



Sarah Orne Jewett's Transforming Visit, "Tame Indians," and One Writer's Professionalization

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DURING the first two weeks of July 1873, twenty-three-year-old Sarah Orne Jewett exchanged letters with Horace Scudder, former editor at *Riverside Magazine* (1867–70), about her prospective writing career.¹ In her 1 July letter, she announced that she had decided to become a professional writer. Between 1869 and 1870, Scudder had overseen three of Jewett's earliest publications, and she wanted him to understand that she was now seeing her work differently. Jewett's declaration has drawn little attention from her biographers, perhaps because it seems superfluous. By 1873, she had been publishing successfully for children, and she had just appeared in the *Atlantic* for the second time, on this occasion with her first really substantial story, "The Shore House" (1873). In fact, however, as an examination of her bibliography shows, Jewett had yet to become a professional. It would take her another four years and a good deal of hard work to produce her first

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¹Richard Cary, *Sarah Orne Jewett Letters* (Waterville, Me.: Colby College Press, 1967), pp. 27–30. In the first letter of 1 July, Jewett makes her announcement to explain why she is asking about securing copyright of her stories. Apparently, Scudder, in addition to answering her copyright question, offered her advice on how to advance her career. She responds to his suggestions in a 13 July letter, in which she acknowledges weaknesses that she needs to remedy. See also Jewett's 14 September 1873 letter to Theophilus Parsons, in which she repeats her announcement (Scott Frederick Stoddart, "Selected Letters of Sarah Orne Jewett: A Critical Edition with Commentary" [Ph.D. diss., University of Illinois, 1988], pp. 50–54).

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book, *Deephaven* (1877). And only thereafter, in about 1879, did she begin to place her writing regularly in the *Atlantic* and *Harper's*.²

In her two July letters to Scudder, Jewett confesses to an attitude that had been latent in her diaries and correspondence before that date: she had undertaken her previous writing in an amateur spirit, and she understood the resulting compositions to be such. In the first communication, she explains, "I am getting quite ambitious and really feel that writing is my work—my business perhaps; and it is so much better than making a mere amusement of it as I used. . . . I am glad to have something to do in the world and something which may prove very helpful and useful if I care to make it so, which I certainly do." When she says writing is not merely her work but her "business perhaps," she stresses the seriousness of her newfound understanding of her vocation by alluding to Jesus's reply to his worried parents, who found their missing twelve-year-old in the temple, conversing with learned men: "How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business" (Luke 2:49)? Like Nan in *A Country Doctor* (1884), Jewett is persuaded that God has given her a talent for the work of writing, and she sets out to perfect it.³

As her biographers reveal, in her early twenties, Jewett engaged in a spiritual and moral quest for meaning and purpose.⁴ On 23 May 1873, not long before she would write her 1 July letter to Scudder, she associates her recent vocational commitment with a visit, the previous November, to Green Bay,

²See Cary, *Sarah Orne Jewett Letters*, p. 17, for information about Horace Scudder. Bibliographic information about Jewett's works appears in the "Chronological List of the Works of Sarah Orne Jewett" at the online archive *The Sarah Orne Jewett Text Project*: <http://www.public.coe.edu/~theller/soj/biblio.html>.

³Nan alludes to young Jesus in the temple at the end of chapter 19, when she asserts that her medical vocation is a true divine calling: "Listen, Aunt Nancy! I must be about my business; you do not know what it means to me, or what I hope to make it mean to other people" (Jewett, *Novels and Stories* [New York: Library of America College Edition/Penguin, 1996], p. 344). In chapter 18, Nan says "God would not give us the same talents if what were right for men were wrong for women" (p. 327).

⁴Paula Blanchard, *Sarah Orne Jewett* (New York: Addison-Wesley, 1994), chap. 7, and Elizabeth Silverthorne, *Sarah Orne Jewett: A Writer's Life* (Woodstock, N.Y.: Overlook Press, 1993), chap. 3.

Wisconsin, where she "had three very happy weeks and where I think I was better and kinder & more useful than during any three weeks I can remember. It makes me conscious of my capabilities for usefulness and goodness more than any other visit ever did!" She goes on, "I think of my writing in a very different way from what I used. It is no longer an amusement merely but *my work*" (Jewett's emphasis).⁵ Jewett had been away from home for about eight months, beginning on 24 October, when she went to New York City, followed by stops in Cleveland and Chicago, before her three weeks in Green Bay.⁶ The previous summer, Jewett had met Theophilus Parsons, a retired Harvard law professor and Swedenborgian apologist, who befriended her and became her spiritual and artistic mentor for a time. She wrote to him from Green Bay on 14 November 1872:⁷

I am farther West now than I have ever been before, and . . . I must tell you of a new and delightful experience I had last Sunday. I went out to the Oneida settlement which is about twelve miles from here. There is an Episcopal church and the congregation is all Indians. I never had seen many before and these looked so like the Indians in my picture books when I was a little girl, that I half expected to hear the war-whoops and to be scalped and tomahawked before I knew it! They were very devout and are said to be a most pious community but they certainly do not look so. The rector told me he had lived there twenty years. I had a very nice talk with him. The Sunday before I was at Grace Church in New York, and I was very much struck with the contrast in the two congregations!

Her experience among the Indians is the only incident regarding her travels that Jewett shared with Parsons or recorded in

⁵Sarah Orne Jewett, *Diaries*, Jewett Collection, Series III, BMS Am 1743.26, item 341, Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass. Item 341 contains sporadic entries from 1871 to 1879, including the entry of 23 May 1873. Transcriptions are available at the Sarah Orne Jewett Text Project: <http://www.public.coe.edu/~theller/soj/let/let-cont.html>.

⁶In her 23 May 1873 diary entry, Jewett reports substantial stays after the Green Bay visit in Chicago, Cincinnati, Brooklyn, Philadelphia (arriving 7 January 1873), Boston, and New York City, before returning home to South Berwick in the spring.

⁷On Parsons, see Blanchard, *Sarah Orne Jewett*, pp. 63, 74–79.

her journal. Although New York City and the Oneida reservation at Duck Creek are associated by virtue of her attendance at an Episcopal service, the contrast between the two sites strikes Jewett as new and delightful. One source of her pleasure is the confounding of her expectations. Because the Oneida she encounters look like the Indians illustrated in her childhood picture books, she supposes that they will be hostile, even violent. Instead, she discovers that they are a devout and pious people, organized into a community of long standing. Later in her letter to Parsons, Jewett observes, "I shall be glad to get back to my hills again. These prairies are like reading the same page of a story book over and over. It seems as if the world I have been brought up in was all cleared away."⁸ Referring to the landscape at the outset, the passage seems to take on allegorical meaning toward the end. The old picture-book image fades as she lingers over the new storybook page. The world has changed its aspect, and that which was novel is now becoming that which is familiar. That shift, it seems, is a bit disorienting for Jewett, for she reports that she will be happy to return home to Maine.

