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WILLIAM APRESS: AUTOBIOGRAPHY
AND THE CONVERSION OF SUBJECTIVITY

By

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B.A., Literature & Creative Writing, University of Montana
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Abstract

“William Apess: Autobiography and the Conversion of Subjectivity”

In 1829, Apess published his first book *A Son of the Forest*, a conversion narrative documenting his life. Apess, a Pequot Methodist minister in the early nineteenth century, has recently come to the attention of academic historians, English literary, and Native American Studies scholars. Barry O’Connell of Amherst College compiled and edited Apess’s writings in *On Our Own Ground: The Complete Writings of William Apess, a Pequot*, published by University of Massachusetts Press in 1992. Apess may be one of the earliest Native writers using the English language, after Samson Occom. He is also one the first Native Americans to document the colonial process that nearly eliminated his people from the Eastern Seaboard.

Looking back on Apess, we can see the importance of such early Native American writing during the Jacksonian Era. This kind of writing explains the process of colonization and subjugation from the perspective of a writer who is colonized and subjugated, a perspective often overlooked. Historians tend to favor the writing of the colonizer and subjugator. For this reason, Apess adds a unique and important perspective.

Apess was not just writing his autobiography. He was using his story to convey his truth. Through his writing he claimed that Eastern Seaboard EuroAmericans greatly misunderstood and denigrated Mashpee and Pequot peoples, misrepresented early American history, and continued to unfairly subjugate Native Americans and other non-EuroAmericans. In order to reveal these claims, I trace shifting perspectives and subjectivities. With each shift in subjectivity, I find a changing relationship to his writing. Reading his narrative as autobiography, I find that Apess’s writing exceeds this genre classification, which leads me to reconsider the limited classifications of *Son of the Forest*, *The Experiences of Five Christian Indians*, as well as his later works *Nullification* and *Eulogy*. This becomes a question of genre, freeing Apess’s writings from the restrictions ascribed to autobiography as a category of genre. The writings, especially *Son of the Forest* qualify as history writing, trauma writing, biography, and distinctly Native American social critique.

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INTRODUCTION

The question of writing opens as a question of morality. It is truly *morality* that is at stake, both in the sense of the opposition between good and evil, or good and bad, and in the sense of mores, public morals and social conventions. It is a question of knowing what is done and what is not done. This moral disquiet is in no way to be distinguished from questions of truth, memory, and dialectics. This latter question, which will quickly be engaged as *the* question of writing, is closely associated with the morality theme, and indeed develops it by affinity of essence and not by superimposition.

-Jacques Derrida *Dissemination* 72 (his emphases)

It is a matter of deep and lasting regret that the character of the Indians, who occupied this widespread and goodly heritage, when men of pale faces came over the pierceless solitudes of the mighty ocean, with their large canoes, and were received with all the kindly feelings of native innocence—I say that it is deeply to be regretted that their character should be so grossly misrepresented and misunderstood.

-William Apess *The Indians* 114

William Apess was a young man on a mission. He undertook to write about his life and convey his truth. Not only was he on the path of self-discovery through self-writing, but he was also on a warpath. Against hegemonicⁱ resistance, Apess represented himself: an indentured servant turned Methodist minister, a Pequot/Mashpee alive and subjugated two hundred years after his people's genocideⁱⁱ, a man trying to wrench a distorted and erased history from the hands of his oppressors. His earliest and most multi-faceted text, *Son of the Forest* started as a conversion narrative but became a historical revision as his writerly quest to represent himself became the need to correct historical representations of his people.

In 1829, Apess published his first book *A Son of the Forest*, a conversion narrative documenting his life. Apess, a Pequot Methodist minister in the early nineteenth century, has recently come to the attention of academic historians, English literary, and Native American Studies scholars. Barry O'Connell of Amherst College compiled and edited Apess's writings in *On Our Own Ground: The Complete Writings of William*

Apess, a Pequot, published by University of Massachusetts Press in 1992. Apess may be one of the earliest Native writers using the English language, after Samson Occom. He is also one the first Native Americans to document the colonial process that nearly eliminated his people from the Eastern Seaboard.

Looking back on Apess, we can see the importance of such early Native American writing during the Jacksonian Era. This kind of writing explains the process of colonization and subjugation from the perspective of a writer who is colonized and subjugated, a perspective often overlooked. Historians tend to favor the writing of the colonizer and subjugator. For this reason, Apess adds a unique and important perspective.

Apess wrote himself out of erasure. O'Connell explains in his introduction that the EuroAmericans had actively written the Pequots out of history (*On Our Own Ground* xxiv-xxvi). Although the Pequot name was erased, a few Pequot people like Apess remained, mostly off reservation and intermixed with African Americans and EuroAmericans. "His people, the Pequots, were assumed by virtually all white Americans to have been wiped out by the allied Puritan forces in 1637," (O'Connell 163). Apess engages notions of personal and political identity as he struggles to convince his audiences that people from the Pequot tribe still exist after a series of genocidal and historiographical acts had nearly wiped them out physically and in name. Many people in his audiences refused to believe that Apess was a Pequot, a considerable obstacle to overcome as he tried to win them over for economic and social purposes. This obstacle caused Apess to force his way into American history against a tide of hegemonic erasure that threatened his existence. Yet Apess continued to write about his life, his story, and his truth.

Certain questions arise from reading Apess's autobiography. One question is whether autobiography, more specifically a conversion narrative, can qualify as history writing. It is the question of whether the writing of personal experience can impact historical representations, in this case, of Pequot and Mashpee people. This question can become a larger question of how we read autobiography as a genre.

Apess was not just writing his autobiography. He was using his story to convey his truth. Through his writing he claimed that Eastern Seaboard EuroAmericans greatly misunderstood and denigrated Mashpee and Pequot peoples, misrepresented early American history, and continued to unfairly subjugate Native Americans and other non-EuroAmericans. In order to reveal these claims, I trace shifting perspectives and subjectivities. With each shift in subjectivity, I find a changing relationship to his writing. Reading his narrative as autobiography,ⁱⁱⁱ I find that Apess's writing exceeds this genre classification, which leads me to reconsider the limited classifications of *Son of the Forest*, *The Experiences of Five Christian Indians*, as well as his later works, *Indian Nullification of the Unconstitutional Laws of Massachusetts [...]* and *Eulogy on King Philip, as Pronounced at the Odeon, in Federal Street, Boston*. This becomes a question of genre, freeing Apess's writings from the restrictions ascribed to autobiography as a category of genre. The writings, especially *Son of the Forest* qualify as history writing, trauma writing, biography, and distinctly Native American social critique.

It is necessary to define genre because each genre has a unique relationship to truth claims. A reader determines genre depending on methodological or structural assumptions. These assumptions or genre criterion cause the reader to weigh the writing's subjectivity and honesty. Deconstructing^{iv} genre emphasizes the subjectivity of all forms

of writing and illuminates the subject and subjectivity within the writing, fractured and unstable yet complexly interactive and interanimated. Apess constantly traverses lines of identification and affiliation, fracturing what was made stable through his writing, destabilizing his subjectivity.

Apess's shifting subjectivities couple with a shifting subject; as this subject shifts the genre transforms. His subjectivity shifts, and so does his representation, from himself to his people. His subjectivity shifts as his subject relocates from self to Indian/white relations. At the same time, his writing shifts in genre from personal narrative to history. Beginning with *Son of the Forest*, Apess's texts move principally from autobiography to history writing. His final text, *Eulogy on King Philip*, should be considered a historical text, as he rewrites the history of the Pequot tribe, disputing dominant accounts of the same history. The nature of his writing changes as he changes in life.

Consequently, his position and request to his reader changes. First, he positions himself as a former indentured servant, a converted Native and Christian asking the Methodist community to accept him as a leader, as is evident in *Son of the Forest*, *The Increase of the Kingdom of Christ*, and *The Indians*. These three texts offer Apess's life story, conversion narrative, and Christian theology as it intersects with his Native concerns for social equality and justice. *Son of the Forest* also conforms to the genre of trauma writing as he recounts his childhood in indenture and earlier. Thereafter, he produces two texts that reveal increased affiliation with Native communities and increased interest in Native representation, *The Experiences of Five Christian Indians of the Pequot Tribe* and *An Indian's Looking-Glass for the White Man*. This interest in Native representation evolves when he represents the Mashpee tribe in their legal battles

with Harvard University and the State of Massachusetts in *Indian Nullification of the Unconstitutional Laws of Massachusetts Relative to the Marshpee Tribe; or, The Pretended Riot Explained*. This writing should be considered legal documentation and representation. After seven more years of writing he positions himself as an authority on Native American legal affairs, a historian asking his audience to rectify social and race-related injustices of popular EuroAmerican history writing in *Eulogy on King Philip*. Thus, Apess changes his view of himself as a writer, changing the nature of his writing. Between each of these texts we can surmise internal transformations which inform the subject and genre of each text, but all of these changes are evident in his autobiography as well. All of Apess's social concerns and private renovations generate from Apess's first and most significant text, *Son of the Forest*. This is why its classification as autobiography is problematic.

Apess stands, in time and place, between the Puritanical beginnings of the United States and the decimated Native nations of the East Coast. He was alive and writing from 1798 until 1839, two hundred years after the Europeans first fought with the Pequot peoples. He fought in the war of 1812 and witnessed Jackson's Indian Removal Act. He participated in Methodism during the Second Great Awakening of 1831. He writes as a Pequot, an American, and a Christian, and where these boundaries meet there is conflict and resolution. Apess's writings contain flickers of an early American identity that does not erase the abuse of colonization, the detribalization of Native peoples, and forced labor based upon racism. The confluence of several lines of affiliation, while seemingly contradictory, form Apess's writerly notion of self.

As modern readers of Apess, we need to reconsider the limited classifications of his writing because his voice needs to be heard in more conversations. His writing needs to enter the realms of historiography, trauma writing, captivity narrative, and many other genres because his writing contains a multitude of genres. He wrote from an evolving perspective, and he did so to appeal to many different readers and listeners. His writing needs to be read by many different readers, not just English Literature scholars.

Self, Life, and Writing

Writing about the self in a truly cohesive or objective manner is a complicated and nearly impossible act. To write about the self is to somehow fashion a narrative from life experiences and notions of the self. The autobiographer compels cohesion out of life's chaotic experiences interpreting and reinterpreting those experiences through memory and retelling. This section begins by introducing key terms for current theories of narrative formation in order to demonstrate that Apess shaped his language and narrations in particular ways to engage Americans with the notions of economic and social justice for Native people. He used his language to write himself and his people into the discourse of Christian theology. Ultimately, Apess defined himself and his life in specific ways that indicate the way he saw himself within his socio-historical context.

Memory

To remember is to hold on to a previous experience inside the mind through a story. To remember is to commemorate. Memory is a mechanism that allows us to recall the things we can no longer see. The word memory came from thirteenth-century Europe and was first written in the margins of the monastic rule known as the *Ancrene Riwe* in 1225, referring to commemoration of the dead.^v Memory first related to a conjuring of those who were no longer present. Built into the notion of memory itself is the separation of the past and present, to bring into the present something from the past that is no longer.

Memory is a combination of the liminal input during actual experience, interpretation of the experience, and temporal distance. We know of our experiences through both the threshold of our senses and our consciousness. Our senses help us intake the world around us through sight, hearing, feeling, and so forth. Consciousness is the mind's ability to absorb and interpret. Julia Watson and Sidonie Smith provide a nice rendering of this notion in *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives*.

As memory researchers from fields as diverse as neuroscience, cognitive psychology, and philosophy have argued, remembering involves a reinterpretation of the past in the present. The process is not a passive one of mere retrieval from a memory bank. Rather, the remembering subject actively creates the meaning of the past in the act of remembering. Thus, narrated memory is an interpretation of the past that can never be fully recovered. (16)

We may experience the world passively, but in order to recall it, we must actively summon it through our subjectivity, linked to our identity and our interpretive systems.

Experience and Interpretation

The distance between experience and interpretation is the fertile ground that grows memory. During experience, we may be utilizing some sort of interpretive system (religious, political, or social theory, for example) to make sense of what is happening. As Smith and Watson indicate, our interpretation cannot be separated from the memory, which means that the individual will determine the memory of the experience, which is never the same as the actual experience. There is no way to capture actual experience; only memory remains. Memory is inextricably influenced by our interpretation.

The habits of the mind (or interpretive styles) developed before the experience limit the immediate interpretation of an experience. Memory adheres to previously established organizational structures for interpreting experience. We cannot identify the world around us without first running it through individual processes of interpretation. The recognition of a sign varies depending upon previous correlations, possibly religious, cultural, linguistic, or philosophical. Interpreting an event is more complicated than simply recognizing a symbol. We first recognize a sign and to it we assign meaning, essential for remembering. How we understand signs immediately creates or sways the memory.

An interpretive system may be one or a combination of established belief systems, either consciously or inadvertently adopted. A parent teaches a child how to interpret

events, bestowing upon the child the interpretive method of the parent. These interpretive methods may change or be enforced, for example, a rededicated belief in Communism or a conversion to Catholicism. It can be a general philosophy on life (as simple as optimism or as complicated as Hegelian dialectics), a religion, a politic, or any combination of political, cultural, philosophical and religious thought, established by others or invented by the individual. There are ancient interpretive styles, creation stories carried in the minds of generations of tribal people that explain the meaning of life and inform a larger worldview. In most instances, the interpretive style is exclusive to the individual, a variation derived from experiences.

Benjamin Lee Whorf developed a theory of linguistic relativity, which bears some significance to this conversation about interpretation. After studying Mayan, Hopi, and Aztec languages for fifty years, Whorf developed a linguistic theory summarized as follows: “[The] structure of a human being’s language influences the manner in which he understands reality and behaves with respect to it” (Carrol 23). Whorf states it himself as he describes the particularities of the Hopi language, how the Hopi tribe may think differently because of certain linguistic conventions unique to the Hopi language family.

All this has a wider interest than the mere illustration of an aspect-form. It is an illustration of how language produces an organization of experience. We are inclined to think of language as simply a technique of expression, and not to realize that language first of all is a classification and arrangement of the stream of sensory experience which results in a certain world-order, a certain segment of the world that is easily expressible by the type of symbolic means that language employs. (55)

Whorf adds another dimension to the argument that we interpret our experiences using various devices linked to subjectivity. He claims that language itself affects our way of interpreting the world around us (Whorf 207). Not only should we factor religion, philosophy, and culture as components of subjectivity, but we need to consider language itself as a means of interpretation, a device that may affect experience and the interpretation of an experience.

Linguists, psychologists, and anthropologists since have nuanced the Whorfian notion of linguistic relativity. Scholars attending the Wrenner-Gren Foundation international symposium agreed with Whorf but sought to update “to consideration of language use in sociohistoric perspective” (Gumperz and Levinson 614). Scholars since Whorf have argued for conceptual universals and non-linguistic kinds of cognition.

Intrinsic cognitive constraints (universals of human thought) and intrinsic linguistic constraints (i.e., nontrivial linguistic universals) are one set of forces operating on the domain of externalized cognition, but equally there are sociohistorical forces, constraining or making available activities, special uses of language and ‘knowledge technologies.’ (615)

These critics of Whorf think that he failed to account for certain types of cognition that are not language based and could be universal, but also to account for such technologies as “literacy and computing devices,” which can be seen as external cognition.

Additionally, as Gumperz and Levinson summarize,

Whorf thought about meaning in terms of the semantic content of grammatical and lexical elements, but theories of meaning have progressed a great deal since then—one of the greatest changes being an

increasing recognition that linguistic meaning resides not only in lexico-grammatical content (semantics) but also in background principles of use (pragmatics). (619)

Linguistic relativity weakens in the face of contextualization and localization of semantics, a phenomenon known as indexicality. I tend to agree with the general consensus that Whorf left out some sociohistorical forces and extra-linguistic cognitive functions, but agree with Whorf about the notion that grammatical functions can lead to culturally specific world views.

We have little evidence supporting the idea that Apess spoke his native language, raised as he was in exclusively English-speaking households from the age of four. He has several ethnicities, some unclear, though he claims to be Pequot. The battles between the Pequot people and the Puritan English decimated the Pequots. Thereafter the Pequot language probably was not spoken, particularly as speaking the language was a capital offence under the 1638 Treaty of Hartford. At the turn of the nineteenth century, when Apess was born, few people remained who identified as Pequot or spoke Pequot. Roumiana Velikova engaged Apess's notion that he himself was Pequot, suggesting that he was mostly Wampanoag in her article "'Philip, king of the Pequots: the history of an error.'" Therefore we understand that Apess probably did not speak the language of his clan or tribe.^{vi} However it is possible that he learned some Mohegan or another Algonquian language dialect when he traveled from Native community to Native community later in life.

Given Whorf's extensive investigation of Native languages, we must take into consideration his notion that language itself provides a certain structure of thinking which

may be the interpretive device that creates or alters the memory of an experience. This may give credence to certain Apess theorists such as Arnold Krupat and David Carlson who claim that Apess could not have written from a purely “Native” voice because he was writing and thinking in English, the language of the colonial force.

Arnold Krupat, in his work *For Those Who Come After: A Study of Native American Autobiography*, sets forth a set of criteria for “approximately authentic” Native American Literature. He writes, “First, they must derive from an actual, taped, or re-creative audition of the Native performance. Second, they must be produced in accord with [...] at least a fair working knowledge of the language in question” (Krupat 13). He is here referring to texts co-written or edited by EuroAmerican collaborators who worked with Native people to produce early autobiographies. To my knowledge, Apess did not work with a EuroAmerican editor and wrote in English, therefore creating what Krupat calls “Autobiographies by ‘civilized’ or Christianized Indians whose texts originate with them contain, inevitably, a bicultural element” (Krupat 31). Apess writes in English, and is thereby “bicultural,” or trapped between two worlds, never fully a member of either, according to Krupat’s criteria for authenticity within Native literature. Krupat challenges these kinds of texts when considering his canon of Native American literature.

