The Hidden Power

Domesticity,
National Allegory,
and Empire in
Helen Hunt Jackson’s Ramona

Thomas Henry Tibbles’s 1881 novel The Hidden Power exposed what the Indian reform movement of the 1880s termed the notorious “Indian Ring”; however, in some way the title referred less to the corrupt system of Indian Bureau agents, frontier merchants, and opportunist politicians who robbed tribal nations and fomented white settler fears than to the “sweet and quiet” yet quite effective domestic influence wielded by a white female missionary. Overwhelmed by “the beauty of her countenance, the earnestness of her manner,” the Missouri Indian Chief Red Iron discovers that the “weakness and gentleness of a delicate woman had conquered” his resistance to Christianity and civilization. Whereas punitive U.S. military campaigns and virtual imprisonment upon a reservation had failed to bring Red Iron and his tribal nation into the “pale of civilization,” Mrs. Parkman “wielded a power stronger than the dictates of councils, or officers, or commissioners” in domesticating the recalcitrant savage. Giving up his own volition as well as tribal sovereignty, Red Iron tells her, “I will do anything you say”; indeed, the narrative notes, “Nothing would give Red Iron greater pleasure than to obey her” (93). Succeeding where physical coercion and political pressure had failed, Mrs. Parkman’s domestic influence transformed Red Iron’s tribalized resistance to U.S. imperialism into the seduction of personal submission to nationalized domestication.

Delicately disciplined by Mrs. Parkman’s missionary manner, Red Iron instinctively casts off this anti-imperialist subjectivity for a suitably colo-
nized one in a chapter aptly titled “A Woman’s Conquest.” In desiring to submit, Red Iron embodied the Indian reform movement’s goals of domesticating rather than exterminating the Indians. Lobbying Congress, the president, and the public, Indian reform organizations orchestrated major media campaigns to effect drastic changes in federal policy towards tribal nations. Seeking to end U.S. policies they considered detrimental to the domestication of Indians, the Indian reform movement self-consciously modeled itself after abolitionism with its moral domestic appeal, even attracting former abolitionist activists such as Wendell Phillips and Lydia Maria Child. Like the abolitionist movement of the earlier part of the century, the Indian policy reformers sought to mobilize the public by presenting policy issues in novels, newspaper editorials, pamphlets, testimonials, speeches, conferences, and other media.

Making explicit the connections between U.S. colonial policy and domesticity, Indian reform novels figured the invisible moral influence of white women as the answer to the “Indian question.” If the mutual determination of the (white) national and the (nonwhite) foreign within Manifest Destiny had worked to replicate those registers of colonial representation, post-Reconstruction domestic discourses yielded an inclusive, liberal form of colonial difference. The white women of the Indian reform movement inhabited less a perfect duplication of the enabling public/domestic dichotomy than a subtle transformation of the relationship between social actors and the colonial state that formally delineated the gendered and racialized limits of social agency.

The discourse of separate spheres, as has often been pointed out, obscures the complicated and conflicted ways middle- and upper-class white women lived within the patriarchal operation of familial life and the masculinized public endeavors of political economy, particularly affairs of state. Rather than simply stabilize the ideology of separate spheres, the long history of these women’s engagement within social movements whose ultimate aim had been state intervention (“reform”) often resulted in a transformed relationship between the state, the groups imagined as beneficiaries of reform, and the domestic reformers, who themselves based their justification for moral interventions within the public sphere upon the very conceptual binary their actions were abridging. The nineteenth-century reform movements in which domesticity played a key role, and specifically the Indian reform movement of the 1880s and 1890s, can be seen as the double-dealing movement of modernity in which colonial
administration was imagined by reformers as a liberative project whereby uncivilized Indians could be redeemed through the civilizing domesticity of white women.

Indian reform novels challenge not only the binaristic configuration of separate spheres but also our understanding of the role of civil society in formulating the parameters of colonial administration. While the state may ultimately arbitrate the legal terms of colonial difference, implementation of such policies often depended upon the representational trends initiated within reform movements and civil society as a whole. Civil society composed and debated the direction of state policy, and, in particular, discourses and practices of domesticity often shaped the discursive parameters through which official policy, and the nature of colonial difference such policies assumed, could be imagined and practiced. In other words, the cultural practices of U.S. imperialism not only generated and sustained imperialist subjectivities and ideologies necessary to the expansion and maintenance of the U.S. empire but also coalesced the imperial nation’s civil society as the thought laboratory within which the collective logic of colonial rule could be formulated. The national debate over the “Indian question” during the 1880s served as such a site. The Indian reform movement coalesced the option of “domestication” by reorganizing Manifest Destiny’s logic of national exclusion into post-Reconstruction domesticity’s logic of national inclusion.

Indian reform novels such as *The Hidden Power* and especially Helen Hunt Jackson’s *Ramona* (1884) emphasize domesticity’s centrality to the production of late nineteenth-century U.S. imperial discourses and nation-building practices. Despite the Indian reform movement’s small number of activists, its largely New England–based constituency of well-placed, well-educated political, religious, and academic elites resulted in cultural and political influence far beyond the relatively small numbers of activists officially registered in the three main organizations (the Lake Mohonk Conference of the Friends of the Indian, the Indian Rights Association, and the Women’s National Indian Association). Within these groups, a dedicated base of upper-middle-class white women posited domestic influence as the gentle force that calmed a native resistance only tentatively contained upon reservations. The aesthetics of domestic influence in the public policy–oriented Indian reform novel thus emerged as a key paradigm for formulating federal policy towards tribal nations.

Challenging current scholarly notions of domestic discourses as simply engaged in the politics of anti-patriarchal resistance or simply disen-
gaged from the racialized practices of U.S. imperialism, Indian reform novels demonstrate the complex and multiple determinations of agency and subjectivity within the post-Reconstruction context. Intertwining the discourse of domesticity as configured within white nationalism with the question of the colonial management of nonwhite populations, Indian reform novels highlight the critical need to articulate two areas of scholarship—studies of domesticity and studies of imperialism—that have typically been theorized separately. Far from positing an unbridgeable chasm between the domestic and public spheres, these novels explicitly elaborated their synergy in imperial endeavors. If previous scholarly considerations have failed to take into account domesticity’s imperial entanglements, recent efforts by Amy Kaplan, Lora Romero, Karen Sánchez-Eppler, Laura Wexler, and others have provided a much-needed theoretical corrective for the study of U.S. imperial culture through their examinations of nineteenth-century housekeeping manuals, missionary tracts, and novels, domestic and otherwise. I wish to contribute to this ongoing conversation by focusing upon the role of domesticity in placing the civilizing aesthetics of domestic influence at the heart of U.S. imperial practices.

“Manifest Domesticity,” as Kaplan has usefully termed the mutually informing nexus of U.S. imperialist and domestic discourses, articulated the political economy of empire through the delimiting of national citizenship. Manifest Domesticity coordinated the imperial incorporation of foreign territories and peoples with the domestic whiteness that preserved, renewed, and guaranteed what Partha Chatterjee has termed the rule of colonial difference, or the preservation of an imagined, nigh-unbridgeable difference (often but not always or simply racialized) between the colonizer and the colonized. Each discourse justified the other. U.S. imperialism fueled domesticity’s expansive tendencies by annexing savage lands in dire need of civilization, while domesticity provided the racial syntax necessary for delineating the ever-expanding boundaries of the white nation. The imperial logic of U.S. territorial expansion entailed the convulsively violent annexation of not only foreign land but nonwhite peoples as well, introducing a threat to white national identity. Turning “an imperial nation into a home by producing and colonizing specters of the foreign that lurk inside and outside its ever shifting borders,” Manifest Domesticity (re) produced the white nation even as each territorial expansion challenged the nation’s whiteness (“Manifest Domesticity” 602). Keeping the nation white, Manifest Domesticity performed the cultural work of border patrol-
ling suited to U.S. imperialism during the era of Manifest Destiny, starting with the forced removal of tribal nations during the 1830s, through the annexation of the northern half of Mexico following the U.S.-Mexican War and until the Civil War.

As both anticipation and response to the unwanted presence of people of color in conquered territories, Manifest Domesticity fixed upon the deportation of nonwhite peoples from the national imaginary of home. Kaplan highlights this convergence of domestic and political discourses in her discussion of Sarah Josepha Hale’s campaign to make Thanksgiving a national holiday. As Kaplan relates, Hale’s proposal required state sanction; for Hale, this holiday would consolidate the white home and the white nation (one and the same project) through the expulsion of black people, free or slave, to Liberia. In this instance, President Lincoln’s proclamation establishing the holiday in 1863 did not precipitate the desired deportations. Nonetheless Hale’s campaign for Thanksgiving, like Harriet Beecher Stowe’s abolitionist novel *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, called for state action to fulfill domestically imagined projects of racial segregation discursively cast as projects of racial liberation (whether expressly white or black, as in the respective cases of Hale and Stowe). As Manifest Domesticity’s preferred method for achieving national (white) liberation, deportation would ensure that nonwhite peoples would remain foreign to citizenship even if not literally expelled from the nation. Conquered or exploited, African captives, Asian immigrants, Mexicans, and Indians remained outside the mutually constitutive, homely national discourses of domesticity and imperial law.

