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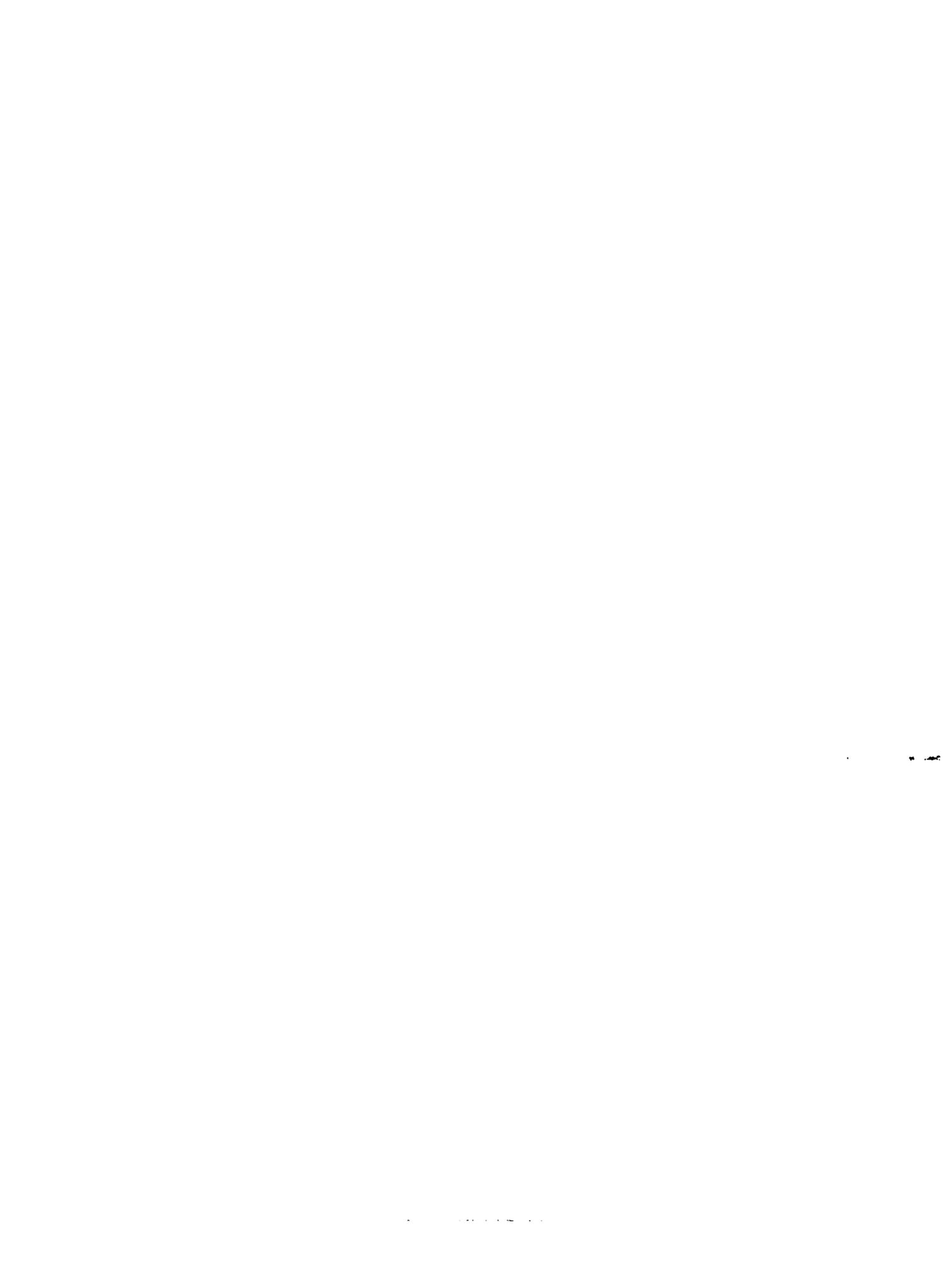
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**At home and industriously employed: The Women's National  
Indian Association**

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**The University of Arizona, 1994**

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AT HOME AND INDUSTRIOUSLY EMPLOYED:  
THE WOMEN'S NATIONAL INDIAN ASSOCIATION

by

Carol Anne Chase Lastowka

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## ABSTRACT

The Women's National Indian Association (WNIA) organized in 1879 to advocate fair treatment of Native Americans. By manipulating the Victorian ideology of domesticity, the organization was able to send women missionaries to the reservations. Because women could only work "at home," the WNIA redefined the Indian reservation as the missionaries' home. This redefinition ideologically enabled women missionaries to engage in non-traditional work.

Conversely, the WNIA believed Indians would only become "civilized" if they moved from traditional dwellings into frame houses. In addition, native houses could only become "homes" if Indian women became ardent housekeepers and converted to Christianity. Accordingly, the WNIA provided financial support to Indians who wished to build houses, and taught the domestic arts to native women and children. In so doing, and by supporting the government's allotment policy, the WNIA participated in the subjugation of Native Americans and in the westward expansion of the United States.

## INTRODUCTION

The year was 1902, and Mrs. Eldridge was in her element. Serving as a teacher one day, then as a medic or agricultural extension agent the next, she was determined to improve Native Americans' lives. A letter which she sent home to the organization sponsoring her work demonstrates that she thrived on "civilizing" the Navajos. Upon receiving a donation of \$100, Mrs. Eldridge "immediately" invested part of it in ploughs and seeds (Indian's Friend 7/1902:8). Then she set out alone on a 45-mile journey. At midday, she lunched with an Indian man who had previously "carried word to the agent for us when Mr. Welsh was murdered". After lunch, Mrs. Eldridge traveled 26 or 27 miles through the wilderness until reaching her destination, an Indian camp. The next morning, she began vaccinating Indians, and continued for at least three days: "before the night of the third day I had used 184 points and as I was getting out of points I used one point for two children" (Indian's Friend 7/1902:9). After she completed her work there, Mrs. Eldridge made her way home, offering medicines and vaccinations at Navajo camps along the way. Mrs. Eldridge firmly believed in her lifestyle: "I do not feel that I can give up the camp work." She wanted to raise up the victimized Native Americans to the status of civilized people, to offer them the means to make a living and a home for themselves within the Anglo-American system.

