an effective strategy to gain authorial advantage in Anglo-American culture," or rather as a way to "proffer an alternative social vision?" (67). Complaint, I argue, should be seen as the means by which Hemans attempts to do both: following first-generation Romantics Wordsworth and Southey, she adopts this mode as a tool by which to exercise her authorial control over a sympathetic, subjective representation of Native American voice. In doing so, she draws the experience of Indigenous women into her wider poetic project – her "alternative social vision" as Nelson puts it – in which universal female suffering is exposed. Race and gender thus become figurations of each other in Hemans's complaint, "Indian Woman's Death Song," as she embodies the Romantic Indian Other to achieve this literary sentiment amongst her white female readership (Ellison 462; Flint 89).

Published in *Records of Woman* (1828) – a collection which itself holds vast potential for discussing female complaint in the British Romantic era – "Indian Woman's Death Song" follows generic signifiers already attributed to the Native American complaints of British poets, using a framing narrative, prosopopoeia of a lamenting woman, and imitation of the death song. The poem opens in the voice of an unnamed narrator who sets the Indian woman within a sublime setting; in the "western wild" (1) amidst "thick forest glooms" (2), a canoe of "frail bark" (4) appears, carrying the mother and her child on their treacherous journey to death. Stormy weather adds to this atmosphere, as her canoe flies on "a tempest's wing," shrouded in "a mist of spray / [rising] with the cataract's thunder" (4-6). The woman herself is characterised as "proudly, and dauntlessly" (7) in "a strange gladness" (10) facing these conditions, thus becoming a part of this sublime scene herself. Conversely to the expectations of a conservative British audience who were likely accustomed to the passive European female speakers of complaint, this characterisation of stoicism affirms the unnamed woman's resolution, as she embarks into the eye of the storm with "a wild proud strain, her song of death" (15).

There are evident similarities between Hemans's complainant and the women of Wordsworth's and Southey's poems, as we encounter yet another depiction of an Indian mother alone, but for her child, and facing death. Employing the traditional first-person

pronoun address, the woman is uncanny in the agency she emits, commanding the waters to “roll” and, with this movement, take hers and her child’s lives to “the Spirit’s land” (16). Repetition of this verb occurs throughout the complaint, acquainting the “rolling” movement of the “dark” river with her own desire to roll from life to death (43). As Wordsworth does in “The Mad Mother,” Hemans makes female suicide and matricide key signifiers of her Indian woman’s complaint. Somewhat divergent from her male contemporary, however, she refrains from imposing criticism on her complainant’s suicidal mission, instead using the description of the woman’s journey on the river as a way to reflect the mother’s suffering in living. Female suicide was, in fact, a common theme within Hemans’s poetry and was not criticised within a Christian framework but rather presented as both a way of reclaiming female agency and satisfying a particularly gendered Romantic “hunger for transcendence” (Harding 139). Hemans’s Indian woman, betrayed by her “warrior” who “hath looked upon another face” (20) determines that in death her husband, “th’ unkind one,” has “no power again to trouble sleep” (41), thus revealing the end of her life to be the act in which her own power is reclaimed. Given that this is a thematic pattern across Hemans’s poetry, it is likely that, while this suicidal response is certainly indicative of popular British representations of Indian women, Hemans’s primary purpose here is to cultivate a poetics representing female consternation. It must be noted that, whereas preoccupation with female suicide or death dominates the laments of Indian women in the British Romantic imagination, the complaints of *real* Native American women, discussed in the subsequent chapters, are more often concerned with preservation and restoration, particularly regarding kin relations between the land and its human occupants, both living and dead.

A connection between the river and the female complainant is something that does, however, spark an interesting connection with the Native American-authored complaints to come, signalling a greater aesthetic association within female complaint between water and women. Hemans puts repeated stress on the woman’s “sweet voice” (13) alongside the evocative sounds of the river, and, as her voice rises “Above the sounds of waters, high and clear” (14), “a low and mournful song” surrounds her (26). The “rolling” river which carries her sad lament evokes images of streams of tears, a central aesthetic common throughout the formal history of female complaints, both male- and female-authored (43). Although the river itself does not have any prosopopoeiac representation, the interconnectedness of the woman – whose “soul” has even dissipated to water – and the river which is carrying her to death, place the poem in an interesting conversation with the tradition of female poets employing rivers to voice their complaints. In the note to the poem, Hemans explains how the woman’s

“mournful death song” echoes across the shore until it is “overpowered by the sound of the waters in which she perishe[s].” This evokes an image of the song being consumed and then preserved by the river itself, an outcome which similarly occurs in Mabel Washbourne Anderson’s (Cherokee) “Sweet Nowita,” a poem discussed in chapter three. The river therefore plays an important role in both melding with the woman’s song and delivering her to the watery release of death, as the poem closes with her direct imperative to the river: “On, on, dark rolling stream!” (43).

As already discussed, the attribution of this self-sacrificial nature to the Native American woman is not incongruous with Hemans’s characterisations of non-Indigenous female suffering. Certainly, when read alongside the women of Wordsworth’s and Southey’s complaints, the lamenting woman of Hemans’s poem seems to affirm the representations of instability and sublimity typical of the female Native figure, “triumphantly” facing death and taking her own child with her to protect her from “sorrow and decay” (45). In the context of *Records of Woman*, however, these characteristics become less Indigenous-specific, as we are presented with the laments of various women who frequently see death as a preferable alternative to the labours of living. Individuality is sacrificed in these complaints, as the often-nameless women of this collection become interchangeable respondents to the unanimous “weary lot” of women (36).

And yet, Hemans’s “Indian Woman’s Death Song” is drawn directly from William Keating’s compilation of the notes made by himself and others on an expedition led by Stephen Long in 1823. In the account Hemans’s poem is adapted from, a Dakota hunter is recorded as having broken his wife’s heart after taking up another partner to assist with domestic affairs (310-13). Despite Keating documenting the name of the wife (whom we can presume is Dakota also) as Ampota Sapa, Hemans decides to keep her fictionalised woman unnamed, although her adjectival repetition of “dark” throughout the complaint is perhaps inspired by the translation of Ampota Sapa as “the dark day.” The specific attention Keating’s account pays to acknowledging the tribal ethnicity of the couple and Ampato Sapa’s name provides detail often remiss in travel narratives, and yet Hemans’s retelling of this woman’s peril largely erases her Indianness which, aside from the identification made in the title and preface, is distinguished only via occasional stereotypical references to the “western wilds” setting (1) and her “warrior” lover (20). Instead, what Hemans draws from Keating’s narrative is simply another example of the “weary lot” which typifies all female experience. The particular account is an easily transferable experience, unlike Wordsworth’s “The Complaint of the Forsaken Indian Woman,” whose self-sacrifice requires a particular

cultural frame of reference. Hemans's *Indian Woman*, like so many others in her *Records of Woman*, is seen to be choosing suicide as a consequence of a "wasting... heart" (37). Her choice to similarly relieve her "young Fawn" from the same fate furthers this notion of a universal female experience, as she determines to prevent her "bright" daughter from pining "in aching love" (38). As the child's "bright[ness]" is repeatedly referred to, a sense of her being pure and unblemished by a woman's reality furthers the mother's self-sacrificial desire, looking towards death as a form of protection against the heartbreak of men.

This mother-daughter connection, commonly recreated throughout the collection in poems such as "Madeline: A Domestic Tale," in fact becomes central to this poem's inner monologue which speaks to universal female suffering. Bound by a woman's "weary lot," the generational bond between two women is one which may be misread in a poem characterising Native American infanticide as both sublime and savage. Lootens highlights the complexity of this poem within Hemans's collection, suggesting that a contemporary reading does not rest easily around the characterisation of the feminine in this complaint (Lootens, "Not Another 'Poetess'" 66). We should therefore ask: "What might it mean to define 'Woman' as 'Indian'? 'Indian' as 'Woman'? Both 'Indian' and 'Woman' as infanticidal suicides?" While Hemans makes what we can only assume to be conscious erasures of Ampato Sapa's individuality, the complaint also relies on readers recognising the cultural framing, again drawing on the familiar / foreign binary typical of both Wordsworth's and Southey's complaints. This is seen immediately in the title and epigraphs, which simultaneously reference the specifically "Indian" female "death song" alongside two epigraphs which serve to globalise this representation of womanhood: a French translation of lines from Friedrich Schiller's *Bride of Messina* ("No, I cannot live with a broken heart. I need to regain joy, and unite with free spirits of the air") and the imploration "Let not my child be a girl, for very sad is the life of a woman," quoted from James Fenimore Cooper's *The Prairie*.¹¹ The erasure of the "Indianness" of our complainant is thus perhaps not so much an erasure as an attempt to combine numerous cultural texts, starting with Keating's edited travel narrative, to create an "imagined transnational, multiracial, interfaith community of female suffering" (Lootens 66). At the same time as Hemans must "flatten" the signifiers of Indianness to achieve universality, she also embodies them through voice to assume a "consciousness of far more complex gendered histories" (67). It is via complaint that Hemans

¹¹ Translated by Madame De Staël, the quotation appears in the epigraph as follows: "Non, je ne puis vivre avec un coeur brisé. Il faut que je retrouve la joie, et que je m'unisse aux esprits libres de l'air."

can explore the poetic project she so desires to achieve in *Records of Woman*, producing a lamentation that desires to be read both in relation to the transatlantic narrative, but also outside it as a sympathetic representation of the conditions of *all* women, regardless of race and ethnicity.

IV. Complaint, Ballad, and Song: The Indian Voice in the British Imagination

What should be obvious by this point is the trilateral relationship between the British Indian song, the ballad, and the mode of complaint; three closely related forms which weave throughout the poesis of Wordsworth, Southey, and Hemans. The interrelationship between these genres / modes of poetry becomes obvious and somewhat complex when attempting close readings of their Native American complaints, provoking questions which place us (the readers and critics) in the same formal conundrums and negotiations that these poets concern themselves with in their poetics: What, we must ask, is similar in the way these forms relate? How do they interact with each other? Are they synonymous with or adjacent to each other? And, most critically, *why* do they all re-emerge in the Romantic period? In a period defined by poesis, the manifestation of the Indian song (with its own transatlantic conditions of rhetorical imperialism), the ballad, and the complaint in the poetry of three British Romantic poets speaks to very specific circumstances.

Tackling the first three questions from the paragraph above, I am compelled to acknowledge that, in a project that argues for the adoption of the term Romantic complaint, it is only Wordsworth who actually references the mode. Whether or not Southey and Hemans themselves consciously use complaint as a model for their lamenting women, their acknowledgement of the (British) Indian song genre should not be considered as operating separately from the mode. For Wordsworth and Southey, amalgamating the British death song with complaint became a way to reconcile their objective ethnographic grasp of the custom with a more “organic” interpretation of the Native woman’s experience of death. As evidenced in this chapter, complaint is the interpretative framework used to locate the female indigene within the British ballad, as well as the Indian song genre, which comfortably represented the *male* Noble Savage but was less amenable to the complex and often contradictory portraits of Native women.

Hemans, it appears, also saw this mode as an opportunity to do as her first-generation male contemporaries did; however, her broader project intersects with a particularly gendered lens, meaning her ethnographic approach takes on a slightly more complex purpose. “Indian

Woman's Death Song" – although a *death song* – rejects the genre's Euro-masculine model which bolsters a vision of Christian martyrdom and classical stoicism (Fulford 142). Like Southey's Chikkasah widow, Hemans's woman simply cannot operate in the same way that the Noble Savage of the British imagination does. This is not to say that the poem fails to do what its title suggests; merely, complaint should be seen as an intersecting mode, enabling us to observe how the "female" is reconciled with the "Indian" in order to locate the familiarity *and* foreignness of these women within the British Romantic tradition.

Accepting that the ballad, Indian song, and complaint all sit adjacent to each other, the question still remains as to why they emerge and coalesce during the Romantic period. McLane suggests the emergence of "orally-based, literarily mediated authority" during the eighteenth century provokes a culture of poesis concerned with song, ballad, chant, and speech, inspired by scholarly authority and evidenced in the restorative work of antiquarians like Ritson, Adair, Pinkerton, and Scott (183). The "double movement of internalization and externalization," wherein a poem strives to possess an "'authentic' subjectivity" alongside "the elaborate authority of editorial objectivity," is central to this poesis, and an action which, as we have seen, is afforded by the female-voiced complaint (182-3). Concerned with voice and the prosopopoeiac representation of a character, this sub-genre confers (or at least conveys a guise of) an achievement of legitimate or "authentic" subjectivity, as the speaker is distinguished from the objective identity of the author. For Wordsworth, Southey, and Hemans then, complaint is the ideal conduit of the "authentic" voice – the Romantic Indian woman – enabling these new poetic concerns with authority, subjectivity, and a national / international literature to be explored.

Chapter 2. “with pen in hand”: Rhetorical Sovereignty and the Act of Complaining

In 1823, Bamewawagezhikaquay or Jane Johnston Schoolcraft (Ojibwe), wrote “The Contrast,” opening the poem with the conscious rhetorical gesture that “With pen in hand, [she would] contrast, / The present moments with the past” (1-2).¹² The poem then goes on to observe the changes inflicted by colonial rule on the métis idyll of her childhood, using the mode of complaint to do so.¹³ A more expansive discussion of this poem occurs later in this chapter, but I have chosen to mark the move into Native American female-authored complaint with these opening lines, which offer an evocative representation of the literal act of writing to validate and secure Indigenous sovereignty. In the uttering of these two lines, Schoolcraft frames her complaint with a direct acknowledgement of her rhetorical agency, proceeding (along with many Native American writers) to set the terms for her own representation.

In this chapter, Schoolcraft leads our movement away from the British-authored complaints to those written by women Indigenous to North America. The work of Native American scholars is integral to my definition of Native American complaint and the first section of this chapter is dedicated to establishing a theoretical framework by which I define the mode. Richard Scott Lyons (Ojibwe), Craig Womack (Muskogee Creek and Cherokee), Matthew Rude Walker (Chickasaw), Karen L. Kilcup, and Daniel Heath Justice (Cherokee) are some of my key guides in the act of drawing Native American poets into Romanticism. Through their work – particularly Lyons’s establishment of the term rhetorical sovereignty – I explore the aesthetic and rhetorical functions of complaint in Schoolcraft’s writing. I then move into a critical discussion of her poetry and song translations as Romantic complaints, looking at the various expressions of maternal, romantic, and political lament that are cultivated throughout her work. Born in 1800, Schoolcraft is contemporary with the second-generation Romantic poets, although her writing has been marginalised from contributing to this literary era, as with Native writing in general. Romantic scholarship therefore also informs my discussion of her poetry, and so too does comparison with early modern complaint, as I complicate the implicit gendered question – is the female writer’s use of this

¹² Bamewawagezhikaquay translates in English to Woman of the Sound the Stars Make Rushing Through the Sky.

¹³ Métis is the shorthand term for describing those of mixed Native-European descent, typically traced back to the unions between Native women and French or English fur traders in the 1700 and 1800s (Brown 65). See my discussion of this term at the beginning of the following section.

mode, and by that extension, her position as a writer, innately political? – by considering the intersecting racial positionality of Native American women writers.

If I take this question as the point from which my study of Native American, female-authored complaint stems, I am immediately drawn to Lyons's theorisation of rhetorical sovereignty as a means of pursuing the duplicitous relationship between language, colonisation, and representation (449). In Lyons's words:

[r]hetorical sovereignty is the inherent right and ability of *peoples* to determine their own communicative needs and desires in this pursuit, to decide for themselves the goals, modes, styles, and languages of public discourse. (449, italics in the original)

Furthermore, Lyons expands this definition out to encompass the right of Native people to "have some say about the nature of their textual representations," attesting further to the importance of Native authored work in the affirming of sovereignty (458). This definition resonates powerfully with the formal history of complaint. As demonstrated in chapter one, the principal feature of the mode, prosopopoeia, often operates as a way to represent minorities, particularly those traditionally without access to the public writing sphere. Thus, claiming back the "I" and re-centring it from a *real* Native subjectivity (rather than the appropriated subjectivity we see in the British Romantic complaints), does something radical, not only to the Euro-masculine history of the mode, but to the place of Native writers and people within literature. For Lyons, legal and literary representation are both privileged within his definition, and this binary is one that lends itself to the role of Native American complaint as well. As we will see in Schoolcraft's work, her first-person laments establish a literary representation distinct from the depictions constructed about her by her husband, the Indian agent and anthropologist Henry Schoolcraft, as she instead defends and propagates the persistence of her Ojibwe culture and status.