The letter to Parsons is even more intriguing when placed next to Jewett's 1893 preface to a reprinting of *Deephaven*, her first major work of regionalist fiction, in which she offers a mature reflection about how she became engaged with the genre:

The young writer of these *Deephaven* sketches was possessed by a dark fear that townspeople and country people would never understand one another, or learn to profit by their new relationship. She may have had the unconscious desire to make some sort of explanation to those who still expected to find the caricatured Yankee of

⁸Fraser Cocks, transcriber, "Sarah Orne Jewett: Letters to Theophilus Parsons, 1872 to 1881," Collection of Sarah Orne Jewett Materials, Colby College Special Collections, Waterville, Me., 1986, pp. 1–5. This transcription appears at <http://www.public.coe.edu/~theller/soj/let/parsons.html>, and is quoted here by permission. Stoddart includes this letter in his dissertation (pp. 41–46), but my study of the manuscript shows the Cocks transcription to be more accurate. This is important because Stoddart reads the word "devout" as "decent," in Jewett's description of the Oneida congregation.

fiction, striped trousers, bell-crowned hat, and all, driving his steady horses along the shady roads. It seemed not altogether reasonable when timid ladies mistook a selectman for a tramp, because he happened to be crossing a field in his shirt sleeves. At the same time, she was sensible of grave wrong and misunderstanding when these same timid ladies were regarded with suspicion, and their kindnesses were believed to come from pride and patronage.⁹

Jewett emphasizes that undoing stereotypes is essential if harmony is to exist between neighbors. Her engrained terror of Indians, from which the Duck Creek episode had released her, is one such "dark fear," and her writing is, for her, a powerful means of dispelling the stereotypes that lead to mistaken identities and misunderstood intentions.



In 1875, "Tame Indians," an account of Jewett's visit to the Oneida, appeared in *The Independent*, a popular literary and religious newspaper.¹⁰ Though she fictionalized the narrative, nesting it inside a double frame, a good deal of what Jewett reports about the village of Duck Creek and the Episcopal mission at Hobart Church can be verified in historical documents. For Charles Johanningsmeier, the story reveals Jewett's thinking about race in 1875, at the beginning of her literary career, as well as the degree of rhetorical and narrative skill she had achieved. The tale, he argues, "demonstrates not only Jewett's ability to craft subtle, complex narratives for both children and adult readers but also her deep uncertainty about the superiority of white, Christian, American culture to the cultures of Indians and other non-white people."¹¹ Audience expectations and cultural assumptions were both matters that Jewett struggled

⁹Sarah Orne Jewett, *Deephaven* (1877; Portsmouth, N.H.: Old Berwick Historical Society, 1893), p. 3.

¹⁰Sarah Orne Jewett, "Tame Indians," *Independent*, 1 April 1875, p. 26. Because the story appears on only one page, I will offer no more citations for it. The text is available online at <http://www.public.coe.edu/~theller/soj/unc/tameind.htm>.

¹¹Charles Johanningsmeier, "Subverting Readers' Assumptions and Expectations: Jewett's 'Tame Indians,'" *American Literary Realism* 34.3 (Spring 2002): 240.

to accommodate in her art, and so it is instructive to see how she worked them out in “Tame Indians,” when she was still a relatively inexperienced but dedicated writer.

In “Tame Indians,” a young, female adult, the narrator, recalls a recent Sunday afternoon she spent in Boston entertaining the younger siblings of a friend. The interactions among the three form the outer frame. Bessie asks for a story, a true story, and Jack likes Indian tales. The narrator proposes that she tell them about her visit to the Oneida reservation, where she attended church with “tame” Indians. Moving to the inner frame, the narrator reports that she was amazed to see so many Indians in Green Bay, and she details how she and her friends readied themselves for a visit to the Oneida reservation early Sunday morning. Before she describes the trip, however, she backtracks to the incident that motivated the excursion.

That bit of scaffolding accomplished, the narrator then shifts to the core narrative, the visit. She describes the village, the church service, and, after it concludes, her talk with the missionary. Incursions from the outer frame are frequent, as the children ask questions and the narrator responds. One such intrusion—when Bessie announces that she wishes that all Indians were dead—becomes a crisis that derails the narrative. The narrator successfully draws the children back into her story, and, briefly returning to the inner frame, she sketches the visitors’ departure from Duck Creek. The story ends in the outer frame, as the children plot to bundle up their dog like a papoose. The absent dog is rescued from that impending fate when the children’s older sister returns and proposes that they all take a sunset walk.

Jewett’s double framing suggests the complexity of the rhetorical situation she develops. The story operates on at least five relational levels. In the first two (within the tale’s inner frame), the first-person narrator functions as the story’s central character, (1) making discoveries at Duck Creek and (2) communicating with her Green Bay friends before and after the visit. Outside of the core narrative but within the story’s outer frame, the narrator as storyteller (3) interacts with Jack

and Bessie; by means of the story, the narrator qua narrator (4) relates with her *Independent* readers, an audience that, as Johanningsmeier shows, comprises both children and adults.¹² The fifth relational level becomes visible when Jewett's implicit authorial voice separates itself from the narrative voice, opening a gap between what readers can understand about the Oneida and what the narrator seems to understand; on this level Jewett as author interacts, through dramatic irony, with *Independent* readers. If we look closely at the narrator's exchanges with her Wisconsin friends (2), we should be able to extrapolate what Jewett gained from her presumably similar experience of attending services with the Oneida.

The narrator, who views Green Bay with fresh eyes, challenges her local friends to see differently. She remembers, "I was so excited about them [the Oneida] and had been asking her [one particular friend] to look at every one I saw." The friend proposes an antidote for the narrator's ingenuous enchantment: "What a pity you couldn't go out to 'the Mission' to church. You would see them there to your heart's content. But, for the life of me, I can't get up any enthusiasm. I think they are stupid, lazy creatures." The attitudinal difference between the narrator and her friend suggests a regional bias that Brian Dippie has identified: eastern liberals, intrigued by the race that had "vanished" from their midst, were interested in the fate of Indians who had survived in the West, whereas westerners, more immediately threatened with violence, saw them as intractable and in need of civilizing.¹³ Indeed, the narrator confesses her limited experience with Native Americans. Except for a few "forlorn creatures who live at watering-places in the summer and make fancy baskets to sell to the summer visitors," they have virtually disappeared from New England, she reports. Therefore, she is eager to take up her friend's offer to see the Oneida up close, in their own community. She awakes early on Sunday morning and hurries through her breakfast.

¹²Johanningsmeier, "Subverting Readers' Assumptions," p. 238.

¹³Brian Dippie, *The Vanishing American: White Attitudes and U.S. Indian Policy* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1982), p. 132.

“We were really going to Oneida, and I was so glad,” she tells Jack and Bessie.

The journey out, however, is dreary: dark weather, a rough road, the forest ravaged by the Lake Michigan fires of 1871—one of which had consumed Chicago—and the dead vegetation of November.¹⁴ Nothing lightens the mood until the travelers arrive in the village. As the bells toll, calling people to worship, the sun begins to shine, a positive transformation that is sustained as the inner frame is completed. When they leave the community after the service, the visiting ladies are merry. Observing the Oneida families returning home from church, the visitors remark on how like themselves they are in their family relations and religious piety and yet how culturally different they are as they journey in single file and carry their babies on their backs. To be hospitable to the naïve easterner, her friends had indulged her, but the gloomy duty they had foreseen had become, instead, a cheerful revelation, one that brought a new appreciation for their neighbors.

The attitudinal shift that the morning at Duck Creek inspires in her friends is an unintended consequence of the narrator-protagonist’s desire to make the trip. She does not set out to change others’ hearts; rather, she behaves like another fictional heroine whom Jewett admired, Leslie Goldthwaite.¹⁵ By focusing her moral attention on the best instincts of her own heart—in this case a kindly interest in people different from herself—she inevitably enacts God’s will, serves others, and does good. Her enthusiasm for culturally different people draws her friends into a new relation with the strangers who live nearby, and as the women worship with their neighbors,

¹⁴Peter Pernin, *The Great Peshtigo Fire: An Eyewitness Account* (Madison: Wisconsin State Historical Society, 1999).