Yet limiting the cultural work of Manifest Domesticity to (re)creating U.S. white homes or to legitimating imperial conquest underplays the era’s continuous making of colonial difference (and hence colonial practice) through the terms of domesticity itself. Imagining the imperial nation as a home, and whiteness as the key determinant of domestic inclusion, Manifest Domesticity served as a key site within U.S. civil society wherein the practices of colonial administration were formulated and debated, thus generating potential solutions to the specific problems of colonial administration. Such an articulation, as suggested by Indian reform novels, requires rethinking the politics of domesticity within the gendered conditions of imperial agency and national subjectivity. As Louise Newman has documented, U.S. feminist movements in the nineteenth century must be understood within a global colonial context in which arguments for the civil rights of white women were formulated through a domestic understanding of colonial difference.
Helen Hunt Jackson was not active in suffragist or other women’s rights movements, yet nonetheless she helped to open new avenues of access to the public sphere. This irony reflects the common discursive construction of civilization that created such opportunities for elite white women at this historical moment. Framed as a moral issue for the nation, the Indian question enabled Jackson, among others, access to public social agency scarcely afforded to any woman. The very conditions of *Ramona*’s production were tied not only to Jackson’s understanding of her role within the Indian reform movement but also to her ability to negotiate entry into official colonial administration upon that basis. Articulating the question of domesticity through the national “problem” of civilizing Indians, *Ramona* uniquely encapsulates the racially differentiated construction of colonial agency through the gendered assumptions of civilizational development by which white women justified the expansion of their roles in public matters.

As Priscilla Wald has demonstrated, tribal nations had long posed a serious conceptual challenge to U.S. national identity as alternative communities that, even if construed as “domestic dependent nations,” nonetheless threatened to collapse the very construction of colonial difference that legitimated U.S. imperialism. Insofar as tribal nations such as the Cherokee appropriated and transformed the textual forms of U.S. nationhood (e.g., a constitution) in order to collectively assert tribal sovereignty in the face of U.S. imperialism, these acts of colonial mimicry disrupted popular discourses of Indian savagery and hence the very rationale for white dispossession of tribal nations. As Wald put it, tribal nations “represented the threat offered by the proximity of an alternative collectivity” (43). In the face of Indian resistance throughout the nineteenth century, the debate over the “Indian question” concerned the nature of colonial difference and the policies resulting from a particular understanding of that difference.

Federal policy towards tribal nations had historically combined strategies of treaty making, removal, military conquest, and assimilation (although not always equally, simultaneously, or consistently). By the late 1870s, only the latter two policies remained. Despite guerrilla resistance, most tribal nations had been militarily defeated by the 1880s. With no lands beyond the reach of white settlers to practice Manifest Domestici ty’s solution of Indian removal, the “Indian question” became a matter of “the stern alternative” of “extermination or civilization,” according to Secretary of the Interior Carl Schurz in 1881 (7). This conceptual binary reworked the hoary colonial trope of the vanishing Indian into the ques-
tion of just how best to accomplish the disappearance of Indians, who, despite all predictions of inevitable, natural demise, remained stubbornly persistent. The continued cultural viability of tribal nations within the reservation system begged the question of Indian disappearance. Even as U.S. policy towards tribal nations oscillated between de facto genocide and programmatic incorporation, the Indian reform movement coalesced during the late 1870s and early 1880s to influence public policy towards the latter position.

Insofar as the shared aim of making Indians vanish joined Indian haters and Indian reformers in their common vision of U.S. imperial rule over tribal nations, the different positions within the “Indian question” indexed distinct conceptions of Indian racialization. The apparent difference between widespread popular support for extermination and the domestication offered by the Indian reform movement lay largely in the specific approach to be used in colonial management. Advocates of extermination held that the nature of Indian difference was racially immutable and resolutely antagonistic. In contrast, Indian reform novels sought to effect changes in federal policy by displacing the popular notion of the inhuman savage with the anthropological concept of the tractable primitive. Opposing those who would kill Indians upon the basis of absolute racial difference, Indian policy reformers thus characterized the nature of colonial difference as developmentally cultural, giving the more advanced white race the moral duty to educate primitive Indians into civilization.

However, a key conceptual problem for the Indian reform movement lay in the disjuncture between the racialized knowledge being produced by key segments of civil society about the cultural superiority of the white race and the actual state practice of acknowledging and fulfilling treaty obligations (even if more honored in the breach than in the observance). Manifest domesticity generated the racial differences that consolidated “the national” and “the foreign,” yet tribal nations presented the specter of nonwhite nations that in certain key respects held, and demanded, equal footing in treaties with the allegedly superior white nation. The racially foreign comprised a nonwhite nationality, thereby emphasizing the modern, state-to-state nature of the complex relationship between the United States and tribal nations.

In effect, the Indian policy reformers sought to transform the political relationship between the United States and tribal nations into the evolutionary relationship between civilized nations and primitive races by positing Indians as culturally less advanced peoples who should be educated
into modernity rather than as modern rivals whose national sovereignty posed a significant conceptual threat to U.S. nationalism. As the burden of white folks and the measure of its civilization, the moral imperative of domesticating the Indian united the homework of the domestic sphere with the empire building of the public sphere in making U.S. citizens out of primitive savages. The reformers’ emphasis upon assimilation transformed Manifest Domesticity’s white nationalism to suit the new problems of colonial management in the post-Reconstruction era of national consolidation. In advocating assimilation over genocide or removal, Indian reform novels chart the transformation of domesticity-influenced colonial difference from the abolitionist emphasis upon the expulsion of racial difference during the 1850s to the Indian reform movement’s advocacy of incorporation during the 1880s.

Nowhere is this revised imperialist cultural work of domesticity more suggestively apparent than in Helen Hunt Jackson’s 1884 historical romance *Ramona*, the best known of the Indian reform novels and a steady best-seller for over five decades. Figuring the domestication of Indians as the homework of white women, Jackson would specifically employ the narrative strategies of domestic novels to imagine the possibility of civilizing Indians into a harmonious multiracial nation. In the “privilidged character” of Aunt Ri, Jackson depicts a white woman’s housework as performing the crucial domestic task of nation building (412). Aunt Ri, a white Southerner who overcomes her prejudices against Indians, serves as Jackson’s example of racial tolerance. A rag carpet of what Aunt Ri calls the “hit-er-miss” pattern emerges as the novel’s metaphor for a reformed United States that made no invidious distinctions among its inhabitants on account of race. In this pattern, there are “no set stripes or regular alternation of colors, but ball after ball of the indiscriminately mixed tints, woven back and forth, on a warp of a single color” (410). Claiming she had never seen a “hit-er-miss” pattern “thet wa’n’t pooty,” Aunt Ri delights “in the constant variety in it, the unexpectedly harmonious blending of the colors” (410). The cultural work of integrating all citizens, actual or potential, regardless of race, appears as the task and result of white domesticity’s housework. Indeed, the intentionality of invidiously racialized projects can only produce results that displease. According to Aunt Ri, those who “hed ’em planned aout” from “ther warp” to “ther stripes” were always “orful diserpynted when they cum ter see ’t done” (410).

Quite unlike Henry James’s cultured refusal of dialect as a literary strategy, Jackson used the Tennessee “Pike” dialect to mark Aunt Ri’s
distance from the social norms of the Eastern reformist elite as well as from those of the Southern belle of the former plantation class. By having the working-class Southerner Aunt Ri articulate the principles of a racially democratic project of nation building, Jackson ties the Reconstruction-era project of incorporating the freedmen into the nation as citizens with the post-Reconstruction project of domesticating Indians into U.S. citizenship. Yet the coalescing of Jim Crow discourses of violent black male sexuality specifically precluded white women from exercising a domesticating influence that would require a close proximity to such imagined dangers. In contrast, the Indian captivity narrative, which emphasized the dangerous potential for the interracial rape of white women by Indian men, had ceased to invoke a generalized sense of racial terror at a time when tribal nations had been largely defeated and Indians were mostly encountered in dime novels or ethnographies. Domestication by white women could thus work in the latter case, but not the former. Avoiding such imagined racial violence, the Indian reform project of civilizing savages could imaginatively unite Northern and Southern white women for the imperial task of nation building after the unsisterly divisions of the Civil War and Reconstruction.