The federal government and the Women's National Indian Association (WNIA) agreed with and sponsored Mrs. Eldridge and other women like her. Such women lived adventurous lives compared to the Victorian model which the dominant society offered. Their stories pose questions and appear to contain contradictions. For instance, how was it that, on the one hand, Protestant churches held the domestically bound wife and mother in highest esteem, yet the WNIA, a church-affiliated organization, sent *single* women to work on the frontier? In addition, why did these women do most of their own work outside the home, while simultaneously teaching native women that good wives must remain within the domestic sphere? Finally, what can be learned from such women about relationships between the federal government, Anglo women, and Native Americans in the late nineteenth century?

To answer these questions, it is necessary to look back to 1879 when, with Protestant benevolence as their ideology, a small group of women belonging to the First Baptist Church of Philadelphia formed the Women's National Indian Association. They believed that for too long colonizers had plundered the natives, and now it was time for Christian women to get involved and repay "our national moral debt to Indians" (Quinton "Seven Ways" 1890:2). As the organization grew, it came to represent a wider denominational base. By 1886, members of the WNIA's Executive Board represented at least 10 Protestant denominations, including Baptist;

Congregational; Friends; Lutheran; Methodist Episcopal; Presbyterian; Protestant Episcopal; Reformed Church, U.S.; Reformed Episcopal; and the Unitarian Churches (WNIA Report 1885:5; 1883:3).

The example of this singular group of reformers has several implications for the study of gender, colonialism, and missions. The goal of the WNIA was to spread religious, social, and economic ideologies and to enforce gender-based modes of production. The WNIA accomplished its goals by targeting the quotidian, everyday lived experience of Indian people, such as the home and education. They viewed women as the site of culture, and children as a site of penetration for Western ideologies. Using gender, race, and class, the WNIA attempted to construct a familial hierarchy of roles that placed the federal government in a "father" role, the WNIA woman in a "mother" role, and Native Americans in the role of "child". This attempt to restructure society demonstrates a persistent contradiction which arises frequently in the WNIA's official rhetoric. At the same time that WNIA women were gaining influence in politics and expanding their own spheres, they were attempting to restrict the roles available to native women. Thus, although the WNIA ostensibly was a reform/missionary organization, its ends were not merely philanthropic or spiritual, but also served the purposes of the United States in conquering and subduing Native Americans.

This paper examines these two aspects of the WNIA's work; the first aspect was liberatory for WNIA women, but the other attempted to limit severely native women's spheres. It is significant that the WNIA women used the same ideology to accomplish both. This paper will demonstrate how, under the guise of moral superiority, the WNIA greatly expanded its own members' spheres far beyond what the Victorian ideal of True Womanhood permitted. Then, the ways in which the WNIA contributed to state formation and western expansion through the destruction of native culture will be discussed. On the one hand, the WNIA women manipulated the contemporary ideology of domesticity and posited the world of the Indians as their extended home. However, while expanding their own spheres, these women participated in a governmental effort to place Indian families in frame houses on individual plots of land. By lobbying for this effort, imposing ideologies of domesticity on Indians, and encouraging capitalism, the WNIA members participated in the attempt to transform Native Americans into a people which could be manipulated, catalogued, and dominated by the State. An examination of the WNIA's official rhetoric about the "home" demonstrates how a single ideology could be utilized both to liberate Anglo women and subjugate Native American women.

The WNIA never admitted to the expansion of its own members' spheres. Its declared purpose was to solve what was commonly known as "the Indian problem," or the conflict

between Native Americans on the one hand, and the United States and Anglo-American society on the other. The WNIA used several strategies, but two were held to be the most important. First, its Missions Department sponsored field matrons like Mrs. Eldridge and sent missionaries to live on the reservations in order to teach Indians how to become good Americans. Second, the WNIA provided loans to Indians who wanted to build frame houses. Other activities included distributing activist literature, sending boxes of charity items to missionaries, and sponsoring public lectures on Indian reform.

The WNIA, which reached its peak membership in 1887 with 104 branches throughout the country, continued to pursue its work until disbanding in 1951 (WNIA Annual Report, 1887:14). However, it had its greatest influence from 1879 until about 1910, a period in which the historical partnership between Church and State was still strong. During these years, the WNIA generated a significant amount of literature for its own members and anyone else who wanted to invest 50 cents or a dollar for a subscription. In addition to numerous pamphlets, the WNIA produced *The Indian's Friend*, a monthly newsletter which was used to communicate with the women in its many branches. The newsletter was edited by the WNIA's national officers; these same officers also wrote many of the articles themselves. Often, articles that related aspects of Indian life were based on trips these active women themselves had

made to the tribes. Other articles were carefully selected and reprinted from various religious and reform publications. Finally, a number of the articles were letters which missionaries and field matrons had mailed to the national office.

Such articles form a significant portion of the sources for this paper. In general, research conducted for this paper came from three main sources, all of which were published by the WNIA. First, monthly issues of *The Indian's Friend* newsletter from the 1880s to about 1905 were examined. In addition, WNIA pamphlets on missions, civilization, and home-building proved to be a rich resource. These first two sources contained the most pertinent information for this paper. Significantly, the newsletters and pamphlets were read not only by WNIA members, but also by other interested individuals. Finally, this paper utilized the WNIA's annual reports which were produced at yearly organizational meetings, and which were probably only read by WNIA officers.