David Carlson offers another dimension by focusing on Apess’s evolving Indian identity in relation to his writing. In his work *Sovereign Selves*, Carlson writes,

Because of the dispersion of his people, he also seems to have lacked a well-developed “tribal” support network that could help him develop a clear sense of Indian identity. Instead, Apess was raised and came to self-consciousness under the shadow of the colonial system, indentured to

white foster families and attending white schools for much of his youth.

(69)

Carlson describes a situation that led to Apess's upbringing under colonialist rule and separation from his tribe (Carlson 67-69). Rather than disqualify Apess as an Indian for his interaction with EuroAmerican society, Carlson sees the value of this mode of interaction toward the increasing identification as a Native. "Apess's autobiographical texts record his evolving articulation of Indian identity and reveal something different from either precontact authenticity or postcontact interpellation" (Carlson 70). He finds uselessness in the question of whether or not Apess's texts can be considered Indian.

Devoting our energy to deciding whether Apess's texts are really 'Indian' prevents us from engaging in the more fruitful consideration of how he uses autobiography to reinterpret Indianness as part of a struggle for survival. (71)

Apess used the English language to remember, organize, and then write about his experiences. It is difficult to determine what was lost or gained by Apess's use of the English language rather than the Mohegan-Pequot or Wampanoag dialect of the Algonquian language group. For better or worse, English was his language. Additionally, there were other influences in Apess's memory and subsequent writing. Time, changes in subjectivity, and his commitments to certain causes also affected his memory and retelling.

Time, Trauma, and Personal Changes

An interpretation of an experience can vacillate drastically depending upon the changes in the person from the time of the experience to subsequent interpretations. Our interpretive style over time creates understanding of a memory, but also impacts the memory itself as we privilege and debase details of the actual experience depending upon our interpretive styles.

Barbara Herrnstein Smith elaborates her narrative theories in her essay “Afterthoughts on Narrative III: Narrative Versions, Narrative Theories.” As Smith’s essay sets about dismantling arguments from structuralist analysis theorists such as Seymour Chatman, it importantly brings to light some key poststructuralist adaptations in narrative theory. Smith’s key theory addresses subjectivity within narrative formation related to the inner workings of the individual narrator.

Not only will different summaries of the same narrative be produced by people with different conventions, habits, and models of summarizing, but even given the *same* conventions, their summaries will be different if the motives and purposes of their summarizing are different. [...] Each of these summaries would simplify the narrative at a different level of abstraction, and each of them would preserve, omit, link, isolate, and foreground different features or sets of features in accord with the particular occasion and purposes of summarizing. (217)

If a person continues to emphasize one aspect of an experience while repeatedly neglecting another, she will eventually forget the neglected detail, making difficult the returning to memory in order to re-interpret. Furthermore, interpretive devices may determine what gains privilege in our memory and what is forgotten immediately upon

experiencing. However, it is always possible to change the way one tells the story, especially if there has been an internal change since an earlier interpretation of an event.

A telling example of the power of interpretation can be found toward the end of Apess's *Son of the Forest*. Apess himself had already developed subjectivity in four ways. He had started as an indentured servant, converted to Methodism, reunited with a positive sense of Pequot self, and was currently invested in a project to include Native Americans in the Christian community in a significant way. He relates the following story:

Many years ago, having preached in the morning to a considerable number of them [Indians], in the recess between morning and afternoon services, news was suddenly brought, that the son of an Indian woman, one of the congregation then present, had fallen into a mill dam and was drowned. Immediately the disconsolate mother retired some distance in deep distress and sat down on the ground. Her female friends soon followed her and placed themselves in like manner around her, in a circle at a small distance. They continued a considerable time in profound and melancholy silence, except now and then uttering a deep groan. All at once the mother, putting her hand on her mouth, fell with her face flat on the ground, her hand continuing on her mouth. This was followed, in like manner, by all the rest, when all cried out with the most melancholy and dismal yelling and groanings. Thus they continued, with their hands on their mouths, and their mouths in the dust a considerable time. The men also retired to a distance from them and went through the same ceremony, making the most dismal groanings and yellings. (*Son 93*)

At this point in the narrative, Apess has relayed a story, giving precedence to the details of the woman's grieving and the grieving support of the people in this community. He stresses these details to prove his interpretation, that the Indians are practicing Jewish customs as evidenced in the Bible. He writes, "Need any reader be reminded of the Jewish customs on occasions of deep humiliation as in Job 21 and 5" (*Son* 93). This discussion forwards his larger argument that Indians have an equal or greater claim to Christianity than the whites because they are among the twelve tribes of Israel, God's chosen people. This interpretation derives from his distinct perspective as a Native and a Christian. It also reveals his need to create an inclusive narrative for Native Christians within the Christian community. From there he fortifies his interpretation by citing five more biblical verses and providing another example of Native American mourning rituals.

The temporal distance from the event is the amount of time separating the event from the remembering of it. Time erases details of the event and possibly the severity of the emotions correlated with the event. The severity of the trauma during an event or the amount of healing after the event may also comprise the distance from the actual experience. If the trauma is unhealed or recent, the closeness of the event may make the narrative of the event more like a reliving than a retelling. This kind of trauma may alter the mind's ability to recall detail accurately, because the body may still be dealing with the emotional impetus, acting against an emotional current in order to articulate the memory in some organized way.

The story that Apess has told is one that he has likely told before, heard before, remembered in this way so that the story becomes solidly within this interpretation, which reflects not only his interpretive style but his personal perspective, his subjectivity.

He tells his stories from particular perspectives in order to appeal to his audiences and ultimately advocate social reform. By telling his stories, he helped his audience understand that Native people were a blessed part of the Methodist community and important members of a greater Christian fellowship. Time, trauma, and personal changes contribute memory making and retelling. Apess demonstrates these factors at play in his narrative formation.

Narrative Formation

A narrative is a collection of data organized into a story. Narrative is the product of an organized memory that connects events to one another in an ordered fashion. In my mind, narrative is a metagenre of sorts, a genre that encompasses many types of writing. Narrative is therefore difficult to place precisely in conversation with genre.

Smith and Watson say that life narrative, “Might best be approached as a moving target, a set of ever-shifting self-referential practices that engage the past in order to reflect on identity in the present” (Smith and Watson 3). The narrative continues as long as the narrator lives. As the narrator lives, the distance widens between the present and the event under narrative examination. As time goes by and distance grows, we remember differently and our perspectives change. Memory, perspective and distance work together to form life narrative. Inside our subjectivity, we recall interpreted events from the past and organize them into coherent material.

Apess published *Son of the Forest* in 1829, thirteen years after he established a more positive sense of Indian self, sixteen years after he had converted to Methodism,

and twenty seven years after he had gone into indenture after his grandmother's beating. In all of this time, Apess changed through the factors of memory, perspective, distance and interpretive style. All of this time influenced his life narrative formation.

As Smith and Watson indicate, narrative is a broad term (Smith and Watson 5). When a writer attempts to turn life narrative into autobiography, she must adhere to specific criteria related to narrative reliability. "In autobiographical narratives, imaginative acts of remembering always intersect with such rhetorical acts as assertion, justification, judgment, conviction, and interrogation" (Smith and Watson 6). To write autobiography is to place a life narrative in a conversation with various devices of reliability, such as those mentioned above.

Apess probably did not begin by writing a life narrative per se. Life narrative would not have been a widely-discussed category during his writing years as it is today. However, he engaged the devices that I have detailed such as memory, perspective, and distance in order to create his writing, which maybe he considered a conversion narrative. Regardless, Apess's shifting subjectivities played a major role in the transformation of his texts from genre to genre.

Apess's Shifting Subjectivities

The individual perceives reality in a specific way. This perceived reality is subjectivity. To be subjective is to view the world through one's mind. It is very difficult, if not impossible to view the world without the subjective lens because there is no way to think without the mind's interference. Thinking is the mind. Each mind develops

individually and subjectively. Apess's magnificent mind developed uniquely to him, and his portrait of subjectivity does not remain constant, but rather constantly adapts as he becomes a writing Indigenous intellectual in the Jacksonian Era. The essential question is how Apess's subjectivity reflects in his writing.

Apess needed to write. As with many writers, his need to write overtook his life. He chose to write, and in order to do this, he educated himself. While speaking and listening are naturally acquired language abilities, reading and writing must be learned. Apess claimed that his indenture stipulated a provision for education, but that only Mr. Furman fulfilled the obligation (*Son* 17). When his indenture sold, his education ceased at twelve years old. Yet the quality of his writing demonstrates the fact that he continued to learn reading and writing in spite of the unfulfilled provision. Apess distinguished himself through his writing, and in fact, wrote to change his situation. He used his writing to achieve private and communal objectives. His writings, individually and as a whole, address specific audiences; his writings underlie the driving need to represent his experiences and his history.

Apess's subjectivity underlies his narrative formation. As we have seen, narrative formation is inextricably linked to subjectivity. This notion is useful because Apess's subjectivity in narrative style influences genre for his texts. Herrnstein Smith returns to the term "versions." In the beginning of her essay she claims that

There are a number of senses in which narratives are commonly said to *be* versions, and conversely, to *have* versions. [...] Most of these versions seem to involve some sort of translated, transformed, or otherwise modified retelling of a particular prior narrative text; the last two seem to

involve a narrative account from a particular perspective or from a perspective that is rather pointedly understood to be but one among many (actual or possible). (215)

All narratives are, in a sense, versions of the actual, created, or otherwise perceived events that have transpired in the past. Each narrative is a retelling that came about through some sort of engagement with the narrator's perspective. Smith points out that each narrative has the potential to exist in many different versions, which reflect the perspectives of those retelling the narrative. Therefore, as Apess narrates his life, he is telling his version, indicative of his perspective, a perspective consistently sublimated by colonizing forces. His version contradicts hegemonic versions of the same or similar experiences in important ways.

Apess's writing evidences shifting perspective that, in turn, reflect shifting subjectivities. His way of thinking changes as he encounters new situations and influences. He changes as he goes through his life, and his writing reflects those changes. Even as the major themes stay the same, he refines his focus on them, displaying interior alteration. His writing remains focused on major themes such as Christianity, Native American history, social and economic justice, and his experiences. At the same time, his writings reveal subjective transformation, an altered person, a changed way of thinking making way for a changed interpretation and possibly an altered memory. Apess interacts with the world around him using his shifting subjectivity. Sometimes the shifting subjectivity gives itself away. I suggest that he goes through at least five major transformations in subjectivity, which led up to and occurred within the life of his writing, from 1828-37. The five subjectivities are as an indentured servant, a converted Methodist,

a Pequot, a Pequot and Methodist minister, and finally as an Indigenous historian. These subjectivities couple with shifting subjects; as he sees himself differently, he refocuses his subject.

These transformations are interdependent. Sometimes the changes happen simultaneously or are layered. They cannot be packaged and narrated the same way that historians contain eras, beginning and ending at precise dates. Apess's personal transformations happened off the page, inside his mind, and no one but Apess himself can say exactly when or how he changed. It might be a challenge for anyone to precisely account for such gradual changes in subjectivity. However, certain events alter the way we see things, such as a religious conversion, a war, a marriage, or a formal or informal education. The major experiences and the daily interactions with life cause transitions in subjectivity.

Subjectivity: Layers and Transitions

Subjectivity layers and complicates as time goes on. To retell an experience is to shape and solidify the memory into narrative. To retell, we rely on what entered our mind from our senses during the event, the subsequent interpretation of the event based on interpretive style, and the amount of time (and personal changes) since the event. However, this transformation of subjectivity is not linear, meaning that it does not advance one direction without return, without sidelong journeys along the way. Apess moved from community to community and saw himself in many lights related to his surroundings. Sometimes his changes were drastic, such as when he obtained freedom

from indenture: when he traveled from captivity to freedom, a journey that saw him fighting a war while also fighting for his autonomy. Sometimes the changes to his subjectivity happened simultaneously, such as when he served as a spiritual leader and then took on legal representation for the Mashpee tribe in Mashpee Massachusetts.

Subjectivity Timeline

To summarize, Apess's first layer of subjectivity is as an indentured servant. His servitude began in 1802 when he was given to the Furmans for care and ended in 1813 when he joined the Army. Apess's second layer of subjectivity is as a Methodist. This subjectivity began on March 13, 1813 when he converted to Methodism. There is no discreet ending to Apess's subjectivity as a Methodist. He may have remained Methodist until his death

Apess's third layer of subjectivity is as a Native American. He began affirming a positive sense of Native self from 1815 when he spent time in Ontario among various tribes. He transformed a negative to a positive sense of Native self while meeting with family in Groton and Colrain in 1819.

Apess's fourth layer of subjectivity is as a Christian and Native leader and representative. He felt the call to be a Methodist minister in 1819 and began his Methodist career. He began exhorting in 1825. He then began emphasizing the need for social justice for Native people in his sermons, and also sought out Native and African American Methodist communities from 1827 to 1829.

Apess's fifth layer of subjectivity is as a Native historian. He was appointed by the Protestant Methodists to preach to the Pequot people in 1831. He traveled among Native communities, hearing their stories and preaching about social justice. He then went to Mashpee in 1833, thereafter representing Mashpee interests by writing legal treatise.

Texts and Genres

To summarize further, Apess's texts are multifaceted and can qualify as several genres each. *The Son of the Forest* can qualify to belong to the following genres: autobiography, Methodist conversion narrative, captivity narrative, Methodist social reform writing, trauma writing, experiential historiography of the War of 1812, Native and EuroAmerican history, history of colonization, and Native American representation. My work attempts to address autobiography, conversion narrative, trauma writing, and Native American representation. *The Increase of the Kingdom of Christ* could be considered Methodist sermon, utopia writing, and Methodist social reform writing. My work attempts to address his writing as Methodist sermon. *The Indians: The Ten Lost Tribes* is a work of revisionist Christian theology, a Methodist sermon, and a strong piece of social reform writing. This work conveys the essential motivations for his Native representations, his attempt to rewrite and re-right the past, which I also focus upon in my work. *The Experiences of Five Christian Indians* could be qualified as the following genres: conversion narrative, captivity narrative, biography, autobiography, and trauma writing. My work attempts to address all of these categories and raise the question of my

story versus our story. *Indian Nullification of the Unconstitutional Laws of Massachusetts Relative to the Marshpee Tribe; or, The Pretended Riot Explained* qualifies as the following genres: legal treatise, tribal representation and advocacy, Native American revisionist history, trauma writing, temperance writing. My work addresses each of these genres in relations to this text. Apess's final work, *Eulogy on King Philip, as Pronounced at the Odeon, in Federal Street, Boston*, qualifies as history, revisionist history, colonial and postcolonial history, Native American history, and EuroAmerican colonialist social critique. My work addresses all of these categories, but returns to the possibility that *Son of the Forest* is the most multifaceted and complex texts, capable of being read on many levels. Different meanings emerge by reading Apess's texts according to the listed genres.

CHAPTER ONE: NARRATIVE AND SUBJECTIVITY

Apess as an Indentured Servant

From the beginning of his first book, Apess tells of his layered ways of changing through vacillating, deforming, and reforming. He explains the first time he learned about death, about his own mortality. Mrs. Furman explained death to young Apess in a Christian context, planting a seed which grew into his eventual Christian subjectivity.

I well remember the conversation that took place between Mrs. Furman and myself when I was about six years of age; [...] On this occasion, she spoke to me respecting a future state of existence and told me that I might die and enter upon it, to which I replied that I was too young. (9)

In the above passage, Apess explains his first serious alteration in subjectivity, the awareness of his own mortality. This description serves as an example of the type of changes within Apess. Young Apess, the mortal child, seriously considers life after death in a religious sense.

His early childhood notions of self and body, even the basic notions of life and death, comes from his masters and captors. He learns about death from the words of his colonizing masters. He learns about life in a white household, subservient and captive. His religious subjectivity and his indentured subjectivity are formed together as a child; however, his indenture is the strongest subjectivity until his conversion to Methodism as a teenager because he does not embrace the Congregationalist Christianity of the Furmans. His indenture is the main subjectivity until his conversion. It is important to

look at Apess's subjectivity as an indentured servant, what he learned to think of himself and how he resisted, from an early age, self-identification as a sub-class human. In order to understand how Apess became aware of himself as an indentured servant, we look to Michel Foucault.

In 1975, Michel Foucault published his breakthrough text on the idea of *Surveiller et Punir*, translated as *Discipline and Punish*. This book discursively analyzes public and private systems of surveillance, torture, punishment, and in the process conceives the notion of a "body politic." Foucault writes, "In our societies, the systems of punishment are to be situated in a certain 'political economy' of the body: even if they do not make use of violent or bloody punishment, even when they use 'lenient' methods involving confinement or correction" (Foucault 25). The body politic is the political element of the body, the political force that the body carries in conjunction with processes of subjugation or subjugating. Foucault stresses the importance of the body, "It is always the body that is at issue—the body and its forces, their utility and their docility, their distribution and their submission" (Ibid).

The following excerpt provides useful context for a discussion about Apess's indenture. Foucault writes:

This political investment of the body is bound up, in accordance with complex reciprocal relations, with its economic use; it is largely as a force of production that the body is invested with relations of power and domination; but, on the other hand, its constitution as labour power is possible only if it is caught up in a system of subjection (in which need is also a political instrument meticulously prepared, calculated, and used);

the body becomes a useful force only if it is both a productive body and a subjected body. This subjection is not only obtained by the instruments of violence or ideology; it can also be direct, physical, pitting force against force, bearing on material elements, and yet without involving violence; it may be calculated, organized, technically thought out; it may be subtle, make use neither of weapons nor of terror and yet remain of a physical order. That is to say, there may be a 'knowledge' of the body that is not exactly the science of its functioning, and a mastery of its forces that is more than the ability to conquer them; political technology of the body.