Like Aunt Ri’s weaving, Jackson’s writing attempted to imagine the domestic incorporation of Indians as citizens even as that incorporation united North and South in the nation’s imperial mission. In this sense, *Ramona* reorients the nation-building dynamics of the romance of reunion. Rather than explicitly highlight the reunification of North and South, the novel screens the drama of racial equality that so plagued Reconstruction upon the picturesque love story between the Californiana mestiza Ramona and the Diegueño Indian Alessandro Assis. Free of the taint of miscegenation (because already performed in the Mexican past), this transposition serves to critique a biologically racialized order that would not assimilate Indians and mixed bloods who have already internalized the rational precepts of civilization, and who have (even if only by necessity) renounced tribal relations. In the context of the mid-1880s, *Ramona* offered a liberal alternative to Jim Crow segregation and to the outright genocide of Indians. The assimilationist aesthetics of post-Reconstruction domesticity imagined diversity in union, and harmony in diversity.16

If within the masculinist discourse of U.S. imperialism, the Indians were destined to disappear before white civilization in a literal sense, then, within the sentimental discourse of domesticity, the savages were to disappear figuratively as the objects of white women’s civilizing activities.
This transformation was formulated in explicit relation to a change in the legal status of Indians. Through the alchemy of domestic influence, racial tutelage would transmute lesser breeds without the law into citizens subject to nation’s law. The education of Indians into civilization necessarily entailed the normalization of their status vis-à-vis the federal government. Whereas extermination would ensure that no Indian would ever become a citizen, domestication made that eventuality the measure of the nation’s civilization itself. Indian reform novels aligned domestication and emergent anthropological theories of civilization by linking U.S. law, private property, and proper gender relations over and against the lawlessness of the uncivilized, undifferentiated, but sovereign tribes.

Basing their arguments upon recently popularized anthropological theories of the evolutionary development of human culture through the universal stages of savagery, barbarism, and civilization, Indian policy reformers claimed that savage and barbarous Indians were indeed capable of achieving civilization with the proper guidance from the already civilized white races. The racialized pedagogical disciplining of Indian minds would replace the fatal punishment of Indian bodies. In contrast to extermination, domestication would allow white recognition of Indian humanity by remapping a static hierarchy of racial difference onto a flexible historical trajectory of cultural development. The reformers sought to reform not only U.S. Indian policy but Indians themselves by reinscribing colonial difference not (strictly) as a matter of race, but as a question of culture. Making the question of colonial difference a matter of degree rather than of kind, this representational shift relied upon domestic influence both for its popular dissemination as discursive knowledge constructing its theoretical object (“the Indian”) and for its perceived efficacy as a colonial policy to manage said object. In wishing to emphasize benevolent assimilation over genocidal conquest, the reformers repudiated popular imperial discourses of irredeemable, inhuman Indian savagery. They instead advocated the paternalistic instruction of the now dependent, child-like, and primitive Indians in a bid to demonstrate that the policy of racial tutelage would better reflect the civilized’s collective fitness for colonial rule than would outright genocide.

In essence, the domestic influence of Indian reform novels would work to make Indians vanish by figuring them as colonial mimics. What Homi Bhabha terms the discourse of colonial mimicry imagined the elimination of colonial difference, here taken as a developmental cultural difference existing prior to and outside of the colonial relationship, as the Enlighten-
ment-inspired goal of colonial management. Understood not as the functioning of colonial power/knowledge networks but as the rationale for the colonial situation itself, colonial mimicry entailed the elimination of the Other's cultural difference through racial tutelage. The Indian reform movement advocated Indian assimilation into the nation rather than their expulsion (figuratively or literally) from it, thus unambiguously raising the question of colonial governance of nonwhite peoples in the U.S. context. Partha Chatterjee outlines the three possibilities for colonial governance arising from Enlightenment narratives:

One is that [the universality of the modern institutions of self-government] must apply in principle to all societies irrespective of historical or cultural specificities. The second is that the principle is inescapably tied to the specific history and culture of Western societies and cannot be exported elsewhere; this implies a rejection of the universality of the principle. The third is that the historical and cultural differences, although an impediment in the beginning, can be eventually overcome by a suitable process of training and education. The third position, therefore, while admitting the objection raised by the second, nevertheless seeks to restore the universality of the principle. (18)

Chatterjee's characterization of the colonial predicament concerning the universality of liberal technologies of governance and Bhabha's formulation of colonial mimicry intersect in the following question: what is the implied relationship between the mode of colonial governance vis-à-vis modern disciplinary technologies of liberalism and the shape of the civil society that government must rule? In other words, what necessary correspondence, if any, must there be between culture and government? In the context of the late nineteenth-century U.S. colonial situation, the discourse of civilization articulated these fundamental linkages. Otherwise known as la mision civilatrice, benevolent assimilation, or the white man's burden, the third proposition offered perhaps the greatest flexibility in implementing the colonial state's regimes of disciplinary power to distinguish colonizer from colonized in that the rule of colonial difference could be explicitly articulated through Enlightenment discourses of nationalist liberalism. Even as the (male) populations of the colonial metropoles were increasingly interpolated as citizen-subjects through state disciplinary regimes and liberal discourses throughout the nineteenth century, the modern state could construct colonial difference
through the same liberal practices that held out the promise of full social agency (i.e., citizenship) rather than exclude on the basis of immutable racial difference. The project of normalizing the status of “natives” could then be relegated to an always-to-be-completed status even while allowing incremental changes.\textsuperscript{20}

As a key discursive site for the Indian reform movement, the Indian reform novel, \textit{Ramona} in particular, coordinated the proliferating array of residual and emergent colonial representational practices (such as the travel narrative, the colonial administrative report, the missionary tract, the ethnographic analysis, the vanishing native story) within a moralistic narrative. Indian reform models made coherent the myriad modes of narrating colonial difference, or, in different terms, the common sense of U.S. imperialist subjectivities, discourses, and practices, to a white middle-class reading public even while reconfiguring the possibilities of social agency for white women.

\section*{The Aesthetics of Reform}

Reviewing \textit{Ramona} in the September 1886 issue of the \textit{North American Review}, former Reconstruction-era judge and prominent Northern liberal Albion Tourgée praised Jackson’s historical romance as “unquestionably the best novel yet produced by an American woman” (246). The author of two novels—\textit{A Fool’s Errand} (1879) and \textit{Bricks Without Straw} (1880)—critical of Northern acquiescence to Southern white supremacy, Tourgée defended Jackson’s novel from imagined realist critics who would “sneeringly” object to this historical romance as a “novel with a purpose” (251). Unlike realist narratives that incessantly belabored the self-reflexive process of artistic creation, the subject of Tourgée’s book review betrayed “no trace of effort” in its “unconscious vigor.” In contrast to the obsessively self-conscious assertion of artistic agency within realist novel, \textit{Ramona} was “so thoroughly done that the hand of the artist is never seen in it” (246). Insofar as the art of \textit{Ramona} appeared to be “artless” in the realist sense, Tourgée characterized the novel less as the intentional product of Jackson’s literary labor than as the “harmonious” expression of an instinc-
tual genius of “sympathy.” Linking domesticity to writing, Jackson seemed to have “instinctively” written the novel “with that unconscious art which characterizes true genius.” Tourgée found “a wondrous glow of perfect knowledge” surrounded the text’s “clearness of conception, depth of col-
pering, purity of tone, individuality and pleasing contrast of characters, and intensity of emotion.” Jackson’s “intimate acquaintance and perfect sympathy for the life she describes” almost bridged the gap between fact and fiction: “Scenes, incidents, characters—all reveal the fact that the author has not only an intellectual appreciation of their existence, but that knowledge which comes from an observation so close and sympathetic as to amount almost to experience” (251). Far from practicing art for art’s sake, Jackson (best known as the poet “H.H.” to the reading public) had harnessed this pleasing literary aestheticism to delineating social relations long erased in the U.S. popular imagination.

Depicting the “conflict of jarring civilizations,” Ramona made visible to Tourgée the historical connections that had gone completely unexamined in previous literary representations of the “greedy, glittering fact” known as California (248). “[N]ot altogether a tale of our California,” Ramona brought to life the California erased by literary representations of the Golden State as “the gold-digger’s paradise, the adventurer’s Eden, the speculator’s El Dorado” (247). In telling the story of those displaced economically and literarily by “this modern miracle we call California,” this novel recallead for Tourgée “the civilization of New Spain” and its sad ruins still visible as “the Indian’s lost inheritance and the Spaniard’s desolated home” (249). If the history of the Californios and the indigenous peoples had been forgotten by “a fresher and stronger social, political, and religious development” of a “grasping, arrogant, self-worshipping multitude” that trampled “ruthlessly, because unconsciously” upon these “two decaying civilizations,” then Ramona would “awaken thought on the part of her countrymen” by refocusing national attention upon “the Indian question” as a moral and political problem for the nation (248; 247; 253).