Privileging rhetorical sovereignty as inherent to Native American writing raises the question of the relationship between the Indigenous woman writer and politics. Lyons's theorisation of this concept seems to suggest the innate politicisation of language in the hands (and mouths) of Native American people, and yet the question of whether Schoolcraft saw herself as a political writer complicates this formulation. In a letter addressed to Henry in the later years of their marriage, Schoolcraft explicates her impressions of female duties:

I cannot enter into the subject of Politicks, I am content to dwell under the dispensations of Providence... & I leave *this* subject to *Men*, as I think Women have a more appropriate sphere in domestic duties... I care not to be called *unpatriotic*, so

long as I obey the laws of the land I live in.” (20 Nov. 1837, qtd. in Parker, *Sound* 44; italics in the original)

And yet, as Parker points out, Schoolcraft then goes on to express her interest in the Canadian Revolution of 1837-38, contradicting her statement in the preceding sentences (44).

Throughout her life, she engages in political activity – as a young girl she accompanies her father, John Johnston, to Mackinac during the War of 1812, which Maureen Konkle stipulates as being for the purpose of translating between the British and Ojibwe (86). The reading of her poetry as Romantic complaint also contradicts this apolitical stance – Schoolcraft used her intelligent command over both Ojibwemowin (the Ojibwe language) and English to present subjective expressions of lament, anger, and protest regarding a range of topics.

Moving deeper into this discussion of language and politics, I return to a statement quoted in the introduction: words, Justice reminds us, “bear a particularly burdensome representational weight,” given the inseparability between language and power (*Why* 6). Justice speaks from his position as a Cherokee, Native American, and, by that extension, a member of a global Indigenous community, whose shared histories of colonisation and coercion have resulted in major rhetorical losses of language and expression. This shared experience breathes through Indigenous writing, which Justice eloquently surmises as

a deep, broad, ancient, and profound archive of Indigenous expression that affirms – indeed, insists upon – the right, responsibility, and capability of Indigenous artists to speak our truths into the world on our terms. (209)

It is no surprise then, given complaint’s gendered history, that in the hands of Native American women it operates so clearly as an expression of rhetorical sovereignty, although this is not necessarily because these writers are inherently political or write about politics (in the western sense of these words). Rather, it is the ability to opt out of that politicised space which distinguishes, say, Wordsworth’s and Southey’s poetry from this argument about whether or not we must read writers’ work with their political context in mind. The aesthetic experiments which motivate the British poets to adopt complaint can therefore be received as just that. For the Native women writers of the nineteenth and early-twentieth century, however, the act of writing signifies pertinent acts of self-determination and preservation within a moment of cultural erasure.

Perhaps complaint in the hands of a minority writer cannot escape some form of politicisation then, even if the particular complaint does not appear political. The women of the early modern period wrote explicitly political laments – take Anne Bradstreet’s “A

Dialogue between Old England and New, Concerning their Present Troubles, Anno 1642” – but they also wrote laments about child-loss, death, religion, and love, just as Native American women in the nineteenth and early-twentieth century did. These complaints, while not always explicitly political in their intent, construct *real* representations of womanhood, enabling these writers claim over experiences which had been typically ventriloquised by male poets. I do not wish to draw a theory so personal and important to the Native American context into a wider discussion of complaint in a way that detracts from the real-life acts of rhetorical sovereignty continuing to be done by Native writers and teachers, moreover perpetuating the continued rhetorical imperialism of white scholars. And yet, it also feels important to bring Indigenous theory into Romantic scholarship and, as I see it, Lyons’s discussion of this term reveals the attraction to complaint felt by women writers.

Identifying and reading Native American Romantic complaint alongside the framework of rhetorical sovereignty offers further benefits, helping to conceptualise a major formal distinction between British and Native American uses of the mode. If, as Lyons states, the “we” – not the “I” – is the driving synthesiser of Native rhetorical sovereignty, then it is the “we” of Native American complaint that offers the most significant engagement in this mode (461). Several poems in this chapter and the following one observe this distinction, as the traditional first-person “I” of complaint is rejected to support a more communal, kin-based perspective. Privileging the collective “we” over the “I,” women including Schoolcraft and Ruth Margaret Muskrat (who forms a large part of my third chapter) compose poems cognizant of the knowledge and experiences of wider family or community members. This fluidity of voice also enables them to invoke the laments of ancestors or others in their community, an action which honours the specific tribal epistemologies they speak from by keeping alive the spirit of these members alongside the voice of the author themselves. In doing so, the speaker(s) represents both the subjective “I” of the poet and, more often than not, a broader community of voices often located in the feminine, Indigenous experience.

Studying these poems as Native American Romantic complaints enables important points of access, from an English literary perspective, into the knowledge they bear, while also challenging and expanding the contexts of this mode. It enables us to place them not only within the British Romantic tradition, but also provides a linear study by which we can connect work of Native American women poets from different tribes, classes, and locations across space and time. In doing so, we can trace patterns across a vast body of work which has for too long been marginalised in literary scholarship. In saying that, this mode is just *one*

way of reading these poems – a way that is useful when looking to talk about them in relation to the British Romantic tradition. In other contexts, such as reading Schoolcraft's Ojibwemowin poems in relation to their Anishinaabe or Ojibwe literary tradition, they would likely look very different. There are times when this mode does not fit easily. There are awkward moments. If anything, however, this should prove the complexity and value of nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century poetry by Native American women, particularly in our readings of Romantic literature.

Furthermore, because the complaint mode so explicitly lends itself to the enactment of rhetorical sovereignty, the pairing of these two frameworks serve as a unique way for settler scholars to recognise and acknowledge the different value systems that underpin Native American literature. Womack's discussion of the Creek notion of balance illuminates the relationship and treatment of spirituality and politics in literary traditions, not only for the Creek, but for many Native American nations. His argument is simple – the reciprocal influence of spirituality and politics in literature is dependent on matters of balance – and yet his discussion concludes that these are inherent qualities which always manifest in mutually dependent ways throughout Native American rhetoric (51-60, esp. 53). This balance is what characterises the epistemology underpinning rhetorical sovereignty. It also provides some form of an answer to the question with which I opened this chapter – is the Native American woman's complaint innately political? The work of Schoolcraft and other women is woven with an intellectual spirit that is multi-faceted and not always comprehensible to the settler scholar / reader. When Schoolcraft laments leaving her children at boarding school in "On Leaving My Children," her complaint voices the same converging identities – that of an Ojibwe, a metis, a woman, a writer, a mother, a wife – that manifest in "Invocation," her complaint grieving the defamation of her Grandfather's Ojibwe Addik heritage. As I will try to mark along the way, her complaints are never simple in their articulation of lament. Rather, they balance her numerous identities and cultural educations in order to localise her own experience as the centre.

I. Waenaesh Keen? Who Are You?: Jane Johnston Schoolcraft in a Metis World

It is only recently that scholarship on Schoolcraft has begun to explore her writing outside the confines of white sentimentality (Cavalier 99). Lead by the increasing volume of work by Native American scholars, these revisionary historiographical movements are crucial in providing a more accurate understanding of Schoolcraft's life growing up as the daughter of

Ozhaguscodaywayquay, herself the daughter of an esteemed Ojibwe chief, and John Johnston, an Anglo-Irish fur trader. Born and raised in Sault St. Marie, a fur trading town within the *pays d'en haut* region, Schoolcraft spent most of her life immersed in what was a booming metis society – a mobile and evolving space distinct within the complex cultural landscape of the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries (Parker, *Sound* 4).¹⁴ It is because of the dynamic of this space that I refer to Schoolcraft as metis in its adjectival sense, referring to the mixed-blood culture and family she grew up amongst.¹⁵ Similarly, I speak of Schoolcraft as Ojibwe, rather than the more commonly used ethnonym Anishinaabe, as this is what she used to identify herself and her kin.¹⁶

Another term that captures the dynamic of Sault St. Marie and the Johnston family's role within the social, economic, and political climate is that of "the middle ground," introduced by Richard White in his study of the French / Algonquin relations around the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In "the middle ground," White argues that "creative misunderstandings" between two cultures produce not only compromise, but mediation, resulting in the creation of practices, rituals, and beliefs which function outside of either of the two cultures' traditions (xii-xiii). While the relationships between French and Algonquin people are the predominant focus of White's study, the Johnston family were very much entrenched in this culture of exchange and mediation.¹⁷ After pursuing Ozhaguscodaywayquay for a year, John Johnston was accepted by her father Waubojeg, a kinship union which strengthened Johnston's success as a trader and Ozhaguscodaywayquay's status within her clan. In 1793 the couple settled in Sault St. Marie, a town that had been operating for over a century with "mutual accommodation" primarily between the Anishinaabe / Ojibwe and white occupants (White xxvi; Parker, *Sound* 4). Johnston was a skilled and respected trader within the community, although as Parker points out his success in this middle ground world owed much to his wife's bilingual skill and

¹⁴ *Pays d'en haut* translates to "upper country" and refers to a territory in what was French Canada where the central fur trade was located (White xii). See White xxvii – xxix for a map detailing this region.

¹⁵ This is not to be confused with the Canadian Metis, a group who around this time began to self-identify under this ethnonym. While Schoolcraft was metis in the sense that she was "mixed-blood," she referred to herself as Ojibwe, and not as a part of the Metis people who formed within the *pays d'en haut* region (Parker 2007 xii). I take my lead from Parker, as the scholar who has most meticulously represented and discussed Schoolcraft and her work, who himself uses metis to describe Schoolcraft and the world she grew up in.

¹⁶ I follow the practices of Parker and Walker here. Schoolcraft was inconsistent with her terminology, using Chippewa, Ojibwa, Ojibway, and even O-jib-way when referring to her people, so I have followed the decisions of the former two scholars to adopt the modernised spelling, "Ojibwe." Similarly, I use Jane Johnston Schoolcraft's English name because that is, as Parker notes, how she signed her name. Any mention of Schoolcraft refers to Jane, and to differentiate her husband I use "Henry" or "Henry Rowe Schoolcraft." See Parker 2007 xii; Walker 137.

¹⁷ Parker adopts the concept of "the middle ground" in his descriptions of the Sault (2007, 4).

kinship networks, particularly as Ojibwe trading operated differently to white capitalist procedures; instead, gift giving and kinship practices were deeply imbedded in the act of trade, meaning that to be successful in this world white traders had to have access to these alternative business relationships (Parker, *Sound* 9).

Ozhaguscodaywayquay therefore held a central role in securing the family's status and success, and her influence within the community must have been obvious to Jane and her other children. Receiving a diverse, thorough education from both parents, Schoolcraft was fluent in Ojibwemowin and a talented writer and translator, making her the subject of her father's attention (himself a vigorous reader and writer). The effect this education had was, as Walker surmises, the erosion of "a strict binary separation between white and Indian worlds," and yet until recently scholarship on the Johnston household cast John's white, male influence as the predominant force over Schoolcraft, to the point at which Ozhaguscodaywayquay's maternal, Ojibwe presence is erased (61). Even Schoolcraft's husband Henry – who, as an Indian agent, similarly benefited off his relationship to the family's Ojibwe kinship network – dismissed the role of Ozhaguscodaywayquay in the upbringing of the Johnston children, writing to their daughter upon Schoolcraft's death in 1842:

Reflect, that your mother [Schoolcraft] herself, had not the advantages of a mother (in the refined sense of the term) to bring her up, that her education & manners were, in a great measure, formed by her *father*, and that she had many & peculiar trials to encounter on coming the broad & mixed circle of society. (16 Jun. 1842, qtd. in Parker, *Sound* 70; italics in the original)

The condescension in this letter is evident, creating a harmful, untruthful picture of a childhood divorced from maternal influence and Ojibwe culture. Readers of Schoolcraft's work must simply turn to her poetry and use of the Romantic complaint mode, however, for evidence against this assumption.

At the age of twenty-three, Schoolcraft composed "Invocation" (1823). Accompanied by the dedicatory subtitle "To My Maternal Grand-father on Hearing His Descent from Chippewa Ancestors Misrepresented," the poem adopts the mode of complaint in a politically charged revivification of her family name. A reading via this mode acknowledges the particular intention and tone behind such a work, locating it within the female-narrated, female-voiced tradition. This retrospective discussion of "Invocation" as complaint restores Schoolcraft's own work as the locus from which readers can infer the importance of her Ojibwe culture, as the mode challenges the reductive early records and scholarship by her

husband and twentieth-century scholars.¹⁸ In doing so, complaint reveals the poem not just as a powerful assertion of her Grandfather Waubojeege's Ojibwe identity, but her own.¹⁹

The poem opens with an imperative, as Schoolcraft calls on Waubojeege to "Rise bravest chief" (1). This device reveals her complaint to be relational, grounded in a familial context that immediately distinguishes her use of the mode from the British Romantics' ventriloquising of deserted Indian women. Not only does Schoolcraft's complaint refute the defamation of her deceased Grandfather to restore her family's lineage, but, as the poet-speaker, her voice becomes an augmentation of Waubojeege's voice, as she promises to speak for him and "proclaim" the honour that has been stripped from him (35). Again, I pause to argue for the reading of this poem as complaint, as an attentive consideration of the use of voice in "Invocation" offers an interesting and complex engagement with the mode. Rather than use prosopopoeia to ventriloquise Waubojeege's complaint, the multiple uses of imperative throughout the poem locate Schoolcraft's own voice as the point from which the lament emerges. The use of this device is executed differently to Southey's "Song of the Chikkasah Widow," in which the spirit of Ollanahta, the widow's deceased husband, is commanded to "[r]est, rest, [and] be still" (3). Here, Southey uses imperative to depict his Romantic Indian woman as active and independent in her complaint, in order to distinguish her from the bewailing women of traditional British male-authored, female-voiced complaint. In Schoolcraft's "Invocation," however, the boundaries of vocalisation are altered to include the multiple voices of her familial lament, as she has the spirit of Waubojeege sit alongside her in a literal "invocation." Although Waubojeege's voice is not actually represented, Schoolcraft imagines him standing in solidarity with her, so that, rather than commanding him to "rest" and be quiet, her complaint in fact augments a more kin-based expression typical of Native American Romantic complaint.

To reiterate, while "Invocation" serves to express the wider political contexts of tribal identity and the impact this has on the entire "warlike lineage" of Schoolcraft's Ojibwe ancestors, it is also a reaffirmation of her own personal identity (12). This can be seen in her attention to clan lineage, which functions in stark contrast to the homogenising rhetoric of her British Romantic contemporaries and their erasure of the diverse Indigenous nations of America under the label "Indian." Demonstrating her epistemological understanding of

¹⁸ See Brazer 1993 for an explicit example of the scholarly emphasis on Jane's "whiteness." See also Bremer 1987.

¹⁹ For the interested reader, Spry offers a provoking discussion of Waubojeege's leadership in his analysis of *The Invasion* (1932), a fictional autobiography of the Johnston family written by Janet Lewis. See Spry 84-87.

Anishinaabe clan structure, Schoolcraft immediately identifies Waubojeege as having “the mark of the noble deer,” establishing him as Addik (reindeer / caribou totem), an important hunting clan amongst the Ojibwe (Walker 64, 66). This status as a hunter and warrior is evoked throughout the poem; Schoolcraft calls on Waubojeege to “wield again thy warlike spear” (4) remembering his “eagle glance” (2), “valour and ire” (23), and “bright splendour” (28) in battle. While the point of the complaint is to condemn the “foes” (5) who, “with black envy” (7), tried to “garble the truth” and reduce (in Schoolcraft’s eyes) his status to that of a “Sioux” (the nineteenth-century term for the Oceti Sakowin), the specificity with which she presents her grandfather’s real identity speaks not only to her understanding of the Ojibwe clan structure, but to her own claim to that structure. Despite white attitudes at the time (which looked to favour the European “side” of her métis identity), she uses her complaint to affirm not simply her “Indianness,” but her Ojibwe and even Addik identity (Walker 60).