### *Redefining Domesticity*

In nineteenth-century American society, women were generally believed to be morally superior to men. Women's sheltered environments were thought to protect them from the immorality and corruption to which men were susceptible in the outside world of business and politics. As long as women stayed within their sphere, it was believed that they would retain their virtue. These beliefs were reinforced in popular magazines such as *Godey's Ladies Book* and by the media in general. Women who read were urged to live up to the ideal by creating a home life for their children and husbands that would reflect women's own inner purity and goodness. Women who could achieve this ideal were referred to as "True Women".

At the same time that this ideology of domesticity permeated the nation, women in Europe, its colonies, and the United States were forming benevolent organizations which took women outside the home sphere. How was this possible, when the "Cult of True Womanhood" dictated that a woman's sphere was within the home? Gradually, the idea developed that, as a morally superior being, it was a woman's mission to impart virtue and alleviate suffering among the less fortunate. The core of a woman's virtue was believed to lie in her natural piety; work which made use of her virtuous nature would strengthen her bonds to the Lord. Thus, rather than removing a woman from her proper sphere in the home,

philanthropic work which was grounded in religion served to enhance the virtuous qualities deemed essential to a True Woman. Those qualities included piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity (Welter 1973:96-98). Women were not alone in holding this belief. In a 1902 speech to the WNIA, the Hon. Merrill E. Gates, L.L.D., said, "Among the mightiest of these social forces . . . I rank the concerted efforts of Christian women directed to unselfish and philanthropic ends" (WNIA Annual Report 1902:34).

Although the writings of Mrs. Eldridge and the WNIA may seem flagrantly anti-domestic, it is important to realize that the WNIA did not feel that it overstepped the bounds of domesticity. Instead, the official rhetoric plays upon women's morality and domestic nature in such a way as to validate the WNIA women's work outside the home. For instance, one article in *The Indian's Friend* makes a call for field matrons to devote their lives to the cause of Indian civilization. Many job requirements are listed, ranging from the ability to ride horseback, to speaking correct English, to possessing "motherly hearts so warm and big that every red sister who wished, or ought to wish, for a better life" could find it through the matron (*Indian's Friend* 6/1890:1). The article in which these job requirements are listed ends with a final, intriguing job requirement: "In short they should be embryo angels, but entertained unawares" (*Indian's Friend* 6/1890:1). The term "embryo angels" today conjures up several

images: virginity, even sexlessness, purity, untouchability, and holiness. This term may have served to justify and gain acceptance for women in missions, not an easy task in a patriarchal and colonialist society. In her article "Women in Missions," Ruth Tucker points to the problem:

The need for women to reach their "heathen" sisters was widely acknowledged, but missionary wives were generally too burdened with domestic duties to meet the need. Nevertheless, most mission boards were not prepared to accept [single] women as missionaries in their own right (Tucker 1990:255).

This obstacle was largely overcome by women forming their own organizations to send women on missions, Tucker argues.

The WNIA is a case in point. With the WNIA, the federal government sanctioned their work and even provided some aid. First, for unstated reasons, the federal government provided legislative backing specifically to this organization. This is evident because the WNIA was initially allowed to establish missions on reservations where other groups were prohibited: "all reservations are open to us, and not all are yet open to church Societies" (WNIA 188?:1). In addition, the government provided housing. As the WNIA noted in 1886:

The Interior Department has promised plots of ground for mission houses, and till these are built, lends Government cottages for the use of the Association's missionaries, and thus gives cordial aid and protection (WNIA Annual Report 1886:12).

The WNIA women recognized their partnership with the federal government and were secure in the knowledge that their own interests converged with that of the United States. This attitude is conveyed in their confident statement that, because many tribes still needed missionaries, "Government will aid us. It already gives us free rent for the work" (WNIA 188?:1).

The number of WNIA women who actually served as missionaries during the years covered by this paper (from the 1880s to about 1905) is in fact quite small. As of 1884, WNIA had two missionaries among the Poncas and Otoes of Indian Territory (WNIA Annual Report 1884:33). In 1885, a woman was sent to the Sioux at Rosebud Agency, Dakota (WNIA Annual Report 1885:13). WNIA's goal was to hand over its missions to Protestant denominations as quickly as possible. For instance, three years after opening, the mission at Rosebud was transferred to the care of a Sioux Indian who was also an Episcopal minister (Quinton 1888:5). In 1886, two more WNIA women, both single, were sent to Round Valley, California; a mission among the Montana Piegans is also mentioned, but no reference is made to the missionary (WNIA Annual Report 1886:11, 12). In 1887, two single women opened a mission at Ross Fork, Idaho among the Bannocks and Shoshones, and by 1890, missions had been established among the Mission and Digger Indians of California (Quinton 1888:3; Quinton "Seven Ways" 1890:10). Other than these specific cases, it is

difficult to discern from the literature how many other women became WNIA missionaries and what tribes were influenced. For instance, an 1890 pamphlet merely states that WNIA had done work "in 20 tribes or remnants of tribes" (Quinton "Seven Ways" 1890:10). Regardless of their numbers, however, the WNIA women missionaries were vitally important to the goals of the WNIA, and their letters appear frequently in *The Indian's Friend*. These women came to represent for the WNIA the hope for a new world order in which Indians and Anglos would be loving members of the same national and spiritual family.