(25)

The body itself can be a unit of production, or at least relatable as a form of economy. Apess's indenture brings about an outright conception of his body as a "force of production." Foucault alludes to several forms of force that emphasize the economy of the body. At the time of Apess's indenture, it was common for Native children to be brought into white households, cared for, and then raised in indenture. I would call this procedure of assimilation a "political instrument meticulously prepared, calculated, and used." The New England postcolonial society faced generations of children devastated by the various acts of genocide against their parents including the Pequot war and legal procedures that left the Native Americans economically and spiritually destitute. The EuroAmericans saw these children as an opportunity for cultural and economic utility. They used the children as indentured servants while instilling EuroAmerican cultural behaviors and beliefs, effectively creating a system of subjugation that incorporated generations of New England Native American children. This was one New England

EuroAmerican form of “political technology of the body.” Other technologies included germ warfare, treaty making, and slavery.

In the course of Apess’s indenture, both ideological and physical violence kept him subjected. Whether or not the ideological violence was calculated, it certainly affected Apess’s outlook for the rest of his life. Eventually, Apess resisted and reversed the political technology of the body while actualizing his intellectual career. But first, we must examine how Apess’s colonizing masters dominated him, physically, mentally and emotionally. He learned from a young age that he was a classified and subjugated being, that his indenture largely informed his first field of subjectivity. Mortality and Christianity are certainly present as he forms his first layers of subjectivity. I believe it is the human condition to be aware of our mortality. This is not unique to Apess. What is unique to Apess is the framework in which he realizes his mortality. That framework is childhood in indenture.

In 1802 Apess was taken from his grandparents after his grandmother nearly killed him in an alcoholic rage at four years old. The cost of his recovery was a childhood of indenture; he was bound legally to the family that would have cared for him for one year following indenture until the age of eighteen, had he not run away at age fifteen.

Apess describes the moment that he lost his freedom plainly and almost without emotion.

He [Furman] found me dreadfully beaten, and the other children in a state of absolute suffering; and he was extremely anxious that something should be done for our relief, he applied to the selectmen of the town in our behalf, who after duly considering the application adjudged that we should be severally taken and bound out. (6)

At first, young Apess considered the Furmans his rescuers and parental figures.

Now this dear man and family were sad on my account. Mrs. Furman was a kind, benevolent, and tenderhearted lady—from her I received the best possible care. [...] Before, I was almost always naked, or cold, or hungry—now, I was comfortable, with the exception of my wounds. (6)

As an injured little boy, Apess's main concern was the improvement of his situation at the expense of this white household. They probably saved his life, but at the expense of his freedom. At first he was just a little child and not expected to work until he grew a little older, so he understood only the benefits and kindness from the Furman family.

He imprinted particularly on the two Furman women, Mrs. Furman and her mother, about whom he writes concerning their acts of goodness, their attempts to instruct him in Christianity and proper EuroAmerican conduct. Upon the death of Mrs. Furman's mother, he writes, "She had always been so kind to me that I missed her quite as much as her children, and I had been allowed to call her mother" (Apess 13).

Apess seems to consider the Furman women his family figures, though maybe not identifying Mr. Furman as his parent, rather his master. He differentiates Mrs. Furman from Mr. Furman through Mr. Furman's acts of subjection, such as beating Apess when falsely accused of threatening another servant:

She [the scullery maid] told Mr. Furman that I had not only threatened to kill her but had actually pursued her with a knife, whereupon he came to the place where I was working and began to whip me severely. I could not tell for what. I told him that I had done no harm, to which he replied, 'I will learn you, you Indian dog, how to chase people with a knife.' (13)

This excerpt is interesting for two reasons. Furman beats Apess because he thinks he is teaching his indentured servant to behave a certain way toward others in the Furman household. Apess already knows how to behave, and this act of violence against him will teach him only to fear the uneducated wrath of Mr. Furman, a man who acts before he investigates and is willing to wrongfully beat and degrade Apess. He also demonstrates that Furman degraded Apess using his ethnicity, which is ideological domination. This ideology of racism impacted Apess. He formed an impression of white racism which complicated and intensified the cruelties of indentured servitude. This kind of forced labor informs his subjectivity throughout his life, causing him to work toward social justice for other Indians like himself.

The people who raised him early on, the Furmans, were not his family; rather they were masters interested in keeping him physically and mentally subjected. Living this way severely affected his subjectivity, as a classified identity and a subject to a superior other. As a little boy, Apess understood that he had a master and that he must work to obey him.

At this juncture, he understood himself to be a classified being and an Indian. These two branches formed almost simultaneously and both in a negative light. As he became aware of his class degradation he also realized that his postcolonial overseers repressed him because he was a Native American. It is difficult to separate his notion of class from his notion of race because he learned to equate the two from those who raised him. However, he began to separate the two later in life when he began affirming his Native identity. When I speak of Apess's Native notion of self, I am specifically looking at a positive and affirmed Native sense of self which only comes about after he has

overcome internalized racism instilled by colonialist oppression. EuroAmerican Christian overseers such as Mr. Furman and Mr. Hillhouse^{vii} enforced a negative notion of an Indian self which successfully harmed Apess's self confidence in order to keep him oppressed and working.

His three masters, Furman, Hillhouse, and Williams, enforced his identification as a sub-class citizen when they sold and resold his indenture. They gradually wore away his sense of autonomy and increased his anxiety about self agency. When Mr. Furman sold Apess's indenture to Judge Hillhouse, he gave Apess the impression that he had some amount of free will. Furman probably needed Apess's consent to sell the indenture. At the time, Apess was twelve years old. Although the text is not clear about whether or not his consent was needed, it is clear that Furman coerced Apess by lying to him about the nature of this transition.

After the bargain was made, my consent was to be obtained, but I was as unwilling to go now [...] After some persuasion, I agreed to try it for a fortnight, on the condition that I should take my dog with me, and my request being granted I was soon under the old man's roof. (14)

Furman dashes away illusion of free will when Apess returns to the Furman home after a fortnight. "The joy I felt on returning home, as I hoped, was turned to sorrow on being informed that I had been *sold* to the judge and must instantly return" (*Son* 15). Apess believed that he had a choice about his indenture because the masters asked for his consent to the transfer and had agreed upon certain conditions. After this transaction, Apess knew that his consent carried little consequence. He later describes the moment

when Judge Hillhouse sold his indenture again, verifying a sense of powerlessness about his person.

He [Hillhouse] obtained a place for me in New London. I knew nothing of it, and was greatly mortified to think that I was sold this way. If my consent had been solicited as a matter of form, I should not have felt so bad. But to be sold to and treated unkindly by those who had got our fathers' lands for nothing was too much to bear. When all things were ready, the judge told me that he wanted me to go to New London with a neighbor, to purchase salt. I was delighted and went with the man, expecting to return that night. When I reached the place I found my mistake. (16)

There are two dimensions to Apess's protest. First, he considers his consent to be "a matter of form" in the transaction of his indenture. He says here that it should be part of the process of transferring bodies, that the bodies have some say in it. During the first transaction from Furman to Hillhouse, he felt a small sense of agency, though he knew it was merely an act when he returned to the Furmans. By the second transaction, from Hillhouse to Williams, he knew that he had no agency. That his consent wasn't obtained traumatized him, adding to an anxiety about his freedom.

The second dimension to his protest has to do with his Native heritage and colonial and postcolonial history. He objects to the idea that the people who stole his ancestors' lands also controlled his body, his freedom. This analysis probably came with the retelling of the events, that is, after his subjectivity had shifted so that he saw things in terms of Native/EuroAmerican relations after he had learned about Native history. This

education which probably occurred some time after his childhood of indenture because he probably didn't have a comprehensive understanding about EuroAmerican and Native land disputes and land acquisition at twelve years old.^{viii} He would have had to learn this history in some way before he applied it to this situation about his indenture and Pequot removal. Subjectivity and memory are linked. He interprets his history by placing it within a specific context. This line of thinking inspires much of his writing, informing his opinions and subjectivity throughout his life.

Upon the reselling of his indenture, Apess reconceived the nature of his relationship to his EuroAmerican overseer. He renegotiated the territory of his servant-status as his reasoning abilities sharpened with age. He understood the household hierarchy and attempted to choose to whom he subjected himself and whom he ignored. "The whole family treated me kindly, and the only difficulty of moment was that they all wished to be masters [...] I was ready to obey the general and his lady at all times. But I could not and would not obey any but my superiors" (*Son 17*).

After two indenture transfers, Apess distinguished a hierarchy within the household. He no longer sought the household's approval, only sought to do his work while minimizing the trauma to his sense of self-worth. He was not acting out of rebellion or pride, but rather self-preservation within a highly structured and abusive environment. Apess eventually ran away from both prisons of degraded self-hood. He learned to reinvent his subjectivities, striving for new perspectives. He did it through narrative formation.

Apess as a Converted Christian

At eight years, Apess adopted his second axis of subjectivity, when he started attending Christian meetings. He was fascinated by the Methodist tent meetings, which differed significantly from the Congregationalist church services that Apess had attended with the Furmans (*Son* 12). The Furmans did not appreciate the tent meetings and subsequently forbid Apess from attending the Methodist meetings (*Son* 13). He later devoted himself to Methodist Christianity at the age of fifteen. Before I detail the significance of Apess's conversion, it is important to understand the history of conversion and Apess's tribe, the Pequot peoples. Apess wrote at a certain time in history, one that might demonstrate the irony of his choice to convert to Christianity, a religion that had been used variously to dominate and assimilate his ancestors starting a few generations before his birth.

As a descendent of the Pequot^{ix} tribe, Apess inherited a long history of English intervention. The English interfered with New England Native (especially Pequot) societies by disconnecting them from their practices of spirituality and attempting to convert them to Christianity. James Axtell discusses the process of cultural resistance and integration in *The Invasion Within; The Contest of Cultures in Colonial North America*. "A Christian and a savage were incompatible characters in the English cosmology, and only a willing departure from all he had known, all he had been, could prepare an Indian for the life of Christ" (Axtell 167). Axtell refers to 1675, when English colonists forcibly settled^x the Pequot Indians like those at Natick (Axtell 186). "Among the serious offenses were powwowing, profaning the Sabbath and failing to give 'ready and comely attendance' upon the preaching of the Reverend James Fitch of Norwich" (Axtell 221).

Generally, the colonists insisted that the people change all domestic habits, from land use to religious and cultural practices to church attendance. Apess knew that his people had suffered repeated injuries to religious freedom. He learned this directly from interacting with the mixed Mashpee tribes in Connecticut and Massachusetts, especially those from his home in Groton, Connecticut.

The New England Company sent Experience Mayhew to meet with the Pequot people and “offer them the gospel” in 1713 (Axtell 243). Apess imagines his ancestors responding to the various English missionaries who had tapped the tribe for conversion. “They would naturally reply ‘Your doctrine is very good, but the whole course of your conduct is decidedly at variance with your profession—we think the whites need fully as much religious instruction as we do’” (*Son* 33). Apess learned from historians during his time reading, attending, and giving lectures among historical circles in Boston as we shall discuss further in the next chapter. Apess idealized his ancestors, hoping that they would respond by pointing out EuroAmerican Christian hypocrisies, as he did in his writing. However, his ancestors might not have had the perspective that he had, given that they did not know Christian “doctrine” or the history of the English “conduct” versus “profession” as well as he did. He had converted and his family had converted, but he also hoped that his ancestors had resisted the cultural and religious invasion that happened before the bloodshed known as King Philip’s War and the Massacre at Mystic River.

Apess’s conversion did not require that he totally abnegate his Pequot practices because he had none. He had lived with his relatives only until age four, and had very few remnants from his Native life. Apess did not convert in order to assimilate or gain

acceptance from EuroAmericans; he converted in order to gain community, and to relieve himself from a particular anxiety. Apess needed to define who he was aside from his role as an indentured servant. He needed to define himself as Christian and also a Native in a positive way. He needed to understand himself by telling the story of who he was in order to become the person that he wanted to become. He found useful vehicles for self expression in the Methodist practice of offering testimony and conversion narratives.

Converting

Young Apess experienced a heavy heart after attending the Methodist tent meetings near the Furmans' home as a teenager. Apess describes the life of terror and self-doubt prior to conversion. He then describes the moment of conversion, when he abandoned all "vices" and former beliefs (and possibly cultural practices), and then the cursory moments of doubt or confusion ultimately overcome by faith. He uses the term "night season" for the time before conversion. In the genre of conversion narratives, time before a conversion must necessarily contrast with a better life after the conversion. He felt deep anxiety about the future of his soul, enormous guilt about past transgressions, and was disturbed by a lack of response to his pleas to God for forgiveness. "I went on from day to day with my head and my heart bowed down, seeking the Savior of sinners, but without success" (*Son* 20). At night he was overwhelmed with terrifying visions of hell and damnation. "I thought I saw the world of fire—it resembled a large solid bed of coals—red and glowing with heat" (*Son* 20). Fearing hell and feeling guilty this young

man was overtaken by the urge to repent. “My distress finally became so acute that the family took notice of it” (*Son* 20).

At fifteen years, Apess converted to Methodism in the solace of the garden where he had been sent to work. "I lifted up my heart to God, when all at once my burden and fears left me—my heart melted into tenderness—my soul was filled with love—love to God and love to all mankind" (*Son* 21). After his conversion, Apess felt peace of mind, and was able to “live in the enjoyment of pure and undefiled religion” (*Son* 21). Apess forever changed when he experienced this joy upon conversion coupled with a Methodist community that accepted and listened to him.

After his conversion, Apess’s subjectivity contains a Christian element, whether or not he writes specifically about Christianity. For example, when representing Pequot history in *Eulogy on King Philip*, he recounts Thomas Weston’s bloody attack at Wessagusset. He concludes the recounting by writing, “We know it was their usual course to give praise to God for this kind of victory, believing it was God’s will and command for them to do so” (*Eulogy* 282). He then asks his audience to judge whether or not these actions of murder and cruelty are indeed Christian and God’s will. As he recalls history, he does so from a Christian perspective, in order to differentiate actions that he considers to be hypocritical and sinful. He represents history and religion, even though he was no longer operating as a Methodist leader when he delivered this particular text.

Conversion works in very interesting ways within Apess’s texts. Apess converts to Christianity and into a white-dominated Christian community and then spends the remainder of his life converting the people who converted him, the EuroAmericans over to his particular theologies and interpretations of Christianity, especially as they related to

social action. It is necessary to understand several aspects of conversion in order to analyze accurately what happens to Apess-the-subject and Apess's subjectivity during the course of this man's intellectual career.

Conversion is a keyword in this discourse used to describe significant alterations in religious or philosophic method, a transformation from one way of seeing to another. Conversion goes far beyond the original notion of a heathen accepting Christianity. As Apess argues, the EuroAmerican Christians were in need of conversion fully as much as are the non-Christian Native Americans. He wants to see acts of humanity and civilization paired, instead of civilization partnered with acts of one-sided benefit. "How much better it would be if the whites would act like a civilized people and, instead of giving my brethren of the woods 'rum!' in exchange for their furs, give them food and clothing for themselves and children" (Son 33). In this example, he sees civilization as a social responsibility toward the well-being of Euro and Native Americans. Notions of conversion and civilization take on a different meaning within Apess's writings. His writing documents his conversions while attempting to convert his Methodist audience in a syncretistic fusing of social justice with Christian theology.

His subjectivity has everything to do with his conversion(s). His subjectivity has everything to do with how he represents himself (Apess-the-subject) in his texts. The key to understanding how conversion affects his subjectivity is the concept of backsliding and how it played out in Apess's literary career.

Backsliding

The conversation and pious admonitions of the good lady made a lasting impression upon my mind. At times, however, this impression appeared to be wearing away—then again I would become thoughtful, make serious inquiries, and seem anxious to know something more certain respecting myself and that state of existence beyond the grave, in which I was instructed to believe. (*Son 9*)

The passage above describes the aftermath of Mrs. Furman exposing six-year-old Apess to Christianity for the first time. She introduced him to the concept of death, which greatly impressed him. He was deeply influenced, the influence altered him, it wore away, and then returned again as a concern for the self in a context that he believed to be reality. Not only does this qualify as a *conversion*, it also documents the battle inside of Apess (and many other Christian converts) from the beginning: resolve and then lack of resolve, conversion and backsliding. Apess, the convert, vacillated between “in favor” and “out of favor” status.

Backsliding is a notion predicated upon seven biblical verses found in both the Old and New Testaments. 1 Kings describes a turning away from the Israelites’ God. “Then the Lord was angry with Solomon, because his heart had turned away from the Lord, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice” (1 Kings 11:9). John, the author of Revelations, describes an abandoning of love, “But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first” (Revelations 2:4). This notion is called deserting in Galatians, “I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who

called you and the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel” (Galatians 1:6-7). Similarly, other verses in the Bible describe a “bewitching” (Galatians 3:1-5), a turning aside to crooked ways, (Psalms 125:5), a deserting, (2 Timothy 4:10), and apostatizing (Jeremiah 14:7). Backsliding is an act of turning away from Christianity in belief or action and is strongly condemned in the Christian practice.