Idiosyncratically, Schoolcraft appears to draw on the noble savage trope in her descriptions of Waubojeege, presenting an expression of “Indianness” that resembles British representations. She repeatedly employs the epithets “warrior” and “noble” in her descriptions of his “[sublimity],” using these signifiers of status to emphasise the significance of her grandfather as an ogimaa.²⁰ Walker makes an important point in his discussion of “Invocation,” noting that the tendency in scholarship is to assume this is a result of assimilated learning via the Anglo teachings of Schoolcraft’s father (66). Rather, Walker remarks that this interpretation in fact denies Waubojeege the immense status and respect he earned via his position as an Addik, suggesting that, instead of reading the poem as a projection of internalised Indian tropes, it should be approached as a historical piece in which Schoolcraft honours her grandfather. In agreement with this, I want to suggest the conditions of “Invocation” as a complaint challenge these assumptions of internalisation even further, given the specific intention behind this poem is to endorse Waubojeege for his “deeds” and “name” against the blasphemous defamation of his lineage, with the repetition of such epithets doing so (34). Even though the language appears to imitate the rhetoric commonly used in British depictions of Native Americans, this complaint is composed with the specific intent of praising Waubojeege and condemning the defamers, using these adjectives to do so.

This compels me to emphasise that Schoolcraft, whose work was circulated infrequently and often anonymously (or under a pseudonym) in Henry’s publications, was

²⁰ “Ogimaa” is the Anishinaabemowin word for a hereditary political leader, that is, chief. See Spry 187n.1.

unlikely to be writing “Invocation” for a British or settler audience.²¹ Rather, the poem (not published until 1860, eighteen years after Schoolcraft’s death) in fact addresses a specifically Ojibwe or métis audience, evidenced by the referencing of particular clan knowledge. The choice of certain rhetoric cannot be interpreted as an attempt to appeal to a white audience: Schoolcraft’s issue is directly with the “They” (9) – potentially jealous Ojibwe or Sioux – who have tried to “lessen [Waubojieeg’s] fame” (11). The intention behind this poem is thus best displayed (from a British Romantic literary perception that is) by the reading of it as complaint, given the mode functions here as a reactive expression of anger. Instead of being understood as an elegy or ode, Schoolcraft’s expression here is one of lament and frustration at the defamation of both Waubojieeg’s and her own identity. She concludes by telling him to “rest” (33) in the comfort that she, his “child’s child,” will “proclaim” (35) and defend his honour, keeping his (and thereby her own) name within her “heart’s warmest core” (40).

To Schoolcraft, the blending of her Ojibwe and Euro-American worlds through writing was a natural and immediate way to answer the question “Waenaesh keen? (Who are you?)” (Walker 67). The complaint mode allows readers of the Romantic tradition to locate her work within this period and style while also acknowledging how she rejects or moulds certain conventions to accommodate and balance her métis identity. “Invocation” evinces a complaint impassioned in its defence of Schoolcraft’s Addik Ojibwe roots. Similarly, “The Contrast” is another poem that, read as a complaint, presents a defence of her métis identity, protesting this time against encroaching imperialist forces. As I have already noted at the beginning of this chapter, the poem opens with a striking gesture towards Schoolcraft’s rhetorical sovereignty, as she writes:

With pen in hand, I shall contrast,
The present moment with the past
And mark difference, not by grains,
But weighed by feelings, joys and pains. (1-4)

The physical act of writing is acknowledged as the process by which Schoolcraft can “weigh” her thoughts and express her concerns and laments. The poem posits her lament through a simple progression, as the first half presents a childhood “Calm, [and] tranquil – far from fashion’s gaze” (5). Here, Schoolcraft seems to be alluding not only to the Sault’s métis community, which for over a century had operated in relative harmony outside of scrutinous government control, but also her own childhood separate from the “gaze” of white men and

²¹ Jane sometimes published under the pseudonyms “Rosa” or “Leelinau” (Parker 2007, 219).

women who closely observed her after her marriage to Henry.²² Schoolcraft describes the “golden hours” (7) and “happy days” (6) spent enjoying “concerts” (13) and “books” (14) in her leisure time, characterising a childhood of peace and learning. We are told how “Friends on every side” (15) surround her, and the many “accents” (19) of her family and friends are remembered as “mild and gentle” as the “song of birds” (25-26).

Halfway through the poem, however, a dramatic change of tone occurs, as Schoolcraft reflects:

But ah! how changed is every scene,
 Our little hamlet, and the green,
 The long rich green, where warriors played [...]
 How changed, since full of strife and fear,
 The world hath sent its votaries here.
 The tree cut down – the cot removed,
 The cot the simple Indian loved,
 The busy strife of young and old
 To gain one sordid bit of gold
 By trade’s o’er done plethoric moil,
 And lawsuits, meetings, courts and toil. (35-46)

In this passage, Schoolcraft contrasts the beauty and natural abundance of the “rich green[s]” with the greedy, sterile invasion of votaries, lamenting the loss of this environment where she and her Native American family were safe. Readers may question certain idiosyncratic choices in her descriptions of her “Indian” family and friends as “simple.” As Kevin Hutchings points out, however, the use of the term in British Romantic poetry could be complimentary, denoting simplicity as “not a lack of reason but an admirable absence of social artifice and presumption” (47). Just as Wordsworth idealises the simple, pastoral lives of his rural folk in the *Lyrical Ballads*, Schoolcraft’s use of the term here is not necessarily an internalisation of negative Romantic stereotypes, or even degradation of non-metis Ojibwes. To assume so detracts from the real intention of her complaint – to criticise and protest the destruction of the Sault’s metis idyll by white imperial forces. As in “Invocation,” Schoolcraft’s adoption of particular words or phrases is done with specific intent; to dismiss it as unconscious internalisation misses the potency of her complaint.

²² This poem (and three other versions similar to it) was written in 1823, the same year Jane married Henry.

The particular care taken by Schoolcraft to endorse the gentle and loving relationships in her community parallels her depiction of the “busy strife” of invading American settlers and their imperial institutions, suggesting instead that it is the bicultural idyll of her childhood which is aligned with true civility. The final stanza of the poem offers a short rumination on this melancholy change, as she bids “Adieu, to days of homebred ease” (47), turning instead “half in joy, half in fear” to “Welcome the proud republic here” (53-4). This final turn, somewhat reluctant in its acceptance of “a new dominion,” emphasises Schoolcraft’s own ruminations on the complexity of her “middle ground” metís identity and her position among the competing ideologies of her American husband, metís family, and Ojibwe relatives (52). Reading “Invocation” and “The Contrast” alongside each other as complaints creates a complimentary dialogue defending this space, with literarily expressed rhetorical sovereignty being the primary way for Schoolcraft to do so.

II. “My land / My little daughter / My little son:” Kinship and Complaint

The previous two poems, when read as Native American Romantic complaints, suggest a fixation with identity and reveal how Schoolcraft firmly locates herself both within the metís world of the Sault and her maternal Ojibwe ancestry. In this section, I have grouped together a series of complaints which build on this notion of identity, particularly as it relates to Schoolcraft’s understanding of kinship. Throughout Schoolcraft’s poetry, a complex taxonomy of her relationships can be traced. Reading them together through the mode of complaint reveals an intelligent localising of her own positionality, as she places herself in relation to the emotional subjects closest to her – her children, her husband, and her land. Weaving this positionality through expressions of lament, protest, and anger, she embeds an Ojibwe epistemology of kinship via these rhetorical expressions of complaint. In this respect, her poetry is both reactive (as complaints, they are often occasional, protesting against particular events) *and* active, honouring the dynamic quality of kinship which, as Justice remind us, operates as something that is “*done* rather than something that simply *is*” (“Go Away Water!” 150; italics in the original). This notion of kinship and relationality offers an important access point into some of the more complex displays of affection and lament towards the aforementioned emotional subjects, particularly for those non-Ojibwe readers of Schoolcraft’s work (myself included), while also signalling a distinct epistemological investment driving the aesthetic and formal qualities of Native American Romantic complaint. In the following poem the relationship between Schoolcraft’s land and children

plays with spatial opposition and physical distance – she travels away from her children, but back to her homeland. And yet, these two subjects are not binary but one in the same: that is, one does not compensate for the other, rather they hold the same essence in her heart.

Afflicted with poor health which would continue for the remaining years until her death in 1842, Schoolcraft suffered further in response to Henry's decision in 1839 to send their two children to boarding school in the eastern states. Ironically, Henry opposed the removal of Native American children to boarding schools and yet operated under the belief that his own children deserved an elite schooling, meaning that Schoolcraft experienced the same painful separation from her children as many other Native American parents (Parker, *Sound* 45). In response, she composed a poem relating this experience, choosing to do so in Ojibwemowin. The poem, given the extended title "On Leaving My Children John and Jane at School, in the Atlantic States, and Preparing to Return to the Interior," offers a complex and revealing insight into Native American Romantic complaint because its original Ojibwemowin composition was preserved by Henry. Furthermore, it is perhaps the most evocative example of the differences between male- and female-authored complaints as we have access to three versions of the poem: the original Ojibwemowin version written by Jane, a "free translation" published by Henry, and a literal translation prepared by Dennis Jones, Heidi Stark, and James Vukelich for Parker's anthology of Schoolcraft's poems (48). An intertextual reading across these sources enables real insight into the function of complaint in Schoolcraft's writing, conferring the rhetorical sovereignty determined in Jane's *own* use of the mode.

The original Ojibwemowin poem and Henry's translation, dated 1839, are recorded in his *Personal Memoirs* (632-33). Expanding Schoolcraft's eighteen short lines into a thirty-two-line complaint which divides its time between praising the homeland she is returning to and lamenting the children she has left behind, Henry's translation is elaborate and laden with Romantic imagery. Correctly, he perceives the importance of her homeland, emphasised in the repetition of the line "Ain dah nuk ki yaun" (translating to "my land"). His first stanza establishes this connection to her "country so dear" (1), the line "My country, my country, my own native land" (3) localising this as the site of comfort for his Jane's maternal lament. The second stanza expands on this, centring the description of home in the scenes of the Sault, which is referred to as the "Fair land of the lakes" (7). With meticulous detail, Henry attempts to capture the essence of this place Schoolcraft is so intrinsically connected to, describing the

[...] beaming bright waters, and landscapes of light;

The breeze and the murmur, the dash and the roar,
That summer and autumn cast over the shore. (8-10)

Henry's own particular affiliation with the area seems to dominate here, as these lines take on the rhetoric of the colonial gaze found in ethnographic and travel literature, texts he himself wrote and published.²³ The abundant descriptions of the land and its oral history – “the lullaby tongue, / That soothed [the speaker Jane] to slumber when youthful and young” – are, as we shall see, excessive when placed alongside Jane's more humble homage (11-12). Furthermore, Henry draws on Romantic tropes to denote this ancestral connection to the Sault as the place where his wife's “forefathers, in liberty free... / shook they the war lance,” contrasting the simplicity of Schoolcraft's Ojibwe poem in which this connection is embedded in the utterance “My land” (14-15; 3).

The newer translation of “On Leaving My Children” places Schoolcraft's Ojibwemowin version in stark contrast, revealing a poem that is powerful in its simplicity. Unlike many of Schoolcraft's poems written in English, its form operates outside of the Romantic tradition, leading Parker to argue for its modernist qualities. He points out the separation between each line as having the effect of suspending each statement in space, a decision which perhaps reflects the sense of distance Schoolcraft feels from both her land and her children as she travels in the liminal space between them (Parker, *Sound* 50). The poem opens in a contemplative state:

As I am thinking
When I find you
My land
Far in the west
My land (1-5)

This intransitive use of the verb “thinking” is evocative in its ambiguity, suspending us as readers (like the lines themselves), as we are provoked to question what Schoolcraft's admission of objectless thought centres around. As the poem weaves between the memory of Schoolcraft's land and children, this act of thought – simply stated, rather than attached directly to an object – maps the weight of these two loves as intimately interconnected. Repeated use of the possessive signifier “my” furthers this by creating a linguistic association

²³ Some of Henry Schoolcraft's well-known ethnographic publications include: *Algonic Researches: Comprising Inquiries Respecting the Mental Characteristics of the North American Indians* (1839); *Oneóta, Or, Characteristics of the Red Race of America* (1845); and *Personal Memoirs of a Residence of Thirty Years With the Indian Tribes On the American Frontiers* (1851).

between that which is integral to her: “My land / My little daughter / My little son” (5-7). While Henry’s version of the poem chooses to depict his wife’s sadness via both detailed Romantic descriptions of the Sault and complaint rhetoric, language and form in the new translation create an evocative space in which Schoolcraft’s lament is revealed via the simple stating of her attachments.

The attention to home’s solaces in Henry’s translation are balanced by the lament which dominates the second half of the poem, as his Jane cries “oh! what’s the joy that a home can impart, / Removed from the dear ones who cling to my heart” (23-4). Admitting that “[her] heart is still here, / With [her] sweet lovely daughter, and bonny dear boy,” Henry briefly allows his speaker a moment of contestation against his authority, as she begs “tell me, can schools / Repay for my love, or give nature new rules?” (25-6) and complaint rhetoric furthers her maternal grief, as she cries “but ah! my poor heart” (29). In the final stanza, quoted below in full, the Jane of Henry’s translation rectifies any implication of challenge, however, conceding to her sense of duty while maintaining the pervading sense of maternal lament:

I return to my country, I haste on my way,
For duty commands me, and duty must sway;
Yet I leave the bright land where my little ones dwell,
With sober regret, and bitter farewell;
For there I must leave the dear jewels I love,
The dearest of gifts from my Master above. (31-6)

The tone of this final stanza is remarkably stoic in relation to the preceding admissions of woe, as the paternalistic presence of both her husband and the “Master above” are reinstated. The return to her country signals a full-circle in the complaint, as the comforts gestured to in the first three stanzas are evoked in this acknowledgement, confirming the conciliatory nature of her homeland and suggesting (along with the realisation of duty), some sense of resignation towards this event.

The religious turn in the final couplet of Henry’s version is one not uncommon in the female-authored complaints of early modern poetry, and yet, when placed alongside the direct translation, we can see this devotional turn is his design only. Rather, the final two stanzas of the newest translated version maintain an emphasis on Schoolcraft’s ancestral lands, suggesting it is this physical location which she ties her devotion to and is, in turn, comforted by. This distinction is important given that, particularly in her child-loss poetry, Schoolcraft does occasionally conclude her English-written complaints with a consolatory

turn to God. Here, however, she expresses a sense of ontological connection between the land's essence and her own, articulating this Ojibwe epistemology through her mother-tongue. Translated into the reflexive expression, "That is the way that I am, my being" (13), her "being" becomes something produced intransitively (not for an object); as Parker surmises, it is something that just *is* – or, in line with Justice's summation of kinship, *done* (Parker, *Sound* 50; Justice, *Why* 150). The simplicity of this expression of ontology, combined with repetitive references to the kinship felt between her land, ties her spirituality to her natural environment, creating a sense of epistemological acuity specific to her Ojibwe heritage.

In distinct opposition to Henry's free translation, the only explicit acknowledgement of emotion (in the direct translation to English that is) occurs at the final line of the poem, as she cries "Ahh but I am sad" (18). The Jane of Henry's complaint spends most of three stanzas expressing the woe of her "poor heart" and then concludes in a resignation of duty; meanwhile, the newer translation reveals a different manner and order of expression. The acknowledgement of emotion at the very end disrupts the sense of comfort Schoolcraft's homeland offers, the conjunction "but" seeming to suggest that *despite all of this* she remains sad, estranged from her children and suffering regardless of the ontological continuity that drives her back to her land.

