

**“I Seek the Level Lands Where Grow the Wild Prairie Flowers”: The Landscape-
Reliant Regionalism of Zitkala-Sa**

By

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To my grandmother, Kathleen Carlson, my greatest supporter.

“I’ll love you forever.
I’ll like you for always.
As long as I’m living,
my Grandma you’ll be.”

I miss you.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis draws on the ideas of Homi K. Bhabha's hybridity, mimicry, and third space theory in conjunction with American regionalism, and situates Zitkala-Sa as a "landscape-reliant regionalist," a term I coin to address her unique position in American literature. According to literary critic Donna Campbell, "Local color or regional literature is fiction and poetry that focuses on the characters, dialect, customs, topography, and other features particular to a specific region" ("Regionalism and Local Color Fiction"). However, this project suggests that regionalism manifests in a unique way in Zitkala-Sa's work. Strictly speaking, regionalism's characteristics do not apply to Zitkala-Sa's writings, certainly not as easily as they do to other (and better known) women writers and prototypical regionalists such as Sarah Orne Jewett and Mary Wilkins Freeman. Zitkala-Sa's own customs were stripped away as a member of the Sioux tribe. In fact, since she was born on the Yankton reservation, she lacked exposure to the customs of her people because those customs barely existed in the reservation setting.

To complicate this view of Zitkala-Sa as a regionalist writer, I draw on Homi K. Bhabha's theories of hybridity, mimicry, and third space to argue that Zitkala-Sa is best understood as what I term a "landscape-reliant regionalist." I define landscape-reliant regionalism as a mode of writing attributed to individuals who write in the vein of local color fiction and/or regionalism, but whose work focuses on the land itself rather than cultural markers such as dialect or local customs. Zitkala-Sa embodies landscape-reliant regionalism since she has been severed from her culture and its practices and retains a relationship with the land itself. I argue that the other aspects of regionalism do not

adequately describe Zitkala-Sa's life, although she is included as a regionalist writer in passing in 2003's *Writing Out of Place* (written by Judith Fetterley and Marjorie Pryse), arguably one of the most important critical texts on the literary movement of regionalism.

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INTRODUCTION

Drawing on the ideas of Homi K. Bhabha's hybridity, mimicry, and third space theory, and in conjunction with American regionalism, this thesis will situate Zitkala-Sa as a "landscape-reliant regionalist," a term I coin to address Zitkala-Sa's unique position in American literature. It is commonplace to situate Zitkala-Sa into the category of regionalism because many critics see her texts as fitting within the characteristics of the movement. According to literary critic Donna Campbell, "*Local color* or *regional* literature is fiction and poetry that focuses on the characters, dialect, customs, topography, and other features particular to a specific region" ("Regionalism and Local Color Fiction"). However, this project suggests that regionalism manifests in a unique way in Zitkala-Sa's work. Her work is stripped of these typical regionalist elements because she was not allowed to use her own language, to practice her own customs, or to live in her natural region. As Ruth J. Helfin writes in *I Remain Alive*, "Zitkala-Sa demonstrates through her stories how the Sioux had already assimilated into their daily lives Euro-American goods and tools, such as writing, which complemented their culture" (106). Therefore, regionalism's characteristics do not apply to Zitkala-Sa's writings as easily as that of fellow women writers and prototypical regionalists Sarah Orne Jewett and Mary Wilkins Freeman. Zitkala-Sa's own customs were stripped away as a member of the Sioux tribe. In fact, since she was born on the Yankton reservation, she lacked exposure to the customs of her people, because those customs barely existed in the reservation setting.

Landscape-reliant regionalism refers to individuals who write in the vein of what literary critics call local color fiction and/or regionalism, but whose work focuses on the

land itself rather than cultural markers such as dialect or local customs. Zitkala-Sa embodies landscape-reliant regionalism since she has been severed from her culture and its practices and retains a relationship only with the land itself. I argue that the other aspects of regionalism do not adequately describe Zitkala-Sa's life.

Before turning to Zitkala-Sa's work, it is important to understand her complicated biography. The woman who would become known as Zitkala-Sa was born Gertrude Simmons on the Yankton Sioux reservation in either 1875 or 1876; sources are unclear which year she was born¹. Zitkala-Sa's biological father was a "worthless fellow" (Lewandowski 18). He goes on to say, "[Gertrude's mother] quickly erased [her father's] faint memory by bestowing the surname Simmons on her child, Gertrude" (18). The biological daughter of a white Frenchman and a Yankton Sioux, Zitkala-Sa experienced racial liminality. Her early life was uneventful, until her elder brother David went off to study at the Hampton Institute, a school in Virginia originally created to educate freed slaves.

While at home with only female companions, Zitkala-Sa thrived. Her early childhood, which she later described as "idyllic" (18), is reminiscent of regionalist ideals. She was surrounded by women for most of her early years, and they had an effect on her upbringing. Zitkala-Sa's education began at a Presbyterian bilingual school on the reservation, and later, at the age of eight, she embarked on her first trip east for White's boarding school. Zitkala-Sa expected her time in the east to be like living under a "sky of rosy apples" (19). Her expectations were short lived. Instead of rosy apples, "the foreign

¹ This biographical section relies on the 2016 biography, *Red Bird, Red Power* by Tadeusz Lewandowski. This biography is one of very few in-depth biographical texts on Zitkala-Sa.

environment and immediate homesickness reduced her to tears” (19). More telling of her experience at the boarding school was the actuality of the apple orchard on the school grounds. Lewandowski reports that: “The grounds at White’s did in fact contain 150 apple trees, but a year after Gertrude arrived the orchard began to die off” (19).

Zitkala-Sa spent the next three years at the boarding school, where she learned of the supposed superiority of whites, but quickly went back to her own customs and dress upon her return to the Yankton reservation. Lewandowski believes that after various years in and out of boarding schools, Zitkala-Sa began to become aware that she no longer fully belonged in her hometown. Seeking distance from her mother, Simmons escaped from Yankton in 1890. After this voluntary leave, Zitkala-Sa switched roles: she became (to her mother) a traitor to her race and began to recruit young children from the reservations for the boarding schools. Although there is nothing written about Zitkala-Sa’s feelings on the matter, it became commonplace for scholars to assume how she felt, as evidenced by several early articles discussing her assimilation into white culture. Popular in the late 20th century, this reading of Zitkala-Sa has more recently fallen out of favor.² The complexities of Zitkala-Sa’s situation have proven to be more than just an assimilationist tendency.

Zitkala-Sa found herself at Earlham College in 1895, and for the first time in her life, she experienced a sense of luxury. The college, with five hundred co-eds, provided Zitkala-Sa with indoor plumbing, good food, and something rare: privacy. It was at this

² These critics include Mary Stout, Dexter Fisher, James Sydney Slotkin, and Robert Allen Warrior.

time that Zitkala-Sa's writing flourished. With growing possibilities, she was published in the college newspaper, *The Earlhamite* (Lewandowski 27).

Although these publishing opportunities opened a door for her, Zitkala-Sa was met with backlash that she had not experienced before: comments that were not applicable to her writings and/or speeches. Instead, she was praised for her "beauty," with comments like "'the pretty young Indian woman" who appeared 'much better looking than the pictures of the average Indian'" (qtd. in Lewandowski 26). In *The Atlantic Monthly* and *Harper's Bazaar*, phrases like "Her voice was clear and sweet; her language was that of a cultivated young woman, and her pronunciation was without a trace of a tongue unfamiliar with English" typically described her writing (qtd. in Lewandowski 26). No matter what she wrote, well-read audiences perceived her the same way: as the exotic other. It seemed that Zitkala-Sa could only find a way into the white mainstream audience if she, for lack of a better phrase, gave them what they wanted. Therefore, she adapted. According to Lewandowski, "Her use of the name signaled a genuine psychological and spiritual rebirth" (37). She wrote the vignettes "Impressions of an Indian Childhood," "The School Days of an Indian Girl," and "An Indian Teacher Among Indians" that would later become published in the collection, *American Indian Stories*. These stories, originally published in *The Atlantic Monthly*, were advertised as the following: "These unique and genuine records of the mind of an Indian child are told precisely in her own words" (Advertisement 11).

The pieces were controversial: she basically outed her employer as the racist demagogue that he was. As Lewandowski explains, "With the trilogy's publication, Simmons, or rather Zitkala-Sa, became the first Indian woman to write about her own life

without the aid of an editor, interpreter, or ethnographer” (40). Because of this fact, publishers cashed in on her “amazing abilities.” Advertisements in *The Atlantic Monthly* and *Harper’s* promptly discussed the exotic Zitkala-Sa, including her clear use of standard English. Her abilities were otherized so heavily in *The Atlantic Monthly* that she was made into a sideshow and praised for her attributes that made her seem more normal: she was like any other white American. *Harper’s* was no better in their examination, stating that before her “progress towards civilization,” she was “a veritable little savage, running wild over the prairie and speaking no language but her own” (qtd. in Lewandowski 44).

Advertisements like this helped bring Zitkala-Sa’s name into the mainstream, although she could only write and publish pieces that met her audience’s expectations. While Zitkala-Sa’s writings exposed the white world for the harm it did to Indian children at boarding schools, readers did not acknowledge these criticisms, or rather they chose to ignore them, and instead decided to focus on her clear English abilities and exotic beauty. Still, Zitkala-Sa pressed on in her writing.

In addition to her writing for *The Atlantic Monthly*, Zitkala-Sa became very active in the Indian community. She became an outspoken critic of peyote use, which she saw as an epidemic in the southwest United States (Lewandowski 14). It is at this time in her life that critics who make the assimilationist argument believe her tendencies to fit in with the status quo started. Zitkala-Sa went off to Carlisle boarding school—the most famous in the land—to teach. There she met one of her closest allies, and one of her greatest threats: the leader and founder, Richard Henry Pratt. Pratt was of the mindset that he and his teachers at Carlisle could “fix” the Indians. Lewandowski describes Pratt’s

strategy: “Designed to eradicate all vestiges of Indian cultures from its wards, the school’s program killed the Indian inside by breaking down students’ nascent understanding of themselves through ridiculing indigenous ways” (29). Pratt’s comments often betray an ethnocentric bias: “It is this nature in our red brother that is better dead than alive, and when we agree with the oft-repeated sentiment that the only good Indian is a dead one, we mean this characteristic of the Indian” (qtd. in Lewandowski 29). Pratt heavily supported a white, Christian doctrine, and as a result, all children who entered the school were “barred from speaking their Native tongues, and [were] convinced that their cultures were bellicose (and inferior) with lectures that blamed white aggression on unprovoked Indian violence” (30). Zitkala-Sa wrote of this time in “The School Days of an Indian Girl,” which I will discuss later in Chapter Three.

Upon her return to Yankton, this time in the role of teacher, Zitkala-Sa’s main job was to recruit young children like she had been when she started at White’s not too many years before (31). It was during this trip that Zitkala-Sa found the dilapidated area she had once called home. Her mother was sick, and her neighbors were not much better off. Without much to return to, Zitkala-Sa found herself back at Carlisle, still caught in the liminal space of Indian and white. At this point, Zitkala-Sa began to find solace with the whites at Carlisle. The students befriended her, throwing her a birthday party, while Zitkala-Sa gave close adults fond nicknames, like “Uncle” and Aunt” (32). Of course, Zitkala-Sa could not be restrained forever. Just as she began to gain trust from Pratt and the higher-ups, Zitkala-Sa’s morals forced her to include non-approved material in her teaching. As Lewandowski points out,

In the sixth-year class she taught, she had held a subversive debate on ‘whether or not the treatment of the Indians by the early settlers caused King Phillip to make war.’ The choice of subject matter demonstrates that Simmons’s resistance to the principles of white education was increasing with every passing day. (33)

She continued to teach this way, separating herself from the other teachers. After the semester ended, she pursued other interests, mainly music. Although she became engaged to Thomas Marshall, her independent spirit remained. She trained in violin in order to attend a prestigious music institute, but due to her older age (twenty-three) and lack of experience compared to those around her, she was never accepted. More sad news followed: Marshall died of measles. Zitkala-Sa, left to herself, began to write, the only thing she felt was her own.

The next venture in Zitkala-Sa’s life began around the time of the *Atlantic Monthly* publications. A doctor, Carlos Montezuma, became a driving force in her life, an Italian man with a name reflective of his father’s admiration for the Aztecs. Montezuma became smitten with Zitkala-Sa right away when the two met through Pratt and the Carlisle school. Meanwhile, her writings encountered criticism. Her submissions to the *Atlantic Monthly* were heavily criticized by *Red Man* magazine, and the editors called her a liar and a traitor to her race. The magazine noted,

Nothing is good enough for her. She is utterly unthankful for all that has been done for her by the pale faces, which in her case is considerable. It would be doing injustice to the Indian race whose blood she partly shares to accept the picture she has drawn of herself as the true picture of all Indian girls. They average far better (qtd in Lewandowski 30).