Within a Christian context (Protestant, pan-denominational), conversion and backsliding are opposites of each other. The first indicates a “good standing” with God by praying for forgiveness and devoting oneself to the practice of Christianity. The second indicates a “bad standing” with God because the believer has chosen to do things knowing that they defy Christian doctrine. Within a Christian practice, these two words are interdependent and define each other. Gwynneth Matthews describes this notion in her article published in *Mind* literary journal, “Weakness of Will.” Describing various types of weakness of will she says the following about backsliding:

One may make resolutions, in fairly general terms, about one’s future course of behavior in some respect or towards certain people, fully intending to implement them, and one may succeed for a time. But then gradually one slips, allowing for an exception here, forgetting about the resolutions there, until one finds oneself back where one started, and feels thoroughly ashamed. It is to this particular form of weakness of will that the term ‘backsliding’ is usually applied. (Matthews 407)

Backsliding cannot happen until one converts. The sinful behaviors before conversion cannot be considered backsliding because the pre-believer lacked the knowledge one gains upon conversion, the knowledge that previous behaviors were wicked and heathen.

Conversion has two subject-based opposites: the unconverted and the backslidden. Unconverted and backslidden do not oppose each other but describe the absence and presence of the conversion knowledge, respectively. Once converted, one cannot be unconverted; one cannot return to life before the decision between heaven and hell. After that, if the choice is not consciously heaven, it is hell. Without conversion, there is no backsliding.

The converted and the backslidden face difficulties because they have the opposite problems. The converted is overcome with weakness in the face of many temptations. The backslidden is overcome with fear and guilt after the indulgence of temptations. While they are opposite problems, these conditions do not negate one another. The converted remains converted. Apess writes,

Some people are of the opinion that if a person is once born of the Spirit of God he can never fall away entirely, and because I acted thus, they may pretend to say that I had not been converted to the faith. I believe firmly that, if Paul ever was born again, I was; if not, from whence did I derive all the light and happiness I had heretofore experienced? (*Son 25*)

In this passage, Apess claims that his conversion changed him so drastically that he could never again return to his existence before his conversion. He uses the term born, meaning his existence has changed so substantially that he is no longer the same person or that he is a new person. He confirms his conversion by describing the feelings he had upon conversion, a sense of happiness. He also compares himself to Paul/Saul, who persecuted and murdered Christians before converting. If Paul was fully converted after such

behaviors, surely Apess was also converted and permanently changed, even with the occasional bouts of backsliding.

Except in saintly conditions, there is no true conversion without backsliding. An absence of backsliding weakens the power of conversion; there must be two contrastive sets of behavior in order for there to be a difference. Nearly unknown is the Christian convert who never felt unassailed by temptation to return to former habits (those habits now forbidden under new rules). Nearly unknown is the convert who did not give in to some small or large temptation in the course of a Christian practice.

The choice to live as a Christian can be described as a dualistic relationship to secular culture. Brian Walsh defines a “dualistic worldview” in his book *The Transforming Vision: Shaping a Christian World View*. “A dualistic world view makes a Christian cultural witness problematic at best, impossible at worst” (Walsh 100). In other words, it is very difficult, if not impossible, for a converted Christian to participate in most human culture. “A dualistic world view splits life into sacred and secular realms, and most human culture identifies as the realm of the secular” (Walsh 100). Thus, instead of trying to participate as a Christian in world culture, Apess imagines an utterly transformed world in his sermon *The Increase of the Kingdom of Christ*. “Announced by prophecy, confirmed by promise upon promise, it is a most certain fact that Jesus shall reign over a world that has long rejected and despised him” (*Increase* 104).

The conversation becomes much more interesting when considering the relationship between backsliding and syncretism, as Jim Kiernan explains in his article “Variation on a Christian Theme: The healing synthesis of Zulu Zionism,” collected by Charles Steward and Rosalind Shaw in *Syncretism/ Antisyncretism: The Politics of*

Religious Synthesis. “In today’s discourse, syncretism carries implications of impurity, backsliding, undisciplined sloth and indulgence, the incapacity to keep up, giving in to old ways; it implies weakness rather than strength” (Kiernan 69). Syncretism, the act of blending culture with religion, is likened to backsliding and weakness. Apess may have faced the greatest temptations to backslide while trying to interact on a syncretic level, possibly attempting to convert other Natives or at least trying to engage with his “brethren.”

Pressure from fellow Christians might be so intense that the newly converted is made to abandon certain cultural or typical behaviors. In general, the Christian history of American colonization demonstrates this pressure. Missionaries, funded by both the church and later the state, traveled to Native communities and converted them while also instilling European cultural notions of lifestyle, such as living in square houses made of wood or brick, dressing in traditional European clothes, and engaging in EuroAmerican economy, which often meant working for Europeans or engaging in European agricultural practices^{xi}. Thus, the process of proselytizing to Native communities involved the infiltration of Christian and European systems, which the missionaries often entwined as part and parcel of the Christian conversion.

Apess formally converted to Methodism on 13 March 1813. Almost immediately following his conversion, temptation arose. His masters repeatedly beat him for his religious zeal. This persecution greatly tempted him to run away, and he ran away from his indenture and his Methodism at the same time. This is the first time we find Apess using alcohol, the substance which had led to his near demise as a young child. After

conversion, drinking was Apess's primary method of backsliding, and he first seriously backslides almost immediately after converting.

Then it was that I began to lose sight of religion and of God. We now set out; it being a rainy night, we bought a bottle of rum, of which poisonous stuff I drank heartily. Now the shadows of spiritual death began to gather around my soul [...] Sometimes I would take a drink of rum to drown my sorrows—but in vain; it appears to me now as if my sorrows neutralized the effects of the liquor. (23)

Apess's "spiritual death" continued as he joined the U.S. Army to fight in the War of 1812. He joined after the recruiters intoxicated him. Describing the recruitment he says, "They began to talk to me, then treated me to some spirits, and when that began to operate they told me all about the war and what a fine thing it was to be a soldier" (*Son* 25). While in the Army Apess repressed his Methodist faith and "acquired many bad practices" (*Son* 25). After joining the Army, Apess began a soldier's lifestyle of drinking and playing cards. He continues, "In a little time I became almost as bad as many of them, could drink rum, play cards, and act as wickedly as any" (*Son* 25). He blends into his surroundings as a method of survival and acceptance seeking.

Although not actively Methodist, he nonetheless feels the pull of his conversion as he admonishes fellow soldiers to not profane the name of God. "Now, although I made no profession of religion, yet I could not bear to hear sacred things spoken of lightly, or the name of God blasphemed; and I often spoke to the soldiers about it" (*Son* 24). This passage indicates that his conversion remains with him even as he is "out of favor." He

still knows what is right and wrong according to his religion and does not hesitate to tell other people when they are committing sinful acts.

Another dimension to the passage above is that Apess held both affiliations (the converted and the backslidden) at the same time, repressing one in favor of the other. This is a pattern that continues throughout his life. He is capable of great change. He is capable of two extremes, which created a sense of instability that affected his relationships and kept him moving from place to place.

From the beginning of his conversion, Apess forecasts his life and eventual death by exhibiting a pattern of drinking and then becoming pious and actively abstaining. Apess walked in both worlds for the rest of his life. Backsliding and converting are alike in that they usually inspire drastic changes of behavior and thought. In the light of conversion, the converted makes drastic changes in lifestyle in order to comply with denominational biblical interpretation and church cultural practices.

The process of backsliding and regaining his faith is a major subject in Apess's writing. As he describes his life, he marks the times of backsliding by linking it to his alcohol use. Apess marks the time that he was fully backslidden and addicted to alcohol when he left the war. "My bad habits now overcame my good intentions. I was addicted to drinking rum and would sometimes get quite intoxicated" (*Son* 31). He worked as a baker, often falling in with the wrong crowd, but the desire for Methodism lingered. In this state of disconnection from active Christian practice, he teeters between both worlds.

I attended a Methodist meeting—at the time I felt very much affected, as it brought up before my mind the great and indescribable enjoyments I had

found in the house of prayer, when I was endeavoring to serve the Lord. It soon wore off, and I relapsed into my former bad habits. (*Son* 32)

Apess suggests that his “endeavoring to serve the Lord” brought “indescribable enjoyments,” happiness in his life. He seems to prefer actively practicing Methodism to the times that he engages in “bad habits.” However, bad habits are hard to break, especially when coupled with social degradation, economic difficulty, and the availability of alcohol, often a supplement payment for labor.

Apess first writes about alcohol at the beginning of his life narrative, *Son of the Forest*. He describes his grandmother’s intoxication which led to his near fatal beating. He does not blame his grandmother for her intoxication, rather, the whites who had degraded her and then provided her with alcohol (*Son* 7). The relationship between alcohol, whites and his grandmother carries a more significant comment on alcohol in the process of colonization. He clearly indicates that the Europeans introduced alcohol in order to deprive his people, including his grandmother and himself, of the necessities for happy Native living, such as land, liberty, and life. Of his grandmother’s intoxication he writes,

I attribute it in a great measure to the whites, inasmuch as they introduced among my countrymen that bane of comfort and happiness, ardent spirits—seduced them into a love of it and, when under its unhappy influence, wronged them out of their lawful possessions—that land. (7)

Apess states that Europeans and EuroAmericans used alcohol to harm the Native people, to “wrong them out of” land and “comfort and happiness.” This loss carried in the genetic memory of generations of Pequots, those who managed to survive, as Apess had. Apess

and his grandmother felt the weight of this tremendous loss, understood the cause, and could not resist in the very patterns that had harmed the previous generations. This is a tremendous weight to bear, which constantly influenced Apess to find abstinence and Methodism.

After the war Apess returns to Methodism and becomes an itinerant preacher. Returned to his conversion, Apess rails against alcoholism and the whites, who, he writes, brought alcoholism to the Native people. In *An Indian's Looking-Glass for the White Man* Apess writes about the “Burning, fiery curse, that has swept millions, both of red and white men, into the grave with sorrow and disgrace—rum” (*Looking-Glass* 155). This passage points to the extreme opposite of backsliding/relapse, an absolute intolerance of alcohol. The quotation describes alcohol as a “burning fiery curse.” When Apess abstains from alcohol, it becomes the enemy in his writing.

Maureen Konkle unearthed and analyzed much original documentation regarding Apess in her book *Writing Indian Nations: Native Intellectuals and the Politics of Historiography 1827-1863*. Regarding Apess, she observes that, despite overwhelming challenges, he chose to be a working intellectual, keeping a personal library, delivering lectures, and publishing discourses during the economic depression of the mid-1830s. “It can be said that Apess sought to make a living from his thinking and writing, and at what turned out to be the end of his life, this struggle was made much more difficult by a depressed economy” (Konkle 154). This pursuit was certainly a life-long challenge, given his socio-economic status. The frustrations of trying to be a working intellectual despite considerable odds probably wore him down at times. These frustrations probably weakened his resolve to abstain from alcohol.

Of Apess's activities shortly before his death, his second wife, Elizabeth Apess says this (transcribed), "We have been boarding in this house 4 months he wrote some books which he sold and lectured on the history of the Indians he has lately been somewhat intemperate" (Konkle 154). Mrs. Apess mentions their location, and then focuses on Apess's two major activities, his intellectual career and his intemperance. Like his grandmother before him going out to sell her handwork, this passage describes Apess going out into a EuroAmerican society to sell his product, his books and lectures, and then resorting to alcohol probably after facing discrimination and cruelty. His grandmother had experienced something similar when she went out to sell her baskets, faced discrimination and ridicule, and reacted by buying and consuming alcohol with the money from her sales. It is also possible that increasing knowledge of the history of the Indians depressed him so much that he took to drink. Apess himself does not mention why he became intemperate.

Mrs. Apess might have been describing Apess's intemperance lightly. The last three people to see him alive attested to bouts of intemperance, as both Maureen Konkle and Robert Warrior address in their works on Apess. "All three of those who testified at the inquest reported that Apess was a heavy drinker, with the fellow boarder reporting that he was known to go on drinking binges that would last for some days, and then would not drink at all" (Warrior 3). In the accounts of Apess's death, fellow boardinghouse resident John Wight said that Apess would "sometimes get on a Frolic and continue a few days and then would abstain from liquor altogether" (Konkle 154). All through his life, Apess behaved properly and then went on what his second wife Elizabeth refers to as "frolics" (Konkle 154). Between the drinking and the abstinence

there is very little. He either engaged in the optimism that his books and lectures could contribute to a greater discussion of Native American history, or he engaged in a self-abusing pessimism; he frolicked.

This inconsistent behavior often destroyed relationships with both Native and Christian communities. At one point, Apess advocated temperance publicly, even establishing a temperance organization in Mashpee. “The Indian preachers have also established a total abstinence Temperance Society” (*Nullification* 234). Although Apess took role of leadership within the Mashpee society, he did not remain in Mashpee. Warrior speculates that his reputation played a part in his departure from Mashpee. “Maybe we ought to suppose that Apess could see that his own infamy was little more than an obstacle to those at Mashpee, about whom he cared so deeply” (Warrior 5). Maybe he removed himself to distance his reputation from the Mashpee people. It is also possible that he could not live up to his own expectations of temperance. As a leader and one of the founders of a temperance society, he would have had been held to very high standards. As his life progressed, he did not remain temperate. Although we cannot know for certain why he left Mashpee, it may be that his alcohol use played a role.

Apess’s initial exposure to Christianity began the vacillation between converted and backslidden. This unique vacillation demonstrates the process of transformed subjectivity. His subjectivity is far from stable, whole or solid. Every time he moved from Methodist to alcohol user, his Methodist subjectivity deformed. His subjectivity reformed each time he moved from “frolic” to Methodist. He only accounted the Methodist times, so we cannot compare his alcoholic times to see the shifting subjectivity. However, we can see the extremism that indicates a total abandonment during the

opposite time. As both Konkle and Warrior suggest from the reports of the three people at the inquest of his death, he drank heavily for days and then abstained altogether. (Konkle 154, Warrior 3). This means that he held two opposites inside himself, inside his subjectivity. He chose to represent one, the one that gave him respect and success. It would have been very interesting to read his writing about intemperance, as he had intended to write. “I could enlarge on this momentous subject—I could speak from experience, as I have too often felt its baneful effects, but as I intend, if the Lord spares me, to publish an essay on Intemperance, I leave it for the present” (*Son* 47).

When he practiced Methodism, Apess thrived within the various Methodist communities, but he came to be a Christian leader after reuniting with his family. Apess needed people who shared his Christian beliefs, but he learned that even those who shared his beliefs did not understand his experience as a Native in New England. He needed other Native people to understand him. As a Methodist, he began to focus on his service to Native and African American congregations. Apess needed to understand another aspect of himself, an aspect that could not be met by Methodists alone. He needed to understand himself as a Pequot.

Apess as a Pequot

Apess formed his identity as a Pequot over time and through experiences with other Native people. As a child, Apess resisted his own Native identity. Apess did not associate a positive sense of Native American identity as a child during his indenture because he learned to fear his Indianness. Let us look at how he learned to shun his

ethnicity out of a struggle for respect from his colonizing masters. He shunned his Pequot self as he struggled for a positive self-image.

I know of nothing so trying to a child as to be repeatedly called by an improper name. I thought it disgraceful to be called an Indian; it was considered a slur upon an oppressed and scattered nation, and I have often been led to inquire where the whites received this word, which they so often threw as an opprobrious epithet at the sons of the forest. (*Son* 10)

The Furmans used his ethnicity to degrade Apess as a child. They did this repeatedly until Apess saw the word Indian as an insult. He was too young to understand what it meant, only to believe it was derogatory. He internalized the notion that Indian was an insult to himself and others like him.

However, this negative Native self-image gradually changed after three major experiences. He reforms his earlier aversion to his Native American heritage and other Native people after re-educating himself. He affirms a sense of his Pequot self in the process of examining his traumas through writing. He reinvents himself as a Native leader after making repeated contact with Native American communities in the Northeast.

Near the beginning of *Son of the Forest*, Apess verbalizes his childhood aversion to his Native American heritage.

So completely was I weaned from the interests and affections of my brethren that a mere threat of being sent away among the Indians into the dreary woods had a much better effect in making me obedient to the commands of my superiors than any corporal punishment that was ever inflicted. (10)

The Furmans threatened him with his ethnic identity, enforcing fear and disconnection while subjugating young Apess. In this passage Apess expresses a fear that the Furmans might abandon him and leave him with his people. He compares the “threat” of joining Native communities with corporal punishment, meaning that he had learned to correlate the two while growing up in the Furman household. According to Apess, Furman used this threat to instill fear and obedience in the child. “A threat, of the kind alluded to, invariably produced obedience on my part, so far as I understood the nature of the command” (*Son* 10).

The Furmans actively conditioned him to feel “terror” about Indians by reciting a history of Indian aggression. “It may be proper for me here to remark that the great fear I entertained of my brethren was occasioned by the many stories I had heard of their cruelty toward the whites—how they were in the habit of killing and scalping men, women, and children” (*Son* 11). These stories about Indian aggression taught young Apess that Indians, as a whole, were aggressive and cruel, in contrast to EuroAmericans. He then sympathized with his EuroAmerican masters while dissociating with Indians, creating in his mind a generalization that he eventually revised, after learning other versions of these frightening tales that he heard as a child. If the Furmans built this general fear in Apess, the foundation was already laid:

I had received a lesson in the unnatural treatment of my own relations, which could not be effaced, and I thought that, if those who should have loved me and protected me treated me with such unkindness, surely I had not reason to expect mercy or favor at the hands of those who knew me on no other relation than that of a cast-off member of the tribe. (10)

Apess had already experienced his Pequot grandmother's aggression, and learned to generalize about Native Americans from this experience combined with the Furmans' messages of fear. However, these childish fears do not remain constant throughout his life. He writes about them, and while doing so, displays a duality, the former fear and the fear transformed.