Jackson herself desired that her audience fall under the artless domestic influence of Ramona. In particular, she wanted readers to consider the national failure to enact what historian Frederick Hoxie has called a final promise to the Indians: assimilation.21 Her previous effort in this vein, the factual exposé A Century of Dishonor, had not generated enough political momentum to push reform measures through Congress. A product of long hours spent pouring over government archives, this 1881 treatise catalogued the U.S. government’s flagrant violation of treaties as well as numerous examples of atrocities committed by whites upon Indians. Hoping to sway Congress, Jackson sent every senator and representative a copy of A Century of Dishonor embossed with a quotation from Benjamin Franklin upon the blood-red cover: “Look upon your hands! They are stained with the blood of your relations” (qtd. in Mathes 36).
But Jackson found that the moral outrage of history had no efficacy in swaying a public indifferent to the cause of justice for a despised racial community. *A Century of Dishonor,* wrote Jackson in 1885, "failed to realize my hopes. I fear few have read it, except those that did not need to" (*Letters* 340). Jackson attributed the treatise’s failure to produce meaningful public support for reform to a disjunction between the nation’s morals and the nation’s reading habits. The public read for personal pleasure, not for moral enlightenment. Convinced that “people will read a novel when they will not read serious books,” Jackson sought with the historical romance *Ramona* to reach the mass market of leisure readers who had ignored the elaborate legal arguments and the impassioned pleas for justice that characterized *A Century of Dishonor* (*Letters* 298). Jackson would write *Ramona* as a fictional historical romance that would teach even as it delighted: “What I wanted to do, was to draw a picture so winning and alluring in the beginning of the story, that the reader would become thoroughly interested in the characters before he dreamed of what was before him:—and would have swallowed a big dose of information on the Indian Question, without knowing it” (*Letters* 337). Representing “the consummate triumph of art” in *Ramona,* the Señora Moreno’s invisible yet complete domestic rule of the Moreno household figures what Jackson hoped would be the novel’s effectiveness in bringing about Indian policy reform: “To attain one’s end in this way is the consummate triumph of art. Never to appear as a factor in the situation; to be able to wield other men, as instruments, with the same direct and implicit response to will that one gets from a hand or a foot,—this is to triumph, indeed: to be as nearly controller and conqueror of Fates as fate permits” (12).

*Ramona* relates the trials and tribulations of the mestiza title character in Reconstruction-era Southern California. Raised as the stepdaughter of the Morenos, a wealthy Californio ranchero family, Ramona Ortega is kept ignorant of her mixed-blood parentage by the strict widow Señora Moreno, whose only son, Felipe, secretly loves the teenaged ward. Ramona only learns of her Indian mother when she falls in love with Alessandro Assis, a Diegueño Indian from the ranchería of Temecula. Ramona and Alessandro elope after meeting with Señora Moreno’s disapproval, and, during their married life in various Indian villages, Ramona readily adjusts to the life she always felt she should have had as an Indian woman. Yet white squatters and settlers continually drive Alessandro and Ramona off traditionally Indian lands. With no recourse to U.S. law, the couple must constantly migrate to evermore marginal lands to escape white persecution. Even a remote mountainside refuge proves inadequate to shut out
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tragedy brought about by racial injustice. Alessandro and Ramona’s first child dies of grossly negligent medical care by an Indian Agency doctor, and Alessandro himself is unjustly shot as a horse thief, leaving the grieving Ramona and their second child in the care of Felipe. Disgusted by thieving gringos, Felipe removes to Mexico, taking the long-suffering Ramona along as his bride and adopting her daughter as his own.

While clearly the outcome of *Ramona* involves not the national incorporation of Indians but rather their expulsion from national space, Jackson hoped that readers would interpret this conclusion as a moral wrong to be righted, as an outrage committed “In the Name of the Law” (her first and preferred title for the narrative), which demonstrated the need to reform said law (*Letters* 307). For Jackson, generating public goodwill for Indians against popular discourses of inhuman, indelible Indian savagery required repudiating older narrative forms that still shaped the U.S. imaginary. Jackson recalled how her own imaginings of Indians had been informed by sensationalist accounts of white homes under savage siege: “I grew up with my sole idea of the Indian derived from the account of Massacres. It was one of childish terrors that Indians would come in the night, & kill us” (*Letters* 330). While the yet more dreadful captivity narrative lurked behind fears of being murdered by Indians, Jackson implicitly recognized that the most popular U.S. discourses about Indians—the massacre and captivity narratives—advocated Indian extermination by propagating a sense of inhuman red deviltry, of absolute racial (and hence moral) difference.

Turning to the domestic therapy that would restore the moral sense of the body politic, Jackson wrote about her intentions for *Ramona* in an 1885 letter: “In my *Century of Dishonor* I tried to attack people’s consciences directly, and they would not listen. Now I have sugared the pill, and it remains to be seen if it will go down” (*Letters* 341). Casting fiction writing as home remedy, Jackson hoped to teach the reading public what Aunt Ri learns about Indian humanity during the course of the narrative. After meeting Ramona and Alessandro, she discovers how mistaken her knowledge about Indians, gathered primarily “from newspapers, and from a book or two of narratives of massacres,” really is. Seeing firsthand how much the Indian family is like her own, Aunt Ri admits, “I’ve got a lesson’n the subjeck uv Injuns” (335). Domestic influence would lead readers to join Aunt Ri in repudiating widespread discourses of Indian deviltry and instead acknowledge Indians as fellow human beings in a less civilized but amicable and tractable state.

In this sense, the narrative strategy of Indian reform novels was also
the political strategy of the Indian reform movement. Only appearing artless, this artful domestic influence formed the central representational strategy for those involved in righting the nation’s racial wrongs during the nineteenth century. Abolitionists and their successors in Indian reform drew upon the nation’s tradition of liberal dissent generally and particularly upon the moral suasion of women’s domestic sensibilities in mobilizing citizens to end inhumane practices against wronged racial groups. Indian reform movement writers followed their abolitionist precursors in employing indirect moral influence to generate public backing for their reforms. Casting Indians and Africans as the saintly victims of rapacious, corrupt, and decidedly un-Christian whites, whether pre-Emancipation plantation owners and overseers or post-Reconstruction Indian agents and settlers, Ramona and its abolitionist precursor, Stowe’s Uncle Tom’s Cabin, would exercise domestic influence hidden in narrative form to achieve their ends.

“If I could write a story that would do for the Indian a thousandth part what Uncle Tom’s Cabin did for the Negro, I would be thankful for the rest of my life,” Jackson wrote to the editor of the Atlantic Monthly in May 1883 (Letters 258). In the spirit of Stowe, Jackson would start writing Ramona seven months later in a bid to win public support for the small but burgeoning Indian reform movement of which she had been an early proponent. In wishing to emulate the success of Stowe’s novel in changing the terms of the national discussion, Jackson acknowledged the power of women’s domestic influence within the public sphere for outlining the moral issues facing the nation and for mobilizing the nation to redress racial injustice. If the Indians were not slaves in the way the freedmen had been, nonetheless the imperative to redress this “stain of a century of dishonor” upon the national consciousness in its dealings with the tribal nations would be even greater since the U.S. government itself had been directly responsible for what appeared to be the Indians’ imminent extinction (Century of Dishonor 31). Casting the Indian reform movement as the successor of the abolitionist movement, Jackson would employ the same moral power of domestic influence in Ramona that Stowe had so strategically drawn upon for Uncle Tom’s Cabin.22

Both novels worked to create moral outrage at the inhumane treatment of human beings unjustly reduced legally to something other than human. Like the abolitionist movement before the Civil War, the Indian reform movement based its moral appeal upon having the fundamental humanity of a racialized group, unjustly reviled nationwide, acknowledged
through governmental intervention. Legislation to protect the civil rights of these groups precisely indicated the nation’s commitment to recognizing that humanity. Seeking in this way to alleviate the unjust sufferings of an aggrieved racial Other, Stowe and Jackson wrote their respective novels to move the nation into sympathetic recognition of enslaved Africans and defeated Indians as part of humanity, a sentiment they hoped would translate into the full recognition of the African and the Indian as persons before the law. Reform might ultimately be a moral imperative and not a political one, yet the morality of the domestic sphere could only be enacted in the public sphere.

As the paramount goal of abolitionists and Indian policy reformers, the recognition and protection of the legal personhood of the African or the Indian meant no less than the extension of American freedom to those explicitly not free. Indians might not be slaves, but, like slaves before Emancipation, had no standing before the law as legal “persons.” Whereas slaves, as property, had no personhood per se in a pre-Emancipation court of law, Indians, as members of “domestic dependent nations” set apart from the United States, could not seek the protection of the federal courts. Legally recognized as a person, the African could be protected from enslavement. Likewise, the Indian, while not enslaved as chattel, could be freed from the tyranny of the reservation system, which, in Jackson’s opinion, left the Indian “far worse off than the average slave ever was” despite being “a far nobler creature” (Letters 135).23 The Civil War and Reconstruction had seen the formal goals of the abolitionists—emancipation and civil rights for African Americans stemming from the recognition of legal personhood—largely accomplished, even if by the 1880s those results were being rendered increasingly tenuous with the cultural and legal consolidation of Jim Crow.