¹⁵Mrs. A. D. T. Whitney, *A Summer in Leslie Goldthwaite’s Life* (1866, 1894), <http://www.fullbooks.com/A-Summer-in-Leslie-Goldthwaite-s-Life1.html>. In a 29 May 1876 letter to Anna Dawes, Jewett writes, “I am so glad you like Mrs. Whitney for I do, dearly, and I think no book ever did me more good than that blessed ‘Leslie Goldthwaite.’ I did not realize how much I learned from it until within a year or two. I read it first when I was fifteen or sixteen and just at the right time—and the older I grow the more I find in it” (C. Carroll Hollis, “Letters of Sarah Orne Jewett to Anna Laurens Dawes,” *Colby Library Quarterly* 8 [September 1968]: 107).

their perspective alters.¹⁶ The plot should be familiar. Jewett elaborated it with explicit narrative commentary in one of her best stories prior to 1875, "Miss Sydney's Flowers" (1874). In various forms, it comes to pervade Jewett's fiction from *Deephaven* (1877) through to her final stories.¹⁷

The inner frame of "Tame Indians"—in which the narrator is kind, good, and useful insofar as her interest in her Native neighbors persuades her friends to forego their prejudices and pay a call on nearby strangers—makes concrete Jewett's report that she had achieved a highpoint in her moral development at Green Bay. That narrative configuration also suggests the way in which the mission visit may have played a part in her decision to write professionally. In her 13 July 1873 letter to Scudder, she confesses a weakness that she believes will prevent her from writing longer fiction: "I have no dramatic talent. The story would have no plot. I should have to fill it out with descriptions of character and meditations. It seems to me I can furnish the theatre, and show you the actors, and the scenery, and the audience, but there never is any play!" When she wrote the letter, Jewett had just completed "The

¹⁶The narrator functions similarly to the "sentimental intermediary" Laura L. Mielke describes in *Moving Encounters: Sympathy and the Indian Question in Antebellum Literature* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2008). "Moving encounters" occurred when whites and Native Americans, "face-to-face in a setting claimed by both, participated in a highly emotional exchange that indicated their hearts had more in common than their external appearances or political allegiances suggested. The moving encounter proposed the possibility of mutual sympathy between American Indians and Euro-Americans, of community instead of division. Essential to such scenes was the sentimental intermediary who provided necessary translation—linguistic, cultural, affective—and attempted to minimize the emotional volatility that so quickly led to confrontation and violence" (p. 2). Mielke argues against the notion that representations of the "moving encounter" always served white oppression (p. 196).

See also "'To Make Them Acquainted with One Another': Jewett, Howells, and the Dual Aesthetic of *Deephaven*" (in *Jewett and Her Contemporaries: Reshaping the Canon*, ed. Karen L. Kilcup and Thomas S. Edwards [Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1999]), in which Paul R. Petrie explores connections between Jewett's and William Dean Howells's mutually supporting ideas about how literature may serve to make the diverse elements of an American nation acquainted with each other. Both come to believe that "fiction promotes the readerly sense of belonging to a common culture with the represented Other, by incorporating the Other into the audience's enlarged sense of its own group identity. Socially alien subjects thereby come to appear in the minds of readers as recognizable, if still distant, kin" (p. 104).

¹⁷"Miss Sydney's Flowers" is collected in *Old Friends and New* (Boston: Houghton, Osgood & Co., 1879).

Shore House,” soon to be published in the *Atlantic*. The seed for *Deephaven*, it was a clear advance over her previous adult fiction, but it suffers from exactly the fault Jewett describes. Indeed, she ends the sketch with a defensive apology for its lack of plot.¹⁸ However, only a month later, in her 12 August 1873 letter to Scudder, she pronounces herself pleased that he enjoyed “Deephaven Cronies.”¹⁹ In this second Deephaven sketch, one glimpses more clearly the mature regionalist writer Jewett was to become; its significantly stronger plot is built mainly out of richly suggestive conversations with Deephaven eccentrics. The inner frame of “Tame Indians” contains the germ that would become one of the most vital organizing principles for Jewett’s stories—the transforming visit. By the time she published “Tame Indians,” Jewett had grasped the importance of this form.²⁰

The narrator’s interactions with her Green Bay friends in the inner frame of “Tame Indians” may reveal Jewett’s own kindness, goodness, and usefulness during that visit. By indirectly causing a moral transformation in her friends, she lived a plot that was adaptable to her fiction. Her “accidental” success, in turn, may have motivated her to write stories that approximate the experience she provided for her friends, stories that allow realistic narrative to teach directly rather than obliging the author to resort to explicit moralism or to familiar theatrical formulas that distance the narrator from her readers. As Jewett stated two decades later, in a 23 January 1899 letter

¹⁸In the final paragraph of “The Shore House,” the narrator says, “I cannot help thinking what a capital foundation the Brandon House would be for a story. I have no material wherewith to concoct an account of a love-affair, but I might have been making your hair stand on end all this time with some legend, and Miss Honora Carew’s reminiscences would be charming if I could only tell them as she does. Perhaps unwisely, I wished to tell about Kate Lancaster and myself, and you would not have believed it if I said we saw a ghost or had some remarkable experience with every-day people. Is it not most probable that the two girls kept house and knew the pleasant people and were very happy indeed, and that nothing in particular happened?” (*Atlantic Monthly*, September 1873, p. 368).

¹⁹Cary, *Sarah Orne Jewett Letters*, pp. 30–31.

²⁰Josephine Donovan, in “Sarah Orne Jewett’s Critical Theory: Notes toward a Feminine Literary Mode” (in *Critical Essays on Sarah Orne Jewett*, ed. Gwen L. Nagel [Boston: G. K. Hall, 1984]) identifies and describes the transforming visit as Jewett’s characteristic plot form (pp. 219–20).

to a young fan of *Betty Leicester*, "the people in books are apt to make us understand 'real' people better, and to know why they do things, and so we learn sympathy and patience and enthusiasm for those we live with, and can try to help them in what they are doing, instead of being half suspicious and finding fault."²¹ Part of Jewett's transition from amateur to professional included becoming willing to address adult readers in an adult way, by accepting the risk of trusting a realistic account to communicate worthwhile truths.²²



Jewett's November 1872 letter to Parsons reveals that her first delight at Duck Creek proceeded from the contrast between expectations and realities—that an Oneida Episcopal congregation in Wisconsin would be so different from and yet so like that at New York City's Grace Church; that the Natives, who appeared so threatening, would prove to be benign fellow Christians. The importance of these contrasts is hinted at in the story's title, "*Tame* Indians," for even as Jewett prepared to travel west, newspaper headlines were trumpeting the savagery of "wild" Indians. The front-page headline of the 10 September 1872 *New York Times* was not unusual: "The Hostile Savages. Seven Mexicans Murdered by Apaches in Arizona. Corporal Black's Body Found Lacerated from Head to Foot. The Militia Called Out by Gov. Safford. Severe Battle Reported with

²¹Cary, *Sarah Orne Jewett Letters*, pp. 115–17.

²²During the 1870s, Blanchard observes, Jewett was struggling to discover how to make her stories convey the positive morality she wished them to embody. Parsons urged her to be direct, to organize her stories in such a way that they explicitly stated moral and religious lessons (pp. 75–76). But, as Jewett says in an 1894 letter, her father often offered different advice: "Don't try to write *about* things; write the things themselves just as they are" (Cary, *Sarah Orne Jewett Letters*, p. 90); see also "Looking Back on Girlhood" (1892), in Jewett, *Novels and Stories* (p. 759). Jewett struggles to balance these two directives in a letter to Parsons of 14 September 1873: "but I care most of all to be a pleasure and a help to people." In the same letter, she also indicates that she is beginning to recognize that the impact of a worthwhile piece of writing may be gradual, building as the reader's understanding matures (Stoddart, "Selected Letters," pp. 52–53). Donovan, in "Jewett's Critical Theory," examines how Jewett followed her father's advice, giving her inspiring experiences time to breathe in her imagination until an inner truth emerged, a truth she could then cultivate in her telling of the story (pp. 212–17).