Apess expressed his childhood fears through writing. He recounts a moment of terror in his early childhood. A few dark-skinned white women frightened him while he was berry picking in the forest. He ran from them "with my utmost speed, and I could not muster courage enough to look behind until I had reached home" (Apess 11). While running from these women, whom he mistook for Indians, he imagined the worst about them. He imagined that they intended to harm him. He ran wildly, his fears increasing, his version of the experience becoming more and more gruesome until he arrived at the Furmans' home. When he reached Mr. Furman, he carried with him a story steeped in fear, and violence. "By this time my imagination had pictured out a tale of blood, and as soon as I regained breath sufficient to answer the questions that my master asked, I informed him that we had met a body of natives in the woods, but what had become of the party I could not tell" (Apess 11). The fear in his mind is real, and contributes to his idea that the women meant to harm him and those who had been with him. As he writes of this moment, he admits that his version of that moment became incredible.

"Notwithstanding the manifest incredibility of my tale of terror, Mr. Furman was agitated; my very appearance was sufficient to convince him that I had been terrified by something" (Son 11). Within this passage, Apess realized that his perspective changed. He draws a contrast between his childhood perspective and the perspective at the time of

his writing. He acknowledges that his childhood fear of Indian people was built on misinformation. From the information that he gathered from the Furmans, he may have seen Indians as fearsome. He also did not know that the EuroAmericans were often the more aggressive force in the Euro-Indian interactions leading up to his generation. He reeducated himself after the Furmans miseducated him. Thus, his perspective changed.

In writing autobiography, Apess realizes that his childhood understanding was incorrect, and he revises it, showing a transformation of his perspective brought about by researching and understanding the history of his people. “The whites did not tell me that they were in a great majority of instances the aggressors [...] they introduced among them the fatal and exterminating diseases of civilized life” (*Son* 11). As Apess matured into an adult, and as his notions about natives changed, the fear became alliance as he wrote, revised, and encountered. He focused and altered his fears through the process of writing about them. In his writing, he incorporated what he learned about Native American and EuroAmerican history to revise his previous generalizations. He also transformed his fear into empathy through exposure to Native communities.

This experience in the woods clearly caused him a great deal of trauma; he claims that after that incident that he started causing trouble shortly thereafter. Possibly he started coming to terms with the fact that he was what he feared, a Native American. This could have been a severe crisis of subjectivity.

The transition in this retelling demonstrates changes in internalized racialism and racism. It may also demonstrate Apess’s awareness of this kind of racial ideology. Through his revisions we map a transformation from internalized racism to reeducation. This struggle began with a childhood as an indentured servant, classified and racialized.

He struggled internally, reacting to the social disease responsible for the suffering of people of color, the subjugation of these people like himself. Having experienced the world as an indentured servant, Apess writes out of this subjectivity. He writes to convey his trauma and to address the transformations that make him a free American, a Methodist American, and finally a Pequot American and Indigenous intellectual.

Trauma Writing

Apess expressed himself through writing his trauma. As he wrote about this trauma, we can see the complication of alliances that he negotiated at a very young age. He identified with the Furmans, who raised him, once considering them like family. However he realized that they were not his family and renegotiated his relationship with those who held his indenture. Writing probably helped him understand what happened to him and why he needed to reconsider these alliances. He then identified as a Methodist. Through Christianity he imagined equality and hoped to access Methodist audiences as a leader. Later he realized that the Methodists made efforts to prevent him from becoming a leader, probably because of his ethnicity. He wrote about this incident and others, over time dissociating himself from EuroAmerican Christians in particular. These complicated alliances have to do with his subjectivity. He saw himself in relation to others. His subjectivity changes as he recognizes how repeatedly he becomes disenfranchised.

Apess experienced trauma and then wrote about it, thereby representing a personal trauma within a much larger context. Leigh Gilmore links trauma to history and the complexity of claiming one's own trauma as it works within social histories in her

work *The Limits of Autobiography: Trauma and Testimony*. “Trauma is never exclusively personal; it always exists within complicated histories that combine harm and pleasure, along with less inflected dimensions of every day life. Remembering trauma entails contextualizing it within history” (Gilmore 31). Trauma occurs in context, inside the interactions between communities, and must be introduced within this context. Apess sought to form alliances with those who had caused him the most harm, his masters, the U.S. government, EuroAmerican Christians, and so forth. After repeated disappointment and betrayal, he eventually gave up the idea of forming alliances with hegemonic types, reclaimed his Native heritage, and returned to face the hegemony in order to state his opposition, a dispute to his people’s misrepresentation.

The transition of affiliation is also interesting because he incorporates historical knowledge to revise his internal racism. Education was important for Apess in his process of shifting perspective. For example, Apess appends *Son of the Forest* with an essay entitled “Traits of Indian Character” cataloguing Native American practices from many different tribes, mainly from eastern North America. Cribbed from EuroAmerican New Jersey congressman and historian Elias Boudinot (O’Connell xlii), Apess compiled a list of cultural observations that disputed popular EuroAmerican stereotypes about Native American people.

His education helped him shift perspective, shift subjectivity, and convert to a unique way of thinking unlike his EuroAmerican masters and unlike the EuroAmerican Methodists. He learned from living with his people, and from traveling in Methodist circles. He learned from participating in the Massachusetts and probably New York historical circles, meeting and reading other historians like Samuel Gardner Drake and

Elias Boudinot (Konkle 100). His experiences led him to devote thirty-six pages of his autobiography disputing EuroAmerican notions about Native American people by providing examples of documented Native American acts and “traits.”

Apess’s reeducation began after fighting for the United States Government in the War of 1812. After leaving the Army without any kind of compensation (officially accused of deserting, a claim he does not explicitly confirm, deny or explain), Apess stays near the border between New York and Canada, living for the first time in Native communities of Mohawk and Mississauga both North and South of the Canadian border. O’Connell indicates that Apess changes after his time with these tribes, that he affirms a Native self for the first time. “Apess implies, without ever recounting, that while he was among these ‘brethren’ he gained some positive sense of himself as an Indian” (O’Connell xxxiii).

Apess already had a negative sense of himself as an Indian. As we have seen, his white overseers degraded him at an early age by using his Indian identity to make him feel inferior as a small child. Apess first mentions living with other Indians upon arrival at the Bay of Quinte. He writes:

The scenery diversified. There were also some natural curiosities. On the very top of a high mountain in the neighborhood there was a large pond of water, to which there was no visible outlet—this pond was unfathomable. It was very surprising to me that so great a body of water should be found so far above the common level of the earth. There was also in the neighborhood a rock that had the appearance of being hollowed out by the hand of a skillful artificer; through this rock wound a narrow stream of

water: It had a most beautiful and romantic appearance, and I could not but admire the wisdom of God in the order, regularity, and beauty of creation; I then turned my eyes to the forest, and it seemed alive with its sons and daughters. There appeared to be the utmost order and regularity in their encampment. (32-33)

This paragraph explains two very important things about Apess's subjectivity as a Native American. First, he believes that Native Americans are intertwined with the landscape. He devotes a large portion of this excerpt to features of the landscape; this description captures most of his account of the time among the Mohawks, Mississauga and Ontario tribal communities. I believe Apess built his narration in such a way as to signal a link between his relationship to landscape and his relationship to Indians. His identification as an Indian has to do with a time in the woods near this beautifully described lake. In this description, the "sons and daughters" emerge from the forest. The forest is "alive" with Native people. This goes against a prevalent and Protestant notion of the unoccupied wilderness which legitimized United States land acquisition to the hegemony, the hegemony which raised Apess.^{xii} Thus, Apess provides a distinctive account of his people in relation to the land.

The second thing that Apess mentions after the lake is God's wisdom in ordering the land. Apess obtains a Native sense of self that is linked to his belief in God and his belief that the Indians are God's chosen creation. Apess uses the words "order and regularity" to describe both God's creation and the Mohawks' encampment, linking God to the Mohawks.

Apess experienced a shift in his perspective from fearing to accepting himself as a Pequot. This shift arrived through education and experience. He changed. “I can truly say that the spirit of prejudice is no longer an inmate of my bosom” (*Son* 51). This is the moment when Apess changes subjectivity. He no longer fights against Indian identity, and begins to think and write from this new perspective. This is when we see a shift in genre and subjectivity as he strives to be a Native representative and a Christian leader.

Apess as a Native and Christian Representative and Leader

Apess’s time with the Mohawks and other Indian communities affirmed a Native sense of self that had been dislocated by a childhood under white indenture. This time with the Mohawks was a step in the journey toward his parents in Colrain and aunt in Groton, toward the decision to become a Methodist minister. This section details some of the external and internal challenges to this subjectivity transition and then describes the details of Apess’s Native and Christian subjectivity.

After years of unsteady employment and bad company Apess traveled to his family as a free young man. The time that Apess spent with his Christian father and his aunt, Sally George, greatly strengthened his self image as a Pequot and a Christian. Apess traveled to Colrain and Groton, meeting with his family and tribe, reuniting with Christianity. He reunited with his father, a very religious man living in a Christian community in Colrain. His time with his father and his religious aunt deeply influenced his Christian development. During this time, Apess revised previous perspectives, and healed from a childhood of degradation. The presence of community and stability

redeemed the degradation that he had been raised to accept. In this time of restoration, he rebuilt his shattered self-confidence. “The lord often met with us, and we were happy in spite of the devil. Whenever we separated it was in perfect love and friendship” (Apess 40). I think that this time with his father and aunt affirmed his emerging identity as a Native and a Christian, providing the solid impetus for his future writings.

Apess’s first publication, *Son of the Forest*, arises out of the struggle to become a minister, written at the time of his struggle and having to do with a legitimization within the Christian community that would have warranted his promotion to leadership. As a Christian and Native leader, Apess saw himself differently from EuroAmerican ministers, and sought to represent himself by demonstrating all he had overcome through Christianity as a Native American.

Shortly after his aunt, Sally George, passed away, Apess describes the pivotal moment when he first rose before a Christian church.

After Brother Hyde had concluded his sermon, I felt moved to rise and speak. I trembled at the thought; but believing it a duty required of me by my heavenly father, I could not disobey, and in rising to discharge this sacred obligation, I found all impediment of speech removed; my heart was enlarged, my soul glowed with holy fervor, and the blessing of the Almighty sanctified this, my first public attempt to warn sinners of their danger and invite them to the marriage supper of the Lamb. (*Son* 43)

This excerpt describes a somewhat miraculous moment in his life when he feels the calling to speak and discovers his speaking aptitude. In typical conversion narrative fashion, he attributes his calling to the need to “obey.” His obedience gave him the

“blessing of the Almighty,” an affirmation which probably earned approval with his audience. This moment of success led him to believe that he could be a leader. This belief propelled his actions for the next several years as he worked within the Methodist community to rise in rank.

Although Apess felt called to become a leader in the Methodist community, he faced many trials in his attempt to assume this role. The Episcopal Methodists denied Apess a license to preach. Apess describes the circumstances leading to his resignation from the Episcopal Methodists and his joining of the Protestant Methodists in the first version of *Son of the Forest*. Interestingly, he edits most of these struggles out of *Son of the Forest*, which Barry O’Connell recovered and added in a textual afterword. To summarize, the Methodist Episcopalians rejected his application to become a preacher. The Methodist Episcopalians denied his ordination, probably because he had broken a rule that he had preached rather than exhorted. Apess claims that the application’s denial may have related to the fact that he once “preached” when he had authorization only to “exhort” (*Textual Afterword* 321).

Apess suggests that his Pequot ethnicity may have also played a part (*Textual Afterword* 321). He implies that certain members of the Methodist Episcopal leadership may have had racial motivations for denying his application. (ibid) After this particular Christian community failed to give him his ordination, he left and found another community who accepted him for what he wants to become. He then joined the Protestant Methodists, who ordained him, and he began preaching on various circuits around New England. He then removed the negative incident from *Son of the Forest* because he probably catered to a more general audience from whom he intended to gain acceptance

and sympathy. Apess might have also removed these accounts not to offend the congregations by pointing the finger directly at them for acts of racial injustice.

While Apess uses his platform to adamantly confront white injustices, none of his texts implicate the congregation, the intended audience, except the text that he removed from the first edition of *Son of the Forest*. He removed both the incident of his ordination denial and an occasion when a Methodist woman badly mistreated Apess's first wife, Mary Wood, who later died from disease, probably worsened by her ill care. (*Textual Afterword* 320). Even though Apess gained access to his role as a leader through the Protestant Methodists specifically, he becomes a more generalized speaker as time goes on, affirming this subjectivity in different social circles throughout New England; it would not do to attack anyone personally lest he lose sympathy for his causes. Although he does not give a motive for removing nearly eight pages of his text that implicate Methodists in various acts of cruelty toward him and his family, his motivation might have been the attempt to keep peace with the Methodists.

When Apess stood before congregations, he often faced ridicule and scorn, which he overcame using his eloquent speech. He gives one specific example in *Son of the Forest*.

I received an invitation to hold a meeting in the same place again. I accordingly went, and I found a great concourse of people who had come out to hear the Indian preach, and as soon as I had commenced, the sons of the devil began to show their front—and I was treated not with the greatest loving kindness, as one of them threw an old hat in my face, and this

example was followed by others, who threw sticks at me. But in the midst
I went on with my sermon. (*Son 44*)

At the beginning of his career in Methodist leadership, Apess faced mocking crowds. Nevertheless, he continued his work and almost immediately saw the fruits of his efforts. At his next speaking engagement, his audience was more receptive. “The Lord gave me strength, and we had a most gracious and glorious exhibition of his presiding presence, as many wept bitterly on account of their sins” (*Son 45*). Overcoming serious adversities, Apess swayed a congregation with his words. As they reacted to his preaching, Apess feels affirmed in his decision to become a leader. He does so because his subjectivity has shifted, and his memory of this event becomes part of the narrative that affirms his subjectivity.

This affirmation comes with many challenges. After the Methodists treated him unkindly in Colrain, he finds solace from another Methodist community consisting of members of his tribe and African American Methodists “Now the enemy sought to prevail against me, and for a season overcome me; I gave way for a little while but soon returned to my *first love*. I went then to my native tribe” (*Son 46*, his emphasis). External and internal forces challenged his assumption of a leadership role; but these struggles ultimately affirmed his sense of leadership. He felt that he could become a Native leader and a Christian leader in New England.

Thus Apess experienced challenges from within as he strove to become a Methodist leader. He claims that he initially resisted the inclination to preach. “I began immediately to confer with flesh and blood, excusing myself, saying, Lord I cannot. I was nothing but a poor ignorant Indian and I thought the people would not hear me” (*Son 45*).

He claims that his ignorance and Indian heritage are obstacles to becoming a preacher and a missionary. This passage also indicates a lack of self-confidence that he had to overcome in order to stand before congregations to share his words. Although he had learned a positive sense of a Native self, the older negative sense of Indianness remained a layer below, ready to surface in a time of self-doubt. He challenged himself by becoming a leader after living as an indentured servant. The vertical move was difficult, bringing up previous traumas which had lent to his self-doubt.

His confidence wavered when the Methodist Episcopal leadership placed him under censure. Of the significant blow to his confidence as a community member and leader he writes,

This unkind treatment, as I regarded it, had nearly proved the ruin of my soul. The waters of affliction had well-nigh overwhelmed me—my hopes were drowned, and having been excluded from the pales of the church, I viewed myself as an *outcast from society*. (*Son 46*, his emphasis)

After facing external challenges to his role, he internalizes the sense that he is an outcast. He feels disenfranchised after his censure, personally denied specific membership. It affects him very deeply, at the level of the soul. However, this blow is mitigated by his initial affiliation as a Native American. This pivotal time sees Apess moving away from Methodism and toward leadership and advocacy work for Mashpee and Pequot people.

Apess spent several years traveling, preaching, selling *Son of the Forest* and doing day labor to support his wife and family. As a Christian leader, he sometimes preached as a guest preacher or adopted a preaching circuit, traveling to several churches to deliver his messages. While he was doing this work, he found the Mashpee Plantation in

Massachusetts. His interaction with the Mashpee tribe altered the objective and nature of his writing, as he became a religious and tribal leader for the Mashpee people, leading a rebellion against state government that eventually led to a measure of self-rule for the Mashpee. At some point, probably during his time with the Masphees in 1832-33, Apess became less concerned with his role as a Methodist leader and more concerned with his role as a Native American leader and representative. Apess's final shift in subjectivity comes when he moves away from Christianity and becomes more interested in Native American causes, such as self-determination and re-representation.

This chapter explored the first four stages of subjectivity that Apess experienced in his life journey. First we examined his subjectivity as an indentured servant. We then discussed the formation of narrative as it relates to subjectivity before delving into his subjectivities as a Christian, as a Pequot and as a Native and Christian leader. These transformations in subjectivity inform the nature of his writing. The next chapter will explore the fifth subjectivity, Apess as a historian and Native American leader, linking subjectivity to genre. When subjectivity intersects with genre, we can see how Apess's subjectivity informed the genres of his texts.

CHAPTER TWO: SUBJECTIVITY AND GENRE

So far we have discussed the process of forming a narrative relative to subjectivity. Memory and perspective work together to form the interpretation of an event, and this interpretation is inherently subjective. We then explored underlying stages of subjectivity in Apess's texts beginning with his perspective as an indentured servant in a EuroAmerican household, moving through stages of Christianity and eventual identification with Native communities, leading to a more positive sense of a Native self. This chapter explores the final stage of Apess's subjectivity. He becomes a Native intellectual and a Native historian. As he changes, his subjectivity changes and his writing changes in genre. He becomes a historian and writes history. His history writing is entirely unique to the time, as it was written from a Pequot perspective, a perspective that had not been represented in American history to that point. This chapter will examine the notion of genre in a poststructuralist context and the various genres that Apess incorporated in his writing. This leads to the question of history writing, why and how Apess wrote history.

