EVER TOWARDS THE SETTING SUN THEY PUSH US:
AMERICAN INDIAN IDENTITY IN THE WRITINGS OF MARY ALICIA OWEN

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ABSTRACT

Mary Alicia Owen (1850-1935) is best known as a folklorist who studied and wrote about the culture, legends, and folkways of Missouri’s African Americans and American Indians. While she is best remembered as the author of two major works of folklore and ethnography, *Olde Rabbit, the Voodoo and Other Sorcerers* (1893) and *Folk-lore of the Musquakie Indians of North America* (1904) she was also the author of several short stories and at least one novel and one play.

In her fiction Owen often portrayed American Indian people as a part of the lively ethnic melting pot that characterized her hometown of St. Joseph, Missouri in the mid-nineteenth century. Yet, despite the years of contact Owen had with members of this vibrant mixed community, she ultimately resorted to many of the same stereotypical conventions that many European-Americans of the Victorian era relied on to portray native people. Many of these same stereotypes can be seen her ethnographic work as well. This thesis examines Owen’s relationship with the American Indian people she studied and her use of stereotypes—most prominently the Noble Savage and the Vanishing Indian—in characterizing them.
When the colonists set sail for America, they knew that they’d not only have to find a way to survive in the wilderness, but would also have to deal with rival nations that were claiming their own share of this vast new land. There had been long animosity between France, England, and the Dutch. These were obstacles which would be difficult to overcome. Therefore, they knew that if push came to shove, they could defeat the American natives in a fight, just as the Spanish had. Conquest was always in the back of their minds, as an alternative to peaceful integration. English pessimism due to Spanish experience with the Indians was no doubt exacerbated when a Chesapeake Indian tribe ambushed the first arrivals making landfall. Identity in postcolonial novel is a focal point in which imaging the crisis and the conflict of the colonized’ s struggle to find a way for the identification between the previous native heritage and history and the power of dominant culture that’s imposed by the colonizers. This idea is discussed by Edward Said that the national re-establishment of society, affirmation of identity, and the appearance of new cultural practices instigated as mobilized force and then advanced the struggle against Western domination everywhere in non-European world. Borges, the writer. Butch Cassidy, they said, had gone into hiding there, along with Dr. Mengele and Martin Bormann and a score of less pleasant characters. It seemed that I remembered Henry telling a story, one night at Francis’s house, about some South American country maybe Argentina, I wasn’t sure. I tried to think. My head ached. Emerging from the woods near Hampden, into an expanse of snow-covered meadow that sparkled in the light, I saw twin threads of smoke coming from the age-blacked chimneys at either end of Commons. Everything was cold and quiet except for a milk truck that idled at the rear entrance as two silent, sleepy-looking men unloaded the wire crates and let them fall with a clatter on the asphalt. Ever towards the setting sun they push us: American Indian identity in the writings of Mary Alicia Owen. Greg Olson Dr. Susan Flader, Thesis Supervisor Dr. Jeffrey Pasley, Thesis Supervisor. ABSTRACT. When Mary came back, she looked very red from the sun. She in the sun too long. had lain. was lying. had been lying. In 1912 the Titanic an iceberg on its first trip across the Atlantic, and it sank four hours later. We TV for ten minutes when the electricity went off. A member of a particular nation is more difficult to define than ever before. Towards defining nationhood in terms of descent, which is shown by the fact that blacks and Native Americans were excluded for reasons of race. Native Americans or Indians were the first people to live in the New World. They had been living there long before the first Europeans arrived. Indians ate many different kinds of food. Those who lived on the plains of the Central United States ate the meat of buffalo. The Pueblos of the south-western part lived on corn, beans and squash. Indians in Alaska and Canada were fishers and hunted deer and other wild animals in the forests. Most Indians ate berries and collected nuts. Indians cooked their food in ovens that they made with hot stones. They preserved meat by smoking or drying it in the sun. Sun-dried = if you leave something in the sun to dry. Surroundings = the world around you. Tent = a sheet of cloth that is held down by poles and ropes; it is used for camping.