This quote shows the true liminality of Zitkala-Sa's experience. Although *Red Man* was a publication targeted for the Indian population, it still criticized both her white and Indian aspects. The writer quickly points out that she is mixed race as well by saying "whose blood she partly shares" when it comes to the Indians (qtd. in Lewandowski 49).

Although she encountered these negative reviews, her writing continued. Next published was 1901's "The Soft-Hearted Sioux," in which a male narrator returns to his homeland only to be rejected for studying among whites. Lewandowski calls attention to this in his critique, "Like the *Atlantic Monthly* series, this story disputed the value of missionary education, asking how high a price indigenous peoples must pay for assimilation" (51). This story brought even more controversy than its predecessors. Pratt personally refuted the text, calling it "'morally bad,' condemn[ing] its depiction of Christianity as a 'travesty,' and harp[ing] on the ostensible defects of Zitkala-Sa's character" (qtd. in Lewandowski 51-52). Although there was a friendship between Montezuma and Pratt, Zitkala-Sa still wrote to Montezuma in desperation, terribly hurt by the cutting remarks from Pratt. Montezuma provided a sympathetic ear to her cries, but the relationship was destined to fail from the start. The two attempted to maintain a loving relationship, but it was too hard, as they both wanted very different things. Zitkala-Sa was not the doting wife type that Montezuma desired. She could not and would never be the kind to give up what she believed in for a man. She even stated, "I am too independent. I would not like *to have to obey* another—never!" (qtd. in Lewandowski 53). Although she gave him plenty of these warnings, Montezuma and Zitkala-Sa continued their tumultuous relationship. Montezuma unsuccessfully tried to get her to move to Chicago, where he was planning on opening a private practice. However, "using

her skills as a writer and teacher to benefit Native peoples took priority” (53). This priority took much more precedence than one may have thought. Letters after this time to Montezuma became much less joyous; she only wrote what was absolutely necessary. In this biographical information, we see into Zitkala-Sa’s personality: not only in her fiction, but also in her life, she resisted traditional roles.

Previously they had had a passionate relationship; by this time, Zitkala-Sa’s passion had reached over into her writings and her growing intolerance for the boarding schools, and by proxy, Pratt. This growing intolerance was highlighted with her publication of “Why I Am a Pagan” in December of 1902. The narrator, in this case, Zitkala-Sa herself, lives on the Yankton reservation, completely removed from the white schooling she received in her youth. The narrative continues, stating that she chose a different religion, one that focused on nature, which she says: “If this is Paganism, then at present, at least, I am a Pagan” (Zitkala-Sa 801). Although she proclaimed these beliefs, Zitkala-Sa was trying to reject the white education she had received. Her religious beliefs began to take the form of Catholicism as she grew older. Letters written at this time suggested that Zitkala-Sa had not rejected the idea of Christianity, and that her ideas about faith were rather abstruse.

Zitkala-Sa found solace and companionship in a friend from the Yankton Sioux reservation, Raymond Bonnin. The two married on May 10, 1902. The newly named Gertrude Simmons Bonnin and her husband moved out west, to Uintah, land of the Utes that had been divided into “allotments of forty or eighty acres” (66). The Bonnins’ time at Uintah was not pleasant. The Utes were troubled with various diseases, including tuberculosis and chicken pox. In fact, letters from Zitkala-Sa during this time reflected a

dark period. Lewandowski points out that, “They described the reservation as a violent place populated by land speculators, opposing religious factions, and corrupt BIA agents who treated the Utes with contempt, and conspired against her and her husband for material gain” (66). Shortly after they had been wed one year, Zitkala-Sa had her only child, a son named Ohiya. Zitkala-Sa took a break from her writing at this time, focusing instead on steady employment. She quickly returned to working at a nearby boarding school, teaching English. However, by this time, Indian boarding schools in the area had fallen highly out of favor. In fact, “The school quickly became so unpopular that in 1904 the reservation superintendent began paying parents to enroll their children” (67). This piece of information shows deep contrast to the way of life Zitkala-Sa had experienced as a young Gertrude Simmons.

Zitkala-Sa became a fan favorite of the young students: “Displaying more empathy for the students than her white colleagues did, she was able to lessen some of the harsher elements of rapid-assimilation-style instruction” (Lewandowski 67). While her teaching excelled, her writing suffered. She had received offers from publishers to write more traditional Indian stories, but living on the reservation provided little to no room for creativity. The fact that they lived in squalor did not help the situation. Zitkala-Sa began to feel disconnected from the Utes, and instead gravitated towards the Mormons who lived nearby. Although they were Euro-American, they had a very different idea of how Indians should be treated: with respect. It was something neither Zitkala-Sa nor any of the other Indians had been used to.

A short time later in 1910, Zitkala-Sa officially converted to Catholicism, stating “I want to bring my boy up *in the church*” (qtd. in Lewandowski 73). Along with this

new-found religion, Zitkala-Sa began to speak at different events in Uintah in order to save them from what she saw as in danger: the Ute's use of peyote. Lewandowski's text includes the transcript of one of her speeches. She states, "These Utes are in great need of rescue. About two months ago, an aged Ute woman, blind, deaf, and very feeble, was the victim of a terrible brutality. Secretly we fear it was the heathen craze of a Ute Medicine man. They have been known to use Human Flesh in their medicines" (qtd. in Lewandowski 75). She saw it as her duty to save the Utes from their own people. Mr. Bonnin was removed from his position with the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions shortly after this speech, but was allowed to return seven months later.

This removal was just another example of Zitkala-Sa's lifelong battle with society. As Lewandowski writes, "The whole incident represented a larger trend that Zitkala-Sa had witnessed all her life. Her husband's forced resignation and the threatened loss of her land were merely part of the historical problem of the U.S. government relentlessly cheating Indians" (77). She later said about the inequality, "Were I a man, I'd gather together all the Indian votes in our United States—then perhaps—my appeal for justice would have some consideration" (qtd. in Lewandowski 77). It was not the last time she would have this idea.

Two years later, Zitkala-Sa began work on her first attempt at drama: *The Sun-Dance Opera*. The story behind this text contains controversies. Not only was Zitkala-Sa essentially blindsided by her co-author, William Hanson, and his decision to take nearly all of the writing credit, but she also did not seem as proud of her contributions as he did. Lewandowski reports that, "Over time Hanson appears to have consistently minimized Zitkala-Sa's role and expanded his own—presumably to feed his ego" (78). In addition,

“Zitkala-Sa left no written record of her work, while Hanson left a substantial account in his memoir, *Sun Dance Land* (1967)” (78). Although the premiere of *The Sun Dance Opera* inspired many promising reviews, Zitkala-Sa could not escape the otherness associated with every creative choice she made. One review by Professor N. L. Nelson of Brigham Young University stated, after meeting Zitkala-Sa, that she was, “one of those rare spirits whom God sends, now and then, among lowly peoples to lift them to higher planes” (qtd. in Lewandowski 85). Lewandowski goes on to say, “Nelson also took care to mention that Zitkala-Sa lived in a ‘modern home,’ rather than a tepee. A revelation, certainly” (85). These comments were things Zitkala-Sa had simply grown accustomed to during her lifetime.

While *The Sun Dance Opera* drew great crowds in Uintah when it opened in 1913, a conflict appeared on the horizon. An Oglala Sioux, Samuel Lone Bear, began to preach to the Utes about the benefits of the powerful substance, peyote (Lewandowski 88-89). Known as being highly charismatic, Lone Bear made his way through the west, committing crimes while maintaining a missionary attitude. He used his charming personality to sell peyote to the locals:

Peyotism derives its significance from preserving ancient beliefs, worshiping the Great Spirit, healing not only the body but also spiritual and cultural existence, understanding the possible weaknesses that allowed whites to prevail, finding goodness even in one’s oppressors, and in particularly, creating social solidarity in the face of cultural destruction. (qtd. in Lewandowski 91)

As a matter of fact, many of the supporters of peyote use were former students at Carlisle and considered themselves members of various Christian denominations. This angered

Zitkala-Sa greatly, and she spoke against the plant itself, which she considered a “menace” (92). Shortly after this time, Zitkala-Sa joined the group, the Society of American Indians (SAI), founded by her former flame Carlos Montezuma. Between the final weeks of 1914 and into the following year, Zitkala-Sa lost both her parents, within two weeks of each other. To deal with her immense loss and pain, she threw herself into her organizations. She continued to bring healing resources to the Utes of Uintah. After making a speech related to her relief efforts, she was approached by the board members of the SAI and became a contributing editor to their *Quarterly Journal*. Many of Zitkala-Sa’s poems appeared in the journal, and “often ran counter to the general progressive, assimilationist goals of the membership” (106). The ever-changing Zitkala-Sa was no different in her SAI publishing days.

In addition to her helping the Utes through the use of soup kitchens, Zitkala-Sa lectured in the western states about the dangers of peyote use. As Lewandowski notes, “Soon she had the support of such groups as the Women’s Christian Temperance Union” (108). Zitkala-Sa, with the backing of Pratt, brought knowledge to many about the evils of peyote use. She had two poems blasting the use of peyote published in *American Indian Magazine*. “The Red Man’s America,” and “My Country ‘Tis of Thee” criticized the country greatly for their lack of understanding. After the publication of these poems, Zitkala-Sa was “thrilled to be in the forefront of activism, and searching for new ways to aid the SAI cause” (115).

Zitkala-Sa’s work became increasingly political, both in writing and in her speeches. As Lewandowski writes, “Zitkala-Sa’s patriotic writings during World War I and her statements during her anti-peyote crusade might suggest that she had reconciled

with white America since the early 1900s. This was not the case” (150). Zitkala-Sa “promoted a proto-Red platform of resistance to white rule” (150). She heavily criticized whites in newspapers, but her cries fell on deaf ears. Lewandowski writes, “White society continued to objectify rather than understand Zitkala-Sa as an indigenous woman” (151). Around 1919, she was completely invested in granting citizenship and citizen rights to all Indians. Zitkala-Sa’s criticisms were reflected in her texts, and can be seen in the collection of *American Indian Stories*.

Not only were her writings from *American Indian Stories* to the pamphlet *Americanize the First American* critical of white society; “between 1921 and 1927, Zitkala-Sa gave some four hundred public lectures” (164). At this time, Zitkala-Sa set her sights on Oklahoma, where whites had been invading the lands for nearly twenty years. Zitkala-Sa teamed up with attorney Charles H. Fabens and activist Matthew K Sniffen to interview the countless victims of theft. They collected interviews across six different counties and published a pamphlet, *Oklahoma’s Poor Rich Indians: An Orgy of Graft and Exploitation of the Five Civilized Tribes—Legalized Robbery*.

Zitkala-Sa’s next years were spent in the National Council of American Indians, but these would be the last productive and happy years of her life. By 1935, she was aging rapidly, faced with illness, financial issues, and family conflict. She experienced night sweats and fits during the night, wanting desperately for them to end her life. Zitkala-Sa died on January 26, 1938 of cardiac dilation and kidney disease, just before her sixty-second birthday (Lewandowski 187). Sadly, even all of her work with the agencies, speeches, writing everything from poetry to nonfiction, did not make a difference when it came to her autopsy results. The doctor listed her name as “Gertrude

Bonnin from South Dakota—Housewife” (187). However, a published obituary gave her due credit.

With this background in place, Chapter One will provide an overview of the literary movement known as regionalism, as discussed by Judith Fetterley and Marjorie Pryse in their seminal 2003 text *Writing Out of Place, and American Women Regionalists, 1850-1910*, their anthology on American women regionalist writers. According to Fetterley and Pryse, the movement itself is best characterized by a selection of women writers of the nineteenth century who include specific elements in their respective texts. These elements include the use of regional dialect, descriptive details (especially of a particular region) and frame narratives where an omniscient narrator, an outsider with some sort of knowledge of the region, tells the tale. They also establish or explore communities of women in their anthology. Through an overview of relevant scholarship on Zitkala-Sa, Chapter One will demonstrate that Zitkala-Sa may be misaligned with the camp of regionalism, particularly when scholars draw on the well-known literary techniques of the movement. As Lewandowski observes in *Red Bird, Red Power*, many scholars label Zitkala-Sa as assimilationist and argue that she allows appropriation to take over and control her ideas.