In spite of this statement of emotion we must accept that, regardless of the precision of the newer translation, our access as English readers to the original tones and expression behind Schoolcraft's Ojibwemowin "On Leaving My Children" is restricted. When her attention turns midway through the poem from her children to her land, Schoolcraft writes:

[emphatically] But soon

It is close however

To my home I shall return (10-12)

Here, the decision by the translators to mark the sense of expression with square brackets recognises the constraints of translation into English. Without this indication, we would have no idea of the forcible intention behind this shift in focus – a shift which, read with an emphatic tone, suggests the weight and power of Schoolcraft's return home and her feelings about this decision. In many ways this literal marker of translation failure reveals the limitations of a project such as this: as English readers how can we ever completely understand the tones of this Ojibwemowin poem? While the direct translation does make my argument for complaint as a point of access relatively complicated, I would suggest that, for those non-Ojibwemowin readers (myself included) who approach the poem, using this mode

as an interpretative framework at the very least prompts us to consider the potential expressions of emotion – of love and sadness – by Ojibwe writers, while keeping in mind the pitfalls of translation.

What is clear from this intertextual dialogue is that it is Henry's translation which sits securely within the Romantic complaint tradition, while Schoolcraft's – although in many ways defined by its closing utterance of lament – operates quite distinctly outside of the typical conventions of the mode. It is for our own benefit that complaint is used to conceptualise the poem within a wider (English) tradition, and again I must acknowledge this frame has many benefits for accessing Native female-authored poetry, while also many pitfalls. In spite of these complexities, which are nicely revealed across the multiple translations of "On Leaving My Children," an interesting relationship to Romantic complaint stands: Henry's decision to frame his free translation through this mode reveals his conception of his wife's work as operating within very conventional Euro-masculine and Romantic ideals of femininity, and it is surprising (or perhaps unsurprising) that when we encounter the direct translation immense formal and aesthetic differences are exposed. While complaint may not fit as neatly with Schoolcraft's own composition as it does with Henry's version, a conversation regarding the mode and the two poems does expose the disparities between (white) male- and (Native) female-authored expressions of grief.

Schoolcraft's poems about motherhood are suffused with a rhetorical sovereignty located in her feminine, maternal experience of loss. The land, while not always at the forefront, is invariably present, a decision that readers must be careful not to assume is simply Romantic and sentimental but rather an expression of kinship inherent to her understanding of motherhood and, at a time of encroaching imperial control, prescient to the feeling of loss. Christine Cavalier makes the point that through sentimental and complaint discourses Schoolcraft finds "a means of conveying her emotions of depression and frustration" in a way that, "from the standpoint of her father's heritage," is "legitimizing and even prestigious" (103). "Sweet Willy" (1835 or later) is a poem that, on the surface, appears as a conventional elegiac complaint lamenting the death of her young son William. Its representation of Christian, métis motherhood, however, subverts existing tropes like the "madness" of Wordsworth's mother (discussed in chapter one) and challenges Romantic conceptions of Indigenous maternity. Her complaint recalls the time that has passed since William was borne from her "anguished sight" (3), as she uses the refrain, "A hundred moons and more have past" (1) to reveal her sustained sorrow. The image suggests a sense of constancy which parallels her own grief, entrenching the complaint within a Romantic

context as she intertwines death and the natural world to reaffirm the Romantic idea of one's emotional condition being tied up with the natural state of things around oneself.

Notably, Schoolcraft plays into the "forsaken Indian" trope, as she relays how the death of William has left herself and his father "Forsaken and alone" (8). It is likely Schoolcraft had been exposed to the *Lyrical Ballads*, and thus to Wordsworth's "The Complaint of the Forsaken Indian Woman," but at the very least she would have been familiar with the stereotypes about Native women which manifested in both political discourse and British and settler Romantic literature.²⁴ These stereotypes, which regarded the female indigene as "both a pitiable victim of male-governed Indian society and a sublime other" (Fulford 174), are not, however, perpetuated in Schoolcraft's "forsakenness"; she is not "uncanny," nor is she sent mad by grief. Instead, her complaint laments her son's death and references her Christian faith as a source of consolation. Rewriting the "forsaken" trope in an instance of rhetorical sovereignty, Schoolcraft uses complaint to centre the experience of sorrow from her own voice, thus denying stereotypes imbedded in the Euro-masculine writing of poets like Wordsworth.

"To My Ever Beloved and Lamented Son William Henry" (1827) works as the pair to "Sweet Willy," revealing Schoolcraft's adoption of the elegiac complaint to explore grief and motherhood.²⁵ The lines "Sweet Willy" and "My Willy" form an alternating refrain to conclude each quatrain, evoking a similar rhetorical concern with positionality – the repeated emphasis on "my" signalling her son's belonging to her – as we see in "On Leaving My Children." Midway through the poem, what has been a focus on her maternal affection for the child "nestled on [her] breast" and "in her arms" becomes a lament which adopts complaint rhetoric comparable to the British tradition, as she cries:

Where is that voice attuned to love,
That bid me say "my darling dove"?
But oh! that soul has flown above,
Sweet Willy. (17-20)

²⁴ Henry provides a brief picture of the literary world Jane would have been exposed to in his recollection of her father John's library. Although he does not mention Wordsworth, he lists Southey, Campbell, Byron and other canonical British poets among some of the figures John was interested in. See H. Schoolcraft 1908 pp. 63-4.

²⁵ This poem is written in six different manuscripts and published in Henry's *Personal Memoirs* (261-62). There are more known versions of this poem than any other, suggesting Schoolcraft regarded it highly, both personally and literarily (Parker 2007, 136). Henry himself called for its preservation "as a specimen of native composition" (261).

Her complaint poses the question dreaded by every parent – “Can I believe the heart-sick tale / That I, thy loss must ever wail,” evoking a lachrymose aesthetic to emphasise her woe (34-5).

In both of these child-loss complaints, the idea of Christian reconciliation is explored. However, where “To My Ever Beloved” concludes in the solace of God’s “decree” (43) and the knowledge that her “spirit will soon be free” (41), “Sweet Willy” offers a more critical meditation on the comfort expected in religious devotion. Using Psalm 125:5 [“They that sow in tears shall reap in joy”] as a refrain, “Sweet Willy” ends with an implicit scepticism over whether joy will in fact amount from her “bitter tears” (47). Although both poems share the same composition date, “Sweet Willy” appears to give more insight into Schoolcraft’s relationship with Christianity; while turning to religion for relief, she stresses that her confinement to a physical, earth-bound body is not fully comforted by a Christian doctrine, emphasising her grief as being irreconcilable. This experience of internal spiritual conflict is one often explored in the elegiac or child-loss complaints of early modern women writers, and Schoolcraft’s own struggle with this is similarly navigated through the mode of complaint, enabling her to express her grief and frustration regardless of her spiritual and religious education.

Schoolcraft carves out a space for reflection on the experience of child-loss and motherhood by localising her own voice and identity as an Ojibwe-Irish woman, and in this respect she dismisses the stereotypes proliferated by the British Romantic poets. Her own identity and relationship to that which she laments is constantly at the forefront of each complaint, as she often bemoans or protests loss and spatial distance from the kin she feels close to. In “Absence” (1825), a complaint exploring the suffering felt when separated from Henry, this idea of distance is imparted via the contextualising of the lament with Ojibwemowin subheadings, each of which function to locate her emotional subjects in relation to each other and herself: Nindahwaymau (the sibling of my mind / heart), Neezhicka (alone), Neenawbame (a husband’s absence), Ningwisis (my son) (Parker, *Sound* 122-23). The aesthetic layout of this poem prompts the reader to keep this notion of kinship at the forefront, alongside a recognition of the metis context through which Schoolcraft frames her experience of Henry’s spatial (and perhaps mental or intellectual) distance. Such a reading asks us to consider the dynamics of her relationship to Henry, the way in which her white husband fitted into her understanding of kinship, and the relationality of belonging. In this poem, complaint again becomes the principal mode by which her experience of kinship is explored, as Schoolcraft reflects on the reasons for her unhappiness, beginning by marking

the distance between her and Henry, but ending with a more critical expression of concern over the effect of this on her wider kin circle – namely, their child.

To reiterate, the division of “Absence” into four sections intentionally locates the tone and context of each section around an emotion or emotional subject, rooting the poem in a corporeal, kin-based Ojibwe experience. Despite the poem being broken up in such a way, the overall lament of loneliness and longing is strengthened by each section, placing it firmly within the female-authored, female-voiced complaint tradition as Schoolcraft expresses her despair at being apart from “nindahwaymau.”²⁶ This serves as the title for the opening section of the poem and Parker translates it to mean “my sibling of the opposite sex,” a title which may seem peculiar given its attribution to her “noble, generous, warm” husband (Parker, *Sound* 122-3; line 7). As Walker has noted, however, “nindahwaymau” is used here in more of a metaphorical sense, perhaps inviting us to understand it as “the sibling of my mind/heart,” denoting the close, intellectual, playful relationship the Schoolcrafts had (69). In using this affectionate address, the solitary scene constructed by Schoolcraft, who “[seated] down in some lone glade” (11) begs “waft him, ye winds, in safety back” (17), emphasises the loneliness – both intellectually and physically – felt at Henry’s absence.

The poem continues with three more sections, all of which develop this sense of seclusion and position the complaint within a metis context. The second segment “Neezhicka,” sees Schoolcraft “Anxious” (1), as “fears possess [her] troubl’d soul” (5) while “time glides on *too* slow” (2, italics in the original) waiting for Henry’s return. Admitting that these feelings only cease when she “gaze[s] upon [her] child” (9), Schoolcraft spends the rest of the section in “fervent pray’r” (12) for her son Willy, expressing a maternal desire for God’s “blessings” (16). Section three, “Neenawbame,” observes an almost severe return to her complaint, however, as Schoolcraft questions:

Say, do thy thoughts e’er turn on home?
As mine to thee incessant roam.
And when at eve, in deserts wild,
Dost thou think on our lovely child?
Dost thou in stillness of the night,
By the planet’s silvery light

²⁶ See Parker’s note to this poem regarding his editorial decision to reproduce these four sections as one poem (2007, 122). There is one manuscript version of “Absence” in full; however, sections two, three, and four all appear as individual poems in other manuscripts, causing some ambiguity as to whether they should be read separately. I have chosen to follow Parker here and treat the sections as one whole poem. In doing so, the reading of complaint is strengthened by the development of lament across each part.

Breathe a pray'r – to the Spirit above,
 For thy wife, and thy child, my love. (7-14)

She continues to call Henry her “dearest friend,” and yet the repeated rhetorical questions in this section display at best a sense of dejection, but possibly even criticism or accusation at his long absences (1). This is accompanied by a haunting anecdote in the final section “Ningwisis,” meaning “my son,” which sees Willy imagining that with every boat arriving at the shore his father has returned home. In drawing Willy’s own sadness into the lament, Schoolcraft augments her complaint to represent the family Henry has left behind. She is not simply a lonely wife who is helpless without her husband; rather, she asks Henry to return to “share the bliss a mother feels,” leaving her complaint lingering on the suggestion that Henry should not be an absent father to their children (9). The complaint is cleverly woven with numerous grievances then, as Schoolcraft locates her experience as a wife and mother at the heart of her lament, bemoaning Henry’s absence for personal reasons, but also criticising him on account of his failure to attend to his kinship duties.

Discussing the preceding poems as Native American Romantic complaints enables us to consider a fuller picture of Schoolcraft’s literary agency. Her poems are not simply displays of literary sentimentality concerned with pensive introspection, tear-stained sympathy, and fantasies of “mother-love and home,” nor are they meek expressions of white assimilation (Bennett qtd. in Cavalier 98). Reading them as complaints – here emboldened by the notions of rhetorical sovereignty and kinship – places them within the tradition of Native women writers reclaiming their subjectivity from the imaginations of male writers. It also lets us reconsider Schoolcraft as an intelligent writer, influenced by both Ojibwe and Euro-American Romantic ideas. In the following section, we see the collision of these two influences in her translations of Ojibwe songs into English, in which the resulting products often adopt the tones and tropes of complaint. These translations offer a provoking parallel with the discussion in chapter one regarding Southey’s composition of what he perceived to be Indian song. As I will demonstrate, reading Schoolcraft’s translations alongside her poetry and the mode of complaint gives further testimony to her own rhetorical sovereignty, whilst affirming the importance of her Ojibwe ancestry and kinship obligations.

III. Schoolcraft’s Translations: Ojibwe Songs and Complaint

If Southey’s antiquarian project is the recovery of oral songs as an experiment in form and what McLane calls “literarily mediated authority,” then Schoolcraft’s own translation and

composition of Ojibwe songs into English produce a body of work attesting the rhetorical sovereignty that she, as a métis woman, is determined to defend (183). This collection, amassed by Parker in *The Sound the Stars Make Rushing Through the Sky* (2007), reveals a poetic project not of recovery but of preservation, as Schoolcraft draws from her mother Ozhaguscodaywayquay's teachings to commit to paper, both in Ojibwemowin and English, the songs of her people. Parker acknowledges the noticeable difference in tone and form between her translations – which are dispersed throughout numerous journals, sometimes in her pen and other times attributed to her by Henry and other associates – and her own poetry, highlighting her refinement as a poet and her readiness as a translator in separating her own aesthetic from the original text – something Henry, or Southey for that matter, did not do (65).

While a whole project could be dedicated to a recovery and discussion of Schoolcraft's song translations, I bring a few examples from this collection into my examination of Native American Romantic complaint to contrast the work on British Indian song in my first chapter. It is interesting that the majority of the songs collated in Parker's collections can be easily affiliated with the complaint mode, suggesting the likelihood of a similar tradition existing in pre- and post-invasion Native American oral literature. Using complaint as a point of access into the English translations of these songs, a pattern can be traced throughout Schoolcraft's Ojibwe and Romantic-informed understanding of poetry. Again, these songs exist firmly within an Ojibwe epistemology, predating any discussion of the complaint mode; yet the decision by Schoolcraft to translate these specific songs speaks to her own interests and experiences as many of them are concerned with the absence or loss of a lover or child, both which she writes about prolifically in her own poetry.

In chapter one I suggested a parallel between the formal features of complaint and the British Indian song, informed by McLane's observation of the latter demanding a competing binary of authorial objectivity alongside the subjective exploration of an Indigenous subject. In the translations by Schoolcraft, however, a different effect is achieved, as the tension between the objective and subjective is somewhat dissolved by Schoolcraft's own proximity to the cultural contexts of the songs. The speaker of each song in many cases augments Schoolcraft's own voice alongside a broader community of voices often located in the feminine Ojibwe experience. In "A Mother's Lament for the Absence of a Child" for example, complaint language is emphasised via a repetitive three-stanza song; the English translation is produced in full below to demonstrate the effect of this repetition on evincing the tone of complaint.

Oh my daughter – my little daughter – oh my daughter my little daughter! Alone now
am I – far far you are gone, and alone now am I.

Sorrowful and lone am I – Sorrowful and lone am I. Always alone – all day alone, my
tears are shed for you. Sorrowful and lone am I.

Have pity on me – have pity on me, my Father abiding above – Take care of my
daughter – my little daughter – Have pity on my love.

The translation evidently reflects its oral form rather than morphing into a British-influenced ballad complaint, which much of Schoolcraft's own poetry takes as its shape. While the Ojibwe text of this song is recorded in Jane's hand, the English translation itself is in Henry's and there is little evidence to suggest to whom the translation is attributed. As Parker points out, however, even if Henry is responsible for the English text it is likely Jane had a role in aiding the transcription (*Sound* 211). Regardless, we can assume Jane had an affiliation with the song in order to record it phonetically in Ojibwemowin. The mournful tone of the bereaved speaker certainly resonates with her own maternal laments "Sweet Willy" and "To My Ever Beloved and Lamented Son William Henry," both turning in the same respect to God in order to seek comfort.²⁷ Similarly, the aesthetic of tears or lachrymose trope common in female complaint also appears here, as in the aforementioned child-loss complaints, emphasising the anguish of the female speaker. For these reasons, I chose to read this as Jane's work because it augments a sense of loss familiar to her other poems and, moreover, is not excessive and embellished (which would suggest Henry to be the likely translator, considering his version of "On Leaving My Children") but rather condensed in comparison to its Ojibwemowin original.