Indians in Yellowstone Valley. Attack on members of the Northern Pacific Railways Survey.”²³ In *The White Man’s Indian*, Robert Berkhofer summarizes the two main stereotypes that have persisted since Europeans’ first contact with Native Americans: the good Indian and the bad Indian. The good Indian is essentially a romanticized noble savage, the primitive child of nature who enjoys “a life of liberty, simplicity and innocence” and represents the mythical origins of an evolving American whiteness. The bad Indian is essentially a projection of evil, of primitive Satanic opposition to a white, Christianized civilization. These stereotypes, Berkhofer stresses, are remarkably static and have remained virtually unchanged over centuries of interaction between whites and various Indian tribes. Indians who have successfully assimilated tend to lose cultural visibility, in effect becoming neither “good” nor “bad” but white.²⁴ Jewett’s impressions in Wisconsin, as she reports them, undo the stereotypical notions she would have carried with her. The Indians she encounters are, surprisingly, neither wild, nor “children of nature,” nor assimilated beyond recognition.

The most obvious similarity the narrator and her young listeners share with the Hobart congregation is that all are Christians and, presumably, Episcopalians.²⁵ The narrator, who apparently attends Episcopal services regularly, assumes the children’s familiarity with the hymns and order of worship. In the inner frame, the visitors participate fully in the service, singing hymns and attending to the sermon. They observe that families sit together and behave just as white congregations do.

²³In *The Newspaper Indian: Native American Identity in the Press, 1820–90* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999), John M. Coward argues that the post-Civil War American press portrayed the “inevitable” disappearance of Native Americans as a process of containment during which Indians would lash out against “innocent” whites (see esp. chaps. 4 and 5).

²⁴Robert F. Berkhofer Jr., *The White Man’s Indian* (New York: Knopf, 1978), pp. 26–29. See also Thomas Parkhill, *Weaving Ourselves into the Land* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1997), pp. 75–77. For a further discussion of how Indian stereotypes function in white racial identity formation, see Parkhill, pp. 106–8; Coward, *Newspaper Indian*, pp. 7–8; Renée Bergland, *The National Uncanny* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 2000), pp. 3–20; and Philip J. Deloria, *Indians in Unexpected Places* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004), p. 50.

²⁵Blanchard reports that Jewett joined the Episcopal Church in 1871 (*Sarah Orne Jewett*, p. 70).

Turning to the differences she observes, the narrator comments that while the men wear the same clothing whites would, the women's dresses, scarves, and shawls are brightly colored, which produces a "droll" effect, an adjective Webster's 1828 dictionary defines as "odd; merry; facetious; comical; as a droll fellow." Though everyone looked "lazy and good-humored," the narrator remarks, a few had eyes like hawks.²⁶ The narrative records the narrator's progress as she moves beyond uncritically accepted stereotypes through a double-vision of contradictory signs toward a more sympathetic view. Later, the narrator notes that she and her friends laughed with delight to see the babies riding off "in state on their mothers' backs, rolled up so cozily in the shawls." While carrying babies in such a manner signals a cultural difference, caught in the word "papooses," the children's good behavior during the church service underscores a basic similarity in how whites and Oneida socialize their children. For the narrator and her friends, the Oneida gradually become not good or bad Indians but *real* Indians. They are not wild savages, nor are they forlorn remnants of a disappearing tribe, nor are they childlike primitives—although this final observation will prove problematic during the course of the story.²⁷

²⁶The narrator reuses two negative words her friend had applied to the Oneida: "stupid" and "lazy." In both cases, she seems to revise their meanings in a more positive direction. The 1828 *Webster's Unabridged Dictionary* gives this definition of "stupid" in reference to persons as "very dull; insensible; senseless; wanting in understanding; heavy; sluggish." In this case, a sluggish demeanor dispels the fear of violence. The 1828 Webster's defines "lazy" as "disinclined to action or exertion; naturally or habitually slothful; sluggish; indolent; averse to labor; heavy in motion." The context in which she uses the word suggests that the narrator is referring to the first part of the definition: "disinclined to action or exertion."

²⁷Jewett's interest in undoing stereotypes is present in her earliest writing, including her first story, "Jenny Garrow's Lovers" (1868) as well as "Mr. Bruce" (1869) and several others, including the first Deeplaven sketches. In "The Orchard's Grandmother" (1871), a hostile encounter between Indians and white settlers is complicated by a child's problem. In other early children's stories, Jewett more than once brings together children of different classes or embeds within a story about privileged, upper-class children another story about working-class or poor children. In "Party Out of Bounds: Gender and Class in Jewett's 'The Best China Saucer,'" Sarah Way Sherman studies how Jewett subverts class divisions in an early children's story (*Jewett and Her Contemporaries*, pp. 223–48). "Jenny Garrow's Lovers" and "The Orchard's Grandmother" appear in Richard Cary, *Uncollected Stories of Sarah Orne Jewett* (Waterville:

By being kind, open-minded, and interested in others, the narrator draws her friends into a frame of reference in which they are able to share her liberation from stereotypical thinking. The liberation is, however, incomplete. "They do not have all the usual Church service; but a much shorter and simpler one, leaving out parts they could not understand," the narrator notes. The assumption is condescending; it is also historically myopic. When Jewett attended Hobart Church, she almost certainly observed two impressive Oneida intellectuals participating in the worship service. The interpreter who rendered the white missionary's English sermon into Oneida probably was Baptist Doctater (sometimes spelled Doxtater in church records). Susan Cooper reports that Doctater had translated the *Book of Common Prayer*, with Oneida and English on facing pages, the text the narrator describes.²⁸ Ellen Saxton, the first wife of the missionary, Reverend Edward Goodnough, recounted that the interpreter sometimes led services in her husband's absence.²⁹ Jewett mentions the second impressive person she saw in a manuscript version of "Tame Indians": "There was a melodeon or cabinet organ played by a young man who had been away to school or college and who looked very intelligent."³⁰ A biographical sketch of Cornelius Hill (1834–1907), "last chief and first priest of the Oneida," appears in *TA LUH VA WA GU*, a history of the Oneida church at Duck Creek. Between the ages of ten and fifteen, he had been educated at Nashotah, an Episcopalian seminary near Milwaukee, and made chief of the Bear Clan. "Chief Hill served as interpreter and organist in the Oneida Church for many years. On

Colby College Press, 1971). "Mr. Bruce" was collected in *Old Friends and New*; "The Best China Saucer" (1872) appears in Jewett's *Play Days* (Boston: Houghton, Osgood & Co., 1878).

²⁸Susan Fenimore Cooper, "Missions to the Oneidas," 10 April 1886, p. 28, published serially in *The Living Church*, 11 April 1885–5 June 1886, available on-line at <http://external.oneonta.edu/cooper/susan/missions.html>.

²⁹Julia K. Bloomfield, *The Oneidas* (New York: Alden Brothers, 1907), p. 280.

³⁰"Tame Indians," bMS Am 1743.2-1743.27, item 7 Tame Indians. A.MS. (unsigned); [n.p., n.d.]. 3s. (12p.), Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass. A transcription appears at: <http://www.public.coe.edu/~theller/soj/unc/tame-indians/tame-houghton.html>.