The WNIA missionaries had a massive organization which supported them, and missionaries received annual salaries of \$500 (WNIA Annual Report 1885:32). But the organization depended on outside financial backing for its survival. By coining the term "embryo angel" for its women in the field, the WNIA was certainly appealing to the nineteenth-century belief that women were morally superior. In addition, the term posited the missionaries as being in a state of formation, powerless, and lacking authority; like embryos, these women would have been non-threatening to the patriarchal power structure of dominant society. Whether or not their usage of the term "embryo angel" involved a conscious manipulation is unclear; however, it is possible to see how imaging their missionaries as angels in the embryonic stage served to imply a divine sanction, which the women no

doubt believed to be true. In so doing, further legitimacy was created for women missionaries. The sexless image of the angel and the sinless image of the embryo may have functioned as part of the movement which enabled women missionaries, now de-sexed and purified, to move into the traditionally male realm of evangelism.

However, the official rhetoric never overtly recognized this move into ministry, which was solely a man's realm within nineteenth-century Protestantism. The closest that the printed job description of the WNIA missionaries comes to acknowledging a ministerial function is in the missionary's vague call to go to the field, "teaching all within reach [but specifically women and children], in the simplest way, redeeming Christian truths" (WNIA Leaflet, "Missionary Work," 188?:2; also, Annual Report 1883:12). Nonetheless, a few printed letters from the missionaries attest to their ministerial duties. For instance, Mrs. McGlashan, a missionary in Indian Territory, delivers a talk in a schoolhouse to adult Indians, including several "chiefs," on "The Book, the Word of God to His People" (WNIA "Missionary Work...", 1885:4). This "talk" may have easily been a sermon. She also distributes Bibles and aches like any minister for the souls she cannot harvest: "I sow the seed as best I can, and water it with tears that I do not see more present results" (WNIA "Missionary Work...", 1885:8). Another instance of a woman moving into a pastoral position occurs

when the missionary Miss Grace Howard ministers to an injured Ponca man by assuring him of God's love (WNIA Leaflet, "Missionary Work", 188?:3). As is suggested by the dearth of information specifically on WNIA women's ministerial activities, added to the manner in which the missionary work is presented, the WNIA preferred to see its missionaries as working in a distinctly feminine manner, couched in terms of the "home". In the official rhetoric, the WNIA presented women missionaries' work as one in which "Radical progress has been made, and ideas, industrial, social, moral and spiritual have been *quietly revolutionized*" (emphasis added; Quinton. Indian's Friend: 6/1895:8). If the WNIA had presented its missionaries' work differently by focusing on women's agency in civilizing and converting Indians, their financial and moral support from Anglo philanthropists would almost certainly have diminished. But by rhetorically attributing their civilizing work to a home-bound missionary woman, they reinforced the ideology of domesticity and reconstructed their missionaries as True Women.

Far from viewing themselves as weak, dependent, timid, and effeminate creatures, the WNIA's members saw in themselves the possibility for the moral, cultural, and religious salvation of Native Americans. The WNIA's official rhetoric presents its members as self-sufficient, extremely capable, and active individuals. This viewpoint is affirmed

in the monthly newsletter, where the following mission statement appeared in every issue:

WORK OF THE WOMEN'S NATIONAL INDIAN ASSOCIATION.

1st. To aid by every means for securing all laws needed by the Indians of the United States.

2d. To send and support suitable missionaries and instructors to reside among Indians, to labor for their help industrially, politically, educationally, morally and religiously (Indian's Friend).

This was not a mission statement designed by women who intended to seclude themselves from morally corrupting influences which existed in the public sphere.<sup>1</sup> Instead, these women, as we shall see, believed that as True Women the moral imperative rested with them to extend their virtue into the corrupted world. In the case of the Women's National Indian Association, this meant intervening in politics and policies which they believed were driving Native Americans to extinction. It also meant lobbying for and supporting government policies which they believed would civilize Indians.

As white, middle- and upper-class women from Christian backgrounds, the members of WNIA believed that without their direct intervention, the Indian race was doomed to "death by slow and torturing degrees of lost manhood, degradation, sin and despair" (Quinton 1890:11). Clearly, not all Native Americans believed this to be the case. One WNIA article documents resistance to evangelism in which an Indian woman in North Dakota named Winnie Enemyheart started a "religious

mania," in which she claimed to have received a message from "God or the angels" that the Christian way was wrong (WNIA. Untitled 8/1906:6) Nevertheless, the idea persisted among the WNIA women that if Indians did not convert to Christianity and adopt Western culture as their own, they would be decimated by starvation, greedy Anglos, and the American thrust of westward expansion. Today it is clear that the WNIA believed that Indians would only be able to flourish like Anglos once they began to live and think like Anglos. The WNIA saw the salvation of the Native Americans as one in which the savages would be "civilized," taught the value of work and education, and ultimately, in which they would give up heathen ways for Christianity.

In general, the WNIA women believed that Indian rituals' were evil. For instance, after viewing a Ponca spiritual dance, the missionary Grace Howard exclaims, "What barbarism!" She earnestly wants to convert the Poncas, and continues, "I cannot but pray God to hasten the time when all these people shall know Him" (WNIA, Missionary Work of the Women's National Indian Association:188?).

In order to become civilized, the Indians needed to abandon nearly every aspect of their own cultures and adopt Euro-American ways. The agents of this "civilization" would be the women of the WNIA. Ironically, the only way that the WNIA saw to protect the Indians was to destroy Indian cultures.

*The Reservation Her Home*

The era following the Civil War in America was one in which even the most progressive women, who urged a widening of women's sphere, still believed in the necessity of separate spheres for men and women (Riley 1984:2-4). The official stance of the WNIA was certainly more conservative, and in its early years it eschewed any association with "women's" causes such as suffrage (Wanken 1981:5). For upper- and middle-class Protestant women such as those belonging to the WNIA, opting to follow a doctrine of domesticity was not an illogical choice. It was this very ideology which attributed to such women the moral superiority which made their philanthropic work possible.<sup>2</sup> Thus, as Prochaska observes in his study on English women philanthropists, "In their attempts to extend their influence they willingly reinforced the stereotypes of women" which, in this case, were associated with domesticity (1980:8).