Another song attributed to Schoolcraft is voiced by a widow who laments her loss and looks to find her lover's spirit.²⁸ Titled "Song for a Lover Killed in Battle," the complaint offers a representation of widowhood in contrast to Southey's "Song of the Chikkasah Widow," one that is remarkably grounded in the natural spirit world. Listening to "the newly budded leaves" (8), the speaker employs imperative, asking "Whisper, spirit, / Whisper to me" (12-13). She determines that once "The grass that is growing over [her lover's] bed of earth" is long enough that "its sighs [can] be heard upon the wind" (2-3), it will "answer [her]

²⁷ This detail in the song translation suggests one or a combination of the following contexts: that either the song had a post-invasion composition; that it morphed over time with introduced Christianity; or Schoolcraft's translation posits an expression of spirituality via her own Christian values. As there is no information regarding from whom Schoolcraft learnt this song, it is difficult to say whether it goes back throughout Ojibwe tradition.

²⁸ Whether Schoolcraft translated this is ambiguous, although the Ojibwe song itself is attributed to her in Henry's *Travels in the Central Portions of the Mississippi Valley* (1825) and it is likely she would have had at least some involvement in the translations (Parker 2007, 205-6).

plaint” (14) and communicate her lover’s voice. The complainant is patient but “Sorrowing” (20), as imperative is used again to conclude the song with the summation, “Hasten, lover; hasten! / Come, spirit; come!” (22-3). Unlike the allusion to God in “A Mother’s Lament,” this song seems to predate or at least disregard any sense of Christian conciliation, as the speaker instead grounds themselves in reverence for the natural world.

In “The O-jib-way Maid,” a song praised by Schoolcraft’s friend, the writer Anna Jameson, and Henry’s superior, the Superintendent of Indian Affairs Thomas McKenney, Schoolcraft translates the story of a distraught young American who “sobs for his sweetheart, because she is going away!” Multiple translations of this song exist; however, the one most definitively attributed to Jane is a literal translation in prose form, reproduced below.

Why! what’s the matter with the young American? He crosses the river with tears in his eyes! He sees the young Ojibway Girl preparing to leave the place: he sobs for his sweetheart, because she is going away! but he will not sigh long for her, for as soon as he sees her out of sight, he will forget her.

This literal translation differs in many ways from a traditional complaint form. It is prosaic; it is not voiced from a first-person pronoun; it centres on a male subject. Placed alongside the Ojibwe song, the translation also deviates significantly from the repetitious form of the song, which Schoolcraft reproduces with five quatrains, each concluding with “We yea, yea haw ha! We yea, yea haw ha!”

Although the translation is not direct, together with the original song form it is suggestive of aspects of complaint, making it a worthwhile divergence in my discussion, particularly given it was such a popular song. What I find most striking about the translation is its explicit criticism of the romantic exploits of white men, which, rather than the young American’s lament itself, enables the poem to be read as a potential complaint. Like a significant number of Schoolcraft’s own poems, the song focuses on loss and absence, but while Schoolcraft as the poet-speaker casts herself in a state of perpetual grief at the death of her son Willy or the absence of Henry, the American of the song “will not sigh long” over the remove of “his sweetheart.” Schoolcraft, who was frequently anxious and even critical of her husband’s long periods of time away, expressed similar concerns about Henry forgetting her; a fate which – as the song warns – was common experience for young Native American girls.²⁹ Thus, whether or not the original Ojibwe song or its translation by Schoolcraft

²⁹ For another Native American Romantic complaint dealing with this issue, see Anderson’s “Nowita, the Sweet Singer” (1900) in chapter three.

functions as a complaint, it certainly refers to a context out of which her own anxieties – which become the subject of her complaints – perhaps manifested. The concluding critique of this behaviour by white men places the song within a specifically female Ojibwe community, functioning as both a lament and warning to young women.

The reading of complaint in these songs and the preceding poetry considers the mode as pertinent to Schoolcraft's agenda as an Ojibwe woman writer. Thinking about them as Native American Romantic complaints, an albeit somewhat generous definition in relation to the song translations, demonstrates the capacity of these compositions to reflect and configure under a particular poetic motive, one rooted in the experience of womanhood and métis identity. In Cari Carpenter's *Seeing Red*, sentimental literature is re-envisioned as a genre by which Native American women writing in the nineteenth century could contemplate femininity and Indigeneity alongside anger. Schoolcraft, whose own writing has often been dismissed as sentimental, should be seen to be doing just this through complaint, using the mode to interrogate her identity (and representations of it by others), her corporeal and emotional experiences within a métis world, and her place as a writer. Doing so enables scholars to place Schoolcraft's poetry in dialogue with a wider Romantic context, emboldening her complaint lyrics next to not only those of the imagined "Indian" women of British poets, but also within the Romantic canon itself. Juxtapositions like the one which opens this thesis – the placing of Schoolcraft and Southey in an intertextual discussion – therefore become effective and rewarding, offering new chances for dialogue between Romantic studies and the writing of Native women.

Chapter 3. From Pen to Mouth: Writing Back

Your mothers, your sisters ask and beg of you not to part with any more of our lands. We say ours. You are our descendants; take pity on our request. But keep it for our growing children, for it was the good will of our creator to place us here [...] Only keep your hands off paper talks for it is our own country. For [if] it was not, they would not ask you to put your hands to paper, for it would be impossible to remove us all.

“Petition to the Cherokee National Council,” Ward and Cherokee Women, 1817.

Complaint’s distinctive attachment to elaborate framing devices, along with a marked commitment to the repetition of highly conventionalised and stylized visual and poetic topoi, enacts a self-conscious interest in the relationship between the exemplary and singular: who speaks, who listens?

Kate Lilley, “Anne Killigrew and the Restoration of Complaint,” 247.

It is for several reasons that I quote the above two epigraphs alongside each other. Seemingly dissimilar, the first is a petition from the Cherokee Women’s council, whose central author is Nancy Ward, or Nanye’hi, a woman regarded as one of the last great War Women / Beloved Women,³⁰ while the other is taken from Lilley’s essay on complaint in the works of Restoration poet Anne Killigrew. Although vastly different in context, what Lilley notes as central to Killigrew’s work – and in fact to complaint in all its forms – is the question of authorship versus audience, or as she simply puts it: *who speaks and who listens?* For poets who are also women, this question is almost never purely literary, although it is through the complaint mode that we can now see a particular female articulation of grievances of a political nature. For Native American women, whose political histories looked much different to their early modern counterparts, this poetic mode of protest is naturally borne in their poetry, as they combine English written form with the diplomatic knowledges asserted by elder kinswomen like Nanye’hi. And what radiates throughout Nanye’hi’s petition is the response to Lilley’s question: *I am speaking, and you are listening.*

For the purposes of cohesion and clarity, this chapter sticks to poetic representations of complaint which have strong resemblances to the mode in their adoptions and re-appropriations of prosopopoeiac and melancholic conventions. While it is tempting to broaden my study to consider texts such as Nanye’hi’s petition as versions of complaint

³⁰ See Introduction, n.7. See also Cumfer 27, 35-38 for detail about Nanye’hi’s status and role in diplomatic negotiations.

themselves, I am resisting this impulse in order to maintain a focus on the mode in poetry and song that draws on and responds to the coinciding eras of colonialism and Romantic literature.³¹ This is not to say that Native women's diplomatic histories did not hugely influence the many forms of literary protest seen within the Native American canon, arguably prompting the natural ascension of the complaint mode into Native women's poetry as a tool of rhetorical sovereignty and expression. The link between these diplomatic histories and complaint is certainly crucial; however, engendering connections between pre- and post-contact forms of protest and a poetic mode only recently consolidated in literary scholarship is not my motivation here. What acknowledging the diplomatic histories of Native American women *does* do is suggest ways in which the poets I look at, all of whom are writing post-1850 and well into the early twentieth century, continue a tradition of female-voiced protest via a hybridised form.

Nanye'hi's petition is a striking example to begin with because it serves as a literary example (presented both orally and in written form to the council) of Native American female protest grounded in the authority of kin relations. Nanye'hi and the other women associated with the Cherokee women's council provocatively assert their identities as mothers because from this position they enact a particularly close relationship with their land, as both the growers and cultivators, but also symbolically as life-givers themselves (Cumfer 36-8). Removal is shown to be akin to matricide here, as the symbolic powers of kin relations are used to validate and give urgency to the protest being made (Miles 226). In the same way, the women poets in this chapter privilege kinship at the heart of their complaints. That is not to say this is unique to Native women's writing. Daniel Heath Justice, Chadwick Allen, and a wave of Indigenous scholars consider kinship theory as a central force in the composition and study of Native literature, given its centrality to Indigenous cosmology. As the diplomatic history of Native American women reveals, however, kin relations accrued a vital rhetorical

³¹ See Parker 2007, 74-5n.1. Here, Parker discusses the "subjectiveness" of what is privileged as literary and what is not, detailing the process he took to appreciate and understand Jane Johnston Schoolcraft's literary works in relation to both western and Native American conceptions of literature. For another very useful, expansive discussion of Indigenous literature and the complexities one encounters defining this, see Justice 2018, 16-26. Justice considers the scope of Indigenous literature and the Native American scholarship attending to its definition, acknowledging the "cultural capital" (20) embedded in the term, while also reminding readers of the "diverse textualities and interpretative traditions" (23) that also imbue the different forms of Indigenous literature. My decision to stick to Native American poetry and song written in English recognises that it is through my training in English literature and British Romanticism that I come to read these texts. While they are only one part of a *much* broader "literary" archive, they hold the potential to enrich both the Romantic canon and a Native American women's literary tradition.

role in the way women protected their world, making its prominence in their writing in English (and in their *complaint* writing in particular), even more self-evident.

In Justice's *Why Indigenous Literature Matters* four provocative questions are posed: "How do we learn to be human?"; "How do we behave as good relatives?"; "How do we become good ancestors?"; and "How do we learn to live together?" (28). Indigenous literature, he argues, is where we see these questions continuously posed, played with, and reaffirmed, and Justice encourages readers and scholars (both Indigenous and non-Indigenous alike) to consider these when approaching Native writing. In this chapter, I observe complaint as one way in which women poets exercise their proximity to these questions, their attempts to honour kinship through writing, and the challenges of doing so in a post-contact world. The women write from the apocalyptic future that Nanye'hi and hundreds of other Native women spoke out in fear of, lamenting a broad range of issues – loss of land, environmental degradation, erasure of identity, betrayal by white governments and white men, to name some – and expressing the ongoing importance of kin relations when faced with disharmony. Reading these texts as complaints enables us to acknowledge the multi-faceted poetic, political, and literary histories combining here. Romantic topoi and complaint aesthetics can be identified, alongside the rhetorical sovereignty which establishes the literary and political agendas of these diverse representations of Native American protest.

Moving from the rather focused studies which form the first two chapters of this thesis, my third and final chapter looks to strengthen the arguments put forward by discussing the poems of four Native American women as complaints. Schoolcraft, who offers the most extensive collection of poetry in English by a nineteenth-century Native American woman, is intimately connected to the women in this chapter, although it is unlikely they had read her poetry or even knew of her. The same poetic and socio-political interests which define Schoolcraft's work are patterned throughout the poems in this chapter and although the four women here are writing later than her and hail from different tribal nations, their concerns are overwhelming similar, both in nature and in expression. This chapter might give an impression of a later generation of female poets whose poetry is more explicitly political than their literary predecessor, although this is not entirely true. The breadth of Schoolcraft's work means that I can provide multiple readings of complaints which range from the domestic-politics of her family life, to the tribal-politics on the maternal side of her family, and while several of the women in this chapter published work extensively, I have only been able to

select several strong examples by each writer to support my argument, on account of time and space constrictions.

Nevertheless, the connections which can be observed between the women in this chapter and the previous work on Schoolcraft reveals a consolidated thematic tradition. Each woman poet crafts responses to their own (and their nations') political and social positioning in a post-contact America, in ways that determine their rhetorical sovereignty and are often outwardly critical. As we saw with Schoolcraft and will continue to see in this chapter, their representations of Indigenous womanhood in many ways subvert the "forsaken" women and "mad" mothers the British Romantic tradition provides us, and the women poets here offer complaints which respond to these stereotypes embedded in Romantic discourse, at times directly. The decision to write poetry in alignment with Romantic taste should not be accepted as merely assimilatory, or even, as Manu Chander suggests, an appeal by those peripheral to the "White Romantic" (3) for "citizenship in the world republic of letters" (5). Rather, Schoolcraft and the women in this chapter are connected to Romanticism because they write themselves into it, rejecting the prosopopoeiac imaginings of British poets like Wordsworth, Southey, and Hemans to instead voice their own concerns and protests against the very real and immediate threats Native American people were facing. Unashamedly, I am asking this chapter (and the readers of it) to do a lot of work: the following section lays out the moves being made here and throughout the thesis between Romanticism, early modern women's complaint, and what I have coined Native American Romantic complaint.

I. Mothers, Sisters, Daughters: The Speakers and Writers

The nature of female-authored, female-voiced complaints suggests that the woman poet (often the poet-speaker) is much closer to the lament espoused than any given male author of this sub-genre, who must deploy prosopopoeia to imagine female laments from which he is far removed. The potential of the female-authored complaint to actualise grievances personal to the poet thus makes this mode a powerful tool for women writers. The complaints in this chapter often explore experiences and histories personal to each poet, and voice plays a significant role here in enabling us to get a sense of *who* is really speaking. I have titled this section, "Mothers, Sisters, Daughters: The Speakers and Writers," in order to position the kin status of each women at the centre of their literary identities, while also alluding to the diplomatic rhetoric used by the likes of Nanye'hi and others. Their identities, of course, are broader and more complex than this, and individual chapters (and anthologies)

could be devoted to each woman. I could also spend far more time delving into their personal histories to contextualise their poetry within the specific geopolitical, socioeconomic positions they write from, although the following short overview of each poet will have to suffice in the hopes that the interested reader will take it on themselves to research further into the complex, rich lives of these women.

Ruth Margaret Muskrat (1897-1982) was born and raised in the Cherokee Nation to a Cherokee father, whose relatives had travelled the Trail of Tears from Georgia to Oklahoma earlier in the century, and an Irish-English mother (Harvey 13). She funded herself through school, earning several scholarships for university study and eventually graduating from Mount Holyoke College in 1925 (Parker, *Changing* 320-21). Throughout this early period in her life Muskrat wrote poetry, although after her graduation she devoted herself to a life of activism and politics.

Mabel Washbourne Anderson (1863-1949) is the other Cherokee poet I have included in this chapter, the descendant of two prominent families in nineteenth-century Cherokee history – her maternal grandfather was John Ridge, the well-known leader of the Treaty Party of Cherokees, and her paternal grandfather, Cephus Washburn, was founder of Dwight Mission to the Cherokees (Kilcup 248). She attended the Cherokee Female Seminary (one of the locations in her poem “Nowita, the Sweet Singer”), and spent her life teaching and writing, publishing poetry and essays on Cherokee subjects and a biography of her cousin Stand Watie, the famous Cherokee Confederate brigadier general (Parker, *Changing* 242).

The third poet is Emily Pauline Johnson or Tekahionwake (Double Wampum), a Kanien’kehá: ka or Mohawk woman who was born in the Grand River Reservation of the Six Nations in 1861 (d. 1913). Her father was George Henry Martin Johnson, an important Mohawk chief known for his skills as a mediator and orator, while her mother, Emily Susanna Howells, was a wealthy British immigrant who educated Johnson in the English literary tradition (Kilcup 207). After the death of her father, Johnson and her family (who had lived a comfortable life on the reservation), could no longer afford to keep their home, and Johnson turned to writing and performing from 1892 onwards. She published both poetry and prose profusely; *The White Wampum* (1895), *Canadian Born* (1903), *Flint and Feather* (1912), and *The Shagganappi* (1913) are just some of her notable poetry collections.