Apess as a Native Historian and Intellectual

Apess behaved like a career intellectual but faced economic challenges. It was economically difficult to maintain intellectual work on day labor earnings. He rose from indenture into a low economic class through fighting for the United States Army. "When I left the army, I had not a shilling in my pocket" (*Son* 31). As he traveled he took work

wherever he could find it, working as a servant, a laborer, a deckhand, a cobbler, and a baker (*Son* 31, 32, 36, 46). He did this work to survive, but his heart was in his work as a speaker. He had strong convictions which led to his work as an exhorter (*Son* 44). He fought against a current of economic struggle to foster and maintain an intellectual career.

As we saw, he experienced objectification from the beginning of his public speaking continuing through the end of his life. Sometimes people were not as interested in his message as much as in his ethnicity and appearance. “I held meetings in Albany, and crowds flocked out, some to hear the truth and others to *see* the Indian” (*Son* 51, his emphasis). While speaking publicly, he often faced people more interested in objectifying him than listening to him because of his unique appearance in Methodist circles. He engaged in intellectual circles, a peerless and unusual figure. He faced those who resisted him from the podium in order to deliver his messages (*Son* 44).

After delivering lectures and receiving mixed reception as a Methodist minister, something inside of Apess changed. Although he continued to sell *Son of the Forest* and preach on circuits, but he couldn’t quite understand certain EuroAmerican Christian assumptions about Native peoples. He envisioned a world that was different from his reality. His then focused on his version of a “kingdom of Christ,” where EuroAmericans recognize and regret colonial atrocities yet he becomes ironic in contrasting this vision with reality in *The Increase of the Kingdom of Christ*.

The white man, who has most cruelly oppressed his red brother, under the influence of that Gospel which he has long professed to believe, and just now begins to feel, pours out unavailing tears over the wasted generations

of mighty forest hunters and, now they are almost all dead and buried,
begins to pity and lament them. (102)

This passage taps the nerve throbbing in Apess's mind: EuroAmerican Christians often played an active role in American racial oppression and had played a hand in his people's genocide. The more he learned about history, the less he believed in the righteousness of EuroAmerican Christians. As Konkle has suggested,

In his first two books that pit his 'experiences'—a term Apess uses repeated in these works—and that of other Native peoples against white misrepresentation, Apess describes the political and psychological effects of misrepresentation but cannot quite explain why whites, especially professing Christians, think what they do about Native peoples. (105)

He became bitter thinking about EuroAmerican Christian hypocrisy. His direction changed after writing *The Increase of the Kingdom of Christ*. He continued preaching among Native and African Christian communities for a few years, but eventually took a path of historical discovery. He began learning and writing Native American history, moving away from proselytizing Christian Methodism. He moved on.

Apess grew as an intellectual when he lived in Boston from 1833-35. He engaged in various historical circles, attended and gave lectures, sold books in several bookstores, and learned about Native colonial history. "A man who did not know the history of his own tribe, he spent his most productive years in a city where the history of relations between Native peoples and white settlers was social pastime and political obsession" (Konkle 103). He reeducated himself by engaging with these circles, discovering much

needed information about his Native New England history, which informed how he spoke of Native present and future.

He worked in these circles to represent his history and the histories of other Native people such as the Pequots and Mashpees. He embraced the process of learning and reconnecting with his people and their history. He worked to represent Native history on the eastern seaboard. As Konkle suggests, he wrote,

EuroAmerican history through Native experience, ultimately producing counter histories that hinge not on Native disappearance but rather continuity, that of the Native peoples who were at the moment rapidly being disappeared from U.S. history by its EuroAmerican writers. (105)

In Boston, Apess faced the challenge of further unlearning what he had learned about New England Native history growing up in indenture. He then relearned by engaging with various scholars and their writings. Ultimately, he began writing a revisionist history that sympathizes with Native Americans and their struggles during colonial assimilation. This is how Apess became an Indigenous intellectual.

Linda Tuhiwai Smith and Apess's "Three Stages of an Indigenous Intellectual"

Linda Tuhiwai Smith analyzes research methods associated with European colonialism and formulates several approaches to research for Indigenous peoples in her work *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. She critically examines various modes of socio-historical production along traditional theoretical pathways including Marxism, feminism and postcolonialism, marking the ways that

imperial powers colonized knowledge. Tuhiwai Smith offers various research and writing projects for people who identify as Indigenous. These projects include offering testimonials, remembering, envisioning, and restoring for the purposes of reasserting the Indigenous voices otherwise systematically overruled by imperial academia in the previous two centuries. Apess meets the criteria of the Indigenous intellectual, according to Tuhiwai Smith's guidelines.^{xiii}

In her chapter on "Colonizing Knowledges" Tuhiwai Smith discusses the three stages of the Indigenous intellectual, a process which Apess reflects in his personal transformations. The first step, "is a phase of proving that intellectuals have been assimilated into the culture of the occupying power" (Tuhiwai Smith 70). Apess incorporates colonial cultural beliefs quite early in life, passively adopting white notions of Native peoples and social stratification as his own. As we have seen, Apess grew up frightened of Native people who lived in the forest, worried that his white master might send him to live with them if he misbehaved (*Son* 10-11). Living in and serving white households, he grew up believing that he was somehow inferior or different. The powerlessness of his youth withered Apess's Indigenous development. He struggled simply to survive with his dignity intact, unable to connect with Native people. Adaptive and bright, Apess educated himself wherever possible. He learned English and became a proficient reader, writer, and speaker. Apess grew up assimilating and adapting to EuroAmericans, fully synthesizing the English language and other cultural mores such as various denominations of Christianity. Yet he refused to continue assimilation. He became resistant.

“Second comes a period of disturbance and the need for the intellectuals to remember where they actually are, a time for remembering the past” (Tuhiwai Smith 70). Apess transformed when he left the Army and stayed with Mohawk and Mississauga communities near Ontario and then continued to live and work with various East Coast Native and African American communities for the rest of his life. The main transition into the second phase occurred when he moved to Groton, Massachusetts and Colrain, Massachusetts, reuniting with his tribe, aunt and father. “My father, who was a member of the Baptist church was much pleased, and what was far better, we had a time of refreshing in the presence of the Lord” (*Son* 43). In his mind and in the minds of his relatives, he was revived, a mortal transformation. “At first my people looked upon me as one risen from the dead” (*Son* 37).

Apess began understanding the situation of his tribe and other East Coast Native peoples, inspiring projects representing and defending Native peoples in New England. “After I spent some time with my relations in Groton and visited all my old friends, I concluded to go to work and be steady” (*Son* 37). Reuniting with his family is an act of reconnecting with his past. Because he experienced several serious traumas as a child including being abandoned by his parents and beaten by his grandmother, reuniting with his family meant healing and rebuilding. This time with his family helped him make healthy decisions, and inspired a commitment to himself and his future.

“In the third phase the intellectual seeks to awaken the people, to realign themselves with the people and to produce a revolutionary and national literature” (Tuhiwai Smith 70). In 1829, Apess first published his conversion-narrative *A Son of the Forest*, a work primarily relaying his personal testimonial for advancement within the

Methodist church. *A Son of the Forest* reflects the transitional first stage of the Indigenous intellectual striving for validation from Methodist audiences who were mostly EuroAmerican. Apess edited his conversion narrative to appeal to his audience; he removed accusations of racism out of his work and later reasserted them as he became a bolder writer, advancing as a Native intellectual. “Look, brethren, at the natives of the forest—they come, notwithstanding you call them ‘savage,’ from the ‘east and from the west, the north and the south,’ and will occupy seats in the kingdom of heaven before you” (*Son* 51). He returns from his time of refreshing and reunification with his people in order to speak for them within a Christian context and later within a historical context.

By 1833, Apess reemerged after enfranchisement with Native Christian family and community. He sought to understand his situation through the stories (mostly captivity narratives) of four Christian Indians. Thus he recorded and published *The Experiences of Five Christian Indians*, as much conversion narratives as narratives of captivity under white domination and poverty. Connecting with and transcribing for others like himself brought Apess closer to understanding himself, a perspective that deepened as he continued writing.

By 1835, he worked for the Mashpee tribe, successfully repossessing a woodlot and a community center through non-violent activism and legal documentation in *Indian Nullification of the Unconstitutional Laws of Massachusetts Relative to the Mashpee Tribe; or The Pretended Riot Explained*. Apess worked for the Mashpee tribe to help them achieve autonomy over their place of worship, and led the residents of Mashpee Connecticut in a revolt against EuroAmerican men who had been appointed as ministers and overseers of the tribal lands.

Apess became an activist after he traveled to Mashpee to find that the church/community center for the tribe, maintained by tribal monies, had been co-opted by a white Christian community. “I inquired where *the Indians* were; to which Mr. Fish replied, that they were at a place called Marshpee, and that there was a person called *Blind Joe* who tried to preach to them” (Apess 171, his emphasis). Apess and prominent Christian members of the Mashpee tribe then engaged in a non-violent rebellion, resulting in Apess’s imprisonment. However, his efforts were eventually successful and the Mashpee people were given access to their community building and woodlot. Apess documents the entire “rebellion,” producing written proof of his activism and a record of the injustices that he worked to reverse. Through these writings and his eloquence he effected positive change for this Indigenous community.

The Mashpee rebellion and the subsequent documentation evince Apess’s transformation of both Christian and Native subjectivities. He contained, but gradually emphasized his Native identity and advocacy more than his roles and duties as a Methodist preacher. By the publication of *Indian Nullification* Apess wrote more fully as a Native, advocating Native social causes using his EuroAmerican background and training. He used his English competency and knowledge of Christian rhetoric to champion Native American causes such as overturning inequality and prejudice against Native people. He maintained his Methodist discourse, but subverted it by emphasizing Christian involvement in genocidal atrocities.

Specifically, Apess worked to overturn the system that governed the Mashpee peoples and caused their economic and religious oppression. Apess worked to protect Mashpee natural resources, restore Mashpee rights to meetinghouses, and change the

nature of their governance. The governing authorities over the Mashpee tribe systematically robbed them of their resources, including natural resources and meeting houses. They also robbed the Mashpee children of their childhoods and education by forcing them into indenture without education. He clearly links a lack of education to Indigenous oppression.

This [schooling] will be one of the best means to raise them to an equality, and teach them to put away from their mouths forever the enemy which the white man, when he wanted to cheat and subdue our race, first got them to put therein, to steal away their brains, well knowing their lands would follow. (250)

Through his struggles he faced imprisonment, libel, and slander for the Mashpees. “I have been assailed by the vilest calumnies, represented as an exciter of sedition, a hypocrite, and a gambler” (*Indian Nullification* 274). Yet he remains clear about his motivations for helping the Mashpees. “I beg my readers to remember that it was in defense of the character of the people under my spiritual charge” (*Indian Nullification* 273).

Apess takes responsibility for the Mashpees, advocating for them from a Native perspective. This community needed his help and he offered. The Mashpees needed assurance that they were capable of governing themselves. As Tuhiwai Smith says, “For indigenous communities, the issue is not just that they are blamed for their own failures but that it is also communicated to them, explicitly or implicitly, that they themselves have no solutions to their own problems” (Tuhiwai Smith 92). Apess may have been the first one to tell the Mashpee peoples that they were capable and had a right to their own

leadership, had a right to their own facilities. In a way, Apess freed the Mashpee people from further abuse by giving them the devices to reclaim resources that belonged to them, including their self-respect.

Apess began writing to try for acceptance. Next, he reunited with identity and community. Apess then returned to white society not to assimilate but to fight for social justice as first and Native and second a Methodist.

In 1836, his writings were much more political and less religious, addressing colonial history in *Eulogy on King Philip, as Pronounced at the Odeon, in Federal Street, Boston*. He spells out his impetus from the beginning of this text.

Justice and humanity for the remaining few prompt me to vindicate the character of him who yet lives in their hearts and, if possible, melt the prejudice that exists in the hearts of those who are in possession of his soil, and only by the right of conquest—is the aim of him who proudly tells you, the blood of a denominated savage runs in his veins. (277)

Apess subverts his alliance with EuroAmerican Christians by pointing out historical hypocrisies. He suggests that Christian leaders have blasphemed as they justified cruel treatment toward African American and Native American people.

I would suggest one thing, and that is, let the ministers and people use the colored people they have already around them like human beings, before they go and convert any more; and let them show it in their churches; and let them proclaim it upon the housetops; and I would say to the benevolent, withhold your hard earnings from them, unless they do do it [sic], until they can stop laying their wickedness to God, which is blasphemy. (287)

By *Eulogy* Apess no longer aligned himself with Christian ministry, as he had in his first two texts. He no longer edited away examples of racial discrimination and moments of prejudice in order to appeal to his white audience. Instead he pointed out these moments from his life and from history in order to appeal to the humanity of his audience, regardless of color. He knew the Bible and then learned his people's history. With this changed perspective, he told perhaps the most important story of his tribe, the story of King Philip.

“Every issue has been approached by Indigenous people with a view to *rewriting and rerighting* our position in history” (Tuhiwai Smith 28). It is a question of morality, as Derrida suggested in the epigraph. Derrida considers what has been done and not done (*Dissemination* 72). Then he brings forth the two essential questions of writing and morality “Both in the sense of the opposition between good and evil, or good and bad, and in the sense of mores, public morals, and social conventions” (*Dissemination* 72). It seems that Derrida sees the writer as one who has the burden of morality in many senses, including public morals and social conventions. Such things were entirely at stake with Apess's texts as they disputed the basic claims of Indian cultivation and savagery, striking the heart of the public more that kept Indians consistently subjugated and subject to increasing pressure to transform all tribal identity and assume a EuroAmerican lifestyle or face other acts of genocide. Apess had a clear idea of good and evil and wrote to defend his truth, bringing forth the writerly obligation of verifiability. “This moral disquiet is in no way to be distinguished from questions of truth, memory, and dialectics” (*Dissemination* 72). Apess assumed a very serious responsibility by engaging in

writing, representing the Pequot and Mashpees, and revising King Philip's history. He did so out of the need to "reright" history, recognizing that what came from "the pen of the historian" was not his history and had poisoned his people by contributing to a mythology of erasure.

Apess needed to tell the story his own way. "Indigenous people want to tell our own stories, write our own versions, in our own ways, from own purposes" (Tuhiwai Smith 28). Apess sought to tell his own version through his sermons, through his conversion narrative, and through his legal writings, representing and bettering his career(s) and representing his people. "It is not simply about giving an oral account or genealogical naming of the land and the events which raged over it, but a very powerful need to give testimony to and respect or a spirit, to bring back into existence a world fragmented and dying" (Tuhiwai Smith 28). Apess felt this "powerful need" to represent King Philip's history, as well as to provide a testimony for the people who could no longer speak of their traumas. He reflects this motivation in *Eulogy*.

I trust the Great Spirit will stand by me, as also good and honorable men will, being as it were the last, still lingering upon the shores of time, standing as it were upon the graves of his much injured race, to plead their cause and speak for the rights of the remaining few. (288)

Apess acknowledges that he is among the last of a tribe, a tribe greatly decimated and injured. He wants to speak for those who are dead, to commemorate those lost among his tribe. He wishes to plead for the living, to speak for them, to advocate for the rights of the few who remain. In this way, he works to "reright" history.

How Autobiography became History: A Poststructuralist Approach

In western tradition, writing divides among genres. Each genre claims unique methodologies of composition. In *Critical Inquiry*, Jacques Derrida addresses the significance of genre while questioning its existence. "If a genre exists [...] then a code should provide an identifiable trait and one which is identical to itself, authorizing us to determine, to adjudicate whether a given text belongs to this genre or perhaps to that genre" (*Law* 64). As a reader attempts to determine genre, she searches for traits or qualities which distinguish a text, placing the text into a conversation with other texts. The text is defined by its peers.

Genre primarily divides between fiction and non-fiction. Non-fiction asserts itself in contrast to fiction as the writing of reality, of the truth. Fiction is generally understood as invented or created through human imagination. Non-fiction claims the literal, the factual, and the truth. Even if fiction represents the literal, it negates the essential claim that *this really happened*. Beyond these two categories lies an endless field of subgenres.

Autobiography, as a genre, tends to align with non-fiction rather than fiction, although it is very difficult to define it as such. The poststructuralist theory of language and subjectivity, brought forth by Derrida in *Dissemination*, brings into question whether the writer-as-subject can fully understand and articulate the self. Articulating the self is very difficult because language is the "prior medium in which differentiation in general is produced" (*Dissemination* 126). Meaning of language arrives through difference; language is "the medium in which opposites are opposed" (*Dissemination* 127). It is a

question of whether or not the writer-as-subject can fully synthesize the external and the internal consistently and rationally (*Dissemination* 128).

We erase as much as we represent at any given juncture in the process of writing by choosing one word over the plethora of other words, creating one possibility while eliminating all other possibilities, some of which have an equal claim of accuracy as does the chosen word. In *Writing and Difference*, Derrida describes “the necessarily restricted passageway of speech against which all possible meanings push each other, preventing, but calling upon each other, provoking each other” (*Writing* 9). The individual interprets word meaning (probably inadvertently) by the subjective experiences that first brought the word into the individual’s mind. If language itself is subjective, we can say that all kinds of writing are inherently more subjective than objective, including history writing. Not only is writing subjective, but all writing adheres to at least two interpretations, that of the writer and that of the reader.

Furthermore, genres do not have discreet borders. Each text may contain more than one genre. Additionally, any text may exceed previous definitions of genre, challenge established classifications. Derrida makes two points regarding this in “Law of Genre.”

First, it is possible to have several genres, an intermixing of genres or a total genre, the genre “genre” or the poetic or literary genre as genre of genres. Second, this re-mark can take on a great number of forms and can itself pertain to highly diverse types. (64)

A text may participate in more than one genre. There are genres so big that they contain nearly all writing. Very different kinds of writing may participate in the same genre. It is

therefore very difficult to determine the significance of genre given a multiplicity and intermixing of genre.