In contrast, the “Indian question,” while even older than the “Negro question,” had continued to vex the nation. Manifest Destiny had precipitated open warfare between various tribal nations and the U.S. government, culminating in the so-called Indian Wars in the two decades following the Civil War. During Reconstruction and afterwards, tribal nations posed serious obstacles to settlement and commercial development of the intermountain West. The reformers’ appeal for the nation to recognize the humanity of Indians had been greatly complicated by the intense military conflict over the resources of land and cultural survival, which during the decades of westward expansion had produced what Herman Melville, in his novel The Confidence-Man, termed “the metaphysics
of Indian-hating” as a national structure of feeling (192). Even as *Ramona* was being serialized in the *Christian Union* beginning in May 1884, the U.S. military waged active campaigns against the Chiricahua Apache band lead by Geronimo. But as the tribal nations approached military defeat, reformers maintained that the federal government had largely suspended its outright killing of Indians with a slower but equally effective method of insuring their extinction: the reservation system. Forced into a humiliating dependency upon the very government they had resisted for so long, tribal nations had been settled upon agriculturally marginal lands and placed into the tenacious grip of unscrupulous Indian agents who grew rich siphoning off treaty-negotiated allotments of government goods. Government statistics that recorded the steady decline of reservation populations only confirmed this narrative of the vanishing Indian.24

During the military conflict between the United States and the tribal nations of the Great Plains and the Southwest throughout the 1870s, the “Indian question” seemed to be largely the frontier concern of Westerners who imagined themselves in imminent danger of Indian attack. Not until the well-publicized flight and trial of the Ponca Nation did the legal relationship between the tribal nations and the federal government come under sustained press scrutiny. The Ponca, ever on peaceful terms with whites, had been forcibly driven from their treaty reservation on tribal homelands in northern Nebraska to marginal lands in Indian Territory by a federal bureaucratic error that had assigned their reservation lands in a subsequent treaty to their old enemy the Sioux. One-third of the tribal nation had died during and after the removal, and, upon the deaths of all but one of his children, Ponca Chief Standing Bear decided to return with a small band of followers to the tribal homelands. While staying with the closely related Omaha nation, Standing Bear and the other Ponca were arrested by U.S. Army Brigadier General George Crook for leaving the Indian Territory reservation without federal permission.

The 1879 decision of U.S. federal judge Elmer S. Dundy in the *Standing Bear v. Crook* case established a new precedent in interpreting the Indian as subject to the jurisdiction of the U.S. legal system, and thus ushered in a new era of the extension of the nation’s power over the tribal nations. Dundy ruled that Standing Bear and his fellow Ponca prisoners were entitled to the issuance of writs of habeas corpus, and thus release from military custody. The decision hinged upon the key legal finding of the case: “That an Indian is a Person within the meaning of the laws of the United States” (Tibbles, *Standing Bear* 110). Dundy concluded that
the meaning of “person” in the wording of U.S. statutes was not reducible to “citizen,” but rather included any human being. Granting that “even an Indian” landed in the latter, more expansive definition of “person,” Dundy found that Indians subsequently had the right of due process of law under the Fourteenth Amendment (100). Introducing this finding in his opinion, Dundy wrote that no case had ever “appealed so strongly to my sympathy as the one now under consideration.” He found the plight of Standing Bear and the Ponca in their suit for a writ of habeas corpus to present the pathetic spectacle of “the remnants of a once numerous and powerful, now weak, insignificant, unlettered and generally despised race” against the might of “the most powerful, most enlightened, and most christianized nations of modern times” (95).

The circumstances of the Ponca flight elicited the most heartfelt sentiment, according to journalist (and later novelist) Thomas Henry Tibbles. Feelings sympathetic to the Ponca ran so high, in Dundy’s opinion, that “if the strongest possible sympathy could give the relators title to freedom, they would have been restored to liberty the moment the arguments in their behalf had been closed” (Standing Bear 96). But in deciding in favor of Standing Bear and the twenty-five other Ponca prisoners, Dundy based his legal opinion on “the principles of law,” which necessarily superseded sentiment: “In a country where liberty is regulated by law, something more satisfactory and enduring than mere sympathy must furnish and constitute the basis of juridical action” (96). Apparently opposing stolid masculine rationality to transitory feminine emotion, this ruling implied a negative principle for anchoring the legal logic of the case in what was not obvious. If basing the decision upon sympathy would make the operation of the law seemingly transparent, then Dundy would assert the otherwise invisible principles upon which the “title to freedom” had its basis. The very exercise of the law’s power ensured its own invisibility so as to render necessary making visible the principles of its otherwise invisible operation; in adjudicating the lopsided conflict in favor of “this wasted race,” the federal legal system proved its ability to disappear as a nationalist expression of power through its apparent ability to adjudicate impartially social conflicts among those subjected to the nation’s power (95). In having been granted the writ of habeas corpus, the Ponca appeared to have triumphed in the legal arena over the military force that could surely defeat the tribal nation on the battlefield.

Upon the release of Standing Bear and his followers from military custody, Tibbles, the editor of the Omaha Daily Herald, arranged for
Standing Bear to give lectures upon the Eastern seaboard. Lending his credentials as a veteran abolitionist, Wendell Phillips wrote the dedication to Tibbles’s account of the Ponca affair. For the nascent Indian reform movement, the outcome of the court case generated by the military’s detention of the Ponca went far beyond the immediate release of a small number of Indian individuals. The decision promised a revolutionary transformation of what the Indian reform movement considered as the anomalous relationship between the tribal nations and the federal government.

Attending Standing Bear’s talk in Boston in 1879 induced Jackson to become one of the nation’s most outspoken advocates for Indian policy reform. Jackson hoped that the Ponca case would establish the legal precedent to “do for the Indian race precisely what the Emancipation act did for the negro” (Letters 36). Having the legal personhood of the Indian recognized would be the first, necessary step towards other, even more important legal developments. Just as Emancipation had not only freed the enslaved but had also initiated a long train of legislation to protect the freedmen’s freedom in the form of civil rights statutes and constitutional amendments, the Standing Bear v. Crook decision signaled to the Indian reform movement the possibility of employing appeals to moral judgment in mustering the political will to destroy tribal sovereignty and to transform the savage without the law into a U.S. citizen.

The heart of the problem for the Indian reform movement was the federal government’s seemingly inexplicable insistence upon treating tribes as nations. For the Indian policy reformers, corrupt and despotic Indian agents were ultimately more the effect than the cause of the decline in Indian populations. The reservation system and its incorrigible administration merely followed as the inevitable result of the federal recognition of tribal sovereignty. While treaty making with the tribes had been suspended by Congress in 1871, the legislation did not alter the obligations of the federal government to observe treaties ratified prior to the ban. Henry S. Pancoast, a Philadelphia attorney and a founding organizer of the Indian Rights Association, wrote in his 1884 treatise The Indian Before the Law that the relative military and social weakness of the early republic made the Indian tribes’ “independent nationality” an incontestable “fact, and its recognition a necessity” (160). By the 1880s, with the relative power of the United States and the tribes reversed, “this treatment of Indian tribes as separate nations” became “the fundamental error in our policy” (160). Now “a fiction and an absurdity,” tribal sovereignty prevented the civilized “absorption of the Indian” into the nation as citizens, according to Pan-
coast: “Just so long as these Indians are alienated by their political inde-
pendence, so long will they be comparatively impervious to the refining
and elevating influence of civilization. Just so long as they are left without
the developing and educating restraint and protection of civilized law, so
long will they be lawless” (161). Separated from civilization by law yet not
governed by it, Indians were driving themselves extinct because the fed-
eral government falsely considered the tribes to hold equal national status
with the United States itself.

The 1884 U.S. Supreme Court case of *Elk v. Wilkins* further highlight-
ed the complex legal debate over the sovereignty of tribal nations and the
status of an individual Indian’s civilized state upon nationality. This ruling
upheld a Federal District Court’s finding that the plaintiff, John Elk, an
Indian born in tribal relations but living in Omaha, Nebraska, apart from
his tribal nation, was not a citizen of the United States under the terms of
the Fourteenth Amendment and therefore not entitled to the franchise.
Associate Justice Horace Gray wrote in the Court’s majority opinion that

> Indians born within the territorial limits of the United States, members
> of, and owing immediate allegiance to, or of the Indian tribes (an alien,
> though dependent power), although in a geographical sense born in the
> United States, are no more “born in the United States and subject to the
> jurisdiction thereof,” within the meaning of the first section of the Four-
> teenth Amendment, than the children of subject of any foreign government
> born within the domain of that government, or the children born within the
> United States, of ambassadors or other public ministries of foreign nations.
> (112 U.S. 94)

The Court’s majority upheld the legal status of tribal nations as distinct
political communities whose sovereignty highlighted the rhetorical basis
of U.S. national sovereignty as well. Civilized Indians “born in tribal rela-
tions” could not exchange tribal citizenship for U.S. citizenship “at their
own will, without the action or assent of the United States” as manifested
through treaties or congressional legislation (112 U.S. 94). In other words,
both nations had to consent to alter the citizenship status of anyone sub-
ject to one national jurisdiction who wished to become subject to another.