June 27th, 1885, he was ordained a deacon, and on June 24th, 1903, at the age of 69, he was ordained to the priesthood by Bishop Grafton."³¹ According to Cooper, Hill had ably represented Oneida interests in a post-Civil War dispute with Green Bay businessmen who hoped to gain control over Oneida assets, especially timber. She cites as evidence an 1868 letter he forwarded to the *Green Bay Advocate* in which he repudiates the claim that the Oneida had failed to become civilized and, therefore, should be removed from their reservation.³² In its published version, however, the story fails to mention the intelligent melodeon player.³³ How are we to understand Jewett's choice to omit evidence that would have undercut the narrator's assertion of the childlike simplicity of the Oneida?

To be sure, the missionary's attitude toward his congregation is decidedly paternalistic. They are among the "disappearing" Indians Berkhofer describes, a progressively assimilating race in the process of forsaking its inferior ways for a superior European-American culture.³⁴ The missionary's role in that process was to serve as the spiritual father who would shepherd his flock into the white fold. As Susan Cooper described the Oneida in 1853, when Rev. Goodnough first arrived, they were very much in need of his attentions. "A half-wild tribe," they "are in the mental condition of children; they may have made a

³¹TA LUH VA WA GU: *Holy Apostles Church, Mission to the Oneidas, 1822–1972* (Duck Creek, Wisc.: Holy Apostles Church, 1972), pp. 7–8. The booklet was published for the 150th anniversary of Holy Apostles Church, formerly Hobart Church.

³²Cooper, "Missions to the Oneidas," 15 May 1886, pp. 107–8. Hill signed his 13 June 1868 letter, "A Chief of the first Christian party of Oneidas."

³³Jewett, in fact, would have seen a good deal more at Duck Creek than she incorporated into her story. She portrays the missionary as a lone, white "father" to the Oneida, the only white present besides the visitors. But Rev. Goodnough's second wife and several young children were living at Duck Creek at the time and almost certainly were at church that Sunday. See "Edward A. Goodnough," obituary, *Wisconsin Daily State Gazette*, 1 February 1890, p. 3. A transcription appears at <http://www.public.coe.edu/~theller/soj/unc/tame-indians/goodnough-bio.html>. Another unusual aspect of the narrative is that it reports no exchange, greeting, or conversation of any kind—except the baby's staring at the narrator—between the white visitors and the Oneida. Some Oneida were fluent in English, and although the two parties may well have been diffident, the lack of interaction is difficult to explain.

³⁴As Dippie explains, assimilation increasingly dominated American Indian policy after the Civil War (*The Vanishing American*, chap. 6).

promising beginning, even decided progress in the right direction, but if abandoned by their guides they must inevitably fall back." Cooper also reports approvingly the Oneidas' difficult but steady evolution in assuming English as their primary language and in becoming "more civilized."³⁵ Toward the end of his life, Goodnough proudly proclaimed that "the grand work of Christianizing the Indians is still going on. They are eager and willing to be taught the ways of the white men, and exhibit a great advancement in methods of civilization. During my stay here, I have encouraged them especially to speak English, and to adopt our manners and customs. The progress they have made is owing to the church, more than to any other one thing."³⁶

The narrator has it on good authority, then, that the Oneida are only just beginning to emerge from their primitivism. The missionary's description of his parish, however, undercuts his patronizing assessment. As the narrator recalls,

we had a pleasant little talk with the missionary, who told us he had lived there twenty years, and that the people were going to build a new stone church soon. And he showed us bead-work and pretty moccasins that the squaws had worked, and told us how much they are like children, and that they rarely save money; so when they are ill and old they are very forlorn. They are superstitious and remember many of the strange old legends; and I should like so much to have talked a great while longer, and to have asked him to tell me the legends and more about his parish. He had a sweet, kind face and seemed so fond of them and so proud of their progress since he came to live with them.³⁷

The missionary's account is complicated by the fact that his parishioners are about to build a new stone church; in other words, they have accumulated the resources needed to achieve their communal goal even though, as individuals, they (or at least some among them) fail to save for their own future

³⁵Cooper, "Missions to the Oneidas," 27 March 1886, p. 784.

³⁶Reported in "Goodnough," obituary.

³⁷Jewett added the information about the missionary collecting Oneida legends when she revised her manuscript.

needs.³⁸ And thus, because they fail to meet his expectations in all particulars, the missionary continues to view the Oneida as childlike.

Through the pastor's reflections on his experience at Duck Creek and the narrator's implicit reactions to them, the Oneida emerge as an interestingly hybrid culture. The missionary remains frustrated that his tireless efforts to Christianize the Oneida have not made sufficient inroads into their superstitions and the folklore they transmit through an oral culture. The narrator, however, regrets that she had not stayed long enough to hear the pastor recite the very legends he disdained. Though hybridity is not a concept Jewett alludes to in "Tame Indians," the concept gains traction later in her career. In "From a Mournful Villager" (1881), for example, she explores how American frontier culture is transforming small-town New England which, in her part of the country, is the minority culture under pressure to assimilate; in that sketch, she recommends careful preservation of the best of the old values.³⁹ In "Tame Indians," the narrator's commentary reveals the Wisconsin Oneida to be a mature, developing culture that is actively adapting to its own ends, not simply accepting, core Christian beliefs and customs of worship as well as a number of technologies, ranging from architecture and dress to musical instruments. That selective process also involves resistance, and the sites of resistance that most interest the narrator are religion, storytelling, and language, language especially.

The Oneidas' commitment to their cultural autonomy is most evident in their reluctance to communicate and worship in English. Even though he has served the parish for twenty years,

³⁸In the Houghton manuscript, where Jewett records the missionary calling the Oneida lazy, in the sense of refusing to "work steadily," he also reports that they have been preparing to build a new church for a long time. Cooper says that the Oneida, on their own and over many years, labored to quarry stone and prepare lumber, and provided donations and raised funds locally to accumulate \$6,000 in cash for a new church by the spring of 1884. However, their church fund disappeared in a bank failure that year. Further sacrifices, along with a national appeal from Bishop Brown, restored the fund to \$5,000 by 1886, allowing them finally to begin work ("Missions to the Oneidas," 5 June 1886, p. 155).

³⁹Jewett, *Novels and Stories*, pp. 585–97. Jewett collected the piece in *Country By-Ways* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1881).

the missionary has failed to persuade the Oneida to sing hymns in English, to use the English *Book of Common Prayer*, or to follow his sermons without the benefit of an interpreter. In an 1877 report on the mission, Bishop J. H. Hobart Brown of the Diocese of Fond du Lac wrote in puzzled admiration, "The great obstacle to the spiritual and social improvement of the tribe is the tenacity with which they cling to their own language. It is delightful to hear them speak and sing the praises of God, but if they could be induced to speak, read and write in English, it would not be long before the last shadows of heathenism would be driven from their hearts. . . . [B]ut their daily life shows that their faith must be nearly right."⁴⁰ Brown considers maintaining their language a lingering sign of heathenism, but by this means the Oneida keep control of their culture; what they adapt from whites is chosen and added or blended.

The narrator seems to glimpse that cultural dynamic at work during the course of the church service. The missionary's sermon, she reports, was short and simple, "just such a sermon as would be preached to children. I remember I liked it exceedingly."⁴¹ Of the translator, she says, "He had a fine, deep voice and a grave manner, and used many gestures, so he reminded me of what I had read of the speeches the braves made around the council-fires." Though the narrator does not reach such a conclusion, one may infer from her description that the interpreter is not *simply* translating the sermon but is adapting it to Oneida cultural norms, as Doctater may also have done in translating the congregation's prayer book.⁴² Doctater, by his

⁴⁰Rev. J. H. Hobart Brown, "The Oneida Indians," *The Church Magazine*, April 1877, p. 51. Cooper describes the Oneida devotional volumes as in active use: "a translation of the New Testament, complete with the exception of Second Corinthians; portions of the Old Testament; the prophesy of Isaiah; a hymn book compiled chiefly from our own; and three different editions of the Prayer Book" (Cooper, "Missions to the Oneidas," 10 April 1886, p. 28).