Why, then, does genre matter? Derrida asked, “Can one identify a work of art, of whatever sort, but especially a work of discursive art, if it does not bear the mark of a genre, if it does not signal or mention it or make it remarkable in any way?” (*Law* 64) I believe the answer is no—a reader cannot identify writing without first determining the genre. Genre immediately informs the reading of any writing. When the reader interacts with a text, a foreknowledge of the genre informs the reading. Reading *Son of the Forest* as history instead of conversion narrative reveals an aspect of history otherwise completely unaccounted for: the experiential data of a Pequot post-erasure and living in the East Coast. Likewise, reading *Indian Nullification* as a legal document reveals Apess as one of the earliest Native legal advocates in the English language, engaging in U.S. legal opposition to systematic reduction of Native autonomy and agency.

Why judge writing based on genre criteria? Attempting to categorize the books in a collection brings about the problem that certain texts do not fit one category or another. Perhaps a text is a mixture of genre, not purely one or another. The reader measures the elements of the text—the style of writing, the time period from which it came, the authorial intentions for the text—in order to categorize. For instance, I found it difficult to firmly stamp a genre on Ray Young Bear’s *Black Eagle Child* because it is at once poetry, prose and autobiography. A simple internet search finds it labeled as prose and autobiography. If pushed, I would call it an epic prose poem, due to my personal investment in Young Bear’s poetic sensibility. Given these kinds of difficulties, it seems useless to judge disputed texts based on categorical criteria.

Apess and Genre

Earlier we examined Apess's shifting subjectivity with a basic claim that as his world view changed he also changed the style and subject of his writing. This section seeks to address the genres within Apess's writing. We will start with his second text, *The Increase of the Kingdom of Christ*, and move through his corpus of writing, returning to his most significant text, *Son of the Forest*, which encompasses in one composition all of the genres that he writes.

Apess first focused on representing the truth of his personal life and conversion to Christianity. In order to do this he adopted the style of the conversion narrative; therefore his earlier writings represent the genres of autobiography and conversion narrative. Apess then writes *The Increase of the Kingdom of Christ*, which describes an ideal Christian society as the subject. He adopted a Methodist rhetorical style, which indicates the genre of religious sermon.

Methodist Sermon

Lois Agnew provides precedence for Methodist rhetoric in her essay "The Centrality of Ethos in Eighteenth-Century Methodist Preaching" by describing the Wesleyan rhetorical style as it differentiated the Methodists from the Anglicans in eighteenth-century England. This analysis carries significance because the eighteenth-century rhetorical style in England carried over the ocean and into the nineteenth-century

with early American Methodists. “The unique feature of eighteenth-century Methodist sermons is generally described as an emotional intensity that deviated from the more restrained Anglican norm” (Agnew 59). When Apess converted to Methodism as a young man, he saw the distinction between Methodists and Anglicans relating to emotional outbursts. “His people shouted for joy—while sinners wept” (*Son* 18). He feels aligned with this kind of worship. “From this time I become more serious and soon went to hear the Methodists again, and I was constrained to believe that they were the true people of God” (*Son* 18).

In keeping with Wesleyan style, Apess’s sermons were often improvised and engaged the emotions and intellects of his audiences. Describing a typical eighteenth-century Methodist speaker, Agnew writes,

He or she builds an ethos through sharing his or her personality in a manner that connects with the audience, a strategy that actively engages the audience members in appreciating the value of the message delivered by a speaker dedicated to addressing their concerns on multiple levels.

(60)

Methodists in America, deriving from Wesley and his rhetorical style, differentiated themselves by holding tent meetings and impromptu sermons during which they appealed to the audiences on personal, intellectual, and emotional levels. Apess was probably attracted to the Methodist rhetorical style because it provided him a vehicle to share his personality, his life experiences, and to work through his emotions in a manner that the Congregationalist and other Anglican congregations would have shunned. Addressing his subject, the increase of the “Kingdom of Christ,” Apess appeals to the emotion and

intellect of his audience. “The heart of man is not large enough to conceive of them in all their glorious extent, nor is the intellect of man strong enough to contemplate them in their unveiled mystery” (*Increase* 109). Apess wants the audience to feel and to think about his concept, the increase of the “Kingdom of Christ.” He wants people to feel the happiness of this ideal place. “Happiness, like a broad, smiling sky, overspreads and surrounds all the inhabitants of the upper climb” (*Increase* 109). This is a patent Methodist rhetorical device, indicating that Apess engaged in this genre.

Apess’s writings reveal shifting or multiple genres as we understand them today. His conversion narrative is autobiography, trauma writing, history writing, and sermon. His writing begins as conversion narrative and becomes history writing. The transitions in genre reflect the transitions in subject and mirror the transformations in subjectivity.

Conversion Narrative and Autobiography

One must use the tools at hand to advance through life. Apess began his intellectual career with a pen and a Methodist community. Using these means, Apess advanced through society and became a Methodist leader before he was thirty years old. The conversion narrative was probably Apess’s most useful vehicle for individual expression and social advancement within the Methodist society at the beginning of his career. Apess wrote two conversion narratives, *A Son of the Forest* and *The Experience of the Missionary*.

Hilary E. Wyss usefully defines the conversion narrative genre in a recent article in which she questions subjectivity and identity formation in colonial Native American

narratives. In her essay “Captivity and Conversion: William Apess, Mary Jemison, and Narratives of Racial Identity,” she succinctly defines the conversion narrative which dates “as early as John Eliot’s seventeenth-century ‘Praying Towns’” (Wyss 2). She says, “The conversion narrative emphasizes an inner process of transformation.” It is an extreme transformation of abnegation. “In such narratives the convert must surrender all that previously defined his or her life as coherent and embrace the terms of the new religious system to which he or she has converted” (Wyss 2).

When the conversion narrative doubles as a Native American narrative, the writer must abnegate the Native self in order for the narrative to gain white acceptance. “In Native American narratives the conversion has cultural implications as well; not only must the transformation occur on a spiritual level but it must also be marked by a transformation of clothing, modes of living, even ways of thinking” (Wyss 2). Conversion narrative requires the author to describe an inner transformation in a way that abnegates their previous life in order to demonstrate the improvement that conversion brings. Apess describes his inner transformation, adopting a language laden with questionable imagery.

To begin with, he colors good and bad, mirroring a Christian and EuroAmerican fear of darkness and dark complexions. He refers to the moments before his conversion as darkness. “No ray of celestial light had dispelled the darkness that gathered around my soul” (*Son* 20). Lightness equates with the celestial, while darkness is elsewhere named “the agony of my soul” (*Son* 20). As soon as he describes the darkness of pre-conversion, he describes a desire to live in the wilderness. “At times I wished to become a dweller in the wilderness. No wonder, then, that I was most desponding” (*Son* 21).

This despondency solidifies his desire for conversion, for he follows the last passage by writing, “Surrounded by difficulties and apparent dangers, I was resolved to seek the salvation of my soul with all my heart—to trust entirely to the Lord and, if I failed, to perish pleading for mercy at the foot of the throne” (*Son* 21). This passage couples darkness with wilderness. As wilderness and darkness equate, they also contrast with notions of faith and righteousness. In *The Increase of the Kingdom of Christ*, he sets forth one image that vilifies both darkness and nature. “But from the sublime heights of our contemplations we will descend to where darkness still mingles with the light and nature struggles with grace” (*Increase* 110). Apess employs traditionally Christian imagery, correlating sin with darkness and isolation with wilderness. He does this to appeal to his audience, already familiar with such religious imagery. However, given evolving interactions with whites and time in the wilderness among Native people, this kind of imagery appears only in his earlier texts, written when he often preached to largely white audiences and worked to gain status in these circles.

Apess used Methodist rhetoric and the genre of conversion narrative to appeal to the Methodists, and speak about his personal story. *Son of the Forest* and *The Experience of the Missionary* employed these genres, but they qualify for so many other genres, including trauma writing, war writing, captivity narrative, and history.

Autobiography and Trauma Writing

The difference between autobiography and trauma writing deserves attention because Apess’s writings qualify as both, yet the genres are significantly different.

Autobiography is a very old form and simply defined by translating the three Greek words that British poet Steven Spender combined in 1771 auto/bio/graphy: self/life/writing (Smith & Watson 1). By contrast, trauma writing is a very new genre, pushed into the fore in 1990 by cognitive therapists who documented the therapeutic effects of disclosing personal trauma through writing (Park & Blumberg). Autobiography incorporates any and all writing of the self, but to be recognized as traditional autobiography it must be somewhat accurate to the actual events of a person's physical life. Trauma writing is a form of autobiography, one that specifies the part of life (or in this case, trauma) under consideration.

Apess's autobiography and conversion narratives record personal and representational traumas. His personal traumas include separation from his family (*Son 5*), being severely beaten at age four (*Son 6*), and being sold and resold into indenture (*Son 7*, 15, and 16). Apess faces representational traumas when the Methodists deny him his preacher's license (*Son 51*), and faced imprisonment, libel and slander while representing the Mashpees (*Indian Nullification 274*).

Apess wrote against traumatic misrepresentation of Native people and more specifically Mashpee and Pequot people. These representational traumas affected and inspired Apess, driving him to compose at least the last two texts, if not all of them. For example, while attempting to gain autonomy for the Mashpee, Apess could not persuade Judge Martson of Harvard College, who "swore in court that he thought Indians an inferior race of men, and, of course, were incapable of managing their own affairs" (*Indian Nullification 229*). Apess makes the following remark concluding *Indian Nullification*:

The Marshpees have been reviled and misrepresented in the public prints as much more indolent and ignorant, and degraded than they really are, and it was necessary for their future welfare, as it depends in no small degree upon the good opinion of their white brethren, to state the real truth of the case. (273)

The New England newspapers that had covered the Mashpee rebellion often misrepresented the Mashpee peoples, giving the impression that they were not peaceful but potentially dangerous. They also alluded to the idea that the Mashpees were not capable of making autonomous decisions. Apess acknowledges that the widespread opinion among white people influenced the leaders and decision makers who could provide the Mashpees with some degree of agency. Apess considered this misrepresentation harmful to the Mashpees, so much so, that he documented both what was written in the newspapers and his actual experience, as well as letters and accounts from others present at the hearings and meetings. In this way, he accounted for the collective trauma that had damaged the Mashpees.

Apess struggled mightily against this kind representational trauma at a time in U.S. history when Native misrepresentation made colonization and genocide seem justifiable to hegemonic forces including EuroAmerican Christians. Such misrepresentations were convenient and rampant. So many voices crowded out Apess's voice that it must have felt overwhelming to him. However, he never gave up. He wrote and spoke about misrepresentation until his last days.

Leigh Gilmore does some interesting work with trauma and autobiography in *The Limits of Autobiography*. She writes that testimonies of trauma are “important in all sorts

of areas: establishing that injuries have occurred, documenting abuse, deepening existing accounts, extending traditions of reporting and testimony” (Gilmore 49). Apess actively documented abuse, which deepened in him the will to resist further abuse. However, documenting trauma brings forth the concern of unacceptability to certain readers. In Gilmore’s analysis of Dorothy Allison’s *Bastard Out of Carolina*, she brings to light the relationship between subjectivity, representation, and trauma, ultimately separating the appropriate from the representative. She writes,

Bastard reshapes our critical understanding of what autobiography is and what it can do. Allison articulates the relations among law, kinship, trauma, and love as the grounds of subjectivity. In so doing, she returns trauma to the set of relations from which meanings emerge. The history of autobiography strongly suggests (in at least the American tradition) that autobiographical subjects are judged in part by whether they are appropriately representative. By uncoupling appropriate and representative, Allison makes the subject of trauma into a new figure of the citizen, where citizenship is inhabited by those whose histories of rights are fully interimplicated in histories of injury. (49)

Autobiographical subjects, such as Apess, face some questioning about the validity of representation precisely because they are the victims of trauma. The subject/writer is subjected to trauma without legal recourse, bearing no rights to a voice, unable to bear witness in a credible way. However, as Gilmore indicates, those are the voices within the “history of injury.” This kind of history should take shape in a more comprehensive collection of histories, containing experiential data.

Trauma writing helped Apess understand and define who he was subjectively through kinship when he was adopted by Mashpee or when he claimed King Philip's blood as his. As such, his concerns became representational concerns. Thereafter he faced slander, imprisonment, and libel because his opponents questioned the appropriateness of his representation.^{xiv} Recollections represent the trauma and the shifted subjectivity which accompanied the trauma.

Dominick LaCapra works with the intersection of autobiography and trauma writing in his essay, "Writing History, Writing Trauma." According to LaCapra, the writing must be both factually and experientially accurate if autobiography becomes history writing. Combining factual and experiential data signals a conflation of two schools of historiography, documentary or self-sufficient style and radical constructivism (LaCapra 1-6). Radical constructivism is the style in which a personal account of an event is emphasized as much as the facts and dates pertaining to the event. The radical constructivist acknowledges the personal transformation derived from experiences. By contrast, the self-sufficient or documentary researcher prioritizes "research based on primary documents that enabled one to derive authenticated facts about the past" (LaCapra 2). The essential difference between these historiographical methodologies is that one is "right" and one is "true." Frank Ankersmit says, "Saying true things about the past is easy—anybody can do that—but saying the *right* things about the past is difficult" (LaCapra 10).

LaCapra emphasizes finding a way to sufficiently and accurately document an historical trauma synthesizing both documentary-style historiography (facts, numbers, and dates), and radical constructivism (the survivors' personal narratives). For LaCapra,

accuracy pertains not only to the facts of the incident, but also to the spirit of the incident. It is important that records accurately capture the emotional gravity of the situation. LaCapra suggests that this emotional gravity comes from experiential data; the truth of an event captures experiential evidence in writing such as a personal narrative.

Applying this analysis, Apess records the experience of prejudice in postcolonial New England, which is something unquantifiable and incalculable, only emotively expressed. For instance, he emotively expresses the experience of being called an “Indian” as a child. “I know nothing so trying to a child as to be repeatedly called an improper name” (*Son* 11). The experience of being called an “Indian” in a disparaging way, continuously as a child, cannot be represented through history. Yet, combined with Apess’s historical experiences, we can understand something about the truth of the time, the experience of a Pequot who survived cultural and physical genocide, disconnection from family and traditional tribal ways of life. To discover the experiential data in Apess’s narrative, we must acknowledge that it captures his personal history, captures an aspect of the history of postcolonial Connecticut and Massachusetts, and documents a movement within the Methodist church, which influenced his Christian theology.

History Writing

Apess wrote history by documenting the “Mashpee Revolt.” This may be one of the first instances of a Native American writing history in the nineteenth century. Not surprisingly, his collection and composition stands out among the accounts of this event. His accounts often differed from those found in New England newspapers, especially

regarding the Mashpees “savage” hostility. Apess recognized that the history according to white colonialist society was not his history. He accuses it of slander against his misunderstood people and their culture. “It has been the lot of the unfortunate aborigines of this country, to be doubly wronged by the white man—first, driven from their Native soil by the sword of the invader, and then darkly slandered by the pen of the historian” (*Son* 61).

History writing documents events, explains the reasons for events, and relies on verifiable evidence such as dates, places, number of people involved, and often, how many people died. American historians sometimes document social and cultural trends, but tend traditionally to document warfare and political developments. The victors documented warfare in early United States history after colonization and during Apess’s time. Apess, a representative of the Mashpee and Pequot tribes, writes the history of his people, representing the underrepresented in early United States history.

Apess’s historical accounts need to be considered history writing because the notion of objective history is under serious examination, considering that reading is writing. This means that a subjective account of history is gaining a foothold and changing the way that people read and understand history. Jacques Derrida asserts in his preface to *Dissemination* that reading is rewriting, as the reader asserts his or her subjectivities in an intertextual relationship with the text (Derrida 63-4). Richard Schur clarifies the recent trend in autobiography theory as it collides with postcolonial theory in his article “Critical Race Theory and the Limits of Auto/Biography.”

Critical race theory and postcolonial theory both seek to contest our failure to realize certain ideals due to the social and cultural "baggage" which has

limited their application. Similarly, any attempt at life writing necessarily holds back from the reader some portion of the life being written. What is held back or inaccessible is precisely the limit that critical race theory and postcolonial theory seek to make, and ultimately, to deploy. It is through the play of absence and presence of the life, which not only forms the subject matter of auto/biography, but also marks the point of contact between the socially constituted subject and the inaccessible individual, that the radical potential of life writing is made possible. (8)

Apress traversed the boundary that Schur indicates as the “point of contact between the socially constituted subject and the inaccessible individual.” On the one hand, he was a classified and racialized being, weighed down by “social and cultural baggage.” On the other hand, he was an individual, a subject and subjectivity traveling through time trying to capture certain experiences and ideas through his writing.

In the last three decades, modern historians such as Geoff Eley and literary critics such as Kali Tal and Hayden White have also questioned the historiographical claim to objectivism. In *The Content of Form*, White writes, “Historians also often claim to explain the matters of which they treat by providing a proper understanding of them. The means by which this understanding is provided is *interpretation*” (White 60). That there is no “proper understanding” is another way of saying that an objective approach to history is very difficult if not impossible.

Historiographical objectivity has recently come into question, as indicated by historical theorist Geoff Eley in his work *A Crooked Line: From Cultural History to the History of Society*. “History’s priorities became refocused by decentering the discipline’s

established subject matters; by claiming the neglected contexts of the personal, the local, and the everyday; and by allowing historians to better face questions of political subjectivity” (Eley 199). Thus, the personal enters the sphere of history, and the subjective becomes an important historiographical apparatus. As historians and readers of history shift their focus toward personal accounts, the subjective document becomes acceptable. The autobiographical text emerges as a valid form of history writing. “No experience is ‘pure’ or ‘true’ since it is mediated by a kind of cultural library of symbols that limit and guide interpretation” (Tal 49). A pure experience or identity does not exist. Our pasts bless and scar us all. The objective text does not exist.