After discussing Zitkala-Sa’s differences from traditional regionalism, Chapter Two will introduce readers to the theory of hybridity, as made popular by postcolonial theorist Homi K. Bhabha in his text, *The Location of Culture*. I discuss the idea of hybridity in relation to W.E.B. DuBois’ concept of double consciousness, in which a person has more than one social identity, culminating in the struggle for one’s identity. As critic Sandra Sumamoto Stanley writes:

Like African American writer and activist, W.E.B. DuBois, Zitkala-Sa not only fought for the rights of her people, but also sought to recover and affirm her people's cultural contributions—as she states, ‘to transplant the native spirit...into the English language, since America in the last few centuries has acquired a second tongue.’ (65)

Hybridity, in which minorities live in the two worlds, opens up new ways of reading some writers of the nineteenth century. David Paul Huddart, author of *Homi K. Bhabha* writes, “These concepts describe ways in which colonized peoples have resisted the power of the colonizer, a power that is never as secure as it seems to be” (1). Bhabha's postcolonial leanings are different than one of the leading critics of the theory, Edward Said. Where “Said argues that the way people in the West discussed the Orient developed a set of discourses of orientalism which set up an allegedly superior Western self in relation to an allegedly inferior non-Western other” (5), Bhabha supplements Said's ideas with psychoanalytic theory culminating in his own theory that “colonial discourse only *seems* to be successful in its domination of the colonized. Underneath its apparent success, this discourse is secretly marked by radical anxiety about its aims, its claims, and its achievements” (5). That being said, Bhabha uses the subconscious of the colonizers to show that agency of both colonizer and colonized is damaged.

As Huddart writes, “[Bhabha's] work operates on the assumption that a traditional philosophical sense of the relationship between one's self and others, between subject and object, can be very damaging in its consequences—something we see too often in the encounter between different cultures” (6). He continues, “Bhabha's writing emphasizes the *hybridity* of cultures, which on one level simply refers to the mixedness, or even

‘impurity’ of cultures – so long as we don’t imagine that any culture is really *pure*. This term refers to an original mixedness within every form of identity” (6-7). Contemporary Native American writers, like Gerald Vizenor, have also commented on the idea of “the systematic exclusion of Native American Indians [which] continues today in the shape of federal reservations and the administration of services by government agencies” (qtd. in Raab and Butler 10-11). Although Vizenor’s argument is associated with modern problems faced by Native Americans, like gambling in casinos, the political aspect is still present.

In Chapter Three, I turn to Zitkala-Sa’s work. A goal of this thesis is to discuss the factors in Zitkala-Sa’s writing and life to show that her assimilationist techniques were in fact deliberate and honest, for she was writing in a world that treated her as the other, the lowly, and the exotic. To highlight these points, I will analyze her work and related advertising in *The Atlantic Monthly* and *Harper’s Bazaar* where her short stories were first published. These periodical publications show the kind of identity being constructed.

In this final chapter, I will discuss and analyze passages from Zitkala-Sa’s work, namely *American Indian Stories*, to show how her work exemplifies hybridity theory and landscape-reliant regionalism. I argue that Zitkala-Sa’s work is best understood as “landscape-reliant regionalism” because the only element of regionalism that truly fits her texts is that of the land. Seeing Zitkala-Sa’s work as fully regionalist is deeply problematic because it distracts from her larger critique.

CHAPTER ONE: PAST SCHOLARSHIP ON ZITKALA-SA

“When Zitkala-Sa seized the pen of the ‘mainstream’ culture, she used that emblem of phallic power as a revisionist force, to deconstruct the prevailing imperialistic mythologies of the majority culture” (Stanley 65).

“She spent her life in balance between two worlds, using the language of one to translate the needs of another. She was in a truly liminal position, always on the threshold of two worlds, but never fully entering either” (Fisher 20).

Introduction

Critics have been slow to recognize the complexities of Zitkala-Sa’s body of work. She has been discussed by critics since the end of the 1970s, with the publication of Dexter Fisher’s thesis and her subsequent article with the same title, “The Transformation of Tradition: A Study of Zitkala-Sa and Mourning Dove, Two Transitional American Indian Writers.” Beginning with this text and into the next decade and a half, scholars criticized Zitkala-Sa for refusing to decide between her native heritage and her white Christian schooling and viewed her as assimilationist. Others have seen her as more of an accommodationist, because she follows a certain way of life while not fully accepting it, and presents an opposing view than the majority. Critics discussed her writing as well as her approach to various political issues concerning Native Americans within the context of assimilation. As her biography reveals, Zitkala-Sa maintained ties to her native community even as she argued against peyote use. However, by the end of the 1990s, the view of Zitkala-Sa changed to a recognition of the complexities of her work and her position as a Native American writer trying to survive

in the literary world. In this chapter, I will discuss the older scholarship that focuses primarily on assimilation and then turn to more recent work that situates Zitkala-Sa in the literary movement of regionalism. Although regionalism can be a useful label and is preferable to pigeon-holing Zitkala-Sa as an assimilationist, I will argue that it is a limited way to understand Zitkala-Sa.

Zitkala-Sa and Assimilation: 1979-1997

In her 1979 thesis *The Transformation of Tradition: A Study of Zitkala Sa and Mourning Dove, Two Transitional American Indian Writers*,³ Alice Poindexter Fisher (pseudonym Dexter Fisher) situates Zitkala-Sa in the context of assimilation in the earliest critical study to consider Zitkala-Sa's position as a liminal figure. Fisher begins with an analysis of an article published by *Harper's Bazaar* in the section "Persons Who Interest Us," which states:

A young Indian girl, who is attracting much attention in Eastern cities on account of her beauty and many talents, is Zitkala-Sa, . . . Zitkala-Sa is of the Sioux tribe of Dakota and until her ninth year was a veritable little savage, running wild over the prairie and speaking no language but her own . . . She has also published lately a series of articles in a leading magazine . . . which display a rare command of English and much artistic feeling. (qtd. in Fisher 330)

Using this interesting quote to setup her argument, Fisher points out that Zitkala-Sa lived in between two worlds: "To her mother and traditional Sioux; . . . she had abandoned,

¹ This thesis eventually produced an article by the same title in *Critical Essays on American Literature* (1985).

even betrayed, the Indian way of life by getting an education in the white man's world. To those at the Carlisle Indian school . . . she was an anathema because she insisted on remaining 'Indian' (14). Fisher also argues that Zitkala-Sa's "Why I Am a Pagan" is "embarrassing" because she was so keen to remove herself from the white, Christian world. Fisher never explains why she uses the word "embarrassing," so it leads one to wonder what she meant by it. Fisher also discusses Zitkala-Sa's decision to change her name from Gertrude Simmons to her Sioux name, meaning "red bird," as an example of her liminality: "In naming herself, Zitkala-Sa is asserting at one and the same time her independence and her cultural ties. As Zitkala-Sa, she will try to recreate the spirit of her tribe in her collection of legends, though she is never able to return to Yankton permanently" (17). Throughout the project, Fisher continues to highlight Zitkala-Sa's status as a liminal figure, never truly stating whether she sees it as a strength or a weakness of the author.

Fisher's work is important for bringing early attention to Zitkala-Sa. In her conclusion, Fisher does not take a stand on whether or not Zitkala-Sa can be understood as either assimilationist or accommodationist, but rather remains moderate on her views of Zitkala-Sa. Fisher's work encourages other scholarship on Zitkala-Sa and introduces the idea that Zitkala-Sa uses assimilationist techniques: "Zitkala Sa . . . [is one] of the early Indian writers who attempted to make the transition from oral to written form and to bridge the gap between tradition and assimilation" (v). Fisher uses the word "attempted" to show the difficulty Zitkala-Sa faced, as well as suggests the thought that she failed. Finally, Fisher leaves us with a nuanced view: "Zitkala Sa was the reformer, the protestor, the one who refused to convert to Christianity or yield totally to assimilationist

politics; her literature, particularly the autobiographical sketches, is remarkable because of the tone of militancy that runs throughout” (38). Fisher’s work situates Zitkala-Sa as a liminal figure who struggled with assimilationism, and marks the first wave/stage of scholarship.

Like Dexter Fisher’s article, Nancy M. Peterson’s *Walking in Two Worlds: Mixed-Blood Indian Women Seeking Their Path* (2002) uses the harsh realities of Zitkala-Sa’s upbringing to show how she assimilated to white culture. First, she mentions the guilt Zitkala-Sa felt after excessive exposure to the administration of the boarding schools: “For her part, Gertrude felt immense guilt for her need to learn things beyond her people’s culture” (163). The guilty feelings continue on for Zitkala-Sa, especially once she felt stuck in-between her two worlds. Peterson writes, “With deep ambivalence, Gertrude recruited students for Carlisle, believing despite her painful experiences that the Indians’ only hope lay in education” (165). It is not only her biographical history that displays her liminality. This struggle of hers comes forth in her writings as well. Peterson notes that the publication of “The Soft-Hearted Sioux” displays Zitkala-Sa’s liminality greater than many of her other works:

[The story] depict[s] an educated brave returning to his father’s lodge and their pain-filled discovery the boy could no longer feed his starving father because he had been taught not to kill. After being ill-received by the newspaper at Carlisle, calling it “morally bad,” Pratt and the newspaper disparaged her work and accused her of harming the educational work underway for Indian peoples. (167)

Further depictions of Zitkala-Sa’s mysterious loyalties include the realization that although she placed her own son in a Catholic boarding school, she states, “Home is

home wherever it may be, and the children's love for their parents and the parents' love for their children bring a heart tie superior to anything the missionary can do for us" (qtd. in Peterson 176). Peterson ends her article discussing the hardships between Zitkala-Sa and her mother: "She had been unable to reconcile with her mother. She always felt guilty she could not be content on the reservation and sad that some reservation Indians suspected her motives and goodwill. She had never been able to balance her progressive drive with her need to value and retain the old ways" (176-7). With this, we can see Peterson's view of Zitkala-Sa's choices. She states that Zitkala-Sa may have tried hard to honor both worlds, but could never escape her difficulties.

Early scholarship continued to focus on Zitkala-Sa as a liminal figure. In 1993, Dorothea Susag published, "Zitkala-Sa (Gertrude Simmons Bonnin): A Power(full) Literary Voice," which explores Zitkala-Sa's autobiographical essays as examples of the myths which "perpetuate[d] the victimization of Indian women" (3). Using Edward Said's idea of the "exile" to frame her argument, Susag argues that "Edward Said defines the recent plight of exiles in 'alien' worlds and their subsequent roles in the development of literature. Viewing the exile as permanently torn from 'a native place' or a 'true home,' Said suggests the exile can never belong to the present landscape" (5). Although Susag sees Zitkala-Sa as the exile, existing in between two worlds, she also acknowledges that Zitkala-Sa flirts with an assimilationist position because of her attraction to the Western world: "She deliberately turned away from her Yankton/Dakota tradition and ambitiously moved into the literature, music, politics, and faith of the dominant culture" (5). Ultimately, Susag sees Zitkala-Sa as stuck between two binaries,

essentially using her placement to her advantage. Using Said to ground her analysis, Susag argues that,

Exiles compensate for ‘disorienting loss’ by creating ‘new worlds,’ resembling ‘an old one left behind for ever,’ while they demonstrate . . . characteristic styles of being an exile, methods for compelling the world to accept [their] vision. These characteristics are apparent in Zitkala-Sa’s writing, evidenced primarily in her militancy, her romanticism, and her singular stereotyping of the ‘heartless paleface’. (7)

Susag’s article is the first in this second wave of scholarship about Zitkala-Sa, a wave that lasts for a few short years.

Zitkala-Sa, Autobiography, and Regionalism: 1997-present

In the late 1990’s, views on Zitkala-Sa shifted. Rather than critiquing her assimilationist tendencies, critics began to see her as more of an “accommodationist”: a person who acclimatizes to a new culture, while still keeping in mind his or her own belief system in order to gain entry into a usually forbidden area. Sandra Kumamoto Stanley’s “Claiming a Native American Identity: Zitkala-Sa and Autobiographical Strategies” provides a good example of this shift in interpretation. She writes of the tendency of minority writers in the 19th century to follow a Benjamin Franklin “rags to riches” ideal, thus compromising their own values to an extent in favor of the majority culture:

Scholars, however, have recently argued that in such autobiographical works as Washington’s *Up From Slavery*, minority writers often have chosen a voice of

reconciliation and accommodation precisely because they understand that they are part of a disempowered group; strategically using an encoded language of accommodation, they seek what power they can from a dominant culture which might otherwise silence them. (65)

We can see Zitkala-Sa as “accommodationist” because she adapts to the dominant culture in order to write and to publish successfully to an audience. This approach influences my own research. The previous scholarship seems to have mixed views on her approach, and the critics seem to be playing a zero-sum game: they see either this or that. However, accommodationism helps to make sense of Zitkala-Sa’s complicated lifestyle choices (such as placing her children in Catholic schools), but also, more importantly, opens up possibilities of interpreting Zitkala-Sa’s works within a wider, and distinctly literary context.