⁴¹Cooper confirms the narrator's characterization of the sermons preached by Good-nough in "Missions to the Oneidas," 10 April 1886, p. 28. Johanningsmeier notes that the narrator undercuts the assumption that simple sermons are merely for children ("Subverting Readers' Assumptions," p. 246). Jewett expressed a similar view in a 12 June 1881 letter to Parsons (Stoddart, "Selected Letters," p. 137).

⁴²Cooper points out that the Oneida particularly valued Doctater's translation and "often read it in their homes with pleasure" ("Missions to the Oneidas," 10 April 1886,

use of gesture, revises Goodnough's sermon oratory, though Jewett could not have known whether he was also fitting its content to Oneida religious traditions.

Although she does not explicitly say as much, the narrator seems to understand that in narrating as in translating, someone claims the authority to represent a culture and convey it to an audience. "Tame Indians" presents a complex rhetorical scene in which a number of different individuals assume that license. The missionary, a pastor addressing his flock, appears to be in charge of the service, which he leads in English. But the words the Oneida hear are filtered through another authority, the translator. Only they know what he says, and details of the story suggest that his speech differs, perhaps significantly, from the minister's. What the missionary may think he is saying to the childlike auditors before him is re-presented, in translation, to a mixed-age congregation. The narrator introduces yet another layer of complexity. A white adult, she listens to the English version of the sermon, reflecting that though it seems to be designed for children, it is an excellent sermon for adults as well. She, too, "translates" it, and in doing so, she becomes an authority as well, reporting her experience to her child listeners and to the mixed-age readers of the *Independent*.

The multiple translations have the effect of displacing the missionary from his status as sole rhetorical authority. He, of course, laments that the Oneida are reluctant to learn English, but he has apparently chosen not to teach them in their language. Viewing the Indians as children, he seems unaware of the ways in which they may be incorporating his teachings into a hybrid culture rather than undergoing a transformation into "white people." Oneida religious practice is flexible enough to selectively accommodate new rituals and beliefs, and yet in stubbornly retaining their "superstitions" and legends, the

p. 28). In *Eloquence Is Power: Oratory and Performance in Early America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), Sandra F. Gustafson relates eighteenth-century missionary David Brainerd's experience with his Delaware interpreter, Moses Titamy, whom he suspected of adapting his sermons. She points out that Native translators could act as cultural brokers, gaining status and power by means of creative translation (pp. 85–86).

Indians demonstrate that they claim a gospel of their own. Their stories are compelling; the missionary remembers them, and the narrator regrets not having heard them. Although he is probably not aware of his transformation, when he listens to the “strange old legends” of the Oneida, the missionary becomes childlike, a naïf in a foreign culture; indeed, he may have absorbed more of that culture than he realizes.⁴³ As Jewett would comment on communication between people and animals in her 1881 sketch “River Driftwood,” “Taming is only forcing them to learn some of our customs; we should be wise if we let them tame us to make use of some of theirs.”⁴⁴ This lesson, however, is unlikely to occur to the missionary, and Jewett was perhaps too polite to embarrass the kindly man in print by pointing it out.

Within the story, the Oneida appear to embrace cultural hybridity most enthusiastically in their singing. The narrator comments, “They seemed to know the hymns by heart, and their singing was very good and interested me more than anything. The tunes sounded so familiar and the words so strange.”⁴⁵ When Jack asks if she remembers any of the words, she is sorry to say that she does not. Cast on the other side of the linguistic divide, the whites who are unfamiliar with the language of worship find themselves in the position of children. *The Book of Common Prayer* and the hymns unite all Episcopalians, but whites and Indians read different words on different pages and hear different sermons and songs. What each party understands of the other will inevitably be incomplete, its complexity and nuance abridged.



While the narrator offers substantial evidence of Oneida cultural sophistication, she does not make explicit the reasonably

⁴³Gustafson reports that David Brainerd was more anxious than Goodnough seems to be that he would be contaminated by pagan beliefs (*Eloquence Is Power*, pp. 86–88).

⁴⁴“River Driftwood” is in Jewett’s *Country By-Ways* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1881), p. 4.

⁴⁵That the Oneida know their hymns by heart suggests that they may be singing them outside of church, a cultural practice that would accord with Michael McNally’s findings in *Ojibwe Singers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

obvious inference that the missionary's paternalism is ill placed. Jewett thus opens a gap between her authorial position and the narrator's, prompting adult readers of the *Independent* to question the narrator's ready acceptance of the idea that the Oneida are childlike. Jewett's most complex and risky rhetorical move occurs at a fifth relational level.⁴⁶ Jewett's father had once counseled her to "write the things themselves just as they are."⁴⁷ Following his advice, she takes the risk of limiting her narrator's perspective while giving readers the wherewithal to challenge her conclusions and yet to recognize as well that the narrator knows more than she is able to convey to the children listening to her story. After all, portraying the Oneida as childlike suits the narrator's rhetorical purpose, which, in part, is to establish a connection between Bessie and Jack and the Oneida that replicates the fellow feeling she and her adult friends felt they had shared with the Indians at Duck Creek.

At the mission church, Jewett powerfully and decisively experienced the ethical value of becoming acquainted with one's neighbors. Cultural differences, she resolved, should not be seen as dividing walls but, rather, as doors that open out toward the delightfully new. One of the more appealing features of social life, cultural differences render people interesting and useful to one another. As Jewett implies in "River Driftwood," cultural imperialism is a dead end; what we should value is cultural diversity and the opportunities it affords for one culture to share the best it has to offer with other cultures.

In the rhetorical complexity of the social interactions taking place at Duck Creek, Jewett discerned a fundamental problem that she would have to tackle if she were to become a professional writer: how to address readers across a range of abilities and experiences. In the kindly Reverend Goodnough, she presented a reasonably successful speaker who would have

⁴⁶Johanningsmeier argues that the *Independent* tended generally to present sympathetic discussions of Native Americans, thus ensuring that readers would see through and judge the prejudices of Jewett's characters ("Subverting Readers' Assumptions," pp. 247-48).

⁴⁷Cary, *Sarah Orne Jewett Letters*, p. 90; see also "Looking Back on Girlhood" (1892), in Jewett, *Novels and Stories*, p. 759.

been much more so had he allowed himself to be tamed, that is, had he learned how to address the Oneida in their own language. The pastor does not recognize that missed opportunity, nor does the narrator, apparently, but the reader does. Though Jewett had dared to use irony in children's stories by 1873—for example, in the opening of “The Best China Saucer” (1872)—she rarely trusted her young readers to deduce important ideas, relying instead upon direct statement. Writing for adults would compel her to revise her texts until they extracted the necessary work from readers that would result in the kind of ethical revelations she sought to impart. In her 13 July 1873 letter to Scudder, Jewett confessed that she had not yet mastered the art of revision, that tinkering with her spontaneously composed stories had so far harmed rather than helped them.

In order to revise one's work successfully, the author must develop a sophisticated understanding of his or her goals and of the needs and abilities of potential readers. By 1875, Jewett seems to have understood a good deal about risk taking and revision, as is visible in the extensive changes between the Houghton Library manuscript version of “Tame Indians” and the version that appeared in print. Jewett calls attention to the hard work of perfecting a narrative in the story's outer frame, where, having failed to devise a sound rhetorical strategy, the narrator must revise her narrative *in medias res*.