What is to be done with a fluidity of genre, with texts that surpass genre limitations, such as when a writer’s personal story intersects a historical event? Moreover, how significant is this particular kind of text when written by the voice of the oppressed? Looking at these questions, Fawzia Afzal-Khan provided some insight in her article “Bridging the Gap Between So-Called Postcolonial and Minority Women of Color: A Comparative Methodology for Third World Feminist Literary Criticism.” Afzal-Khan addresses the critical discourse surrounding the writers of “outlaw genres,” particularly Leila Khaled, Toni Morrison, bell hooks, and Assata Shakur who write variations on personal narrative and autobiography that defy traditional Western genre definitions. This conversation delves into the relationship between oppression and writing, resistance and representation. She writes,

Despite differences in genre and historical experience, one can see how being part of a historically oppressed "race" (Morrison, hooks) and, in the case of Khaled, an oppressed nation, and how sharing gender oppression

within their respective communities marks these three women's discursive strategies with a common desire: namely, with what hooks calls the "yearning" for some form(s) of empowering resistance through which they and their "people" can come into their "own." (7)

Afzal-Khan sees this intersection between event and personal narrative as an important tool for people recounting racial and gender oppression. Afzal-Khan suggests that personal narrative can be resistance writing. Apess, by documenting the personal, captures the historical experience of his time. He was the only Pequot writing this personal and historical story. Through his writing, his voice remains into the present day. His personal story gives a historical account from the voice of the oppressed.

Deborah Gussman claims that Apess was one of the first to assert a Native American historical account in print in the United States in her essay "'O Savage, Where Art Thou?': Rhetorics of Reform in William Apess's *Eulogy on King Philip*." She writes, "Apess's project of revising history from a Native American perspective returns to the very beginnings of the colonization of New England" (Gussman 453). Apess describes pre-contact Natives, "Such were the Indians while in the pride and energy of primitive simplicity: they resemble those wild plants that thrive best in the shade of the forest, but which shrink from the hand of cultivation, and perish beneath the influence of the sun" (*Son* 62). His account uniquely regards Indigenous people and pre-contact time by referring to the time before colonialism as having "pride and energy" of "primitive simplicity." This indicates that the time before the introduction of European technological advancement was a time of dignity, useful endeavor, and simplicity.

He then compares Native people to wild plants. By drawing this parallel, he emphasizes that both are ecologically bound to a certain type of landscape, that they both resist colonial cultivation. He asserts that Native plants do not survive in direct sun is a metaphor for Native people, who cannot survive under conditions of forced labor, such as spending countless hours engaged in colonial agricultural practices. He provides this symbolism and metaphor to diagnose the suffering of his people which coincides with the transformation of his Native lands.

Regardless of genre, Apess's texts contained a unique subjectivity, and one that is increasingly important to history as we begin to understand the nature of U.S. colonization. Although each of his texts may point to a different genre, all of them converge in his primary text, *A Son of the Forest*.

Returning to Son of the Forest

Apess wrote all of his works in seven years, and died three to five years after his final work. His first few texts, *Son of the Forest*, *The Experiences of Five Christian Indians*, and *The Increase of the Kingdom of Christ* demonstrate his intentions to thrive within the Christian community, changing it from within, while his final texts *Indian Nullification* and *Eulogy on King Philip* indicate a shift from influencing Christian community to defense and representation of his peoples, the Pequot and Mashpee peoples of Connecticut and Massachusetts.

Each text marks a slight change of subjectivity and subject, style and form, all indicating that Apess's writings changed in genre as he changed as a person, as a thinking

subject. As he changes his subject from self to others, his genre shifts from autobiography to trauma writing, conversion narrative, and eventually to history. Trauma writing may be seen as a subgenre of autobiography or history, as trauma writing chiefly documents the actual and emotional experience of an event for the purposes of healing from the trauma, whereas autobiography can be simply defined as self life writing. Conversion narrative differs from trauma writing in that its main purpose is to convey a religious conversion to affirm membership within a religious community whereas trauma writing has no need to indicate any kind of religious transformation. History differs from conversion narrative because history documents the events and experiences of people during a time and place whereas conversion narrative is limited in scope to the event of a religious conversion. Even as the various texts indicate shifting genres, we can see all of the above mentioned genres within Apess's primary text, his essential text, *Son of the Forest*.

“Autobiography’s project—to tell the story of one’s life—appears to constrain self-representation through its almost legalistic definition of truth telling, its anxiety about invention, and its preference for the literal and verifiable, even in the presence of some ambivalence toward those criteria” (Gilmore 3). Smith and Watson restate, but allow room for more than just the verifiable and the literal. “Life narrators inevitably refer to the world beyond the text, the world that is the ground of the narrator’s lived experience, even if that ground is comprised in part of cultural myths, dreams, fantasies and subjective memories” (Smith & Watson 9).

Autobiography as genre becomes problematic when the space between the internal realm and the external is the battleground for those seeking accurate and verifiable data. Not only must the story be “my truth” but it must also be “the truth” that

others can qualify in some way. Thus, readers often question the autobiographer's accuracy for several reasons. Autobiographies are rarely limited to the self as subject. Often "my story" also becomes "your story" or "their story." For example, *Crashing Thunder: The Autobiography of an American*, edited by Paul Radin, combines and documents the lives of two brothers, Sam and Jasper Blowsnake, focusing on Sam Blowsnake's life while taking the name of Jasper Blowsnake (Radin xi). A text such as *Crashing Thunder* calls to question the accuracy of the "auto" portion of autobiography. How can two lives combine to form the story of one man?

Sometimes an autobiography becomes representational of a social group, whether intended or not. Such is the case with Marie Chona's *Papago Woman* and Rigoberta Menchu's *I, Rigoberta Menchú: An Indian Woman in Guatemala*. These works have come to represent a group of people, Papago and Guatemalan women, respectively. These texts represent one story while detailing larger stories of community. To a western reader, schooled in notions of personal identity and private property, collective identity is a difficult concept.

Coupled with Indigenous identity, notions of communal representation have been systematically negated in favor of Western individualistic representations. Community or collective representation has been discredited as unethical among researchers, according to Tuhiwai Smith. "The social 'good' against which ethical standards are determined is based on the same beliefs about the individual and individualized property. Community and Indigenous rights or views in this area are generally not recognized and not respected" (Tuhiwai Smith 118). However, collective identity, collective storytelling, is

an essential tenet of Native American literature. One's identity comes from family, clan, tribe, and land. Sometimes, one's identity is one's family, clan, tribe, and land.

Poststructuralist Robert Smith writes in *Derrida and Autobiography*, "I cannot 'know myself' without this relation to Others, so that the autobiographical gesture of self-knowledge can be made only in the proximity, the 'proximal disclosedness', of Others" (Smith 106). Smith claims that we cannot know the self without the other, without the relationship and proximity to others. Just as genre is defined by the peers of the text, the self is defined by the peers of the self.

Apess was displaced, but he held onto himself and his people, whom he discovered on his path to his story. "My people have had no press to record their sufferings or to make known their grievances; on this account many a tale of blood and woe has never been known to the public" (*Son* 60). He held onto his people's history, and he wrote it in his story, his autobiography with personal and collective identities unfolding. Apess's autobiography captures his story while also reaching further, to explain something about Native history on the Eastern Seaboard from the perspective of a Pequot, to speak for more than himself, "Where a community is also limited in number, and forms, as in an Indian tribe, one great patriarchal family, the injury of the individual, is the injury of the whole" (*Son* 63).

Why Apess Writes about History and What Apess Says about History

Representing Native American history concerns Apess from *Son of the Forest* forward through his writing career. Even though his earlier writings primarily function as

religious texts for a Methodist audience, his Methodist audience was often an audience of Native and African American people. He traveled to religious communities that were more frequently comprised of Native American people and African American people. He identified with and responded to a Christian theology of justice and equality for Native Americans and other people suffering from prejudice. Even though he functions as a Christian missionary and exhorter, he addresses issues of racism and historical injustice from the beginning of his writing. “The Indian character, I have observed before, has been greatly misrepresented. Justice has not and, I may add, justice cannot be fully done to them by the historian” (*Son* 60).

Historians stand upon the shoulders of the predecessors, quoting and paraphrasing, perhaps modifying the slant or interpretation of the data which had already been recorded. Apess relied heavily on certain colonial and postcolonial historians.^{xv} Apess’s appendix to the *Son of the Forest* paraphrases or directly quotes these authors while rarely crediting them as his source. This is common among writers in his time. O’Connell carefully sorted out Apess’s words from the words of his chosen historians, and from these words we can determine the motivation for his history writing, the slant that he chose to emphasize. We can see why he included this history in his autobiography from these glimpses of his own words and the words that chose to paraphrase.

It is a matter of deep and lasting regret that the character of the Indians, who occupied this widespread and goodly heritage, when men of pale faces came over the pierceless solitudes of the mighty ocean, with their large canoes, and were received with all the kindly feelings of native

innocence—I say that it is deeply to be regretted that their character should be so grossly misrepresented and misunderstood. (114)

Apess deeply mourned the character of his people, which had been grossly misrepresented and sullied. He feels the loss of a great misunderstanding between Indian Americans and EuroAmerican that caused so many acts of injustice and cruelty. When he speaks of the “pierceless solitudes” I believe he is also describing the great spiritual and cultural distance between the Indigenous and the colonizing peoples, a divide that Apess could never bridge. He describes a kindness and an innocence lost by way of misrepresentation and misunderstanding. He regrets this and sought to address it, probably for the first time in U.S. history. He is one of the few members of his tribe to have survived generations of genocidal colonialism, spiritual erasure, environmental, cultural, and linguistic pressures that thoroughly transformed the East Coast pre-contact tribes. His writing is his way of remaining, and remaining is a matter of resistance.

The white man came upon our shores—he grew taller and taller until his shadow was cast over all the land—in its shade the mighty tribes of olden time wilted away. A few, the remnant of multitudes long since gathered to their fathers, are all that remain; and they are on their march to eternity.

(115)

Apess’s message marches into eternity as readers continue to find Apess’s writings. The fact is that these writings are important because they reveal a personal transformation and an account of a complicated man situated in a complicated history.

CONCLUSION

There are many other areas of research that intersect with my work on Apess. One of the largest questions that I did not answer is what Apess was reading that influenced the construction of his texts. Certainly Apess read and responded to captivity narrative and slave narratives, which were prevalent and important historical texts during the early 1800s. George Price^{xvi} suggested that Methodist Reformation pamphlets on social change influenced Apess's work in social justice and perhaps the style of his social reform writing. What was he reading and how did it affect his writing?

Another question that I have not answered is how Apess's texts enter conversation with other Native texts of the same period, such as Blackhawk's narrative, and Samson Occom's conversion narrative and religious pamphlets. How distinct is Apess's voice in the context of his peers?

More than anything I want to emphasize that Apess was asking his audience to reconsider history. He wanted his readers to think about history, especially the history of Native/EuroAmerican interaction. He wanted his readers to question the acceptable histories represented and to make changes based on changed assumptions. I see Apess's history writing as collage history, taking from everything he knew and learned in order to compose something entirely his own. Apess took from everything around him, his life experiences, publications and local speeches, words from outskirt communities whose churches rang sermons of Christian justice. He used everything he could to pull himself up, hand over hand, from economic and social poverty to good standing and respectability.

He joined and broke with circles of people often, always in transition from one perspective to the next, constantly a different Self and Other, because he himself was never sure of the Self or the Other. As a youngster, his EuroAmerican upbringing led to referring to Indians as Others. Yet he claims King Philip's blood as his own in his final text, one which attacks EuroAmericans as Others. He tries to work himself into Methodist community, where non-believers, white and Native alike, are Others, all in need of the community of believers that he envisions but never finds. He became a tribesman and a leader within the Mashpee tribe, where he attacked the same government that he had served in wartime. His language changed, his habits changed, all depending on how he saw himself with proximity to social circles, referring back to the notion of "proximal disclosedness." If it was a question of nurture versus nature, he used every possible nurtured means to get at his nature, something he would perhaps never understand.

The question that Apess left unanswered, one that he sought yet could never answer for himself, was his history, how he lost himself and his own Native history. Everything that made him who he was defied the self he wanted to understand or become. I'm not sure he ever accepted himself as an indentured servant, a preacher, a "denominated savage" or of any of the titles he received, sought for, or gave himself in his writing. This uneasiness with titles perhaps makes Apess who he was, a true subject, one without a definite sense of self or a self perpetually changing and rewriting itself.

At the same time, Apess understood himself more clearly because he constantly traversed lines of affiliation and identification. The layering and transitioning allowed Apess to become the person that he wanted to be. Perhaps Apess found himself in

between his subjectivities and in between his texts. Perhaps his recounting freed himself from his subjectivity. He wrote and freed himself.

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NOTES

ⁱ Antonio Gramsci is the father of the term hegemony, defined in his 37 volume manifesto, *Prison Notebooks*. Hegemons are dominant groups or people. Hegemony is the system wherein ideas are understood to be universal or natural, even though they were disseminated by an empowered minority. Hegemony has to do with the proliferation of intellectual property by the few in power and the mass adoption of this intellectual property by those subjected to a particular hegemon.

ⁱⁱ Genocide, from the Merriam Webster Dictionary, is an organized and systematic destruction of an ethnic or national group. In this context, it is not just killing the people, it can also mean killing their culture, their language, and their religion. From contact to the present day (to some extent), Native Americans have experienced a cultural, spiritual and ideological genocide in addition to a history of physical genocide.

ⁱⁱⁱ See the final chapter for a more engaged definition of autobiography. Simply put, autobiography is self life writing. It has taken on more specific qualities since its inception in 18th century Europe having to do with order and the material specifically addressed in the writing, but many of these formalisms have been either questioned or dropped in today's post-structuralist context.

^{iv} Barbara Johnson, in *The Critical Difference*, writes, "Deconstruction is not synonymous with 'destruction,' however. It is in fact much closer to the original meaning of the word 'analysis' itself, which etymologically means 'to undo' -- a virtual synonym for 'to de-construct.' [...] If anything is destroyed in a deconstructive reading, it is not the text, but the claim to unequivocal domination of one mode of signifying over another. A deconstructive reading is a reading which analyses the specificity of a text's critical difference from itself" (Johnson 3).

^v Oxford English Dictionary Online

http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/00305561?query_type=word&queryword=memory&first=1&max_to_s how=10&sort_type=alpha&result_place=2&search_id=s7dw-KXwP1f-9099&hilite=00305561

^{vi} Apess didn't know his tribal language. When he lived with his tribe in Groton, he mentions following customs but that his family doesn't speak the language. "We observed particular forms, although we knew nothing about the dead languages" (*Son* 40).

^{vii} Judge William Hillhouse (1728-1816) was an important figure in the North Parish of New London, known as the "patriarch of Montville." (O'Connell xxxi)

^{viii} Unless he had been told about Native removal from lands from his biological family when he had run away to see them during his second indenture (*Son* 16). Apess doesn't address his source for this specific claim.

^{ix} Apess indicates that he may be Pequot, but some scholars suggest he was from a Mashpee tribe on his maternal side. The idea of his mixed ancestry is engaged primarily by Barry O'Connell in his introductions to the two books, but also by Laura Mielke in "Native to the Question," and especially Roumiana Velikova's essay "'Philip, King of the Pequots': The History of an Error". "Apess appears to have been misled by Elias Boudinot, one of the principal sources [for *Son of the Forest*]...who also misidentifies King Philip as a Pequot" (Velikova 331).

^x By "settling," I mean that they were made to build fences around their lands and cultivate them in an English manner. "Apple orchards were planted, fences extended around both fields and orchards, cows, goats, and hogs introduced, hay gathered, barns and sheds built from hand-sawn planks, and most important, fields plowed with proper implements by men and tame animals, not by women with clamshell hoes," (Axtell 162).

^{xi} While the ancestors of William Apess experienced repression of traditional religions, they also had a history of converting to Christianity. Some converted by free will, others by force, but in either event the John Eliot's Praying Towns serve as an example of early colonized Christian natives, who were expected to comply with the dictates of Eliot, and his notions religious expression. John Eliot's praying towns were highly regulated societies devoid of personal or cultural religious or even economic expression.

^{xii} This prevalent Puritanical vision saw America as a desolate wilderness filled with ignorant souls who required the Gospel and "civilizing" as much as anyone in the world did. "According to Genesis, they argued, the Lord had commanded the sons of Adam to subdue the earth and, they concluded with self-assurance, God undoubtedly had included the American continent in this commission" (Carroll 3). This led

the movement to “civilize” the “wilderness” and its inhabitants. Lack of conversion and civilizing meant erasure at some point in this logic, and a great mythology of unoccupied land arose, disinformation that influenced massive amounts of European immigration and resulted in suffering and, in worst cases, genocide for Native people in North America.

^{xiii} Tuhiwai Smith credits Frantz Fanon for a particular three-step process for the developing Indigenous intellectual (Tuhiwai Smith 70).

^{xiv} During the Mashpee Revolt, Apess was openly slandered (*Nullification* 166, 167, 203, 242, 226-28) and went to prison for his involvement and leadership (*Nullification* 184-86). Later he sued John Reynolds for libel relating to the Mashpee Revolt. (Konkle 149)

^{xv} Especially Elias Boudinot (O’Connell xli), but also Samuel Smith (*Son* 75), David Brainerd (*Son* 52), William Penn (*Son* 90-91), Samuel Drake (Konkle 102) and William Robertson (*Son* 55).

^{xvi} Conversation on 7/21/08 during thesis defense.