Zitkala-Sa can also be understood as part of the feminist recovery of women writers in the 1980s-1990s. With the publication of Fetterley and Pryse’s *Writing Out of Place: Regionalism, Women, and American Literary Culture* in 2003 and their Norton Anthology *American Regional Writers*, Zitkala-Sa’s work reached a new audience. Before the publication of this text, scholarship on Zitkala-Sa was sparse. This interest is positive for Zitkala-Sa because it calls attention to her work, but it may also be seen as problematic because the label regionalism threatened to pigeonhole her again, albeit in a slightly different way. Consider, for example, that *Writing Out of Place* does not include a section dedicated to Zitkala-Sa in its table of contents. Fetterley and Pryse mention her in passing only and in relation to another minority writer discussed in the text, Sui Sin Far. Like other scholars, Fetterley and Pryse draw attention to the liminal space Zitkala-

Sa occupies. A review of the MLA International Bibliography database shows that nearly two thirds of scholarship on Zitkala-Sa/Gertrude Bonnin was released after *Writing Out of Place*. Despite its limited consideration of Zitkala-Sa, this text and the Norton anthology sparks an upsurge in scholarship on Zitkala-Sa, offering literary critics and historians the opportunity to reframe/consider her place in the canon of not only women's literature, but American literature.

American literary regionalism can be described as one of the most complicated literary movements because many critics disagree on the definition and even the label, with some preferring the earlier term "local color." In addition, the terms "local color" and "regionalism" are problematic, for some critics use them interchangeably, some see them as similar yet different, and some see vast differences between the two. Providing a general definition, Donna M. Campbell defines regionalism as "fiction and poetry that focuses on the characters, dialect, customs, topography, and other features particular to a specific region" ("Regionalism and Local Color Fiction). The *Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*, gets more specific, showing that local color and regionalism can be distinguished by the time they were used: "Whereas local color is often applied to a specific literary mode that flourished in the late 19th century, regionalism implies a recognition from the colonial period to the present of differences among specific areas of the country" (Wilson and Ferris). *The Oxford Companion to American Literature* adds another wrinkle: "In local-color literature one finds the dual influence of romanticism and realism, since the author frequently looks away from ordinary life to distant lands, strange customs, or exotic scenes, but retains through minute detail a sense of fidelity and

accuracy of description” (Hart 439). Taking a similar approach, scholar Anne E. Rowe on the *Library of Southern Literature* website notes that,

With the increasing move toward urbanization and industrialization following the war and the concurrent diminishing of regional differences, it is not surprising that there was a developing nostalgia for remaining regional differences. Local color writing, which was regionally, and often rurally, based and usually took the form of short stories intended for mass consumption, met a need for stories about simpler times and faraway places.

Rowe goes on to say that although many critics associate regionalism’s beginnings with Bret Harte and the west, the south played a major part in the development of local color characteristics.

As this survey of basic, student-friendly definitions suggests, regionalism and local color are complicated terms. An early attempt to recognize these complications is 1997’s *Breaking Boundaries: New Perspectives on Women’s Regional Writing*, edited by Sherrie A. Inness and Diana Royer. The editors describe this project as “expanding the definition of regionalism to include formerly marginalized texts and authors” (1).

Furthermore, they note that the contributors “show how regional fiction, rather than being a conservative genre, as some have argued, is actually a genre that offers a forum for social protest. Yet others wish to complicate readers’ understanding of regionalism by looking in fresh, new ways at authors who have long been associated with regionalism, such as Mary Austin, Kate Chopin, Sarah Orne Jewett, and Harriet Beecher Stowe” (1). *Breaking Boundaries* provides a general overview on the writers from the camp of regionalism. The sole focus on women writers, including Zitkala-Sa, shows the

distinction for this text from others written on regionalism. The sole article about Zitkala-Sa is D.K. Meisenheimer, Jr.'s "Regionalist Bodies/Embodied Regions: Sarah Orne Jewett and Zitkala-Sa," and although the article juxtaposes Zitkala-Sa with a well-known regionalist writer, Meisenheimer discusses the decisiveness missing from earlier scholarship: unlike her fellow scholars, she takes a stand on Zitkala-Sa's approach. Meisenheimer writes, "In the course of her short literary career, Zitkala-Sa would gradually abandon her earlier assimilationist tone and out of her encounter with regionalism (and the audience it satisfied) begin to develop key literary strategies for subverting its expectations" (109). With this publication, Zitkala-Sa is no longer situated as liminal in precisely the same way she was before.

Judith Fetterley and Marjorie Pryse further complicate our understanding of the differences between "local color" and regionalism. In *Writing Out of Place*, they provide an even more nuanced view of "regionalism" that extends the definition beyond the physical space:

Significantly, the etymology of the word "region" does not suggest any connection to "natural" or geographical boundaries. To be ruled is to be *regional*; to rule is to become the kind of the *realm*. . . Thus a region is an area ruled by a more powerful entity, earlier a king, in modern times the state or nation, and increasingly at present global economic interests. The very words "region" and "regionalism" therefore convey political relations of subordination. (3)

Although many critics have overlooked regionalist writers, in favor of realist writers such as William Dean Howells or Henry James, Fetterley and Pryse insist that it is simply not accurate to categorize many women and minority writers as realists. Pryse and Fetterley

argue that, “while regionalism shares certain features of mode and subject matter with realism, it does not share the ideological underpinnings of the more familiar category. . . . Regionalism poses both a critique of and a resistance to the cultural ideologies that realism naturalizes” (4). In other words, the writers that have been long ignored in the canon are of the utmost importance in realizing the power dynamic not only in nineteenth and early twentieth century American literature but also in labels like regionalism, realism, and naturalism.

Fetterley and Pryse explain why they chose to distinguish the term “regionalism” from “local color fiction” or “regional” writing:

Our choice of the term “regionalism” to mark the category of texts that exist in this site of contestation results from the ironically fortuitous way in which literary historians have casually designated nineteenth-century works set in geographical regions outside urban centers as ‘local color.’ Even feminist critics have, until recently, accepted this term and used it to refer to any nineteenth-century regional writer. (6)

As Fetterley and Pryse write, “Regionalism becomes a site where questions of race and questions of gender find mutual and dynamic articulation for both white writers and writers of color” (27). For them, when a writer is seen as regionalist, gender and race are all blended together because all of the writers included in the movement are marginalized in some way. However, if all writers are to follow the guidelines both Fetterley and Pryse ascribe to regionalism, Native American writers *cannot* be considered regionalist writers as the Fetterley and Pryse definition suggests. This is because they do not write of their own dialects (if forced to attend boarding schools), and they do not practice their own

customs. My claim that Native American writers cannot be simply placed within the camp of regionalism resists Fetterley and Pryse's approach: "As we shall demonstrate throughout *Writing Out of Place*, the fictions of Dunbar-Nelson, Sui Sin Far, and Zitkala-Sa do not constitute a separate category; indeed their texts are central to our definition and understanding of regionalism, complicating and problematizing many of its key features" (27). Although Fetterley and Pryse attempt to complicate the textbook definitions of regionalism by including these writers, this method proves to be problematic because minority writers receive cursory analysis. This idea will be further discussed in Chapter Three, when we look at Zitkala-Sa's writings and explore how her work follows one tenet of regionalism: a connection to the landscape.

More recent scholarship, which can be considered a third wave of scholarship on Zitkala-Sa, reflects a variety of approaches to her life and work. "Zitkala-Sa's and Sui Sin Far's Sketch Collections: Communal Characterization as Resistance Writing Tool," a 2008 article by Vanessa Holford Diana, focuses on the communal voice found in her *American Indian Stories*. As Diana writes, "Many editorials espousing the reformers' assimilationist viewpoints appeared in periodicals such as the *Atlantic Monthly*, where Zitkala-Sa also published a number of her stories, a placement that suggests that her writing is in direct dialogue with the underlying assumptions of such reform rhetoric" (99). Zitkala-Sa, who originally had to write in the vein of whoever would publish her in the early days, finally got a chance to write her true feelings. The audience was similar to her first publication, but in this one, a 1934 newspaper article, she discussed the origins of Thanksgiving Day. She states, "It was the love of the red man for the white man that saved the lives of the Pilgrims, and protected them in founding a new government. . . . You

who live in cities have been too preoccupied to behold the naked, hungry red man on remote reservations” (Red Men). Since this article was written in a similar medium as her first publication, she has the opportunity to use her audience to project her true feelings and ideas. Having had to write what the critics wanted for so long, this shows a kind of breakthrough for Zitkala-Sa’s writing. This article also shows the various topics scholars have discussed in relation to Zitkala-Sa in recent years.

We have seen how scholars have discussed Zitkala-Sa in previous scholarship. The first glimpse of her is used in a muddy analysis, followed by assimilationist readings of her texts. A second wave sees critics using biographical criticism as a way to analyze her work. After these waves, scholars began to view Zitkala-Sa’s work as fitting into the literary movement of regionalism. Instead of a regionalist writer, Zitkala-Sa is best understood as what I describe as landscape-reliant regionalism because she only has one aspect of regionalism in her writing: a deep connection to the landscape. Although regionalism *may* be a useful label for the work of Zitkala-Sa, I complicate this approach in the next chapter through the use of Homi K. Bhabha’s theories of hybridity, mimicry, and the third space.

CHAPTER TWO: HOMI K. BHABHA'S THEORIES & THE LIMINALITY OF
ZITKALA-SA

"I was neither a wee girl nor a tall one; neither a wild Indian nor a tame one"

("School," 191).

*"These unique and genuine records of the mind of an Indian child are told precisely in
her own words"* (Advertisement 14 424).

Much like Zitkala-Sa writes in her autobiographical sketches first published in *The Atlantic Monthly*, postcolonial theorist Homi K. Bhabha discusses the idea of a minority living as a liminal figure, in between two worlds. He calls the act of this living between two worlds hybridity. Bhabha states:

Hybridity is the name of this displacement of value from symbol to sign that causes the dominant discourse to split along the axis of its power to be representative, authoritative. Hybridity represents that ambivalent 'turn' of the discriminated subject into the terrifying, exorbitant object of paranoid classification—a disturbing questioning of the images and presences of authority. (162)

Liminality is a common theme in Native American literature, but criticism does not always consider the ways in which Native American writers and their fictional characters dealt with the severity of their environments. As Atilla Silku states in her article, "Fiddler on the Threshold: Cultural Hybridity in Gertrude Bonnin's *American Indian Stories*,"

Bhabha claims that ‘all cultural statements and systems’ are merely constructions, and because of their discursive nature, cultural signs ‘can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized, and read anew’ [“Cultural” 208]. Such an understanding of hybridity and cultural polarity makes it possible to re-read the Native American history from a postcolonial perspective because of the similarities between assimilation and colonization processes. (116)

Using a postcolonial lens to read Zitkala-Sa can be useful for studying and understanding her textual choices.

Homi K. Bhabha describes the need for a theory of “cultural difference,” which designates the internal difference between the speaking subject and the subject spoken about or partially shaped in that act of speaking, as well as the difference between Self and Other. In other words, Bhabha examines the dominant culture and its alienation and subsequent assimilation of a certain group. To convey this idea in a simpler and more familiar way, enter the following metaphor, recognized among both Americans and non-Americans to describe the country: the melting pot.

As Shannon Sullivan writes in *Living Across and Through Skins: Transactional Bodies, Pragmatism, and Feminism*, “The metaphor of the melting pot has been used not to produce a genuine fondue, but to force all the different kinds of cheese into being one of those cheeses: American cheese. That is, the melting pot metaphor has functioned to promote the assimilation of ethnic minorities into Anglo-Americans” (15). Afro-Canadian writer Cecil Foster calls it “a neo-mythic ‘melting pot’ of differences: of colours, ethnicities, races, nationalities, lineages, diasporas, and cultures. It was a melting pot that could not fully dissolve every difference in a brew of absolutes” (225). Bhabha’s

theory of hybridity provides a more nuanced account of this categorization issue. In this chapter, I suggest that Bhabha's theory of hybridity provides a useful lens to analyze Zitkala-Sa's work, and I will argue in the next chapter that his definition of hybridity is directly applicable to Zitkala-Sa's experiences as a Native American child forced to assimilate to a "white" identity.

Bhabha & Hybridity

Before turning to a reading of Zitkala-Sa's work, it is important to have a working definition of hybridity. Robert J.C. Young notes, "there is no single, or correct, concept of hybridity: it changes as it repeats, but it also repeats as it changes" (25). In the simplest terms, hybridity can be defined as the act of belonging to a "mixture of traditions or chains of signification" (Raab and Butler 1). Bhabha explains that there is no resolution for hybridity: "Hybridity has no such perspective of depth or truth to provide: it is not a third term that resolves the tension between two cultures, or the two scenes of a book, in a dialectical play of 'recognition.' In effect, it is always there" (121). In short, the opposition of hybridity and "purity" is false because for Bhabha no identity is fully homogenous. As Bhabha states, "Cultures come to be represented by virtue of the processes of iteration and translation through which their meanings are very vicariously addressed to – *through* – an Other" (58). A hybrid individual must live in between two worlds.

As Bhabha suggests, hybridity captures the need to exist in the dominant culture while still maintaining a self-image, including race, ethnic, and gender identities. In this sense, hybridity is similar to "double consciousness" coined by W.E.B. DuBois in his

1903 text, *The Souls of Black Folk*. As he writes, “It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity” (3). And, just as DuBois describes of double-consciousness, otherized individuals must be aware of the space they take up as minorities existing in dominant culture, and the individuals must *live in* and *adapt to* both worlds: a culturally dominant white culture and the world they are born into as a minority.