The children have asked for a story, and she simply begins telling it. However, as she interacts with her audience—Jack and Bessie—the narrator must take their interests and capacities into account. Jack says he likes Indian stories. The narrator clearly understands the sort of story he wants, because, before he even has a chance to register his preference for a tale “about fights and splendid Indians who knew all about hunting,” she anticipates probable objections by emphasizing that her story is about *tame* Indians and by recommending that, when he is older, he read Francis Parkman's *The History of the Jesuits in North America* (1867) which, she suspects, will alter his romantic attitude toward “wild” Indians. According to Dippie, Parkman advocated the “convenient extinction” of

Native Americans, too wild ever to be civilized, a conviction "Tame Indians" sets out to repudiate.⁴⁸

The narrator tends to give Jack special attention, as if debating with him, and fails to consider how that will affect Bessie. She indulges Jack's interest in violence, in part to make clear to him its darker side. In the last instance, she sensationalizes her tale with the kind of gratuitous excess one expects in the less responsible newspapers. She relates that the Oneida at worship looked "as if they never heard of going on the war-path, or of burning people's houses and murdering them in the night [their beds], or of carrying them off captive through the woods [in winter]." The lines as quoted are based on the Houghton manuscript, with final revisions indicated by strikeouts and brackets: "their beds" replaces "the night," and "in winter" is appended to "the woods." As she revised, Jewett embellished the horror of the narrator's description of what was *not* happening during the church service.⁴⁹ She also adds to the published text the entire ensuing incident that leads up to and includes Bessie's exclamation. Before Bessie weighs in with her opinion of the Indians, the narrator observes that though the Oneida have historically been a peaceable people, they are "all that are left of the great tribe, and it was pitiful to think how they have been pushed further and further back from the sea and are being crowded out of the world." The narrator has chosen to highlight the contrast between wild Indians and the Oneida to evoke sympathy for them, but her

⁴⁸Dippie argues that Parkman, in accord with Samuel George Morton, concluded that Indians as a race were not capable of becoming civilized (*The Vanishing American*, pp. 82–93). In *The Jesuits in North America*, Parkman records what he saw to be the effects of the Jesuit mission: "The Indians melted away, not because civilization destroyed them, but because their own ferocity and intractable indolence made it impossible that they should exist in its presence." European settlers possessed and Natives lacked "the plastic energies of a higher race" (*France and England in North America*, 2 vols. [1865–82; repr. New York: Literary Classics of the United States, 1983], 1:623). As Coward amply demonstrates, this majority view about Native Americans, which persisted into the post-Civil War period, was widely disseminated, and sensationalized, by the press (see *Newspaper Indian*).

⁴⁹The details Jewett chooses, notably the winter captivity, suggest that she is drawing upon the *French-led* Indian raid on Salmon Falls in 1690, which she describes in "The Old Town of Berwick" (*New England Magazine*, July 1894, pp. 592–93), one of the most frightening memories of "Indian" hostilities in Jewett's locality.

rhetorical strategy backfires. Bessie blurts out: “It makes me afraid even to read about Indians, and I think these are the nicest ones I ever heard of. I am glad there isn’t room enough in the world for them. Wicked things!”

Even though Bessie acknowledges that the Oneida are “nice,” the narrator has failed to complicate Bessie’s attitude toward Indians. Like many Americans living in an era in which wars with Indians in the West were almost continuous, Bessie is caught up in the stereotype of Indian savagery, a stereotype that supported various means of *making* Indians vanish. Bessie’s terror, like that Jewett expressed in her letter to Parsons, arises from Indians’ portrayal in the media: Bessie is afraid to *read* about Indians; Jewett’s fear derived from storybooks. Reacting to the fear of what *some* Indians *might* do to her, Bessie naturally wishes them *all* dead. The narrator’s emphasis on the peacefulness of the Oneida village has little impact on Bessie, and her energetic reaction silences the narrator, drawing her into a moment of reflection.

The brief meditation that follows marks the point at which the narrator adopts a more self-conscious and deliberate rhetorical strategy: she discovers the need to revise. Confiding in her *readers* (both adults and children), she tells them what she will *not* say to Bessie and Jack:

And I thought if we only would crowd the wicked thoughts from our hearts by putting better ones in it would be a capital plan, and then it flashed into my head that the Indians had been like weeds in the garden, which have to make room for the flowers always; but that the white people, some of them, have no right to the Indians’ places, for they are no better than they were.

Reflecting on Bessie’s wish to exterminate the brutes, the narrator moralizes that it is the duty of all right-thinking individuals to crowd out wicked thoughts from the gardens of their hearts by planting flowers of better thoughts. The metaphor leads her to another: European Americans have thought of Native Americans as weeds in the garden of America which should be uprooted to make way for European-American flowers. Immediately challenging the image her mind has generated, she

decides that Indians are no more weeds than white settlers are flowers. The metaphor does not hold racially, only individually. Some Indians *have* been cruel, but her visit to the Oneida has shown her that "Indian cruelty" is not a racial trait. The white people who covet Indian lands and have taken them at Sand Creek (1864) or at Camp Grant (1871–72) are often wicked themselves.⁵⁰ In those few private thoughts, the narrator deconstructs the idea of Manifest Destiny as she reconstructs the popular metaphor of the American garden. She acknowledges that Indians *own* places and deserve to remain in them because they are not all wicked, any more than Bessie's moment of savagery proves that she is irredeemably corrupted, or any more than the kindly missionary's mistaken notion that his parishioners are like children proves that all whites are weeds in an American garden. At this point, when the narrator confides in her readers, Jewett may narrow or even close the gap she opened between her implicit authorial voice and the narrator's. It seems clear, at least, that the narrator here rejects the notion of morally significant differences between Europeans and Native Americans, the basis upon which Indians might be deemed inferior, whether as "weeds" or as cultural children.

Following Bessie's outburst, the narrator recognizes that she is failing to communicate to the children what she has learned from her visit to Duck Creek. She lets her readers know what she would like the children to take away from her tale, but how can she transmit that insight to Jack and Bessie? At this point, she has a second flash of inspiration; she remembers "how funny the Indian babies were." It helps to remember that the 1828 Webster's dictionary defines "funny" as "droll; comical." Her response to Bessie's tirade, then, is indirect. She does not scold Bessie or hold her accountable for her wicked thoughts. She does not preach or moralize. Instead, she tells a story, creates a picture, scatters the seeds of flowers that may displace the weeds: "'After service was over,' said I, 'we watched the

⁵⁰See Colin Calloway, *First Peoples*, 3rd ed. (Boston: Bedford St. Martin's, 2008), for accounts of Sand Creek (pp. 302–3) and Camp Grant (pp. 311–12). Coward also discusses Sand Creek in *Newspaper Indian*, chap. 4.

people go away, and laughed to see all the papposes ride off in state on their mothers' backs, rolled up so cozily in the shawls.'"