Given that a woman's sphere was in the home, and women were also innately virtuous beings, the next step seemed obvious. In general, Christian women reformers in the nineteenth century were able to remain virtuous in others' eyes and do social work by claiming that their benevolent work was an extension of the role of motherhood (Ginzberg:1990). Thus, women in the WNIA, like other women's reform groups at the time, presented the world of the socially, racially, morally, and economically "inferior" as

their home, and its inhabitants, their children. For instance, pupils at Grace Howard's school at Crow Creek become "Miss Howard's girls and boys" (*Indian's Friend* 12/1892:4). Although Indian women are "sisters," they are certainly not on an equal footing with WNIA women. Instead, the relationship resembles more that of an older sister—the WNIA woman—in the role of surrogate mother, raising and looking after her younger sister—the native woman. A religious allusion to superiority is unmistakable in an article that plays upon the name of Miss Shepard, a teacher at the Apache School in Alabama. Miss Shepard, the article states, "aims to lead her flock" (*WNIA Report of the Missionary Department*. Nov. 1891:4).<sup>3</sup> Thus, due to their "race," Native Americans were placed in the lowest echelon in the hierarchy of the national family.

The next logical question poses itself: if the WNIA woman is the mother, and Indians are the children, then who is the father? For, many of the WNIA missionaries and field matrons were single women who were widowed or never married. However, they were never really "alone". In fact, two fathers are referred to in the official rhetoric of the WNIA. The first father is "The Great Father," the federal government. Although the WNIA itself never refers to the government as "The Great Father," occasionally this name appears in the reported speech of Native Americans. The second father is, of course, *the* Father, God. Thus, the single woman missionary in

Indian country really was not single. On the one hand, through her organization's relationship with the government, she was the matronly counterpart of the state. On the other, she had no need of an earthly husband, since her religious convictions bound her to the ultimate Father who was, in effect, her spiritual husband.

By adopting the Indian's world as an extended women's home, the WNIA made it ideologically possible for its missionaries to perform work outside of what was traditionally considered "the home" and to do jobs far outside the realm of traditional domesticity. Letters from the field which appear in *The Indian's Friend* contain positive proof. For instance, we turn again to Mrs. Eldridge, whose letter demonstrates how becoming a field matron gave women the opportunity to sidestep their own domesticity and do things unthinkable for anyone less than a True Woman. In her dispatch to *The Indian's Friend*, Mrs. Eldridge writes that she purchased farm equipment, vaccinated hundreds of Navajos, planned to "put a stop to" a man who was fencing in land that was not his own, and cared for her horses (7/1902:8). Mrs. Eldridge had little time or desire to practice the "domestic arts" in her own home, as she wrote, "I do not feel that I can give up the camp work." Her activities and desires clearly lay outside the domestic sphere. Yet, she goes on to say, "I have a great pity for those who have had nothing done to help them towards making a

living *and a home*" (emphasis added; 7/1902:9). Although Mrs. Eldridge herself chooses to remain outdoors and outside the home, she expects something different from Indian women. This expectation highlights the class difference which existed between Native Americans and WNIA women. WNIA women were physically able to engage in charitable work outside the home because they could afford to hire domestic servants. For many missionaries, the only domestic servants available would have been native peoples. For instance, the WNIA missionary Grace Howard hired Indian men to work outside her home and Indian women to do "much of the house work" (Indian's Friend 2/1890:3).

Turning the world of the reservation into their home enabled such women to reconcile more easily in their own minds these two views of women's roles which appear to be contradictory today. Thus, by redefining the sphere of maternity and domesticity, "women's influence could be exerted over an entire nation" (Ginzberg 1990:16). Through rhetorically and ideologically transforming the reservation into their home, women could become Christian leaders, doctors, and missionaries, and fulfill professional roles previously held only by men.

*The House Versus the Home*

Due to the important role that the "home" played in the ideology of domesticity, a significant amount of time, money, and newsletter space was devoted by the WNIA to issues regarding the home. This emphasis is due to the fact that they saw the home as one of their most important tools for effecting the transformation of so-called "savages" into "civilized" people.

An anonymous article in *The Indian's Friend* lists three tasks which women missionaries must undertake to elevate the Indians: "by teaching them how to make *homes* of their houses; by telling them the glad tidings of salvation; and by enthroning themselves in the hearts of the people" (*Indian's Friend* 7/1890:2). That the task of home-making was listed first emphasizes the primacy of the home in the official rhetoric of the WNIA. In fact, a later article asserts that the most important and "holiest" duty that an Indian woman has is to manage her own home and children. (*Indian's Friend* 12/1899:10). Thus, homes were absolutely essential to the civilization of Native Americans.

For Anglo-American women in the 1800s, the home represented purity, privacy, safety, and family togetherness, none of which was believed by WNIA women to exist in Indian society. The general opinion was expressed by WNIA member Alice Fletcher when she asserted that "in the native order of society, the home, as we understand it cannot exist"

(Indian's Friend 2/1890:1). Another article suggests that the concept of "home" was almost beyond Indians' comprehension, because there existed no word for "home" in "their language" (Indian's Friend 8/1894:9). It must be noted that not in all instances in the WNIA literature are Western houses the only kind of dwelling that may be called a "home". The WNIA president paraphrases a report from the missionary Grace Howard, stating that the distances between the Ponca "homes" were great (Quinton 188?:2). However, when the WNIA's writings focus on domesticity, Native Americans are almost never conceded to have "homes".