Huddart explains in *Homi K. Bhabha* that Bhabha’s theory of hybridity questions the tendency to critique colonialism as an all or nothing proposition. In most postcolonial theory, the role of colonized and colonizer is simply reversed, and Bhabha draws from Edward Said. However, Bhabha’s work deals with the mind of both colonizer and colonized, taking into account the background of and even more deeply, the subconscious of each party in order to analyze completely. He calls this liminal area the third space:

[F]or me the importance of hybridity is not to be able to trace two original moments from which the third emerges, rather hybridity to me is the ‘third space’ which enables other positions to emerge. This third space displaces the histories that constitute it, and sets up new structures of authority, new political initiatives, which are inadequately understood through received wisdom. (qtd. in Rutherford 211)

Bhabha recognizes the importance of acknowledging the facets of colonialism in order to be free from its oppression. Bhabha offers a nuanced account of liminality that emphasizes the interconnectedness of colonizer and colonized. He also discusses a

contemporary writer familiar with the term of hybridity, Gloria Anzaldúa. She writes of her identity,

As a mestiza I have no country, my homeland cast me out; yet all countries are mine because I am every woman's sister or potential lover. I am cultureless because, as a feminist, I challenge the collective cultural/religious male-derived beliefs of Indo-Hispanics and Anglos; yet I am cultured because I am participating in the creation of yet another culture, a new story to explain the world and our participation in it, a new value system with images and symbols that connect us to each other and to the planet. (182)

Anzaldúa sees herself as far removed from all her people (colonized and *powerless*), yet part of the entire whole because of her existence on Earth (colonizer and *powerful*).

Acknowledging the relationship between colonizer and colonized, and recognizing that the line between the two is not necessarily distinct but rather fluid, is another major tenet of Bhabha's theory of hybridity. Bhabha's ideas about the third space provide a useful way to understand Zitkala-Sa's work. Chapter Three suggests that reading Zitkala-Sa's work through the lens of third space theory reveals a metaphorical area for the liminal characters to exist harmoniously, since they do not seem to belong elsewhere. The metaphorical third space she creates for her characters is the land around them, a place without judgment or bias, where they can feel comfort.

Hybridity & *Atlantic Monthly* Advertisements

“In societies where multiculturalism is encouraged racism is still rampant in various forms. This is because the universalism that paradoxically permits diversity masks ethnocentric norms, values and interests” –Homi K. Bhabha

When “Impressions of an Indian Childhood,” “The School Days of an Indian Girl,” and “An Indian Teacher among Indians” were first published in 1901, they were advertised in *The Atlantic Monthly* (see Fig. 1). The publication exposed its mainly white audience to the “exotic Native.” However, Zitkala-Sa represented the tamed exotic. She looked different, but she was still acceptable: she spoke in near perfect English. Therefore, *The Atlantic Monthly* could feel as though it was accepting diverse writers, yet play it safe by picking a writer who fit white standards. The advertisements below show how the comments frame her as an other. In her writings, she presents to the world a Native who tells not only the story of her distinctive

Advertisement 14 -- No Title
The Literary World; a Monthly Review of Current Literature (1870-1904); Nov 25, 1899; 30, 24; American Periodicals
 pg. 424

The Atlantic Monthly
 + 1900 +

AMONG other interesting contributions for the coming year are the following papers, to appear in the January, February, and March numbers:

The Memories of an Indian Childhood,
 By ZITKALA-SA (RED BIRD).
 The writer of these papers is a young Indian girl of the Yankton Sioux Tribe of Dakota Indians, who received her education in the East.
 These unique and genuine records of the mind of an Indian child are told precisely in her own words. A second paper,

The School Days of an Indian Girl,
 will describe her experiences as a pupil in the Government schools; while a third,

An Indian Teacher Among Indians,
 throws a good deal of light upon the vexed problem of Indian education.

SPECIAL OFFER.--In order to introduce the Atlantic to a large circle of new readers, the publishers announce that on receipt of 50 cents the magazine will be sent on trial, for three months, to any person whose name does not now appear upon the Atlantic subscription list.
Illustrated prospectus for 1900 now ready. Send 10 cents for a recent sample copy of the magazine and the prospectus.

35 Cents a Copy. \$4.00 a Year.
HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN & CO. . . . 4 Park St., Boston.

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Fig. 1. Advertisement in *Atlantic Monthly* showing upcoming stories written by Zitkala-Sa.

life, but also actually writes in the English language. This success story demonstrates for the white audience that their assimilationist techniques “worked.” The exposure of Zitkala-Sa’s world demonstrates a marketing tactic for the *Atlantic Monthly* publishers, but the other side of this issue is to make sure that it does not present Sioux life too closely because it may be unsettling for the white, middle class audience. In an advertisement for *The Atlantic Monthly*, critics write, “These unique and genuine records of the mind of an Indian child are told precisely in her own words. [Another paper] throws a good deal of light upon the vexed problem of Indian education” (Advertisement 14 424). They describe her in this way not only to “prove” her authenticity, but also to showcase her ability to write in the English language she had to learn on the reservation. Advertisement 14 shows a picture of Zitkala-Sa in Indian style dress with a serious look upon her face. Displaying “Zitkala-Sa” (Red Bird) informs readers of the meaning of her unique name. The advertisement presents her as an exotic “other” who can write in English and comment on “the vexed problem of Indian education.”

Other advertisements follow this general approach. Another advertisement reads, “The author has endeavored to present the life of her race from the Indian point of view, bringing together the most treasured relics that her own ancestors have and clothing the stories in picturesque English. These legends are illustrated with great fidelity to nature by a talented young Indian artist” (Notes and News). The advertisement shows the racist views of *The Atlantic Monthly* contributors of the time. They make readers aware that she is not white since she speaks of “her race from the Indian point of view,” but that she *is* trying to enter into the white world through the use of “picturesque English.” These advertisements reflect the kind of hybrid identity that Bhabha describes.

In fact, even in her later years, working as a land rights activist, Zitkala-Sa suffers from backlash and degrading comments in “Red Men Who Taught Pilgrims How to Exist on First Thanksgiving Day in 1621,” a newspaper article in *The Washington Post* (see Fig. 2). She writes her message to the people on Thanksgiving Day, sharing her concerns about neglect of Native Americans. She states, “You who live in cities have been too preoccupied to behold the naked, hungry red man, on remote reservations. You have not had the time to shake hands with them in memory if [sic] the first Thanksgiving Day. Then let the red man be your invisible guest at your dinner table now” (13). In turn, the columnist states, “Upon her marriage more than 30 years ago, Zitkala-Sa relinquished her fanciful Indian name and assumed the title of Mrs. Bonnin” (Red Men). The characterization of her name as “fanciful” shows the disregard for native customs. Also, much like the early advertisements of her work, this comment emphasizes her appearance rather than her accomplishments—her “efforts” on Indian citizenship receive passing mention in a short phrase.

Red Men Who Taught Pilgrims How to Exist Guests on First Thanksgiving Day in 1621

But White Race
Now Considers
Them Intruders

Mrs. R. T. Bonnin, Native-Born Indian, Recalls Neglect of Her People.

GUESTS at the very first Thanksgiving dinner more than 300 years ago were Indians who had taught struggling white settlers how to plant crops, how to secure game, that they might exist in this new country. But whatever gratefulness the white race ever had toward the red men disappeared soon after early hardships were conquered. Today the Indians, instead of the white man, is considered the intruder.

At least that is the way it appears to Zitkala-Sa, member of the Ponkan Sioux tribe, and wife of Capt. Raymond T. Bonnin. Upon her marriage more than 30 years ago, Zitkala-Sa relinquished her fanciful Indian name and assumed the title of Mrs. Bonnin. But she relinquished none of her interest in her people.

Largely through her efforts the Indians gained full citizenship, the National Council of American Indians was founded, and the General Federation of Women's Clubs added in Indian welfare department. Mrs. Bonnin, who now lives in Lorton, Park Va., was the first president of the National Council of American Indians.

Following is her Thanksgiving message:

By Zitkala, Sa (Gertrude Bonnin.)

It was the first year following the white men's welcomed landing when crops were harvested, that the first Thanksgiving was celebrated. The Pilgrims invited their Indian hosts to join them, which they did, bringing gifts of venison. It was the love of the red man for the white man that saved the lives of the Pilgrims, and protected them in founding a new government. The Nation is preparing to celebrate the memory of that first Thanksgiving in 1621. I bring the red man before you. Let us forget.

Where is the red man? How has he fared in these three centuries? The Institute for Government Research states: "The race as a whole is poor. Several tribes, embracing in the aggregate a high proportion



In memory of the first Thanksgiving in which whites and Indians joined, Mrs. Gertrude Bonnin (Zitkala-Sa), president of the National Council of American Indians, pleads for greater recognition today of the Indians' rights, and for more attention to their needs.

Fig. 2. Partial newspaper article from *The Washington Post*, featuring photo of Zitkala-Sa.

In addition to these comments and reviews of her texts, *The Red Man and Helper* criticized her work for being a traitor to those who helped her in the past. An excerpt from the review states:

All that Zitkalasa [sic] has in the way of literary ability and culture she owes to the good people, who, from time to time, have taken her into their homes and hearts and given her aid, not a word of gratitude or allusion to such kindness on the part of her friends has ever escaped her in any line of anything she has written for the public. By this course she injures herself and harms the educational work in progress for the race from which she sprang. In a list of educated Indians whom we have in mind, some of whom have reached higher altitudes in literary and professional lines than Zitkalasa [sic], we know of no other case such pronounced morbidness. (qtd in Fisher 15)

Judging from this particular review, Zitkala-Sa had at least some critics who believed she was an assimilationist.

Bhabha & Mimicry

Bhabha's theory of mimicry provides another useful way to reconsider claims that Zitkala-Sa is an assimilationist. Mimicry is "desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, *as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite*" (86). Bhabha goes on to say, "Mimicry is also the sign of the inappropriate, however, a difference or recalcitrance which coheres the dominant strategic function of colonial power, intensifies surveillance, and poses an imminent threat to both 'normalized' knowledges and disciplinary powers" (86). According to David Huddart, author of *Homi K. Bhabha*, mimicry is, "not slavish

imitation, and the colonized is not being assimilated into the supposedly dominant or even superior culture. In fact, mimicry as Bhabha understands it is an exaggerated copying of language, culture, manners, and ideas” (57). In a basic sense, mimicry involves the copying of stereotypes, and embracing said stereotypes in order to be part of the established community. It can be common to assume that when writers take part in mimicry, they are fully assimilating into the dominant culture, but in fact as Bhabha suggests, they know exactly what they are doing: “Mimicry is constructed around an ambivalence; in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference” (86). Mimicry must highlight differences while still maintaining the disguise in a sense; those who take part in mimicry must pay attention to their agenda and to the world they are acting in. He states, “The emphasis on hybridity and the liminal is important because colonial discourses have often set up distinctions between pure cultures” (8). Bhabha takes his time to show the blurred lines between colonized and colonizer. The relationship is not as polarized for Bhabha, who sees the reasons for the categories as stemming from the same place. In other words, Bhabha sees an other as living in a state of always watching, and always being aware of the space one takes up, while realizing that he or she will never overcome his or her deficient place in society. The other strives for excellence and acceptance but is never allowed to achieve it.

Mimicry, Bhabha says, “represents an *ironic* compromise” (86). When considering the role of mimicry, another nineteenth century writer provides a useful analogy: Charles Chesnutt. As Wilson argues, “From the beginning of his national exposure in *The Atlantic*, Chesnutt was aware of his white audience’s expectations, and he wrote his plantation stories as a response to and a critique of that tradition” (60). Much

like Zitkala-Sa did in her writing with exposing the white entrapment and encroachment on native soil, Chesnutt mimicked his white audience's stereotypical beliefs, and through his writing, "expos[ed] not only the horrors of slavery but also the difficulties of Reconstruction (and of the present) for African Americans" (60). This type of writing allowed writers like Chesnutt, and also Zitkala-Sa, to become established in the literary world. Years later, there would be an established readership for their more political writings—in Zitkala-Sa's case: the dangers of peyote use, and the importance of Indian tribe land rights. As the *Atlantic Monthly* and other advertisements imply, Zitkala-Sa may have been writing with a particular audience in mind in order to become published. She had to mimic the white writers, and use their language, or as the publishers state, "[write] precisely in her own words," in order to reach an audience.