Rather than pontificating, the narrator offers the children an opportunity to delight in newness, to enjoy, as she did, observing and identifying with the Oneida mothers and children. She replays the word "cozy," which she had used earlier to describe the sofa where the three sit during story time. Thus, the narrator calls attention to their present comfort and safety, which she then connects to the way in which Oneida mothers care for their children, a strategy that effectively diverts Bessie from her terror and rekindles her enthusiasm for learning about the nice Oneida.⁵¹ Her story back on track, the narrator is able to interest Jack and Bessie in the Oneida children, their behavior in church, the one individual baby who stared at the narrator during the service, and then in the missionary. She is able to highlight both similarities and differences between the Indian families and her child audience. Her success may be measured in the children's plan to wrap up their dog like a pappose.⁵²

The outer frame of "Tame Indians" depicts a narrator who, in mid-narration, undergoes a transformation from an amateur into a quasi-professional storyteller. In her silent aside, she directly acknowledges her reading audience, letting them in on thoughts she considers too mature for her outer-frame auditors, Bessie and Jack. In that brief aside, she exposes the core idea behind the Indian stereotypes the story as a whole presents and subverts, unmasking the evil desire of some whites to take Indian land if they might. Converting strangers into neighbors by means of storytelling requires tact, such as knowing when not

⁵¹Jewett deploys similar rhetorical strategies several times in her career, encouraging young people to rethink their stereotypical views of Native Americans. See, e.g., her poem "York Garrison: 1640," in *Wide Awake*, June 1886, pp. 18–22, and Blanchard's presentation of Jewett's report, in her 10 November 1890 letter to Louisa Dresel, of playing "scouting for Indians" with her nephew (p. 202). A less dramatic example appears in "The Orchard's Grandmother" (1871).

⁵²Here my reading differs from Johanningsmeier's; he sees the narrator engaging in self-discovery as she constructs her narrative for the children. In his view, she becomes increasingly doubtful "about the authority of her own point of view" ("Subverting Readers' Assumptions," p. 245). As a result, she is frustrated that the children have not absorbed her own growing distrust of stereotypes.

to say what one is thinking. It requires rhetorical skill, knowing what means will work at what times with what audiences. It requires hewing to the discipline of showing, of providing pictures of characters in thought and action and allowing readers to make inferences based upon them. It requires risk taking, being willing to accept that not every reader will see through a narrator's limitations. And it requires revision, developing a sophisticated understanding of one's goals and altering the text to meet readers' needs and abilities.



That Jewett's professional career may have originated in the pleasurable undoing of negative stereotypes about Native Americans did not free her from the structures of her culture and its assumptions. Toni Morrison, who, in *Playing in the Dark* (1992), speaks of how white American writers must struggle to write humanely in a wholly racialized society, says the best authors recognize that in America "there is no escape from racially inflected language," and she asks critics to study the complex work "writers do to unhobble the imagination from the demands of that language."⁵³ While Jewett in 1875 seems able to see through contemporary stereotypes of Native Americans and sets out eagerly to overturn them, still, in work published through 1875, one finds references to racial and cultural stereotypes that should disturb alert twenty-first-century readers. In "Desert Islanders" (1872), children pretend to be cast away on an island where they must be careful to watch for savages. In "Cartridges" (1874), she describes Sepoys as "ignorant and undisciplined" before their English mentors took them in hand. In "The Turtle Club" (1875), she compares misbehaving schoolchildren to "wild Arabs."⁵⁴ "Tame Indians"

⁵³Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark* (New York: Vintage, 1992), pp. 12–13.

⁵⁴Noting that Jewett seems rather easily to accept and include in her writing stereotypes of peoples who are distant and, to her, exotic recalls one of Johanningsmeier's main points about "Tame Indians": that it shows her questioning contemporary ideas of white supremacy. Jewett's ideas about race have been hotly contested ever since the issue was first raised decisively by Amy Kaplan ("Nation, Region, and Empire," in *The Columbia History of the American Novel*, ed. Emory Elliott [New York: Columbia

suggests that Jewett, like many Americans, then and now, could recognize and resist stereotyping people with whom she had some acquaintance—rural New Englanders, timid urban ladies, Native Americans, African Americans, Irish and French-Canadians—while at the same time, perhaps unconsciously, deploying stereotypes in other contexts in which her awareness has not been so obviously provoked.⁵⁵

Finally, of course, we cannot know whether the 1872 encounter with the Oneida that liberated Jewett and her friends from some stereotypes was *the* decisive moment at which she recognized that her vocation was to convert strangers into neighbors by telling stories. She gave the Duck Creek episode serious attention in her writing—a letter, a journal entry, a story—and she explicitly connects the visit with her coming to key understandings about herself. Moving her friends from impatience to enthusiasm toward the Oneida illustrates her favorite plot form, the transforming visit, a form that particularly served her desire to use her writing to do good in the world. Jewett's stay in Green Bay and her decision to become a professional writer mark her transition out of what she characterized as a spiritually dark period in her life. In the same May 1873 journal in which she recorded her decision

University Press, 1991], pp. 240–56), and by Richard Brodhead in *Cultures of Letters* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), chaps. 4 and 5. Just how difficult it is to determine Jewett's position in any particular case can be seen in "The White-Rose Road," an autobiographical sketch, collected in *Strangers and Wayfarers* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1890). What is one to make of her statement that the "pine woods and the Indians seem to be next of kin" in that the woods "had no idea of losing in their war with civilization and the intruding white settler" (*Novels and Stories*, p. 710)? Especially unsettling is her diary entry of Sunday, 15 August 1869: "Very rainy. Went to Church all day. Miss Lizzie Parks & Mr Barker of California sat with me in the morning. A nigger preached in the afternoon—." This is the only use of "nigger" so far noted in Jewett's writing. What did the word mean in Jewett's family, community, and church four years after the Civil War?

⁵⁵Jewett published a number of works that included Irish, French-Canadian, and African American characters. The Irish stories, with a careful introduction, are collected in *The Irish Stories of Sarah Orne Jewett*, ed. Jack Morgan and Louis A. Renza (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1996). I examine African American characters in "To Each Body a Spirit: Jewett and African Americans," *New England Quarterly* 84.1 (March 2011): 123–58, as does Josephine Donovan in "Jewett on Race, Class, Ethnicity, and Imperialism: A Reply to Her Critics," *Colby Quarterly* 38.4 (December 2002): 403–16.

to write professionally, she noted (what follows is a literal transcription):

The days are over with when "the question of my own personal salvation was the whole of religion to me" as some one wisely says — and now I am living another kind of life from the one I was snarled and tangled up in [two?] years ago when this book, half journal and half extract book, was begun. I know better what I am doing, and this I owe in great measure to Prof — Parsons, who has been one of my best friends these last six months — Whose letters and whose books and what he himself has said to me have made me wiser and better.⁵⁶ I think of my writing in a very different way from what I used. It is no longer an amusement merely but *my work*. In a review of Miss Thackerays last novel I found this "In short, the tenderness of a loving womanly heart pervades the whole book. It is *Miss Thackeray* in "Old Kensington" that makes it so delightful a story." — This is what I wish; to be so good and true that myself in my stories, my books if I write them; will be sympathetic, and I hope they may never fail to be interesting and helpful and strong to do good, because there is no life or reality running through and my own heart is cold and selfish. And I mean never to finish a story without putting in at least some little word that will help people to be happier, and to grow better.

By the end of her career, when she wrote her famous 1908 letter to Willa Cather, Jewett was surer of the relationship between being good and writing well: "you must write to the human heart, the great consciousness that all humanity goes to make up. . . . And to write and work on this level, we must live on it. . . . We must be ourselves, but we must be our best selves."⁵⁷ Much of her journal of 1871–73, though, is taken up with her struggle to discipline herself to live for others and not for herself, as the idea of Christianity she shared with her young female friends demanded, and with groping toward a way to realize the exclamation she recorded on the title page of that

⁵⁶For a discussion of Theophilus Parsons's influence on Jewett as person and artist, see Josephine Donovan, "Jewett and Swedenborg," *American Literature* 65.4 (December 1993): 731–50.

⁵⁷Annie Fields, *Letters of Sarah Orne Jewett* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1911), pp. 249–50.

journal: “Not *how* but *what!*” When she finally understands what she must do, what her work will be, how to live for others becomes clear to her, and she can take up her adult, professional life, going about her “father’s business.”

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