If in upholding tribal sovereignty the Supreme Court’s majority had
to emphasize the consensually dependent nature of the political relation-
ship between the United States and the tribal nations, Associate Jus-
tice John Marshall Harlan maintained in his dissent that the majority’s
stance depended upon what he considered as the fictional equality of tribal nations with the United States. Citing the Marshall court’s opinion in Cherokee Nation v. State of Georgia that tribal nations’ very “state of pupilage” rendered illusional any notion of consensual relations, Harlan opined that the Civil Rights Act of 1866, confirmed and strengthened by the Fourteenth Amendment, rendered any Indian born within U.S. borders who chose “civilization” over tribal relations a U.S. citizen. The fiction of tribal sovereignty held only as long as an Indian chose to remain in tribal relations. In other words, savage (i.e., kinship) nationality was not equivalent to civilized (territorial) nationality. Savage modes of government applied only to savages, Harlan suggested, while civilized government pertained to the civilized. In Harlan’s view, the majority’s insistence upon the equivalence of savage nationality and U.S. nationality created “a despised and rejected class of persons, with no nationality whatever; who, born in our territory, owing no allegiance to any foreign power, and subject, as residents of the States, to all the burdens of government, are yet not members of any political community nor entitled to any of the rights, privileges, or immunities of citizens of the United States” (112 U.S. 94). For the ex-slaveholder Harlan, the majority’s opinion implied that detribalized Indians would have no more rights than free blacks held before Emancipation. Similarly, Indian policy reformers emphasized how rulings such as Elk v. Wilkins only emphasized the contradictory and counterproductive legal position that detribalized Indians occupied before U.S. law, while the bastion of savagery itself, the tribal nation, received protective encouragement under the same law. Adopting the tenets of civilization was apparently insufficient to transform an Indian into a U.S. citizen. Indian policy reformers realized that the tribal nations would either have to be acknowledged as conceptually equal with the United States (the understanding that had resulted in the reservation system), or would have to be abolished to enable the true domestication of Indians. Maintaining that tribal sovereignty neither allowed Indians redress through the U.S. courts nor encouraged their entry into civilization, the Indian reform movement made the abolition of tribal sovereignty a key goal.

**Ramona and Indian Domestication**

To save the Indians from themselves meant promoting the national will to ensure their domestication, a project Jackson would undertake in *Ramona*—
Perhaps for this reason Jackson chose to write about the plight of the so-called Mission Indians of Southern California, who had never ascended to the status of nation, or rather had never been recognized by the U.S. government in treaties as such. Even as the artful aesthetics of domestic influence worked to convince citizens to support Indian reform measures, the narrative would construct the Indian as, if not quite yet part of the nation, capable of civilization through a carefully supervised racial tutelage. Unlike Manifest Domesticity, which operated upon the principle of the deportation of freed slaves in the works of Stowe, Jackson thought that racial tutelage through domestic influence could prepare Indians for the ultimate recognition and protection of their title to freedom: U.S. citizenship. Significantly, scientific theories of civilizational development that emerged during the three decades between *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* and *Ramona* significantly altered the terms upon which racial reform operated. Whereas Stowe drew heavily from a racial romanticism whose basis for action was the Christian brotherhood of all peoples, Jackson’s reformist impulses, although still infected by Christianity, were fundamentally informed by Darwinian and post-Darwinian anthropology.

In her recourse to the terms “savagery” and “civilization,” Jackson invoked the teleological scheme of cultural history propounded by Lewis Henry Morgan, widely credited as the founder of the scientific discipline of anthropology in the United States. Morgan’s work on the evolutionary development of civilization emerged as the leading account of colonial difference in the fledgling field of anthropology, elaborated in a series of studies from the 1851 *League of the Iroquois* through the 1879 *Houses and House-life of the American Aborigines*. In these works, Morgan systematically developed a conceptual framework for the colonial management of indigenes in which domesticity figured prominently. In his most influential work, *Ancient Society* (1877), Morgan elaborated a universal developmental trajectory of human culture from the lowest stages of savagery through the middle stages of barbarism to the highest stages of civilization, stages that existed not only historically in sequence for any given human community but also coexisted simultaneously in the present between different cultural groups. Morgan’s narrative of civilization identified Aryan civilization, as manifested in European nations and especially the United States, as the apex of cultural development, whereas tribal societies in Africa, Australia, and the Americas generally occupied the more developmentally primitive stages of savagery or barbarism.

Refuting polygenecist accounts of humanity’s origins, Morgan posited
all races as belonging to the same species but historically developing at different rates along the scale of increasing culture. Cultural differences, in other words, were figured as temporal differences on a single, universal scale. The present-day savage was what the civilized had been centuries or millennia ago. At once a cultural ancestor of the currently civilized and a living cultural fossil, Indians had qualitatively less culture than whites. Guided by the civilized white race, Indians only needed to advance through the developmental stages of culture in order to achieve civilization. Cultural advancement consisted of two main categories. Invention described the contingent technological advancements that allowed humanity to improve the conditions of subsistence through the manufacture of weaponry, pottery, and textiles, the discovery of fire, the cultivation of plants, and the domestication of herd animals. The development of inventions was historical, contingent; progress varied according to the material conditions available to a specific group at any particular time.

In the second category lay the true seeds of culture whose development were teleological and constant: the institutions of family, government, and property. In contrast, the development of institutions invariably followed the same inevitable path of development despite material differences between peoples. Only developmental differences explained the myriad manifestations of these institutions across the world’s peoples. The most important institutional developments were those stemming from the sexual division of labor. Morgan’s *Ancient Society* traced the relational development of the domestic and the state as the genealogy of separate spheres, relegating women to a pre-political status within civilization and nonwhites to a pre-civilizational status within modernity. What made civilization civilized was the different foundational principle upon which people related to each other.

For Morgan, kinship in pre-civilizational societies determined the entire range of social relationships in savage and barbarian societies. There were no relationships that were not essentially domestic ones, or fictive extensions thereof. In savagery and barbarism, kinship as mediated through the historically variable family form determined the nature of governance. All relationships were personal or personalized kinship ties that determined the structure of not only families but of clans, tribes, and even confederacies of tribes. Specifically, matrilocal kinship determined these relationships. In essence, all relationships, including those of governance, were what in a civilized condition would be classified as domestic relationships. Kinship formed the social universe within which relationships
could be imagined. Hence Morgan’s fascination with Indian dwellings, which he felt provided the scientific evidence that matriarchal governance in Indian societies was essentially an extension or elaboration of domestic relationships.28

In contrast, civilization subsumed the organizational principle of kinship under savagery and barbarism into the vestigial vehicle for the transfer of private property. Relations between people were mediated not by kinship but by property. Kinship had been privatized and removed as the general principle by which relationships were governed as the public sphere of the state arose to guarantee the abstract, independent existence of property. The state generated the archive necessary to track the transfer of property between unrelated individuals, ensconcing the principle of governance on the basis of national territory made up of individual property holdings. Morgan applied the Latin term societas to the kinship governance system of pre-civilizational peoples, and the term civitas to the property-based national governments of the civilized. The subsumption of societas, or the kinship mode of social governance, by civitas, or the territorial mode of state rule, was predicated upon the complete removal of women from governance in the new states. Only when women were removed from governance could a state emerge guaranteeing fully elaborated property relations. Within Morgan’s evolutionary scheme of culture, both racial and gender hierarchies are reproduced through the inevitable, teleological development of institutions. Patriarchal relations between white women and white men stood as the inevitable, necessary guarantee of racialized difference between the civilized and the primitive, the colonizer and the colonized.

Drawing upon Morgan’s theory to categorize the condition of the Mission Indians, Jackson toured the Southern California countryside as a Special Agent to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for three months in mid-1883. Having received the charge to investigate the Mission Indians as a result of A Century of Dishonor, Jackson would base an official report, Ramona, and a series of California travelogue sketches for the Independent upon her observations. Seeing the properly gendered division of labor in their villages, Jackson found the Mission Indians to have attained a level of civilization above the typical Indian savagery, as indicated by their villages’ remarkable resemblance to white communities. In her report, she wrote that many Mission Indian villages were “industrious, peaceable communities,” filled with people “cultivating ground, keeping stock, carrying on their own simple manufacture of pottery, mats, baskets, &c.,” and
generally “making a living” (*Century of Dishonor* 459). In demonstrating such adaptations to “civilization,” the Mission Indians had established “rights . . . quite different from and superior to the mere ‘occupancy’ right of the wild and uncivilized Indian” (*Century of Dishonor* 461).