Much like her contemporaries, Zitkala-Sa took advantage of the opportunity given at *The Atlantic Monthly*. After being published, she became established as an author, showcased in her first publications: "Impressions of an Indian Childhood," "The School Days of an Indian Girl," and "An Indian Teacher among Indians," the three vignettes that would later be published in the collection entitled *American Indian Stories*. As stated in Zitkala-Sa's biography,

Though highly sentimental by modern standards, the *Atlantic Monthly* series quickly made Simmons, or Zitkala-Sa, the toast of Boston literary society. . . . The pieces helped Zitkala-Sa find an audience for her compilation of traditional Sioux tales, *Old Indian Legends*, published by Boston's Ginn & Company in 1901. As a whole, her early works constituted a critique that overturned white discourses of

civilization, gender, and religion to reveal the hypocrisy of the Euro-American perspective on Native peoples. (10)

In a sense, Zitkala-Sa wrote what she had to in order to be published. As Cathy Davidson explains in her edited collection of Zitkala-Sa's works, *American Indian Stories*, although written and published at different points of Zitkala-Sa's life, *American Indian Stories* should be read as one continuous narrative. The beginning stories show mimicry at work throughout Zitkala-Sa's use of familiar forms; as Davidson observes, "The book starts with an autobiographical narrative that moves from the child to the student to the teacher" (67) in the popular Benjamin Franklin autobiographical style. Davidson continues on by mentioning the stories that display a "female hero," which she states, "reads as both a cautionary warning against the strategies of land grafters and a utopian vision of feminist solidarity" (67). These stories show a shift in Zitkala-Sa's writing displaying mimicry. She still writes what the audience wants: fanciful stories about the exotic "Other," but with a deeper meaning behind them. Davidson explains the major transition Zitkala-Sa makes in her writing: "She ended the collection by moving to her own political present tense. "America's Indian Problem" pulls the collection into focus, both continuing the cycle (we know now it's child-student-*activist*), but also suggesting we reread all of *American Indian Stories* as a literary manifesto" (67). For example, in "America's Indian Problem," she brings to light the issue needed to be dealt with: the inequality of Indians. Zitkala-Sa states in the article, "The stain upon America's fair name is to be removed, and the remnant of the Indian nation, suffering from malnutrition, is to number among the invited invisible guests at your dinner tables" (156). After the publication of semi-

autobiographical stories, Zitkala-Sa was able to write more freely about subjects that interested her.

In *American Indian Stories* (1921), the collection which later included the autobiographical *Atlantic Monthly* selections as well as several short-stories, Zitkala-Sa added “America’s Indian Problem” (1921) to close the volume. In this piece, she begins with a well-known idea amongst Americans: “The hospitality of the American aborigine, it is told, saved the early settlers from starvation during the first bleak winters” (155). She provides examples of how American Indians were paid back for their kindness and generosity to the colonialists:

It was in this fashion that the old world snatched away the fee in the land of the new. . . America was divided between the powers of Europe and the aborigines were dispossessed of their country. The barbaric rule of might from which the paleface had fled hither for refuge caught up with him again, and in the melee the hospitable native suffered “legal disability.” (155)

She continues on to explain what should be done: “We would open the door of American opportunity to the red man and encourage him to find his rightful place in our American life” (155). She continues her integration techniques, but then asks her audience if they truly know what the Bureau of Indian Affairs accomplishes. She begins with a direct address to the audience: “Do you know what *your* Bureau of Indian Affairs, in Washington, D.C., really is? How it is organized and how it deals with wards of the nation?” (156). She then lays out the “Report of the Bureau of Municipal Research,” the date of publication, and the address. In this section, we see Zitkala-Sa’s writing change. She no longer needs to embrace mimicry. Her work has been published and she can use

her platform to highlight the problems she sees in the American Indian community.

Further, Bhabha's theory provides a useful way to understand Zitkala-Sa's critique of white culture.

Bhabha uses an idea of a double self to describe African characters in postcolonial literature. A similar point can be made for narrators in Zitkala-Sa's stories, where the displaced character seeks his or her place in the world. For example, in all of her stories published in *The Atlantic Monthly*. She refers to herself as "I," and when other characters speak to her, she does not mention any of them referring to her by any name. The only words used to address her include her brother calling her "baby sister," and her mother calling her "my child" (99). One can assume in most of the *American Indian Stories* that the narrator is based on the author herself. However, as it is known, these texts are only semi-autobiographical. In addition, "The Soft-Hearted Sioux," portrays a male narrator. The narrator(s) in *American Indian Stories* experience a lack of space, so he/she seeks out a space for recognition: which in turn is found in the landscape. Furthermore, Zitkala-Sa's narrators seek a religious figure in nature. Using Leslie Marmon Silko's idea from *Almanac of the Dead*, "Native Americans acknowledge no borders," can be used to analyze Zitkala-Sa's position on her writings; her type of regionalism does not and cannot be an example of the textbook term, for she has no "borders;" her connection to the land and the region is not the same as her non-Native contemporaries.

Zitkala-Sa's Relationship to the Third Space

“For me the importance of hybridity is not to be able to trace two original moments from which the third emerges, rather hybridity to me is the ‘Third Space’, which enables other positions to emerge” –Homi K. Bhabha

Bhabha's concept of the third space provides a useful lens to examine the connection between identity and landscape in Zitkala-Sa's work. Bhabha's third space theory emerges in the linguistic patterns and sociological background of the writer and borrows heavily from psychoanalysis, drawing some criticism.

Divided between her Sioux Family and her white classmates and instructors, Zitkala-Sa's third space becomes the landscape surrounding her. It is in this landscape, whether it be in the Sioux area of the Great Plains where she grew up, or the “Land of Rosy Apples” in the allegedly more sophisticated East, where the boarding schools were located. This idea of Zitkala-Sa's own third space will be examined more in depth in the next chapter with textual evidence from her fictional, semi-autobiographical accounts of her younger years. “Impressions of an Indian Childhood,” “The School Days of an Indian Girl,” and “An Indian Teacher among Indians,” first published in *The Atlantic Monthly* in 1901 demonstrate her liminality and her version of the third space. As Bhabha states in a 1990 interview about the third space, “However rational you are, or ‘rationalist’ you are (because rationalism is an ideology, not just a way of being sensible), it is actually very difficult, even impossible and counterproductive, to try and fit together different forms of culture and to pretend that they can easily coexist” (qtd. in Rutherford 209). Thus, the room for the third space exists to allow for a state of mind outside and/or in between

colonizer and colonized to exist; Bhabha's third space theory brings about another dimension to reading Zitkala-Sa's work. Drawing on Bhabha's theories, Chapter Three will provide a close reading of Zitkala-Sa's work and argue that she can be understood as a "landscape-reliant" regionalist.

CHAPTER THREE: THE LANDSCAPE-RELIANT REGIONALISM OF
ZITKALA-SA

“When the spirit swells my breast I love to roam leisurely among the green hills; or sometimes, sitting on the brink of the murmuring Missouri, I marvel at the great blue overhead.”

“With a child’s eager eye I drink in the myriad star shapes wrought in luxuriant color upon the green. Beautiful is the spiritual essence they embody.”

-“The Great Spirit”

Introduction & Background

Originally published in 1902 in *The Atlantic Monthly* as “Why I Am a Pagan” and collected in 1921 in *American Indian Stories* under the new title, “The Great Spirit,” provides one of the best examples of Zitkala-Sa’s landscape-reliant regionalism. The entire first paragraph establishes the natural world as a space of comfort for the narrator:

With half-closed eyes I watch the huge cloud shadows in their noiseless play upon the high bluffs opposite me, while into my ear ripple the sweet, soft cadences of the river’s song. Folded hands lie in my lap, for the time forgot. My heart and I lie small upon the earth like a grain of throbbing sand. Drifting clouds and tinkling waters, together with the warmth of a genial summer day, bespeak with eloquence the loving Mystery round about us. During the idle while I sat upon the sunny river brink, I grew somewhat, though my response be not so clearly manifest as in the green grass fringing the edge of the high bluff back of me. (114)

Zitkala-Sa uses euphonic words to describe the sense of comfort she feels when thinking about the land. This feeling continues throughout the vignette, to the final remarks:

“Here, in a fleeting quiet, I am awakened by the fluttering robe of the Great Spirit. To my innermost consciousness the phenomenal universe is a royal mantle, vibrating with His divine breath. Caught in its flowing fringes are the spangles and oscillating brilliants of sun, moon, and stars” (117). In this section, we see the faith the narrator has for God, but a different type of faith than the anglocentric God her teachers at the boarding school introduced her to. Unlike her anglocentric counterparts, she sees God in all living things, not as a man in the sky. She denies the well-known tenet that “there is one God who gives reward or punishment to the race of dead men. In the upper region the Christian dead are gathered in unceasing song and prayer. In the deep pit below, the sinful ones dance in torturing flames” (116). Instead she says, “A wee child toddling in a wonder world, I prefer to their dogma my excursions into the natural gardens where the voice of the Great Spirit is heard in the twittering of birds, the rippling of mighty waters, and the sweet breathing of flowers” (117). Instead of embracing a white monotheistic religion, she embraces the natural world to find her inner strength, peace, and religion. Since she does not follow this dominant religion, she relies on nature instead to find her place in the world.

Drawing on the previous chapter’s discussion of Bhabha, this chapter argues that Zitkala-Sa can be understood as a “landscape-reliant” regionalist. In addition to the assimilation she experiences, her reliance on landscape connects to her work with land rights later on in her lifetime. Recent scholarship acknowledges the limitations of placing Zitkala-Sa in the camp of regionalism because of its inability to respond “to the need for appropriate critical approaches to Indigenous literatures” (Totten 85). Scholars such as Gary Totten see the inclusion of Zitkala-Sa’s work into regionalism as an assimilation of

its own—into American literature without bringing to light its unique qualities and identity. Fellow Native writers like Paula Gunn Allen and Elizabeth Cook-Lynn identify a broader problem with the placement of Native writers in the canon of literature because it marginalizes them. This issue proves to be true for a writer like Zitkala-Sa because critics place her in regionalism, which is an already narrowed category distinct from realism and naturalism and mainly for female and minority writers. However, in Judith Fetterley and Marjorie Pryse’s substantial text, *Writing Out of Place: Regionalism, Women, and American Literary Culture*, they write that “the fiction of Zitkala-Sa do[es] not constitute a separate category; indeed [her] texts are central to our definition and understanding of regionalism, complicating and problematizing many of its key features” (27). This is followed by a statement which describes Zitkala-Sa’s work within regionalism: “Regionalism becomes a site where questions of race and questions of gender find mutual and dynamic articulation for both white writers and writers of color” (27). Thus, for Fetterley and Pryse, Zitkala-Sa’s writing is not completely different from that of her contemporaries, but rather placed in a category where all marginalized writers can be included and highlighted for their strengths.

As a writer with a unique background and rich history, Zitkala-Sa incorporates all the subjects Gary Totten mentions— “the major problems and concerns of national history,” “slavery,” “the place of indigenous people” and “women’s rights” (86)— but her reliance on the nature and landscape around her remains imperative to her survival. For these reasons, Zitkala-Sa differs from traditional regionalists like Sarah Orne Jewett.

In her article, “Ambiguity and Affiliation: The Stories and Essays of Zitkala-Sa,” Molly Crumpton Winter describes something highly reminiscent of the liminal figure present throughout the texts of Zitkala-Sa. She states:

In the writings of Zitkala-Sa, a rejection of American identity coexists with a sense that a traditional tribal identity is no longer viable once the process of assimilation begins. What emerges is a profound ambivalence: the record of an individual who does not want to become an American but feels that she can no longer claim her ethnic identity once she is separated from her tribe. (55)

Rather than fully adapt to one side or another, she relies on nature to not only give her company, but to establish some sort of identity. Zitkala-Sa’s identity proves to be a major theme throughout her semi-autobiographical works. For her, writing about the land shows a connection she has with no human. This relationship to nature emerges in her writings, including many of the selections in *American Indian Stories*. In addition to her account of her life on reservations and her upbringing as a Yankton Sioux in *American Indian Stories*, she retells ancient American Indian legends in *Old Indian Legends* (1901). In all of these stories, the main components involve natural aspects, anything from lightning and thunder to foliage and flowers. As she includes in her preface to her *Old Indian Legends* (1901), “Under an open sky, nestling close to the earth, the old Dakota storytellers have told me these legends” (5). When she recalls the stories of her past, she is nuzzled close with the earth: her one and only confidant, her closest friend. Zitkala-Sa connects her landscape-reliance with her advocacy for Indian land rights in the preface: “These legends are relics of our country’s once virgin soil. These and many others are the tales the little black-haired aborigine loved so much to hear beside the night fire” (5).

“Once virgin soil” shows the white invasion of the New World. After that, she describes how Indian children learned of the ancestral stories: under a night sky. Her reliance on the landscape gives her a way to resist some of the assimilationist tendencies introduced to her at boarding school.

As a liminal figure in between two very different worlds, one of the Native way of life and one of white Christian capitalist society and customs, Zitkala-Sa creates for herself a new version of regionalist writing—what I term landscape-reliant regionalism. In distancing herself from both her Native community and the white world imposed upon her, she does not use her natural dialect or local customs, so she turns to the land itself. Because of her liminal presence between the white world and the Native one, she creates her own space where she can belong and finds a connection with the land around her.