Zitkala-Ša (Yankton Sioux), similarly to Johnson, made a career as both a performer and writer. Born in 1876 and given the name Gertrude Simmons, she was raised on the Yankton Reservation in South Dakota by her Yankton mother, Ellen Simmons (Tate I Yojin

Win, or Reaches for the Wind) (Kilcup 294). Her white father deserted the family before Zitkala-Ša was born. As a young girl she was educated at White's Manual Labour Institute, before finishing college and briefly teaching. At the turn of the century, Zitkala-Ša began to pursue her interests as both a creative artist and activist, dedicating the rest of her life to advocating for Native American rights and publishing work, including poetry, articles, and even an opera (*The Sun Dance*).

In a series of questions Kilcup defines as pressing for any student and teacher of Native American literature, she asks, "Is there a Native American women's literary tradition in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries?" (1). This thesis relies on the answer to this question being yes, although it must also acknowledge the complexities of a broad study of Indigenous women's writing from this geo-political area and time period. As Kilcup eloquently reminds us:

[m]aking pan-Indian (that is, cross-tribal) generalizations in such matters can be difficult and to do so means risking oversimplification, especially in the case of women who occupy intercultural positions. On the other hand, to avoid such conceptualization merely because it is difficult and complex means to deny to Native American writers one kind of power and authority very much valued in mainstream United States culture: the power of having a coherent tradition. (1)

This passage is instrumental in highlighting the tensions in a project that looks to expand the literary dialogue around both complaint and Romanticism. By choosing to focus on poetry by nineteenth- and twentieth-century Native American women, I have decided to seek outside the mainstream Romantic canon to look for revisionary examples of women's writing, and in doing so stress similarities between these "non-mainstream" forms and the work of British Romantics (5). The four women acknowledged above share similar experiences in many ways: all are educated (in both their tribal cosmologies and through white schooling) and come from mixed race families, many of whom held great social capital in the intercultural and interracial environment of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. For each of them, writing was, if not their sole career, one supplementary to their income. And yet despite these similarities, the women all come from different tribal nations, grounding them in specific cosmologies. This chapter is therefore at risk of generalising the nature of Native women's writing, although once again I want to reiterate that reading them alongside each other through the framing mode of Romantic complaint is only *one* way of approaching and collectivising the poetry here. As Womack and Justice have both argued, canonising work by

tribes is an important and fulfilling way of reading numerous works from a particular Nation.³² Nevertheless, reading carefully across the tribal contexts and geo-political histories of each women has a power in its own right, disestablishing the idea of literary tradition as “self-consciously” constructed while also offering one way of conceptualising Native American women’s writing from this period as a part of a greater transatlantic dialogue, regardless of their literary prominence at the time (Kilcup 7).

Gesturing towards a Native American women’s literary tradition is further complicated in a project which looks to draw this group of poets into discussion with British tradition. Often, the complaints here offer striking commonalities with those of the early modern British women poets, and the comparative attention I give to this at certain times throughout the chapter is done to embolden the readings of complaint in Native American women’s poetry. What is important to keep in mind, however, is that these four women are not responding to early modern female complaint – in fact, they would have had no knowledge of such a tradition existing.³³ Romantic poetry, by contrast, was one of the most prominent ways through which they would have become familiar with the British literary canon, and it is thus Romanticism that serves as the hinge through which we can trace a line of female complaint poetry. In doing so, the study of complaint is enriched, its recognition in Romantic poetry crucial to considerations of how both men and women poets across the transatlantic thought about the colonised world.

Most importantly, reading the poetry of Muskrat, Anderson, Johnson, and Zitkala-Ša as versions of Native American Romantic complaint evinces an example of a poetic push-back against the idea of the single story (Justice, *Why* 36-7). Deriving this concept from Nigerian storyteller Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (Igbo), Justice finds similarity in Adichie’s experience of the reduction by Euro-western literature of the thousands of cultures and people across one of the largest land masses on Earth into one “authentically African” story. Rhetorically imperial in its nature, western literature codifies whiteness as diverse and abundant in stories, while anything which sits out of this is easily “typed.” The British Romantic complaints evince an example of this, in which the vast cultures of Indigenous America are expressed through one archetypal Romantic Indian woman. In this regard, the Native female-authored, female-voiced complaints which follow demonstrate shared

³² See Womack 1999 for his foundational argument on this matter, particularly in relation to a Creek literary canon. See also Justice 2006 for another example of this practice for Cherokee literature.

³³ Similar problems around literary community and tradition have preoccupied scholars of early modern women writers. See Ross 2015, 5-6.

experiences – of motherhood, of colonisation, of love, of violence, and trauma – without homogenising the laments of each complainant into one story.

II. Laments of the Land: Echo and Kinship

The land as an embodied being is an aesthetic familiar to British Romanticism, although as Kevin Hutchings and many other Romantic scholars have pointed out, much of the expressions of ecological sympathy and natural spiritualism emerged on account of the stories about Indigenous cosmology coming across the Atlantic (Hutchings 14-15). For Native Americans, land as an embodied being is a given, and always has been.³⁴ It is unsurprising then that the aesthetic environments of the complaints which follow do more than provide Romantic, pastoral settings to complement the “lamenting woman” figure, as typical of the male-authored early modern and Romantic complaints. In many cases, in fact, the land is active in its personification, offering sympathetic response through echo. Ruth Margaret Muskrat even makes a point of employing prosopopoeia to represent particular environments, channelling the voices of the natural world to lament the destruction of kin ties by colonial invasion. This section narrows its attention to five poems which, in one way or another, conjoin the voices of the female speaker / poet-speaker and the surrounding landscape. Although individually the complaints lament different issues – including the criticism of white men’s deceit in love, displacement of land, and so on – the effect of grouping these poems together here reveals the overwhelming focus they give to kinship ties, particularly with the environment. Topoi familiar to Romantic complaint make it an appropriate interpretative mode, as the aesthetic of both human and non-human lament combine to offer multi-vocal expressions of grief that consolidate the acts of rhetorical sovereignty enacted by each woman poet.

Fittingly, “Penseroso,” meaning brooding or melancholic, is the title of a five-stanza complaint which appears in Johnson’s 1895 poetry collection, *The White Wampum*. Easily identifiable as complaint, this forlorn meditation observes the speaker (presumably Johnson herself), bemoaning humanity and retreating away from social interaction, casting herself in a

³⁴ This notion of embodiment is drawn from Allen’s work on sacred Native American earthworks and mound sites. Allen develops this term to represent the experience and expression of kin relations between Native American’s and their land, particularly in relation to sacred sites like earthworks, which encompass land, energy, life, and death. He proposes that these sites be read as forms of embodied stories, not simply as burials or archaeological structures. In doing so, he outlines an Indigenous-specific way of relating to non-human life forms and expands the literary potential of these mounds as stories and narratives, alive and breathing. See Allen 2015, 391–411.

solitude familiar to both Romantic and complaint aesthetics. What is striking about the melancholic, lonely images she evokes, and what distinguishes this as a Native American Romantic complaint is her relationship with the land. Here, the surrounding natural environment is an embodied being rather than a symbol of isolation and human disconnection, meaning that Johnson's melancholic retreat away from people is expressed differently to similar elegiac complaints featuring Indigenous women popularised by British male Romantics like Wordsworth, on account of the kinship relations the speaker upholds.

As a complaint, the scene with which we are presented appears similar to the prosopopoeiac visions of male authors in the early modern and Romantic periods – we are confronted with a lamenting figure, seemingly alone in a desolate landscape. Johnson opens “Penseroso” with this despairing sentiment:

Soulless is all humanity to me
To-night. My keenest longing is to be
Alone, alone with God's grey earth [...] (1-3)

It is not her aloneness which is the subject of Johnson's complaint, but rather her fellow “soulless” humans. Similarly, this admission of solitude, which reveals Johnson's disassociation from her human brothers and sisters, is immediately challenged, as she goes on to personify the “grey earth” as being the “Pulse of [her] pulse and consort of [her] dreams” (4). Earth as a living and breathing organism becomes Johnson's companion in an expression of kinship, as the rhythmic flow of human blood is echoed by the beating of Nature's own heart. The personification of the natural world operates more distinctly as an exploration of alternative kinship with that which is not human, rather than a simple deployment of a literary device to create a Romantic aesthetic: Nature's soul throbs alongside Johnson's, and her “waters beat” (19), her “seas and thunders roll” (18) and her “torrent[s] dash” (10) in solidarity. It is this dynamic which is integral to Native American-authored Romantic complaint, for while the British Romantics are strongly invested in a connection with the natural world, the complaints by which they prosopopoeiacally represent Native American women do not (and *cannot*) treat the land as kin.

There is something interesting to be said here about the reciprocity explored between Johnson, the lamenting poet-speaker, and Earth. The beating of their two pulses, the breathing of their two souls, and the dynamic movement of Nature becomes almost echoic, or at least repetitious of each other, suggesting the kinship which binds their relationship. Johnson concludes her lament in firm resolution: “God's grey earth,” she concedes, “has no

cheap counterfeit” (20). The tumultuous responses by Nature are not merely mimics or imitations of her own state of mind. Instead, Earth supports and consoles in ways that the “touch of human hand” or “human voice” cannot (12). The reciprocity is positive and sustaining to the despair Johnson feels, as Earth’s synonymous movement becomes a warm, caring display of solidarity, just as we will see in the use of echo (itself the embodied voice of Nature) in Anderson’s “Sweet Nowita.”

Appreciating the connection between a nation and their land, it is not surprising that the two Cherokee poets I draw from both centre their complaints around one natural resource in particular: the Spavinaw river, which is the site of Muskrat’s “Songs of the Spavinaw” (1920) and “Nunih Waiyah” (1922), and Anderson’s “Nowita, the Sweet Singer” (1900). Running through the Cherokee Nation in Oklahoma, the Spavinaw’s presence in these poems suggests its importance to the two poets, both as a symbol of the land they were raised on, and to their Cherokee epistemology more broadly.³⁵ In “Songs of the Spavinaw,” I explore how the form of a political-pastoral complaint localises the river as its site of lament, as prosopopoeia evokes a distinct sense of the river’s power, but also grief, as it bears witness to the negative interferences of man-power. Muskrat’s personification of this topographical feature can be placed comparatively alongside the British female literary tradition, attesting to a common personal and aesthetic preoccupation with water and rivers by Native and non-Native women poets alike. Early modern poet Hester Pulter, for example, composed “Complaint of the Thames” (1647), a lament which “transposes the voluble female voice of the complaint genre onto the personified Thames” to vocalise Pulter’s political grievance at the imprisonment of King Charles I (Ross, *Women* 146). A similar aesthetic can also be seen in Hemans’s British Romantic complaint, “Indian Woman’s Death Song,” which locates her suicidal female vagrant on a “dark, foaming stream” (31). In “Songs of the Spavinaw,” this marker of Cherokee land acts alongside Muskrat’s own political anger, as the Spavinaw is both its own person and the mouthpiece for Muskrat. So, while easily thought of within this female tradition, “Songs of the Spavinaw” and the other river poems in this section consider the relationship between water and women through a specifically Indigenous cosmology, as

³⁵ While both Muskrat and Anderson were born and raised in the Cherokee Nation where the Spavinaw runs, it should be noted that their families were Cherokees from outside of this area. Muskrat’s paternal grandmother’s father, Ezekiel Fields, made the decision to migrate towards Indian Territory in Oklahoma earlier than the era of forced removal, while her paternal grandfather, Jacob Muskrat, had been a young boy when he and his family were coerced along the Trail of Tears in the winter of 1838-39 (Harvey 12-3). Similarly, Anderson’s maternal grandfather, John Ridge, was a member of the Treaty Party that agreed to move from traditional Cherokee lands in Georgia to Indian Territory (Kilcup 248). Nevertheless, both women were raised in the Cherokee Nation and evidently felt a strong connection the Spavinaw.

one engaged in kinship and reciprocity. In this poem, the Spavinaw and Muskrat become one through prosopopoeiac enunciation to posit a collective lament at the abuse of this tributary by white Americans.

The complaint centres itself firmly with the first-person “I” of the river, the refrain “I am the river of Spavinaw” becoming an authoritative assertion of subjectivity – a bold declaration in answer to Lilley’s question, “who is speaking?” Muskrat is intent on relaying both the river’s personhood and its judicial power, dedicating the first stanza to this task.³⁶ Claiming that “Sadness and gladness must answer my law,” the river reveals, “Measure for measure I give, and withdraw,” emphasising its supreme power as both life-giver and taker (3-4). These allusions to governmental power or “law” ironically adopt western bureaucratic rhetoric, juxtaposing this with the naturally pre-existing order of the environment and Indigenous law, while also acknowledging the political subjectivity of the Spavinaw as a river. Cherokee cosmology consolidates around the acquirement of harmony through balance, and so it is significant that Muskrat facilitates a sense of equilibrium that is central to the way the river distributes its power (Cumfer 25).

An abrupt break in the poem’s melodic rhythm signals the complaint to follow. Spavinaw laments that, despite these “gurg[e]s of glee” (14), in her “shadows creep” (24) a “song [of] throbbing, pitiful sobbing, / Choked by an agonized pain” (26-7). This depicts the river as something of a caged animal:

As I dash down my falls,
As I beat at my walls

Frantically fighting, running and righting. (31-3)

Succeeding the admission, “I sing of the power of men,” this evocative description depicts the active resistance of the Spavinaw against human dominance, suggesting that the crux of its lament is the disregard of kinship ties in favour of anthropocentric action (29). Repeated in the following stanza, the Spavinaw again “sing[s] of the power of men, / Of the hurry and power of men” (35-6). Here, however, man’s power becomes ironic alongside the river’s own authority, revealed in its decision to “flood” the land (34). The Spavinaw’s complaint is not resolved by a retention of ultimate power, although we are forced to recognise its immensity

³⁶ Muskrat’s representation of Spavinaw’s personhood resembles the kinship attitudes of many Indigenous people around the world and precedes movements by groups across multiple countries to have certain landmarks, including rivers, granted the legal status of living personhood. Within the past decade in America, the formal recognition of particular natural resources as having rights include the acknowledgement of the Klamath River by the Yurok Tribe (Oregon), the Rights of Manoomin by the White Earth band of Ojibwe, and the Colorado River, which sued the state of Colorado in 2017 for the right to personhood.

as incomparable to human control. Rather, close attention to the river's song conveys a strong emphasis on balance and harmony, revealing the heart of the lament to be the disruption of this relationship by humans. Muskrat creates a dynamic binary between exploitative ways of relating to the river, and kin-based ways, locating the complaint around this idea of relationality in alignment with Cherokee cosmology. This attention to relationality is one we see present often in Native American women's writing; as I note in my reading of Schoolcraft's "On Leaving My Children," land is often present in her work as a way of retaining a sense of ontological kinship, whether this be as a mother to her children, or an Ojibwe woman with her land.

The publication date of "Songs of the Spavinaw" insinuates a potential political motivation for Muskrat's complaint, in addition to her advocacy for kinship between humans and the land. The subject of a decade of infrastructural discussions, it was decided in 1918 that the Spavinaw river would be dammed and a pipeline built to transport water towards Tulsa, an oil town struggling to supply its rapidly increasing population and industry. This historical context gives a haunting new tone to the poem, as Muskrat, by personifying the mournful voice of the river, invites readers to think about the environmental and spiritual impacts of human interference. This can be summed up in the striking image of the Spavinaw "catch[ing] up life's sorrows and mirror[ing] them back" (25). Here, the river is figuratively associated with reflection, this mirroring of the world's sadness functioning as a visual emblem of echo. This image feels also literal, however, as the consequences of industrial interference and pollution can be visualised on the river's surface.