For Jackson, the Mission Indians had demonstrated the results of a half-century of racial tutelage in the Spanish Missions. Situated upon prime coastal lands from San Diego to Sonoma, the Missions had been founded by the Franciscan Order lead by Father Junipero Serra in a bid to secure the Spanish Crown’s hold on its northernmost province, which was sparsely populated by Spanish subjects. From 1769, when the first Mission was established in present-day San Diego, until 1834, the year the Mexican Republic secularized the Missions and disbursed the lands to form the great Californio ranchos, the Missions had served as the economic engines of California, wherein Christianized Indians (called neophytes) labored at supplying the material needs of the remote colony. The Missions had long since fallen into ruins by the time Jackson toured Southern California a half-century after secularization, but her travel narrative *Glimpses of Three Coasts* constructed the memory of the allegedly harmonious relations between whites and Indians, in which the former taught the latter the practices of civilization, as the very model of racial tutelage: “The picture of life in one of these missions during their period of prosperity is unique and attractive. The whole place was a hive of industry: trades plying indoors and outdoors; tillers, herders, vintagers by hundreds, going to and fro; children in schools; women spinning . . . ” (55). In this favorable characterization of the semi-civilized status of the Mission Indians, Jackson cited the 1852 report of Benjamin Davis Wilson, then sub-agent for Indian affairs, who also attributed the industrious and cooperative behavior of the Mission Indians to the racial tutelage of the Missions. In comparing the Missions to “a Manchester or Lowell, on a small scale,” Wilson’s report makes evident how the discipline of supervised labor formed properly ordered regimes of racial and gendered relations (48). “Devoted neither to war or to the chase,” “friendly to whites,” and on the whole “docile and tractable, and accustomed to subjection,” the Mission Indians exhibited “the traits which are always looked to as the grounds of civilization” formed through the labor disciplines instituted by the Franciscans (32). Secularization had all too soon curtailed the racial tutelage of the Missions. In a sentiment echoed by Jackson, Wilson wrote, “In the fall of the Missions . . . philanthropy laments the failure of one of the grandest experiments ever made for the elevation of this unfortunate race” (3).
But labor discipline in and of itself seemed insufficient to complete the civilizing project left unfinished. If the Missions and their institutional successors, the short-lived farm reservations of the 1850s, could not be revived in the 1880s, then Jackson and the Indian reform movement would inculcate the desire for civilization among the Indians through domestic influence. In her report on the Mission Indians, Jackson advocated the expanded presence of female educators, whose civilizing touch would reach far beyond the classroom into the Indian home: “Women have more courage and self-denying missionary spirit . . . and have an invaluable influence outside their school-rooms. They go familiarly into the homes, and are really educating the parents as well as the children in a way which is not within the power of any man, however earnest and devoted he may be” (Century of Dishonor 469). Having taught the freedmen the lessons of democracy, white women could similarly lift the Indians into civilization. Educating Indian women in the arts of domestic influence would bring Indian men into the pale of civilization once the work of white women was done. Secretary of the Interior Schurz commented, “Nothing will be more apt to raise the Indians in the scale of civilization than to stimulate their attachment of permanent homes, and it is woman that must make the atmosphere and form the attraction of the home. She must be recognized, with affection and respect, as the center of domestic life” (16).

In Ramona, the protagonist’s own domestic influence can turn “a wretched place” of a mud hut into a sliver of civilization (337). Aunt Ri, the peripatetic Southerner whose own “affectionate disorderly genius” seems less developed in this direction, exclaims, “It beats all ever I see, the way thet Injun woman’s got fixed up out er nothin” (337–38). Making civilization out of savagery via this display of orderly domesticity, Ramona transforms a room of “the mud hovel” into “jest like a parlor!” (337). Most importantly for the reformers, Indian children would come under the all-important domestic influences of their mothers, thus suggesting to Schurz an attractive and cost-effective way of making the Indian disappear: “If we educate the girls of to-day, we educate the mothers of to-morrow, and in educating those mothers we prepare the ground for the education of generations to come” (16). Through their domestic housework, opined Indian Agent Wilson, Indian women “may be among the most efficient civilizers” (50).

Tying Indian men to the land, Indian women formed the essential link between the need to labor and the desire for private property. Domesticity thus articulated the essential conditions for destroying tribal sovereignty and thus savagery itself. Bound by the invisible but pervasive influence of
domestic interiors, Indian men would find the necessary impetus to leave tribal communalism for wage labor. President of Amherst College Merrill Edward Gates, a prominent member of the Lake Mohonk Conference of the Friends of the Indian, defined the civilizing link between labor and the desire for private property as the essential difference between the savage Indian and the civilized American:

We have, to begin with, the absolute need of awakening in the savage Indian broader desires and ampler wants. To bring him out of savagery into citizenship we must make the Indian more intelligently selfish before we can make him unselfishly intelligent. We need to awaken in him wants. In his dull savagery he must be touched by the wings of the divine angel of discontent. Then he begins to look forward, to reach out. The desire for property of his own may become an intense educating force. The wish for a home of his own awakens him to new efforts. Discontent with the teepee and the starving rations of the Indian camp in winter is needed to get the Indian out of the blanket and into trousers,—and trousers with a pocket in them, and with a pocket that aches to be filled with dollars! (334; emphasis in original)

Wage labor is then the effect of the domestic desire for property, which itself indicates the conversion of the savage, communal Indian into the “intelligently selfish,” autonomous, rational actor of classic laissez-faire economics. Only as this economic subject could the Indian then enter into the social contract of the “intelligently unselfish” nation. In fulfilling the desire for property, the racial tutelage of wage labor would make the Indian vanish, leaving instead the citizen.

The Limits of Reform

The project of racial tutelage, while essential for transforming the Indian into the citizen, nonetheless had its limits and hazards. According to Jackson, the supersession of tribal habits and relations could potentially take many years of concerted effort upon the part of whites: “It is strange how sure civilized peoples are, when planning and legislating for savages, to forget that it has always taken centuries to graft on or evolve out of savagery anything like civilization” (Glimpses 60). The danger of being overly optimistic was one the U.S. government could learn from the annals of
previous Spanish colonial Indian policy: “With singular lack of realization of the time needed to make citizens out of savages,” the Spanish crown had considered a decade sufficient time to inculcate upon the neophytes the tenets of Christian civilization. For Jackson, “five times ten years would have been little enough to allow for getting such a scheme fairly underway, and another five times ten years for the finishing and rounding of the work” (60).

But even if the long apprenticeship in civilization was taken into account, there remained the disturbing possibility that the Indians, even those ready to become individual property owners like Alessandro Assis of *Ramona*, might still never fully retain the lessons of racial tutelage. At first glance, Alessandro embodies the living legacy of the Mission’s civilizing influence. The son of the “right-hand man” to the Franciscan priest at Mission San Luis Rey, the literate Alessandro is not only a skilled sheep shearer but also a talented vocalist and musician whose sweet strains help bring the Californio ranchero Felipe Moreno back to life after a severe illness.

But other invisible yet equally powerful influences could exert themselves through the layered veneer of civilization. Civilized example might be superior to civilized precept, yet neither were certain to overcome still earlier lessons in savagery engraved within the body. Perhaps the most widely accepted theory of biological inheritance before the rediscovery of Mendelian genetics at the turn of the century, the neo-Lamarckian transmission of acquired characteristics ensured that what culture developed the body would remember. Just as the neo-Lamarckian mechanism of the inheritance of acquired characteristics allowed acquired or invented culture to be readily translated into biological race, the atavistic retentions of the latter could erupt into the lives of even the fully civilized. For Morgan, racial reversion explained some of what he considered as deviant social phenomena within modern civilization:

In the light of these facts some of the excrescences of modern civilization, such as Mormonism, are seen to be relics of the old savagism not yet eradicated from the human brain. We have the same brain, perpetuated by reproduction, which worked in the skulls of barbarians and savages in by-gone ages; and it has come down to us ladened and saturated with the thoughts aspirations and passions, with which it was busied through the intermediate periods. . . . These outcrops of barbarism are so many revelations of its ancient proclivities. They are explainable as a species of mental atavism. (61)
That barbaric atavisms such as Mormonism flourished out West, where the institutions of civilization were weakest, was no coincidence.

Indeed, white women often found that even white men needed to be domesticated out on the frontier. In the absence of church or government, only the home countered white men's proclivity for civilizational backsliding. Discourses of middle-class domesticity worked to reverse the unsavory or violent aspects of masculinist imperialist adventuring all too often brought home. What in the discourse of imperialist adventuring signified a redemptive opportunity to regain manhood became in the discourse of Indian policy reform the embarrassing collapsing of difference between the civilized and the primitive. In her 1868 essay “An Appeal for the Indians,” Lydia Maria Child denounced how U.S. military campaigns against tribal nations became nothing more than a catalogue of war crimes. For Child, report after report of massacres of Indians committed by U.S. soldiers begged the very question of civilization itself: “But are we civilized? When I reflect upon what we have done, and are doing toward our red brethren, I cannot in conscience answer yes” (87). The masculinized violence of frontline imperialism especially endangered the civilized status of white men. Reverting to barbaric warfare, white men only demoted themselves to the cultural level of their primitive enemies, casting the very basis of colonial difference in doubt.

When racial reversion affected white men, white women would provide the guidance to recall the moral lessons of domestic influence. After Aunt Ri chides young Merrill for his callous support of villainous settler Jim Farrar in Alessandro’s death, he finds himself shaken to the very moral core:

Aunt Ri’s earnest words . . . reached a depth in his nature which had been long untouched; a stratum, so to speak, which lay far beneath the surface. The character of the Western frontiersman is often a singular accumulation of such strata,—the training and beliefs of his earliest days overlain by succession of unrelated and violent experiences, like geological deposits. Underneath the exterior crust of the most hardened and ruffianly nature often remains—its forms not yet quite fossilized—a realm full of the devout customs, doctrines, religious influences, which the boy knew, and the man remembers. By sudden upheaval, in some great catastrophe or struggle in his mature life, these all come again into the light. (406–7)

Hidden but not forgotten, early domestic training could influence adult moral judgment and contest the demoralizing experiences of the harsh
frontier environment. But if Californian Merrill finds that he is really “New Englander yet at heart,” the ever-precarious racial fault lines of California reveal Alessandro as always an Indian savage rather than a potential citizen (407).