To these financially situated WNIA women of the nineteenth century, the home was much more than a place to reside. WNIA member Sarah Kinney summed up all that a home should be:

The word home conveys to us the picture of one roof sheltering father and mother, and their children, secure in the sharing and inheritance of the property resulting from the toil of the family (Indian's Friend 2/1890:1).

This definition elucidates why Native Americans could not have "homes," for it excludes all but Westerners. First, the home must have one permanent, sheltering roof, a parameter which excluded teepees and any temporary dwellings used by migratory groups. The field matron from Rosebud gives testimony to this belief when she complains that a "great hindrance" to her civilization work is the way in which the

Indian "houses" are built (Indian's Friend 7/1893:3). Specifically, the roofs and floors are earthen, causing unhealthy and wet conditions when it rains.

The family unit which resides in the home—"one roof sheltering father and mother"—matters a great deal as well; polygamous, multi-family, and probably even extended-family units do not count, and are seen as counterproductive. In addition, the legal conditions of individual rather than tribal ownership and inheritance must be present. According to this definition, of course, Sarah Kinney continues, Indians lack "homes". Under tribal organization, property is inherited by the tribe, and in Kinney's narrow definition, children are shortchanged. Finally, most Native American societies did not "toil" in ways which were acceptable to Anglo society. Very few societies with which the WNIA had contact were involved in proper capitalist undertakings, such as managing their own industries or conducting agricultural farming, at this time.

Other articles suggest a separate, perhaps more insidious fear of nineteenth-century women who strived for purity in all things. Traditional dwellings consisting of just one room may be the cause of low "domestic morals," argues Amelia Quinton (Indian's Friend 6/1891:4). (The WNIA never mentions the one-room dwellings in which homesteaders often lived; certainly, mentioning this fact would not have aided the cause of the WNIA.) Although her statement is not

explicit, Quinton is obviously referring to Indian children being privy to sexual experiences. Indeed, another article points to the lack of both privacy and a "pure family life" in one-room Indian dwellings (Indian's Friend 4/1889:3). Quinton recommends removing Indian children to boarding schools in such instances rather than day schools, which presumably would permit children to return home during that sexually dangerous time of the day, night.

Thus, traditional dwellings represented all that was evil. They were unsanitary, encouraged sexual immorality, stole children's innocence, and prevented property inheritance. As embodying the polar opposites of these evils, the women of the WNIA felt that it was their duty to introduce Native Americans to the superior Western-style home.

### *A Symbiotic Relationship*

For the WNIA, rhetoric about domesticity which was centered around the home served as a screen of sorts for informing readers about missionaries' frequently extra-domestic activities. Rhetorically, the WNIA attributed a great deal of agency to the missionary's home. For instance, the agency attributed to her home by Grace Howard, a single missionary at the Crow Creek Agency in South Dakota, is significant. A letter from the missionary follows an article ending with a plea for financial support of the WNIA's Home Building Department, which provided financial loans to Indians. Although the letter features Grace Howard's quotidian interactions with Native Americans, another character plays a leading role in her story: her home. Her home is first mentioned when the narrator describes the "appreciation" felt by her favorite, industrious Indian girls for "such a home as mine, which is made as their own" (Indian's Friend 2/1890:3). But its dramatic entrance occurs when Grace Howard proclaims, "I believe my home has a wide influence." The missionary's home does not just sit on the prairie, it *does* things as well. According to another letter, the Indians think so, too. Even "unenlightened" Indians tell the missionary, "It is good to have your home here" (Indian's Friend 8/1894:9).

These statements lead one to ask whether it is the home or the missionary herself that is doing the civilizing. A

clue to the answer may be found in Grace Howard's next statement: "The people are constantly coming to me" (Indian's Friend 2/1890:3). Perhaps the "wide influence" is the result of both Grace's home and herself, for it appears that the one must operate in conjunction with the other. A woman was, after all, the crucial element needed to transform a house into a home, or so it was believed at the time. Indeed, the home alone could provide no civilizing influence without a Christian woman to grace it, for it was only "a white woman's presence in an Indian camp" that could "purify the moral atmosphere there" (Indian's Friend 8/1894:9). The converse notion that a woman is ineffective without a home is true as well: "She who would help in the Dakota homes, will first make a home for herself" (Indian's Friend 8/1894:9). The woman and the home are mutually dependent, and only when their forces are combined does either reach peak effectivity.

Further examples from Grace Howard's letter underscore the symbiotic relationship between the woman and her home. It is significant that the services and entertainment which she, and only she, provides to Indian visitors in her home cannot—at least not in a civilized way—be accomplished outside the home. For instance, she serves a cup of tea, provides the use of her sewing machine and instructional lessons, serves dinner, and offers "a bright, warm room" made cheery with her own welcome, among other things (Indian's Friend 2/1890:3). The way the missionary tells it, her home itself has the

power to raise the Indians up the cultural evolutionary ladder. Grace Howard describes the effect of the mere "coming in and out of my house" as "a general waking up" on the part of the Indians (*Indian's Friend* 2/1890:3). Attributing the agency to her home, not to herself, may have served a dual purpose. It would have assured readers that the missionary was still a True Woman who was devoted to creating the perfect home. In addition, using rhetoric about the home as a screen may have enabled her to perpetuate her non-traditional activities without inviting scorn from the mainstream society. Without a doubt, exposing the natives in her home to all the good things in life as defined by Western society would have validated the missionary's work in the eyes of *Indian's Friend* readers; this was certainly a job that no man could have done. Such a message could have been important for securing the necessary donations upon which WNIA missions depended.

Further, this particular missionary also writes that her home has aided in the spiritual salvation of Indians, as discussed above. Rather than Grace Howard herself who is converting the Indians, it is the home's influence which is decisive. This may be seen when she writes:

I employ heathen as well as Christian; and some of those who are now devoted attendants at our little chapel *came first into my house*, then stayed to evening prayers, brought their children to be baptized, and finally gave themselves (emphasis added; *Indian's Friend* 2/1890:3).