In many ways, the complaint voiced by the Spavinaw in this poem operates differently to "Nunih Waiyah," the other of Muskrat's poems which includes reference to the river. Where in "Songs," Muskrat gives the role of poet-speaker over to the Spavinaw to protest for itself the loss of kinship, the vocalisation in "Nunih Waiyah" forms a complaint less discernible, more complex in its lament. The title itself refers to a revered mound earthwork occupied roughly between 300 – 600 CE, located in what was Choctaw land and is now Mississippi (Parker, *Changing* 325n.). While predominantly connected to the Choctaw people, some versions of the Choctaw creation myth recall Nunih Waiyah as the source out of which the Muscogeans, Cherokees, Chickasaws, and Choctaws all emerged (Pistonatubbee 13). It is not entirely clear why Muskrat felt connected to this sacred place and chose to acknowledge it in the title, nor is the "her" – the subject of Muskrat's poem – entirely self-evident. The key signal we get to the identity of "her" comes near the end of the poem, at

which point the poet-speaker (presumably Muskrat) also gains a literal presence, as she writes:

What difference now that I was born a paleface,
And she was Nunih Waiyah, a Redman's child? (13-14)

The "her" which Muskrat writes of is thus a personified Nunih Waiyah, a feminised spirit or kinswoman whom Muskrat eulogises within a pastoral environment common to the female-complaint aesthetic. "Take her away," she writes, "and lay her gently down to rest / Beneath the cool grey willows" (1-2); "Lay her where the rippling of the Spavinaw / Can lull her dreamless sleep with its incessant song" (5-6). Here, and in "Sweet Nowita," the Spavinaw's presence as a ceaseless singer becomes the voice or echo of the voiceless woman (in this case, the spirit of Nunih Waiyah), a significant topos in the female-complaint sub-genre. As Ross observes in the pastoral complaints of Hester Pultner, the country landscape, particularly the surrounding rivers, often gain echoic resonances in their personified effusions, so that the voice of the river either responds to or represents the woman-speaker ("Complaint's Echoes," 191). This too resounds in the writing of Native American women, not just as an aesthetic choice, but as a spiritual acknowledgement of the reciprocity of kin ties with the natural world.

"Nunih Waiyah" begins in an environment that is both familiar to the female-complaint tradition and the Romantic aesthetic, and yet most might approach it as an elegy to someone personified as Nunih Waiyah, or perhaps the earthmound itself.³⁷ Reading it via the mode of complaint is, however, the point of access by which the poem's meaning and power can be understood. This becomes clear at the turn of the third stanza, in which Muskrat's presence in relation to Nunih Waiyah is revealed. Emphasising her own bodily mortality, Muskrat shifts to focus on her inevitable reunification with the mound, a union in "that eternal space" where Nunih Waiyah's "love by Death's cold withering blackness [is] undefiled" (15-16). This "twilight realm of dreams" (18) becomes a place where their relationship can bloom, a hopeful conclusion in respite of the heart-wrenching separation that Muskrat alludes to in her third stanza:

Take her now, my hours of tryst are over,
There's nothing else for pain to feast upon,
I gave her all, and, to her cold grave yonder,

³⁷ In 1830, sovereignty over much Choctaw land, including Nunih Waiyah, was ceded to the American government under the Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek. This sacred mound, instrumental to Choctaw and other Native American tribes, was not given back to the people until 2007 (Lewis 1).

All light and life for me have gone. (9-12)

Here the crux of the poem lies, the complaint mode serving to provide one possible reading in which Muskrat conveys a troubled, complex relationship with the personified Nunih Waiyah, who perhaps serves as a symbol for Muskrat's Cherokee or Native American identity. Muskrat does not grieve Nunih Waiyah's death, but rather their meetings in the living-world, possibly the cause of anxiety and identity crisis present in the rhetorical demand "What difference now that I was born a paleface, / And she was Nunih Waiyah, a Redman's child?" Muskrat, whose poetry career preceded a very long life of teaching and activism, was twenty-five at the time "Nunih Waiyah" was written, and the complaint conceivably represents a young, mixed-race Cherokee's struggle to connect with a culture (represented via the personified Nunih Waiyah) erased from her everyday life. In some respects similar to Hemans's reflections on the trials of living as a women, the spirit-world, or world after death, becomes a place without judgement, and it is the living-world from which Muskrat's complaint is espoused.

Despite the difference in form and address, Muskrat's two complaints both place the natural world at their centres in order to grapple with the loss of, or disconnection from, spirituality and identity grounded in a Cherokee kinship with nature. The role of the river offers a significant connection between the two poems and the complaint mode, whether it be via the central speaking voice in "Songs of the Spavinaw," or part of the pastoral-complaint aesthetic in "Nunih Waiyah." In Anderson's "Nowita, the Sweet Singer" (1900), the site of the Spavinaw is again used to augment the lament of Nowita, a "Cherokee maiden" who is courted and then abandoned by a "young professor from the East" (Anderson qtd. in Parker, *Changing* 243). In the lengthy framing narrative that precedes the poem, Anderson describes the Female and Male Seminaries (boarding schools established by the Cherokee tribal council in 1851) on the bank of the Illinois river as the place of Nowita's meeting with the nameless "pale face" professor, although the poem itself tells of their reunification in Nowita's home on the banks of the Spavinaw, "the most beautiful stream in the Cherokee Nation" (Anderson qtd. in Parker, *Changing* 242-43). Notably, the poem is not told from the perspective of Nowita, but rather recounted by an unknown narrator, possibly Anderson herself. As a consequence of not hearing the maiden's first-person lament, we are encouraged to pay specific attention to the qualities of speech and song, and silence and echo, which resonate throughout the poem, as Nowita's literal *and* rhetorical silence requires different vocalisations of lament, which the land itself fulfils on her behalf. In this regard, "Nowita, the

Sweet Singer” re-appropriates the complaint mode to offer a different response to Lilley’s question – Nowita *isn’t* speaking and whose fault is that?

The poem opens within a Romantic setting, the pastoral scenery emphasised to complement both Nowita’s “sweet and child-like” countenance (4) and the scenes of romance which have past between “the sweet singer” and the young professor (24). This first section establishes the role of speech and sound in the poem, setting the couple within a mellifluous environment. Notably, Nowita names the professor “Ska-kle-los-ky, the sweet speaker” (31), although “sweet” here garners a more odious meaning, as he whispers “words [meant] to flatter” in Nowita’s “child-like” ears (23-24). Together “their voices sweetly blending, / [Can] be heard” (17-8), until Nowita, “Filled with new and dreamy music” (29) must return to a homeland equally characterised for its melodious effusions. Anderson has the young maiden placed between two worlds defined by their orality: the “honeyed speeches” (26) of her lover, and the “singing brooks and rivers”; “the breath of bursting blossoms”; and “the calling [...] pine trees” (54-7). This cacophonous environment in which the romance is set is not to last, however. The “pale and handsome stranger,” who remains nameless throughout the poem, departs, vowing to return and marry Nowita (68). Of course, this promise is broken and the “gentle Indian Maiden” (183) becomes a “sad-faced woman” (184) whose hopeful song fades from “[sad] singing” to eventual silence (163). Not “the powers of the magician,” the “pleading of her people,” nor “Chiefs from far and distant nations” can console Nowita, now known by the tragic oxymoron, “the silent singer” (192-7).

The silence of Nowita, the lamenting woman of the poem, offers a significant formal distinction from the first-person prosopopoeiac tradition in complaint. And yet, the mode has the capacity to extend itself to this poem, not only because her silence becomes a powerful semblance of Anderson’s complaint itself, but because of the numerous complaint topoi which are present throughout the poem: the lamenting woman figure, tearful aesthetics, and, most importantly to my argument, the echo. Recent attention to Echo or the echo in early modern complaint has looked to amend the criticism that complaint is typified by a failure of dialogue, the isolated female lamenter pouring out her troubles in “unanswered apostrophe” (Ross, “Complaint’s Echoes” 186). As Ross highlights, the echoic resonances of rivers, birds, caves, and other natural sources within the typical pastoral complaint setting are not there simply to amplify the speaker’s woe, but to “figure female-female dialogue” in which empathy and friendship is offered (189). In the context of Native female-authored complaint, this is advanced by the actual kin statuses these non-human life forms held, particularly in

Cherokee cosmology where the balance and harmony of opposite forces (like human and non-human) are highly privileged (Cumfer 25).

In “Nowita, the Sweet Singer” echo is used to this effect. While the maiden waits for her lover’s return, the “song birds” who reside in the forest where Nowita waits “[mock]” her “happy echo” in cautious warning (157-8). Once she has “passed away in silence” (218), it is the river and nearby cave which “[repeat]” and echo the “sad, unhappy story” (210). The surrounding landscape extends its sympathy to Nowita by seconding her song, but it also (even more strikingly) adopts her voice once she passes, so that

If you go alone at twilight
To the cave beside the river
[...]
You may hear the repetition
Of the songs as they were uttered,
By this charming Indian maiden,
By Nowita, the sweet singer. (214-21)

Nowita’s story of deceit and loss is preserved by the Spavinaw and surrounding land, carrying the echo of her voice to those who listen. Read alongside the tradition of female complaint, it is tempting to draw comparisons to one figure instrumental in early representation of the mode: Ovid’s nymph Echo, whose body “shrivels” and “dries” after being rejected by her love Narcissus, until it is only her voice left echoing off the rocks (III.397). And yet where Echo / echo (in Ovid and throughout female-complaint) has been a problematic figure for feminist scholars given the negative associations she / it poses between the female body and voice, the function of echo in Anderson’s poem is to embody the complaint which Nowita cannot make herself, repeating it to those who will listen in both a memorialisation and a warning to other young Cherokee women (Ross, “Complaint’s Echoes” 185). Where Ovid’s Echo is cursed by the Goddess Juno for her talkative nature, Nowita’s decision to be voiceless is the direct cause of abandonment by a white man, grounding the complaint in a context specific to the Indigenous woman’s experience. Furthermore, a note to line 215 (quoted above) locates this to a particular place “on the shores of the Spavinaw,” where, “borne on the waters” in the cave, “a low sound as of singing may be heard” (Parker, *Changing* 250n.7). This is attributed to “De-cu-na-gus-ky-skilly,” a “Singing Spirit” in local tradition, therefore grounding Nowita’s story firmly within both a Cherokee literary history and a local history of the Spavinaw, circling the poem back to a

Cherokee environmental kinship. In this light, echo as both a rhetorical technique and a literal presence serves as an enactment of kinship, intimately linked with storytelling and human / non-human relations, prompting the scholar of Native American female complaint to rethink echo's potential in synonymising land and woman as kin.

Reading "Penseroso," "Nowita, the Sweet Singer," and Muskrat's river poems alongside early modern scholarship on female complaint reveals striking patterns and thematic concerns in the poetry of women spatially, temporally, and politically separated. In thinking about complaint as a broad female tradition, I am offering a revisionary way for reading the mode across a wide range of works, an act which enables us to consider complaint as operating outside of the early modern era it is most closely associated with. In chapter one I marked its ascent into the Romantic poetry by British authors Wordsworth, Southey, and Hemans to suggest that it reappears here as a way for these Romantics to consider a group of women they were newly exposed to through travel literature, while also aiding their establishment of a national literature informed by oral and ballad traditions. By reading the mode in the works of these Native American women, however, we see how it offers examples of Indigenous-authored, poetic pushbacks against the tropes inscribed in the Romantic canon by the aforementioned British writers. As I emphasise in the introductory remarks to this chapter, I am not wanting to overemphasise particular patterns to the point of suggesting the influence of (or even assimilation to) particular European texts and topoi on writers like Anderson, Johnson, and Muskrat. Just taking "Nowita, the Sweet Singer" as an example, attention to the framing narrative, references to specific Cherokee places and customs, and Anderson's notes to the poem reveal how grounded the poem is in the literary tales of her Cherokee Nation. The influence of the natural world – particularly the Spavinaw river – on these poems means that they can be read as Romantic complaints by providing examples not only of Indigenous-voiced but Indigenous-*authored* engagements in the mode, while also contributing to a body of Native women's writing which looks to the land and history around them to produce a voice of protest located through the auspices of kin relations.

III. "Give Back the Peace and Plenty"

This voice of protest which I gesture to at the closing of the previous section becomes the point of focus throughout the following close readings. We have established the *who is*

speaking part of Lilley's question, so now this section turns to observe the *how* (i.e. in what manner), a question integral to the construction of voice, particularly in the overtly political poems I have selected for this section. The line selected for the above title signals, or at least prompts, an answer to this question. Provocative in its use of imperative, vehement in tone, "Give back the peace and plenty" is taken from the closing couplet of Johnson's scathing complaint which features towards the end of her 1895 poem, "The Cattle Thief" (61). In many ways, the poems in this section concern themselves with the loss of either peace – in a diplomatic sense as we see in "The Cattle Thief," or in a spiritual, kin-based sense, such as in Zitkala-Ša's "The Indian's Awakening" – or plenty, in the form of land and the physical and mental produce which comes from having sovereignty. In dealing explicitly with the issues of displacement, cultural genocide, and loss of sovereignty, the voices we are exposed to in these poems are harsher, urgent even, inflecting the mode of complaint with a pointed sense of purpose.

It feels apt to pause here before continuing with any close readings, to address my characterisation of the poems as "overtly political." In my second chapter, I laid out the problematic relationship between women, writing, and politics, arguing that the inherent politicisation of work by women (particularly women of colour), occurs on account of white, hetero-masculinity being the unconscious centre from which all else is Othered. On the other hand, writers like Schoolcraft are just as easily dismissed from a political, public sphere, instead ostracised by the contemporary western academy as sentimental and domestic. Rhetorical sovereignty ensures an Indigenous-specific way of appreciating the "inherentness" of politics to Native writing, in a way that frames the Indigenous author as active, rather than helpless, to the automatic codification of literature as white, heterosexual, and masculine. Particularly as we are concerned with complaint (which in its female-authored, female-voiced capacity often is often public and affective), the female-authored expression of this mode naturally lends itself to a rhetorically sovereign acclamation, because it allows real representations of Indigenous womanhood in contrast to those ventriloquised by British Romantic authors.

This is clearly evinced in "The Cattle Thief," which presents us with a familiar aesthetic scene of a distraught woman, although her posturing is certainly unlike the typical "lamenting woman." The complaint itself occurs at the end of a longer narrative account about a band of settlers tracking down and murdering "the famous Eagle Chief" (5) of the Cree, who has "thieved and raved" (8) cattle for the purpose (it transpires) of feeding his

starved, resourceless tribe. In contrast to Johnson's "Penseroso," which observes the complaint postures of solitary retirement and meditation on woe, the complaint here (voiced by the daughter of Eagle Chief) is vehement in its expressions of grief, both at the murder of Eagle Chief and the treatment of the Cree people. The daughter's complaint might look familiar to the imagined ravings of widowed mothers or mad women authored by the British Romantics; however, Johnson's intent here is explicit political condemnation of white treatment of Native people, as the severing of kin relations with the land is revealed to be the primary cause for the daughter's grief.

The framing narration offers a decidedly negative depiction of these American settlers as the savage, violent attackers, ignoring the customary death song by killing the chief before he has a chance to fight to the death, and maiming the body on the principle that "he'd have treated us the same" (33). As they move "like a pack of demons" (30) towards the body of the Eagle Chief, it is "a woman's strange, wild cry" (34) which stops the settlers advancing, and immediately after this the daughter appears, covering her father's corpse with a blanket and admonishing, "If you mean to touch that body, you must cut your way through *me*" (38, *italics in the original*). Prefiguring the complaint to come, the framing narration observes the immediate effect of this woman's appearance, her presence causing the "cursing settlers" (39) to drop away and behold her "rave" (42) to come:

Stand-back, stand back, you white-skins, touch that dead man to your shame;
 You have stolen my father's spirit, but his body only I claim.
 You have killed him, but you shall not dare to touch him now he's dead.
 You have cursed him, and called him a Cattle Thief, though you robbed him first of
 bread –
 Robbed him and robbed my people – look there at that shrunken face,
 Starved with hunger, we owe to you and your race. (43- 48)

The daughter mourns her father's murder and vows to honour his body, posing a complaint that is active and public, rather than those produced by Wordsworth and Southey which imagine their female complainants in the typical Romantic and complaint settings – isolated landscapes in which a lone speaker bemoans her situation. Southey's "Song of the Chikkasah Widow," for example, has particular thematic similarities with Johnson's complaint, both speakers voicing laments characterised by vehemence and honour. And yet, his poem lacks any sense of a public statement, something which, in Johnson's poem, renders the daughter's complaint a significant level of agency. "The Cattle Thief" thus works to create a productive

dialogue between the female speaker's direct attack on the settlers who murder her father and Chief, and Johnson's own act of rhetorical sovereignty, as her criticisms are vocalised through her complainant.