Brooding upon the “the wrongs he had borne, the hopeless outlook for his people in the future, and most of all on the probable destitution and suffering in store for Ramona,” Alessandro’s “brain gave way” to hurts “gone too deep.” “Secretly brooding upon the wrongs he had borne” cracks “his self-contained, reticent, repressed nature” and allows the unconscious savage to surface (366). Mentally unstable, Alessandro drifts into intervals of delusions “always shaped by the bitterest experience of his life”; recovering, he “had no recollection of what had happened” (367). One such spell becomes Alessandro’s death at the hands of Farrar: Alessandro inadvertently takes Farrar’s horse during such an amnesiac episode. Before his death Alessandro attributed his madness to having chosen an individual fate over communal existence. Returning from seeing his people driven from Temecula, he tells Ramona, “It is the saints who have punished me thus for having resolved to leave my people, and take all I had for myself and you” (206).

But the text belies this self-explication of the malady, suggesting rather that Alessandro suffers from never really having left his tribal nation at all. Farrar’s casual shooting of Alessandro depends not only upon a legal system that barred Indians from testifying against whites, but also upon Farrar’s privileges of whiteness that enable him to execute acts of punishment for property crimes. Leaving Alessandro to die, he shouts, “That’ll teach you damned Indians to leave off stealing our horses!” (371). But if Farrar’s attribution of criminal intent to Alessandro speaks more of the racist construction of all Indians as inherently criminal, then precisely the lack of criminal intent on Alessandro’s part also indicates his distance from understandings of private property. Indian policy reformer Pancoast noted that “the Indians among themselves are wonderfully free from the crimes which infest civilization,” particularly property crimes, but “strangely as it may sound, it must be remembered that these crimes are to some extent the unfortunate incidents and creatures of a higher states of social development.” The general recognition of “the right of individual property” was “indispensable to robbery”; “inseparable from our civilization,” property crimes indexed the degree to which any civilization had truly progressed (163). In other words, property crimes represented an improper relationship to actual property but the correct conceptual relationship to, and recognition of, private property.
Alessandro may have never intended to steal the horse, but criminal intent would have precisely indicated his recognition of the horse as private property. Rather, his misrecognition of the horse not as private property resulted from his not recognizing any private property whatsoever. Alessandro’s madness is thus characterized precisely by a misrecognition of the status of livestock as private property. In such a delusional state he would often “enter any enclosure he saw, where there were sheep or cattle, go about among them, speaking of them to passers-by as his own” (367). This imaginary appropriation is less a personal enrichment than an elemental repetition of the now-lost tribal wealth his father had held as a communal trust. Despite keeping nearly as many sheep as the Morenos themselves, Pablo Assis remains poor rather than wealthy because he “feeds and supports half his village” (92). Before the tribe’s eviction from Temecula, Alessandro was to have succeeded his father as caretaker of his band’s communal resources. Alessandro’s madness, in effect, is presented as an atavistic reversion to a state of savagery that does not recognize private property. Civilization could take the Indian out of the tribal nation, but not the tribal nation out of the Indian.

While Aunt Ri vocalizes Jackson’s outrage at Alessandro’s murder, the episode nonetheless highlights the fragile nature of racial tutelage and the perceived danger of racial reversions. As the project of civilizing the savage is cast into doubt, the possibility of incorporating the Indian into the nation as a citizen recedes for the text. Rather, racial reversions make clear the impossibility of making the Indian disappear into U.S. citizenship. If Ramona herself remains, deep down, a semi-barbaric Californiana rather than a savage Indian, nevertheless the danger of racial reversion is always present in her mestiza blood. Both she and Felipe, with his heartfelt desire to marry and misceginate, must leave the United States for Mexico in order to keep the nation white and free from the invisible, insidious influence of mixed blood. In essence, the attempt in *Ramona* to incorporate Indians into the nation is thus less about making Indians disappear into citizenship as it is about ensuring the hegemony of liberal deployments of colonial difference.

Insofar as the romantic union of Alessandro and Ramona ends in his death and her removal to Mexico as Felipe’s bride, the failed national allegory of *Ramona* suggests precisely the impossibility of incorporating indigenous people within the post-Reconstruction national imaginary. Arguably, Ramona and Felipe’s exile to Mexico is the trace of Manifest Domesticity’s earlier function to ensure national whiteness through expulsion of nonwhite populations. Jackson not only ensures that miscegena-
tion never occurs domestically but also rhetorically banishes questions of racial injustices (such as the Californios’ dispossession and the hyper-exploitation of mestizos and Indians) from the national political agenda. Jackson’s national allegory disseminated the possibilities of seeing the Indian as an American rather than as an Indian in the liberal choice to domesticate rather than exterminate, thus allowing the possibility that the citizen could replace the savage through the powerful but invisible effects of domestic influence. By making widely available the possibility of making the Indian vanish through the unconscious influence of racial tutelage, this liberal narrative of colonial difference also insured that the unconscious influence of race would foreclose any successful attempts at Indian domestication. Hidden in the blood, the racial reversions of *Ramon* reveal the national allegory as a representational strategy for managing colonial difference, making available new ways of constructing the Indian as disenfranchised, deterritorialized wage labor rather than as an obstacle to national economic development.

**White Feminism and Empire**

Liberal imperialism confounds rigid notions of colonial rule in offering national inclusion to the colonized, promising ultimate convergence into the colonizer’s civil society. Deployments of colonial mimicry depend upon the imagined transformations of the colonizer/colonized relationship promised by colonial education of the natives. Ultimately, the colonial fantasy is that the colonizers, exercising their moral duty to bring civilization to dark hinterlands, are there for the good of the colonized. At once reassuring morals and pocketbooks, colonial mimicry ensures that the material exploitation of native labor and resources proceeds in all good conscience. Insofar as civilization is synonymous with whiteness in the late nineteenth century, colonial rule both depends upon, and deplores, the necessarily shifty, shiftless, and shifting borders of civilization. Basing the future abolition of colonial difference on a colonial mimicry founded upon theories of cultural development creates the very disciplinary management of “race” itself as the border of the United States. Thus national allegory, far from incorporating racial Others, becomes the hegemonic representational technology for keeping the nation white.

In the late nineteenth century, the liberal reconceptualization of colonial difference ultimately reaffirmed colonial relationships while further
normalizing the role of white women within the state’s management of racial hierarchies. If the teleology of civilizational development depended upon the emergence of a gendered public/domestic dichotomy, then transformed U.S. colonial policies of benevolent assimilation generated new regimes of gendered power relations that allowed white women to become more fully enabled social actors through colonial practices. White women’s participation in nineteenth-century social reform movements (particularly abolition and Indian policy reform) not only resulted in what they considered as steps towards the relative normalization of state functioning in relationship to slaves or Indians but also in relation to themselves. Hence, the moral imperative of the domesticity-influenced reform novel to address federal policies not only concerned the morality of such practices but also introduced new modes of direct participation for white women within the colonial project. By representing the domestic influence of white women as the necessary mediation needed to civilize Indians and consequently bring them under U.S. law, the Indian reform novel made possible the later deployment of white women as state agents of colonial policy.

The reformers’ belief in the uplifting domestic influence of white women became institutionalized through a government program implemented at the behest of the Women’s National Indian Association by the early 1890s. The field matron program sent white women onto reservations for the express purpose of inculcating the sexual division of labor of “the spheres.” Just as farmers and mechanics provided Indian men with the example of manly labor, field matrons would provide Indian women with the example of proper domesticity. Likewise, white women were employed by the federal government as teachers upon reservations and at the Indian boarding schools, whereas before the Civil War the regular and widespread public or governmental employment of white women (even if unmarried) in any context remained relatively rare. Whereas mid-century modes of domesticity had typically emphasized moral reformation of the public sphere through indirect influence, new anthropological theories of civilization made it possible for white women to participate directly within the processes of colonization as U.S. state agents without compromising the moral purity of the domestic sphere. Despite initial opposition to these roles, they would later be elaborated and expanded as part of the U.S. occupation of the Philippines, Guam, and Puerto Rico after the U.S.-Spanish War.

Rather than affix responsibility for U.S. imperialism, the point here is
to analyze the hegemonic relations that allowed the discourse of domesticity to present as emancipatory (both for white women and the objects of their reform activities) yet another set of colonial practices. To the extent that the Indian reform movement made the formal normalization of Indians as U.S. citizens synonymous with and contingent upon the civilizational difference of colonial mimicry, the domestic terms of national incorporation ensure that state functioning would forge a politically, economically, and culturally subordinated position for individual Indians within the nation while simultaneously dismantling tribal nations. By removing the work of national integration out of the conflictual public sphere of political power and into the apparently non-coercive (but not apolitical) domestic space of the home and family, the Indian reform novel occluded the agency of those who might not wish to represent the colorful counterpoint to the warp of whiteness. In the long run, reform policies only succeeded in further marginalizing and dispossessing Indians. As a discourse of colonial mimicry, the domestication of Indians sought national integration by collapsing cultural differences through education while assuring that racial difference would always serve as a ready marker of the impossibility of that task. The ambivalence of colonial mimicry, as Bhabha has pointed out, is that the continual deferral of colonial difference makes apparent the contradictions of the discourse, hence delegitimizing colonial authority even as it is asserted. The legacy of this policy of colonial mimicry is the mimic citizen, both beloved and despised, celebrated but feared, enfranchised yet powerless. Liberal projects based upon hierarchies of culture repeat colonial difference under emancipatory guise, always deferring the question of full citizenship rights for people of color.