Grace Howard's home serves as a figurative entry hall to the kingdom of heaven. If this is so, then she as the missionary is surely the angel at the gate.

*The Home as a Civilizing Agent*

Both the WNIA and the federal government viewed tribal organization and the communal ownership of lands as a hindrance to the effective move from teepee to "home". The solution which was required to break up this "peculiar kinship organization" could be found in the individual ownership of lands (Indian's Friend 2/1890:1). The government saw allotment as the only way to break up Indian Territory; the WNIA hoped that allotment would ensure each Native American an inalienable piece of land.<sup>4</sup> Through its publication of numerous articles advocating individual land ownership, the WNIA supported the federal government's plans to break up tribal land into allotted parcels. Once allotment had occurred, and each married couple or nuclear family possessed its own 80 to 160 acre parcel of land, the WNIA urged, a "home" must be erected. The WNIA bemoaned the fact that the government would not allocate more funds to home-building, for they believed that "the home is the only true center and source of our Christian civilization" (Indian's Friend 12/1892:2). This rhetoric also served the WNIA women's desire to become socially active, since Christian women were the ones to teach Indian women "how homes are made" (Indian's Friend 12/1892:2).

The ideology of home-building was relatively simple, and was grounded in anthropological theories of social evolution. Once a nuclear family moved into a home, the family would be

propelled up the social evolutionary ladder toward civilization. The Indian family could, to some extent, overcome the "savagery" of its own race. Indian women would begin to heed the universal "mother and wife instinct to build up a home" and raise up their children and husbands in a civilized fashion (Indian's Friend 8/1894:8). Other Indians not residing in frame houses would be caught up in the back draft and eventually follow suit:

By these homes a new social force would be initiated on the reservation that would emphasize the lesson of the missionary and aid him in uplifting the people and also give an impetus toward better modes of living throughout the tribe" (Indian's Friend 2/1890:1).

Thus, not only would the erection of a house serve to uplift the Indians within, but it would also be an "object lesson" to "less favored Indians," such as those who did not possess a Christian education. The homes would also serve as an "inspiration" to those who were "struggling upwards . . . from barbarism into civilization" (WNIA Annual Report 1886:12). Those who continued to live in traditional dwellings would observe, desire, and then strive to attain the prosperity which blessed those Indians who had moved into frame houses, which were "like little palaces, in an almost homeless land" (WNIA Annual Report 1890:20). The WNIA never admitted in its official rhetoric the possibility that some Indians would not want to live in frame houses.

The WNIA also assumed that children who attended boarding schools would learn to appreciate the superiority of Western-style structures; eventually, they would come to reject traditional dwellings. When the children returned to the reservation from school, they would seek out the Indians there who owned frame houses, and would "find there (in the frame houses) a welcome resort" (Indian's Friend 2/1890:1). In addition, the assumption was made that girls returning from the boarding schools would want "neat and clean homes," and would disparage their mothers' traditional, and thus inadequate, housekeeping skills (Indian's Friend 7/1890:2). The home, then, came to stand for cleanliness and sanitation, thus reinforcing notions of the dirty, unpure, "home"-less Indian versus the clean, pure, healthy Anglo.

The move into a home would also supposedly strengthen the marital relationship by solidifying "natural" gender roles which the traditional native lifestyle subverted. This "benefit" can be identified in the WNIA's presentation of the relationship between Indian men, women, and housekeeping, in which conflicting messages are given in the official rhetoric. On the one hand, the assumption is made that Indian men are dissatisfied with traditional housekeeping methods. For if only the Indian women would sweep, dust, and scrub, "The men would be quick to note the progress of their women in learning to keep their houses 'like white man's home' " (Indian's Friend 7/1890:2). On the other hand, however, the

reader is led to believe that Indian men wrongly treat their wives like servants, forcing them to perform manual labor outdoors, and to provide for the family and "all the tribe" (Indian's Friend 8/1894:8). Thus, two conflicting messages can be identified. First we are given the image of a woman who knows nothing of housekeeping. Then we are shown a picture of a woman who is so over-worked at the wrong kind of labor that she has no time for housework. The supposed desire of Indian men for cleaner houses, coupled with the image of the overburdened Indian woman, a popular theme in Western writing at the time, may have worked together in colonial minds to demonstrate the Native American need for enlightenment. For, it was fully the belief of the WNIA that once women were taught how to be good wives, their husbands would be drawn under the wing of civilization and become good citizens. Once husbands saw the changes wrought in the home by their house-keeping wives, everyone would be happier. The husband would realize that his wife's real place was in the home, and that his was in the outside world. The Indian husband would stop overburdening his wife with extra-domestic work, and she in turn would be able to find satisfaction in her new and "natural" realm. Thus, the WNIA attempted to restructure native gender roles according to Victorian domestic ideals. Although the WNIA focused both its writings and charitable works on Indian women, drawing in the Indian man's opinion on housework here was a subtle and perhaps even

subconscious way of harkening back to the ideal of True Womanhood. A happy husband was, after all, one of the goals of a True Woman.

Finally, the home represents for the women of the WNIA not only all that is civilized, but it stands as well for the ultimate destination of all Protestants, the heavenly kingdom. This view is perhaps demonstrated most eloquently in the story of Ta-sina-sna-win, also known as Luella, a Dakota girl who had recently converted to Christianity, only to die of consumption. In a eulogy to this child, the WNIA missionary from Luella's village writes, "Luella is gone, gone home to God . . . safe, safe at home with the Heavenly Father; no longer an orphan, homeless . . ." (*Indian's Friend* 6/1890:3). Luella, who was snatched from the grasp of her medicine-woman grandmother, then cleaned up, civilized, and converted, represents the highest aspiration for a missionary. Even as she lies on her deathbed, she does not falter, but sings hymns and asks for prayers. This eulogy must have painted a beautiful and poignant picture for *Indian's Friend* readers. For, from her earthly "home", the missionary has been able to rescue a child from savagery and heathenism, and to prepare her for an eternal home. Heaven, as one missionary put it, is "the real Home" (*WNIA "Missionary Work"*, 188?:3).