As a child brought up on the reservations in Yankton, South Dakota, Zitkala-Sa experienced indoctrination not only of American “culture” but of Christianity as well. As Winter writes,

Another part of this experiment was the Christianization of the American Indians. . . . The most effective means of Christianizing Native Americans and disengaging them from their traditional ways of life, however, was education—specifically, the system of boarding schools that removed children from the influence of their families and attempted to acculturate them into American society. (58)

Zitkala-Sa’s writings provide further examples of her acclimation. As an Indian child who was nearly brainwashed by the whites around her, she wrote about her experiences in the English language in “The School Days of an Indian Girl” (1901). These attempts at

indoctrination directly conflict with the narrator's relationship to the land. The Christians at the boarding schools she attends attempt to fully indoctrinate her through their teachings and beliefs. However, when she is still a new student, she resists their advances.

As shown through Zitkala-Sa's texts, her loyalty does not always remain with the whites, although she mostly acclimates through her English writings and her marriage to fellow boarding school-educated Raymond Bonnin. Although she had felt separated from her fellow natives because of her unique placement between the reservation and the Indian boarding school, her love for natives and her cultural heritage never fell to the wayside. Instead, she focuses her frustrations upon the land rights of many tribes, not only her native Sioux. Julianne Newmark observes in "Pluralism, Place, and Gertrude Bonnin's Counternativism from Utah to Washington, DC," "her pluralist counternativism, with its specifically Native senses of reciprocity and place centrism, propelled her efforts toward political empowerment and land rights for Native people across tribes" (318). Newmark describes counternativism as a way for Zitkala-Sa and the rest of those affected by "xenophobic nativism" (318) to retaliate and fight their way into their own place in world and attempt to get back what is rightfully theirs. Zitkala-Sa's way deals with this issue by fighting for land rights for Indian tribes.

Newmark recollects that Zitkala-Sa had experienced a sort of disconnect from her roots as her work with activism continued. Newmark argues that,

In 'Why I Am a Pagan,' she [Zitkala-Sa] offers a paeon to the idyllic natural world on the edges of the Missouri, where the water, clouds, hills, and bluffs 'bespeak with eloquence the loving Mystery round about us.' [25] All of the

entities surrounding her—the flowers, the star shapes in the grass, a rock—are ‘lovely little folk,’ beings with roles equal to or surpassing hers. (326-7)

Even after she is freed from the boarding schools and the reservations, and is committed to helping the world, she continues to seek nature for solace and understanding. As Paula Gunn Allen suggests in *Spider Woman’s Granddaughters*, a collection of short stories by Native American women writers,

I suspect Zitkala-Sa is having her little vengeful joke on the white women she spent so much time with, trying to get them to work for Indians’ rights. The delicacy of the ladies of privilege she knew must have been in stark contrast to the ideals of womanhood she had been raised with, and for which her life, and that of her mothers, must have been models. (34)

Allen sees Zitkala-Sa’s adhering to white Christian beliefs as a ploy to get whites to understand the Natives and to use their power to grant land rights to all. Allen assumes that Zitkala-Sa worked closely with whites but for her own benefits. It seems that Zitkala-Sa did not follow the rules of the so-called white saviors because she felt she had to assimilate and become closely aligned with them, but that she did so for her own safety. In addition to a sense of safety, it can also be assumed that Zitkala-Sa remained close to the whites to gain some sense of identity, since we have noticed that she always seemed to be looking for some semblance of self.

Although it seems that Zitkala-Sa’s assimilationist tone disappears over the years, Paula Gunn Allen sees the change as Zitkala-Sa masquerading her tone in a way that she continues to criticize those around her, but in a less harsh way. In “Regionalist Bodies/Embodied Regions,” D.K. Meisenheimer Jr. observes, “In the course of her short

literary career, Zitkala-Sa would gradually abandon her earlier assimilationist tone and out of her encounter with regionalism (and the audience it satisfied) begin to develop key literary strategies for subverting its expectations” (109). After establishing her career by being published, she could successfully incorporate what she had learned from the assimilation she experienced to the regionalist tone, which has a direct correlation to her work with land rights later on in life. Meisenheimer writes, “Too soon, she would give up writing entirely, rechanneling her talents into political activism for Indians still very much alive; yet, a hundred years later, the strategies she initiated continue to animate the works of Native American women writers such as Linda Hogan, Paula Gunn Allen, and Leslie Marmon Silko” (109). Meisenheimer sees Zitkala-Sa’s adaptation of regionalism as a unique version: “Zitkala-Sa’s paradoxically movable rootedness takes its cue not only from nature, from place, but from Native American culture as well” (110). Nature proves to be a major component in Zitkala-Sa’s writing, much like its origins in Native American culture. When she reminisces in her work, she speaks highly when she mentions customs she followed, versus people who influenced her. These experiences include hearing legends by the fire, bathing in a river, living in a teepee, etc. Thus, her reliance on the landscape and the naturalistic qualities of the region are of the utmost importance when understanding her writing.

Finding the Landscape-Reliance

From the beginning of *American Indian Stories*, the narrator shows the importance of landscape to identity. In all things she does, she involves nature and land in some way, providing comfort in a chaotic world. She remembers her mother and their relationship, which although strained, remains very important to her (much like Zitkala-Sa and her own mother's relationship). In "Impressions of an Indian Childhood," the first subsection is about the narrator's mother. The narrator sets the scene for the reader:

A wigwam of weather-stained canvas stood at the base of some irregularly ascending hills. A footpath wound its way gently down the sloping land till it reached the broad river bottom; creeping through the long swamp grasses that bent over it on either side, it came out on the edge of the Missouri. (68)

This detailed setting proves important because the narrator's connection to the land relates to her relationship with her mother: her mother is the one who instills a deep love for the land. Next, she introduces the reader to her dear mother. She remembers her on the edge of the "muddy stream for our household use" and the lessons her mother instilled in her: "I was as free as the wind that blew my hair, and no less spirited than a bounding deer. These were my mother's pride, --my wild freedom and overflowing spirits. She taught me no fear save that of intruding myself upon others" (68). This fondness continues in the section "The Beadwork," where the narrator and her mother make moccasins: "Then the cool morning breezes swept freely through our dwelling, now and then wafting the perfume of sweet grasses from newly burnt prairie" (73). She reminisces on the way the land smells after storytelling around a fire the night before. This relationship with her mother changes as she grows older and adopts her own

customs and beliefs. Because Zitkala-Sa loses her mother's sense of comfort after she attends boarding school, she must seek out love and motherhood somewhere else.

Although she tries to while at school in the East, she cannot fully adapt to white, Eurocentric ideals, and therefore finds solace in the landscape and nature surrounding her. The reader can see that for Zitkala-Sa, the only similarity between her life on the reservation and her life at boarding school is a connection to land. The landscape never betrays her, abandons her, or refuses to adapt to her changes. Therefore, it provides her only comfort; it provides some semblance of identity, something she so desperately desires.

Nature provides various meanings for the narrator in the next few stories of "Impressions of an Indian Childhood," like the importance of respecting spirits in Chapter Five: "The Dead Man's Plum Bush" or valuing animals as equal to human beings in Chapter Six: "The Ground Squirrel." In "The Dead Man's Plum Bush," the people of the land gather together to honor one of their own, a newly christened "warrior" (80). The narrator questions the meaning of everyone gathering together to honor the man, but learns of the connection through a plum bush with a legend surrounding it. Her mother tells her, "Never pluck a single plum from this brush, my child, for its roots are wrapped around an Indian's skeleton. A brave is buried here. While he lived he was so fond of playing the game of striped plum seeds that, at his death, his set of plum seeds were buried in his hands. From them sprang up this little bush" (80). From this quote, the narrator learns of the connection between the land and the dead. In "The Ground Squirrel," the narrator wants to capture and domesticize the squirrel near her wigwam,

but learns of the importance it brings to the Earth, and why it should remain in its natural element.

The land symbolizes something different in the next section, Chapter Seven: “The Big Red Apples.” Here we see the first glimpse of the enemy: the “palefaces” (83).

Although the narrator’s mother had warned her of the white man’s negative influence, even she is not immune to receiving their culture:

Within the last two seasons my big brother Dawee had returned from a three years’ education in the East, and his coming back influences my mother to take a farther step from her native way of living. First it was a change from the buffalo skin to the white man’s canvas that covered our wigwam. Now she had given up her wigwam of slender poles, to live, a foreigner, in a home of clumsy logs. (84)

Although she accepts this architectural change, she forbids her daughter from accepting the culture of the whites around her. The narrator’s mother senses her daughter’s curiosity about the East. She cries in desperation for her daughter to reconsider: “There! I knew you were wishing to go, because [your brother] has filled your ears with the white man’s lies. Don’t believe a word they say! Their words are sweet, but, my child, their deeds are bitter. You will cry for me, but they will not even soothe you. Stay with me, my little one” (84). The narrator’s mother fears the inevitable: that her daughter will adapt to the white world and forget her original customs, religion, and culture. Because of her curiosity towards the East, the narrator does not follow her mother’s wishes. Instead, she learns in a difficult way the lesson of loss. To find her comfort, she seeks out the land around her. Nature and land means something completely different in this story for the narrator. In it, she can tell a tale close to that of the Garden of Eden. She writes,

Judewin had told me of the great tree where grew red, red apples; and how we could reach out our hands and pick all the red apples we could eat. I had never seen apple trees. I had never tasted more than a dozen red apples in my life; and when I heard of the orchards of the East, I was eager to roam among them. The missionaries smiled into my eyes and patted my head. I wondered how mother could say such hard words against him. (83-4)

Here, the land of red apples represents coveted territory: nature provides a glimpse into the better life of the Eastern, civilized world. The exoticism of the bright red apples tempts the young narrator into thinking it is superior to the reservation on which she lives. The end of this story marks the move of the young narrator to white assimilationism.

After the stories in “Impressions of an Indian Childhood,” we learn of the importance of landscape for solace in a place where she feels lost and alone in “The School Days of an Indian Girl.” In these stories, Zitkala-Sa provides a detailed account of life at the boarding school, and how the narrator deals with struggles. She must grow accustomed to white culture including the way she dresses, the cutting of her long hair, and her introduction to the devil, “This terrible creature roamed loose in the world, and that little girls who disobeyed school regulations were to be tortured by him” (94). Even worse, she must suffer from her mother’s anger when she returns home. Her mother sees her as no better than the white enemy: “Her few hinted words hinted that I had better give up my slow attempt to learn the white man’s ways, and be content to roam over the prairies and find my living upon wild roots. I silenced her by deliberate disobedience” (101). However, this feeling directly contrasts with a later quote, demonstrating her

liminality: “Often I wept in secret, wishing I had gone West, to be nourished by my mother’s love, instead of remaining among a cold race whose hearts were frozen hard with prejudice” (101). Therefore, she feels hardly connected to either group of people, since she does not fully belong in either section.

Instead of trying to find herself in either section, she seeks solace in the land around her, since it is the only element in her life which remains constant. In the beginning, she feels ambivalent about her journey: “I had arrived in the wonderful land of rosy skies, but I was not happy, as I thought I should be” (89). She was excited to go and see the things the people on the reservations idealized extensively, but the aspect she enjoys the most is the horizon and sky. Although the beauty she admires and loves surrounds her, happiness does not emerge.

As she continues her stay at the Indian boarding schools, Zitkala-Sa suffers continuously in her introduction to white culture. In the subsections “II. The Cutting of My Long Hair,” “III. The Snow Episode,” and “IV. The Devil,” the “palefaced” (90) people cut off her hair, she believes she sees the devil, and she gets in trouble for playing in the snow; these events occur during her first few months on the reservation. The next section, “V. Iron Routine,” shows her rigid daily routine, beginning with “A loud-clamoring bell [which] awaken[ed] [them] at half-past six in the cold winter mornings” (95). Zitkala-Sa never stops reminiscing and longing for her old life of freedom, especially with the line, “From happy dreams of Western-rolling lands and unlassoed freedom we tumbled out upon chilly bare floors back again into a paleface day” (95-6). Even her dreams are filled with the landscape she loves so much. The narrator feels that the land is her only place of comfort because it is the only sustaining element in her life.