Furthermore, the daughter's emphasis on the injustice and greed of white people turns to centre on the stealing of land. Not only, the daughter points out, have settlers taken land that is not theirs to take, but they have disrespected kinship practices of reciprocity and compensation, resulting in starvation amongst the Cree people:

How have you paid us for our game? how paid us for our land?

By a *book*, to save our souls from the sins *you* bought in your other hand

[...]

Go back with your new religion, and find – if find you can –

The *honest* man you have ever made from out a *starving* man. (51-2, 55-6, italics in original)

The daughter sardonically criticises the idea of Christianity as compensation for Manifest Destiny, Johnson italicising certain words to emphasise the hypocrisy of the settlers' actions.

The protest closes in a series of fierce imperatives:

Give back our land and our county, give back our herds of game;

Give back the furs and the forests that were ours before you came;

Give back the peace and the plenty. Then come with your new belief,

And blame, if you dare, the hunger that *drove* him to be a thief. (59-62, italics in original)

These commands espouse the political and economic factors impeding Johnson's collective Native community, expanding the daughter's lament over the personal loss of her father and Chief outwards to encompass the "we" and "our" of her nation. She does not beg for a sharing of these things, but demands they be returned so that Cree and other Native American tribes can restore the balance with their non-human relations.

By closing "The Cattle Thief" with a twenty-line female-voiced complaint, Johnson locates the female voice – both her own and the fictionalised daughter of Eagle Chief – at the heart of the political protests against white imperial expansion across North America. The woman through whom she vocalises this complaint is feared by the murderous settlers, but readers understand her power, not only as the daughter of a chief, but as an orator on behalf of her Cree people, as she defends their claim to the land and demands the return of that which has been stolen. Johnson herself was the daughter of a well-known chief of the Mohawk tribe, George Henry Martin Johnson, whose death (speculated to be a result of

injuries incurred by an attack by a gang of alcohol traffickers) left Johnson's family dependent on her writing (Kilcup 207). Although the complaint is situated from the perspective of a Cree woman, it must in some ways be informed by Johnson's own experiences of paternal loss on account of western invasion. What is clear is that Johnson exposes a greater narrative of cultural genocide and loss of kinship, using prosopopoeia to inscribe an experience true to all Native American nations.

To a somewhat contrasting effect, Zitkala-Ša's "The Indian's Awakening" (1916) adopts the complaint mode to poeticise a more immediately personal account of loss, centring the traumatic experiences she had as a young girl at White's Manual Labour Institute in Indiana to reveal the effects of acculturation on her sense of identity and self-perception. Similarly to "The Cattle Thief," mistreatment by white settlers is central to the lament, although Zitkala-Ša's position as the poet-speaker distinguishes the complaint formally, as she adopts the first-person "I" to reflect on her childhood experience of assimilation. Grappling with the competing notions of her Yankton spirituality and Christian education, aspects of devotional complaint become present in "The Indian's Awakening," as Zitkala-Ša literalises her feelings of identity and spiritual crisis to explicate the complexities of growing up with two competing identities.

The poem opens with an account of the physical erasure of Zitkala-Ša's Yankton identity. As a "hand" reaches in to "cut [her] hair" (2), she "snatch[es] at [her] eagle plumes and long hair" (1) in an attempt to protect these emblems of her personal identity and culture. The vulnerability of her position as a young student is prevalent, as Zitkala-Ša metaphorically reflects on the desperation of her "blind" young self to "see," a task which, in its contradiction, points to the impossible expectations of her white schoolmasters (6). The final couplet of this first stanza rests on this criticism, drawing attention to the hypocrisy of Christian teachings in the face of imperial domination and destruction. Demanding why her teachers had "no courage frankly to tell / Old-race problems, Christ e'en failed to expel?," Zitkala-Ša highlights the failures of Christian missionaries, using the mode of complaint to criticise the rhetorical imperialism of the boarding schools and missions (7-8).

The following two stanzas draw explicitly on complaint rhetoric, as Zitkala-Ša's distressed soul yearns for what she has lost. Her disposed "long hair" and "eagle plumes" signify a greater cultural misplacing, as she laments that from her "own people, [she has] gone astray," left to the nomadic life of a "wanderer, with no where to stay" (17-19). Metaphor rhetorises an aching lament over her naïve desire as a young girl to leave the

Yankton reservation to study, as Zitkala-Ša realises that there is “No Sun for the flowers” in the harsh boarding school environment, and “vain [was] planting [the] seeds” (16). Where her “light” once shone bright it has now “grown dim,” and she laments the “black... abyss / That yawns at [her] feet” (9-10). The juxtaposing images of light and dark in these stanzas seem to represent Zitkala-Ša’s complex struggle with faith, as she is both disconnected from her Yankton spirituality and cynical of a Christian faith by which she will never quite be accepted; alluding to Matthew 7.7, she has “knocked” and yet received “no admittance” (20), rather being left to stand “Alone with the night and fearful Abyss” (23).

The rhetorical displays of woe reach their climax by the fourth stanza, as Zitkala-Ša poses a series of existential questions:

Oh, what am I? Whither bound thus and why?

Is there not a God on whom to rely?

A part of His plan, the Atoms enroll? (26-8)

This expression of spiritual crisis is not unfamiliar in the devotional complaints which proliferated among the female-authored early modern poems in this mode, a sub-genre which Ross et. al. succinctly define as complaints which “emphasize the experience of earthly life as a vale of woe, but in looking to Christ and, ultimately, to the afterlife, [...] anticipate a final consolation that typically eludes the secular complainant” (348). Zitkala-Ša’s complaint operates distinctly outside of this Christian framework – in fact, she explicitly criticises Christ for failing to protect her community via offering any form of reciprocal kinship. She does, however, to find consolation in the form of spirituality, bemoaning the loss of her cultural identity and a meaningless life on earth without the guidance from some higher power.

The remaining twelve stanzas, however, do observe a form of spiritual consolation, although not in such a way that Zitkala-Ša’s faith in one religion is confirmed. Rather, the complex division she feels between her Yankton identity and European education is navigated through an amalgamation of spiritual faith, as “a sweet Voice” arrives to “soothe” her “loneliness” (29-30). This “Voice” is ambiguous in its characterisation: stanza five conveys a distinctly Christian God, who is “at the heart” of “man and the planet” (30), while stanza eight offers a description of a “Great Spirit” who rules over the “billowy sea,” “azure sky”, and the “Sun, moon, and the stars” (60-3). In the end, it is not the domination of one form of spirituality that provides Zitkala-Ša with the consolation she desperately seeks – rather, it is “Harmonious kinship” which makes “all things fair” (43). This restoration grounds the complaint’s consolation firmly in a Yankton / Native American knowledge,

speaking to the wider pattern that is highlighted when placing all of the poems in this chapter alongside each other. As this vision of harmonious kinship occurs to Zitkala-Ša, a “prancing” (46) steed appears to carry her away from “An angry red river” (50) and into the “Spirit-world” (65) where her ancestors wait to reassure her: “We are souls, forever and aye” (74). Via this vision, her connection to her Yankton community is restored, re-establishing confidence in her own identity and ancestral connection, while also undoing some of the guilt and suffering caused during her time at boarding school. The loss of her sense of self is caused, ironically, by the very thing that leads her back to find it – faith – and this complaint offers a complex meditation on how, through restoration of balance and kinship, competing identities can be held alongside each other.

This remark by Zitkala-Ša – “We are souls, forever and aye” – suggests kinship to be the prevailing antidote to the post-contact America which represents assimilation, removal, and cultural genocide of Native people. Reading the poems in this chapter as examples of complaint highlights the centrality of kin ties to the experience of Indigenous womanhood, as we see how the imbalance of these relations proves a constant source of lament and protest for each of the four poets. By paying close attention to the language of grief and the location of the self – never far from the centre, even in the poems which privilege the “we” over the “I” – particular aesthetic and thematic patterns can be consolidated, forming the female-authored “Native American Romantic complaint.” Doing so emboldens the rhetorical sovereignty exercised by these women poets and affirms their place within complaint and Romantic studies. What this chapter offers then, is a tradition of female-voiced complaint not necessarily self-conscious in its construction, but nevertheless vital to how we think about and study Native American literature, women’s writing, and, of course, Romantic literature.

Conclusion

Expanding on Lyons's concept of rhetorical sovereignty, and Ojibwe scholar Gerald Vizenor's term "survivance," Miami Indiana / Eastern Shawnee writer Malea Powell contrives "rhetorics of survivance" as a phrase inquisitive of the processes of Native writing. What, Powell means this phrase to provoke, are these rhetorics and how did nineteenth-century Native writers actually *use* writing to convey the inseparable lived experiences of "survival + resistance" (400)? This thesis reads the mode of complaint as one way of responding to Powell's question. Adopting this mode as an interpretative framework, I have argued that five Native American women "transform their object-status within colonial discourse into [...] subject-status" by using methods familiar to the female-authored complaint. Claiming the first-person "I" for themselves (and those in their kin networks), these women protest issues of personal and collective importance, redressing the stereotype of the Romantic Indian and engaging in the Romantic and English written traditions for purposes of their own survivance.

In a final reiteration of the *how*, I turn to Muskrat's "The Trail of Tears" (1922), concluding this thesis by re-emphasising the conventions and themes of the female-authored Native American Romantic complaint. Both devastating and resolute in its poeticising of the genocidal walk her Cherokee family (and many other Native American people) were forced to make, Muskrat's complaint combines the multivocal tones of the trees, Cherokee ancestors, and her own voice to tell a story of the prevailing strength of kinship. It is Romantic in the specifically Indigenous context which I suggest throughout chapter three: it looks to the natural world for solidarity and comfort, and this is reciprocated in a literary enactment of kinship through personification and echo. Symbols common to Romantic elegy – graves, trees, time passing – are profuse throughout the poem, but the context in which they occur points to the real political and social crisis of Cherokee removal. As a result, these Romantic signifiers become the tangible emblems of loss and destruction which prompt "The Trail of Tears" to be read as a Native American Romantic complaint, as Muskrat conflates the experience of grief as one felt synchronously by both her Cherokee relatives and the land they were forced to leave behind.

To be clear, claiming the "I" does not always, when it comes to Native American Romantic complaint, refer to the singular. As Lyons asserts, it is always the "we," rather than the "I," which drives Native writing and the implicit cohering of rhetorical sovereignty that

happens when a Native writer takes up the pen. The interconnectedness of other human and non-human kin is prominent in the complaints studied, so even laments voiced from the first-person often address conditions that are not only personally, but collectively suffered.

Chapter three attended to these diverse voicings, from Zitkala-Ša's introspective "I," to Anderson's narrative account of Nowita's suffering, to the prosopopoeiac enunciations of the daughter in Johnson's "The Cattle Thief." In "The Trail of Tears," Muskrat composes a layered, multi-vocal lament in which the trees – who are both the custodians of Cherokee land and the embodied life forms of their ancestors – lead a chorus of grief and protest. Unlike the river in "Songs of the Spavinaw," these trees do not speak through prosopopoeia, although they are personified: the poem opens, "In the night they shriek and moan, / In the dark the tall pines moan" (1-2), and through this literary device we are given a sense of the holism of kin relations, as the trees "groan" (4) in full knowledge of their people's suffering.

That this experimentation with voice occurs to a lesser effect in the British Romantic complaints is telling of the different intentions of these writers. For the British Romantic – preoccupied with authorial control and subjective interiority – augmenting and enhancing the prosopopoeiac "I" of the Romantic Indian woman was the principal way to coalesce the conflicting stereotype of her as "savage," with the lamenting woman of the traditional British complaint. What the poems in chapter one offer, then, is a persistent representation of the Romantic Indian woman as both sympathetic and uncanny, deserted (often by a lover) and placed within a natural sublime setting to bemoan her circumstances. By encoding her into the familiar aesthetic of the female-voiced complaint, I argued that Wordsworth, Southey, and Hemans attempted to draw the simplicity and orality this Romantic Indian woman symbolised into the poetic zeitgeist of balladry and the establishment of a British literature, accentuating and simultaneously minimising her "nativeness" in order for these poetic projects to be realised by British readers. As a result, the Native female complainant was accepted into the British version of the transatlantic narrative, paradoxically affirming her as part of an identifiably British literature.

The following two chapters then proceeded to observe what the poetics of complaint written by nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Native American women actually looked like. What is consolidated aesthetically and thematically from this study is a specific range of preoccupations and conventions which I identify as Native American Romantic complaint: the rhetorically sovereign command over voice, whether that be by the poet-speaker or the author's orienting of the "we" rather than "I"; the placing of the lamenting woman in a landscape of kinship and reciprocity, rather than isolation; the amalgamation of Romantic

signifiers and rhetoric with tribal cosmology; and the re-centring of the female Indigenous voice, an act often informed by diplomatic history, to protest issues directly affecting this identity. Studying these poems as complaints uncovers new points of access, from an English literary perspective, into the knowledge they bear, while also challenging and expanding the contexts of this mode. Reading them alongside both the British Romantic tradition and their Native American contexts acknowledges the conditions these poems rose out of, offering one possible way of connecting the work of these five women – all from different nations, classes, and locations across space and time – together.

My insistence on complaint being merely *one* way of studying these works is to acknowledge that non-Indigenous readers (myself included) can only have certain access points to Native writing. Moreover, my reason for concluding with “The Trail of Tears” is purposeful – I am thinking of Te Punga Sommerville’s notion of academic “rearranging” (649). In this way, Muskrat’s complaint is the resounding voice I leave readers with. Complaint’s “repetitive, involuted rhetoric” operates in full force throughout this poem, as Muskrat and her Cherokee kin’s experience of grief is made insistent by repetition: the profuseness of “moan” and “groan” throughout the poem becomes almost onomatopoeic, the long sound created by the assonance of *oa* evocative of creaking trees (Lilley 248). A shared feeling of “broken hopes” and “broken hearts” (9) is emphasised across a wide kin network, as the “forefathers that fell” (6) and the pines that moan on their behalf “shriek an echoed groan” (6) while the Cherokees, “a quivering mass of broken hearts” (10), are “driven over the trail” (11). Again, the vocal layering of this lament is evidenced, as those that travel the trail are depicted “Stifling back the groan that starts, / Smothering back the moan that starts” (12-3). While Muskrat conveys the Cherokee people as voiceless on account of being worn down to defeat, the repetition of “groan” and “moan” affiliates their internal cries with those of the trees, whose echoic personification stands for not only the non-human, but also ancestral suffering occurring on account of the removal. Just as the river carries the story of Nowita’s sadness in Anderson’s poem, the pines resolutely uphold their kin ties, supporting and bemoaning the removal of their human relations.

I am reminded once again of Lilley’s question which prefaces chapter three. The *who* speaking in Muskrat’s complaint is plural and multivocal, emerging out of the shared experience of a broad Cherokee kin-network who all lament their enforced separation. The poem, which begins in present tense, shifts to past tense, as Muskrat recalls how the Cherokees

Were driven over the trail.

[...]

From the homes their fathers made,

From the graves the tall trees shade

For the sake of greed and gold,

The Cherokees were forced to go. (11, 17-20)

Muskrat's own voice – not as the poet-speaker but nevertheless as the female Cherokee author – is thus pulled into the complaint, as the effect of this forced removal is alluded to in the poignant closing reflection that

Father Time or wisdom old

Cannot erase, through endless years,

The memory of the trail of tears. (22-4)

Cherokees and their non-human relatives are marked forever by the displacement imposed on them by the American government. This image of Father Time and aged wisdom as incapable of erasing this history draws Muskrat and others into the poem, reminding the reader that the hurt and suffering caused by these removals continues to burn in the cultural memory of later generations. Their resistance and endurance are cemented via complaint, however, as the many voices present meld in rhetorical solidarity. It is precisely this action of cementing and consolidating the multiple voices of kinship which resembles the Native American Romantic complaint, confirming its necessary place within our study of Romantic and complaint poetry. These are the “rhetorics of survivance” that Schoolcraft, Muskrat, Johnson, Anderson, and Zitkala-Ša leave us.

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