

Colonization:
A Justification for Being Selfish and Greedy

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Deborah Miranda's piece, *Bad Indians*, unearths a hidden past through unique stories of her own ancestors and other California Indians. Miranda's integration of menippean/juvenalian satire and inclusion of different literatures within the text adds a unique or rather silenced perspective regarding the immoralities that condoned America's colonization. Her piece coins the concept that America has been underexaggerating the subjugation forced upon the Native-Americans, and how the situation's essence seems to be just as twisted today, as it was years ago. Upon analysis of Miranda's writing style, it becomes clear that she desires her audience to look at the situation from an alternate perspective, rather than the one they were trained to look through at youth.

A Psychological Attack:

Miranda is constantly referring to the Indians' ways of life in a negative tone, as to resemble the perspective of colonizers. The book thrives off this type of menippean satire. The book's title, *Bad Indians*, and the author's negative referencing of the Native-Americans acts as a sarcastic aggreal to previous colonizer perspectives. This pessimistic approach truly captures emotions as it is showing how Native-Americans were forced to accept a different way of life. Miranda's method of writing shows how these people externalized acceptance to this cruelty, while being broken internally.

Subordination draws emotion and Miranda seizes that feeling by incorporating numerous conversations in which this social structure is endorsed. "He taught us to sing (our own songs were ugly), he taught us to speak (our own languages were nonsensical), he made us wear clothes our bodies were shameful), he gave us wheat and plow (our seeds and acorns were only for animals)."¹ This dialogue, regarding the Padres, demonstrates the plight and inferiority that

¹ Miranda, Deborah A. *Bad Indians*. (California: Heyday Books, 2013), 34

these colonizers have caused. They have not only stripped Native-Americans of their culture, but have also shamed them for it. Colonization is breaching a civilization and essentially dissipating its spirit. The satire is painful, rather than comical as the voice recalls Native-American customs and relates it to savagery. Miranda is showing how these customs are being inferiorized. The voice accepts this subservience, which is what draws emotion and in turn generates pity.

Institutionalized Injustices:

On top of attacking mental attitudes, Miranda applies Juvenalian satire to expose pre-existing institutional racism. Miranda speaks on this concept by saying, “Can you imagine teaching about slavery in the South while simultaneously, requiring each child to lovingly construct a plantation model, complete with happy darkies in the fields, while masters, overseers with whips, and human auctions?”² She is criticizing current institutions’ teachings regarding history. She finds faults as schools are finding the positives that supposedly came from human exploitation. This dark history is being taught in a positive light, when it should be remembered as a solemn time. Miranda is suggesting that students should not be creating models or talking about what good has come from colonization. American history has truly been tampered with and the outcome has been a gradual acceptance and appreciation towards the years of violence and injustice. The use of this type of satire aids in putting down current institutions that the audience has grown within. It is relatable and so finding faults in America’s current system, really puts others on edge because past and future generations are going through this erroneous schooling.

This tampering leads to ignorance, which is effectively vivid through future generations. Miranda recounts an experience in which she encounters a younger child who is shooting a video

² Miranda, Deborah A. *Bad Indians*. (California: Heyday Books, 2013), 14

on Mission Indians. This child's ignorance of living Indians proves Miranda's point in that their history is dying due to these institutions. She continues to make use of this satire as she describes how institutions are continuing to replay their own account of previously set events. "That's why it's time for the Mission Fantasy Fairy Tale to end. This story has done more damage to California than any conquistador, any priest..."³ American Indians have indeed suffered, but their true death will come once their past is forgotten. America is pushing in such a way that the previous customs of those that first settled in the New World are being set aside. They are acting as though these people have vanished, when the reality is that they are still living. They've fought through the torture and stand with resilience. Their existence must be acknowledged, so the memories do not fade away.

Fluidity in Literature:

Another approach that Miranda has taken advantage of is her ability to digress between multiple literary genres and writing methods. Miranda mentions a newspaper article⁴ that ends the term "diggers" from federal use. It is saddening that tribal recognition, like the Mewuk, took years. These racial terms came directly from colonization to further separate these groups. The use of an article is crucial in establishing credibility from the media rather than pure recollections from others. It takes a break from the usual memoirs that Miranda provides and paves way for different types of evidence. This in turn, gives more diverse and concrete evidence towards Miranda's primary views.

Miranda applied various other literatures to her memoir, but her insertion of J.P Harrington's collage⁵ was especially unique as this literary form is typically used for visual

³ Miranda, Deborah A. *Bad Indians*. (California: Heyday Books, 2013), 16

⁴ Miranda, Deborah A. *Bad Indians*. (California: Heyday Books, 2013), 59

⁵ Miranda, Deborah A. *Bad Indians*. (California: Heyday Books, 2013), 102

representation. Harrington pieces together various parts of different stories and this collage format is used to tie his multitude of thoughts. There is a text-world connection as the author talks about the coyote's hunger, and it is all related together as Harrington opens up about his fear of a forgotten culture. A digression into this literature reaped a greater emotional appeal in that individual thoughts were being expressed through each slide, and it all collectively came together to formulate a greater thought. This diversion from memoirs to collage deepens the emotional connection regarding the colonists' illful hunger for territory, wealth, and power.

Strength in Memory:

Colonization is never beneficial for both groups because the epitome of it is to create a superiority complex. Miranda works to prove this point as she demonstrates the discrimination that the Native-Americans faced through various literary entities. Her continual satire has grown into a merciful take on their plight. Their strength is shown through different memoirs that Miranda includes. They've gone through torture, disease, and enslavement, yet they are still pushing strong. Their history is being mended, yet they continue to recount their stories from generation to generation. Institutionalized recountment may alter true history, but the past of these strong people will forever be recognized as these tribes prosper, regardless of everything they've gone through. It will be told through the mothers, fathers, brothers, and sisters that have lost their life to preserve this rich culture.

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