Not too long after “The School Days of an Indian Girl,” the narrator experiences change. In “An Indian Teacher Among Indians,” she heads back home and sees her mother. Although she feels excited at first, stating, “When I saw the first cone-shaped wigwam, I could not help uttering an exclamation which caused my driver a sudden jump out of his drowsy nodding” (107), this ends once she faces her mother. After some time, she reflects on her change in the section “Retrospection.” She says, “For the white man’s papers I had given up my faith in the Great Spirit. For these same papers I had forgotten the healing in trees and brooks. . . . Like a slender tree, I had been uprooted from my mother, nature, and God” (112). This comparison she creates, likening herself to a tree, can be seen as another trait of landscape-reliant regionalism. Not only does she show she love for the land, but she sees herself as the tree itself, embodying the land around her, becoming one with the landscape. She says of her change when she returned to the Yankton reservation, “I roamed again in the Western country through four strange summers. During this time I seemed to hand in the heart of chaos, beyond the touch or voice of human aid” (97). She does not necessarily desperately miss her previous life with the Sioux tribe to the point of crying on a regular basis, but she does not wish to embrace the life on the reservation. After all, she is the one who says, “No, I will not submit! I will struggle first!” (90) while at the boarding school. Instead, to help find herself and familiarize herself with her own identity again, she rides out to be in nature in an Emersonian fashion. She displays these romantic qualities throughout the chapter “Four Strange Summers,” in which she embraces her individuality and sets out away from her family:

I turned with the curve in the road and disappeared. I followed the winding road which crawled upward between the bases of little hillocks. Deep water-worn ditches ran parallel on either side. A strong wind blew against my cheeks and fluttered my sleeves. The pony reached the top of the highest hill, and began an even race on the level lands. There was nothing moving within that great circular horizon of the Dakota prairies save the tall grasses, over which the wind blew and rolled off in long, shadowy waves. (98)

Zitkala-Sa embraces her independent soul at this point. She reminds one of the “drifter” spirit so popularized later on with the “Go West” ideal in the nineteenth century. Her combination of a minority (both American Indian and a woman) wanderer in search of true identity and the Romantic spirit seeking truth from nature surely makes her unique. She writes about the questionable life on reservations, which in turn, differentiates her from her contemporaries.

Characteristics of Zitkala-Sa’s Type of Regionalism

As discussed in Chapter One, Donna Campbell provides a basic definition of regionalism: “fiction and poetry that focuses on the characters, dialect, customs, topography, and other features particular to a specific region.” In the following section, I demonstrate how Zitkala-Sa does *not* follow a textbook definition of regionalism, and instead, can be considered “landscape-reliant.”

In many of her stories, the reader has a sense of how Zitkala-Sa differed from her fellow women and minority writers of the late nineteenth/early twentieth century. Unlike those around her labeled as regionalist, she was not allowed to practice her own customs,

she had to acclimate to the world around her at the boarding school (including cutting her hair and adapting white dress), and she was forced to speak a new language. Therefore, the only trait of the movement that seems to fit her writings is that of a connection to the land around her.

Unlike the fellow regionalists in her category, she does not have many markers or recognizable characteristics. Kate Chopin, a well-known regionalist, introduces her readers to the Cajun accent and regional features of the Louisiana bayou area. Mary Wilkins Freeman and Sarah Orne Jewett, forerunners of regionalism, share the New England customs with their audience. Another regionalist mentioned previously, Charles Chesnutt, wrote "The Goophered Grapevine," which includes a heavy amount of African American southern vernacular dialect. In contrast, Zitkala-Sa's most autobiographical stories, "Impressions of an Indian Childhood," "The School Days of an Indian Girl," and "An Indian Teacher Among Indians," contain a mere glimpse of Native American language or dialect. For instance, in "Impressions of an Indian Childhood," the children say "han, han" meaning "yes" in Lakota. This lack of dialect and language shows an even further removal from regionalism according to the Campbell definition.

Landscape-reliant regionalism can be seen in "The Land of Red Apples," the first section of "The School Days of an Indian Girl." As the narrator states, "We had been very impatient to start on our journey to the Red Apple Country, which, we were told, lay a little beyond the great circular horizon of the Western prairie. Under a sky of rosy apples we dreamt of roaming as freely and happily as we had chased the cloud shadows on the Dakota plains" (87). Because she cannot be sure of the people in the east, since her mother has warned her about their ways, the narrator must rely on the world around her

for comfort. Nature has never betrayed her the way people have in her life. There seems to be great promise ahead for the narrator and her fellow Indian friends because of the outlandish stories told to them. The story continues with a common theme throughout the text: deep contrast. This first use of contrast sees the narrator sharing her dreams of the faraway lands, but seeing firsthand the harshness of human beings: “We had anticipated much pleasure from a ride on the iron horse, but the throngs of staring palefaces disturbed and troubled us” (87). Therefore, Zitkala-Sa shows a disparity in the ways of her people: gentle, belonging to earth, and the industrial “norm” of the nineteenth century: “Very near my mother’s dwelling, along the edge of a road thickly boarded with wild sunflowers, some poles like these had been planted by white men” (88). The narrator personifies the poles, “Often I had stopped, on my way down the road, to hold my ear against the pole, and hearing its low moaning, I used to wonder what the paleface had done to hurt it” (88). As they near the school, the narrator describes her and her fellow recruits’ fear, which contrasts with the “excited palefaces” when faced with the “brightness of the lights” (88). She then states “[her] body trembled more from fear than from the snow I trod upon” (88). The next section includes a clever use of word choice (although intentional or not is unknown): “whitewashed.” The narrator describes the “strong glaring light in the large whitewashed room dazzled [her] eyes” (88), but the word could have double meanings: the stark industrial period may have used a bright white color to paint the walls, but also the erasing of native influence can be called whitewashing.

In the next part of the story, the narrator recalls feeling a different way about a paleface woman in the village: “A rosy-cheeked paleface woman caught me in her arms. .

. I stared into her eyes, wishing her to let me stand on my own feet, but she jumped me up and down with increasing enthusiasm. My mother had never made a plaything of her wee daughter. Remembering this I began to cry aloud” (88). We see a glimpse of the narrator’s liminality and lack of identity in this passage. She is lost in the new white world, but if we judge the second to last sentence in the passage as her criticism of her mother, then the white world somewhat appeals to her.

However, this link to the white world does not last long. She cries herself to sleep thinking of her family, but seeks solace in an older girl who speaks in her “mother tongue and seem[s] to soothe [her]” (89). Her final words in “The Land of Rosy Apples” show the sadness she feels: “I had arrived in the wonderful land of rosy skies, but I was not happy, as I had thought I should be. . . My tears were left to dry themselves in streaks, because neither my aunt nor my mother was near to wipe them away” (89). The feelings of sadness continue through the other stories in *American Indian Stories*. Throughout these pieces, Zitkala-Sa suggests a liminal identity.

Bhabha and Zitkala-Sa: The Metaphorical Third-Space

When Zitkala-Sa must live in between the two worlds, the west and the east, she must adapt to what surrounds her. Bhabha’s theory of hybridity provides a useful lens for understanding her experience. Zitkala-Sa can never feel wholly part of either world, so instead, she must create her metaphorical third space in order to survive. Bhabha defines the third space in *The Location of Culture* as:

The production of meaning requires that these two places be mobilized in the passage through a Third Space, which represents both the general conditions of

language and the specific implication of the utterance in a performative and institutional strategy of which it cannot 'in itself' be conscious. What this unconscious relation introduces is an ambivalence in the act of interpretation. The meaning of the utterance is quite literally neither the one nor the other. This ambivalence is emphasized when we realize that there is no way that the content of the proposition will reveal the structure of its positionality; no way that context can be mimetically read off from the content. (36)

In the case of Zitkala-Sa, Bhabha's third space can be seen as a literal and a metaphorical space, where she is caught in between two worlds: white and Indian. Since there is no way for her to be her true self and fully live in either of these worlds, she must create her own figurative space through the landscape around her. When she must live in between the two worlds, the west and the east, she must adapt to what surrounds her.

Nature and land symbolize many different things for Zitkala-Sa throughout her stories and nonfictional works. The landscape provides a separate place for the narrator of Zitkala-Sa's stories to find solace and comfort, and even deeper, a place for her to exist harmoniously with a sort of identity. Homi K. Bhabha's theories of mimicry, hybridity, and the third space help readers to understand the reasons for the choices Zitkala-Sa made in her texts and can be useful in studying the otherness of Native American women writers. Zitkala-Sa embodies all three of Bhabha's theories, and that is highlighted not only in her texts, but also in her own life as a Sioux woman born on a reservation and sent to an Indian boarding school.

CONCLUSION

Zitkala-Sa spent her life fighting for the rights of her people, not only the Sioux, but also tribal people throughout the nation. As Lewandowski accurately describes, “As a woman whose culture, nation, and identity had been violently marginalized, Zitkala-Sa attempted to effect change” (194). Her call to action is highlighted throughout her career, from short stories about her time at the Indian boarding schools to a play highlighting a tribal ritual, to pamphlets about the rights of indigenous people. Her work should be appreciated, which includes not only her published work, but also her social activism. Just because she died thinking her work was not worthwhile does not mean she is not worth studying. As fellow Yankton Sioux, the contemporary writer Vine Deloria, Jr. wrote about land issues in his 1969 manifesto, *Custer Died for Your Sins*, Zitkala-Sa was the forerunner of these issues nearly fifty years earlier. She was before her time, fought for her land and people during her time, and should be remembered for her dedication to American Indians after her time. Although she has not been in obscurity like other female authors, the incorrect placement of Zitkala-Sa as an assimilationist, accommodationist, or regionalist further problematizes the interpretation of her writing.

The semi-autobiographical works of Zitkala-Sa show the author’s life as she was raised, from the Yankton Sioux reservation to the Indian boarding schools she attended as a child and taught at as an adult. This thesis used Homi K. Bhabha’s theories of hybridity, mimicry, and third space in order to situate Zitkala-Sa as a “landscape-reliant regionalist,” a term I coin to address Zitkala-Sa’s unique position in American literature.

Zitkala-Sa’s own customs were stripped away as a member of the Sioux tribe. Since she was born on the Yankton reservation, she lacked exposure to the customs of her

people, because those customs barely existed in the reservation setting. Because she lost her customs, culture, and religion during her indoctrination at various Indian boarding schools in the East, and in addition, could never fully ingrain herself into white culture, she became a liminal figure without a true home. As a result of this experience, she sought out comfort and constructed an identity from the only constant in her life: the land around her.

As discussed earlier in the thesis, the characteristics of regionalism do not fit Zitkala-Sa's writings. The truthful telling of a certain region and its customs, including religion and culture cannot be written by a woman who was forced into another religion, and stripped of any customs from her origin. Therefore, only one trait of regionalism fits the texts of Zitkala-Sa: a relation and connection to the land.

I defined landscape-reliant regionalism as a mode of writing attributed to individuals who write in the vein of local color fiction and/or regionalism, but whose work focuses on the land itself rather than cultural markers such as dialect or local customs. Severed from her culture and its practices but retaining a relationship only with the land itself in order to create an identity and sense of self, Zitkala-Sa embodies the landscape-reliant aspect of regionalism.

In Chapter One, I provided an overview of the literary movement known as regionalism. In relation to this overview of regionalism, I juxtaposed it with early criticism of Zitkala-Sa's writings, starting with Dexter Fisher's early work. Beginning with Fisher's seminal work and into the next decade and a half, Zitkala-Sa was criticized for refusing to decide between her native heritage and her white Christian education. However, by the end of the 1990s, critics began recognizing the complexities of Zitkala-

Sa's work, shifting their focus to her position as a Native American writer trying to survive in the literary world.

In Chapter Two, I discussed Homi K. Bhabha's theories, including hybridity, third space, and mimicry. Zitkala-Sa's writings fit into the theory of hybridity because they exist between two areas: the customs and loyalty she has to her western origins, and the excitement of civilization in the east. She cannot fully exist in either area, so she decides to live in the third space, which for her is made up of the landscape around her. As far as mimicry goes, Zitkala-Sa needed to, like many minority writers, write in the vein of whatever would get her published in order to make a living from her writing. Therefore, she wrote the stories "Impressions of an Indian Childhood," "The School Days of an Indian Girl," and "An Indian Teacher Among Indians," first published in *The Atlantic Monthly* in 1901, to showcase her life as an exotic other, while mimicking a white style of writing.

In Chapter Three, I examined Zitkala-Sa's work, arguing that her use of assimilationist techniques was in fact deliberate and honest. Much like her contemporaries, Zitkala-Sa took advantage of the opportunity given at *The Atlantic*, establishing her name with the vignettes "Impressions of an Indian Childhood," "The School Days of an Indian Girl," and "An Indian Teacher among Indians" that would later be published in the collection entitled *American Indian Stories*. Understood in light of Bhabha's theory, these periodical publications as well as (racist) advertising show the kind of identity being constructed for Zitkala-Sa by her white editors.

Moreover, I argued that considering Zitkala-Sa's work as fully regionalist is deeply problematic because it distracts from her larger critique. Drawing on Bhabha's

theory, I argue that Zitkala-Sa's work is best understood as "landscape-reliant regionalism" because the only element of regionalism that fits her texts is that of the land. In going forward, creating a new space for studying Zitkala-Sa rather than simply placing her within regionalism brings forth the idea to study the contemporaries of Zitkala-Sa, other Native American authors who have not been discussed thoroughly.

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