The home is thus imbued with properties extending far beyond the basic notion of a sheltering frame structure. For

the missionaries of the WNIA, the earthly home has become the civilizing instrument of choice; not only does the home transform those living within, but, like a vortex, it draws in all those who see it. For the Native American who yields totally to the force of its pull, eternal salvation will result.

*The Home Building and Loan Department*

A chief concern of the WNIA women was that, after they had instructed Indians in the arts of civilization, the pupils would be unable to use their new knowledge because they still lived in traditional dwellings. Worse yet, they might slip back into "the barbarism from which the missionaries had rescued them" (*Indian's Friend* 4/1889:3). In the early 1880s, anthropologist Alice Fletcher envisioned a solution which was developed and carried out by Connecticut philanthropist Sarah Kinney. Not only would the WNIA teach Indian women and girls how to become homemakers, but it would also loan substantial funds to deserving, married Indian couples for the construction of Western-style frame houses. In 1885, the Indian Home Building and Loan Department was officially incorporated into the WNIA, its purpose "To enable educated Indian pairs thus to establish themselves in civilized and Christian homes" (Quinton "Seven Ways" 1890:9). However, in order to build a home, an Indian first had to own his own plot of land.

Both the federal government and the WNIA believed that Indians would never assimilate to white society until they had become self-interested and industrious individuals, each man the owner of a plot of land and a frame house. Through this process of individualization, the Indians would come to reject tradition and the tribe itself. The move into a wooden home represented the epitome of the WNIA's and the federal

government's joint quest to individualize and civilize Native Americans. As the 1870s gave way to the 1880s, continuous and increasing Anglo pressure on the government to reduce the massive tribal land holdings in the Midwest became the driving force behind the government's desire to solve "the Indian problem". The government responded by instituting a policy of forced land allotment which was aimed at "the obliteration of tribal life" by attaching each nuclear household to a segregated plot of land (Blumenthal 1955:159). Although numerous tribes had already been subject to allotment under treaties made with the government, the Anglo desire for Indian land was codified by the federal government in the General Allotment Act (24 U.S. Stat. 338) of 1887 (Hagan 1988:61). The act "gave" citizenship plus 160 acres of tribal land to each head of family, 80 acres to singles over 18 and orphans under 18, and 40 acres to other singles under 18 (Mark 1988:118).

Significantly, the WNIA was in a position to lobby the government for passage of this important piece of legislation, which, it must be noted, was not desired by many Indians. In fact, the WNIA may have played a vital role in the passage of the Dawes Act. As early as 1883, the WNIA began presenting to Congress petitions which called for the allotment of lands in severalty (WNIA Annual Report 1883:18). Their lobbying efforts become even more significant in light of the fact that Senator Henry Dawes, the major sponsor of

the allotment act, served on the WNIA's Advisory Board in 1887, the year the act was passed, and 1888 (WNIA Annual Report 1887:6; 1888:6). In addition, WNIA member Alice Fletcher not only lobbied for the cause, she also surveyed land plots on the Nez Perce Reservation in Idaho, and served as the allotting agent for both the Omaha and Winnebago Indians in Nebraska (Hagan:61). She recognized that allotment required the "uprooting and transplanting of the people," and she even urged allotment agents to cajole recalcitrant Indians into accepting parcels (Indian's Friend 9/1889:4).

The allotment policy is important for this study because it presumed that the new Indian landholders would build frame houses on their parcels. Thus, the WNIA's special department and its rhetoric regarding the home worked practically and ideologically in conjunction with the federal policy to transform Native Americans into functioning members of Anglo-American society. Indeed, the federal government's Office of Indian Affairs sanctioned the WNIA's home-building plan, as did Senator Henry Dawes, who was the act's sponsor (Annual Report 1890:20; Wanken:157;161). Although relatively few Indian homes were actually financed by the WNIA's Home Building Department, ("forty or fifty homes" were "furnished" within the first five years), the prominence given to the subject in the official rhetoric indicates the importance which the organization's leaders attached to the project (WNIA Annual Report 1890:20).

The reformers frequently worried about Native Americans who did not live in frame houses, because such people were capable of movement, of disappearance, of migration. As the missionary at Ross Fork, Idaho complained,

"There are but few Indians here now. Some are on the river bottoms and other in the mountains fot [sic.] the time." This coming and going is another of the great difficulties in way of civilizing wild Indians (Quinton 1888:5).

Such "wild" peoples represented the indigenous freedom and mysterious savagery that the government wanted to quell because it stood in the way of orderly westward expansion by Anglos. However, it was hoped by the federal government and the WNIA alike that the move into a frame house would "civilize" Native Americans and destroy tribal sovereignty by breaking up communally owned lands into private plots.

In addition to these culturally destructive effects, another insidious aspect of allotment and the move into a frame house can be identified. A theoretical framework which provides a useful tool for analyzing this aspect is Michel Foucault's interpretation of the panopticon. The panopticon consists of an arrangement of buildings and prison-like cells in which "inmates" are constantly visible to the surveillant. Through spatial ordering, the panopticon "brings together power, control of the body, control of groups and knowledge" (Rabinow 1984:19). Although certainly unlike prisons, individual land allotments with their WNIA-funded houses

served, within the newly created hierarchy of the national family, as cells in a panopticon. By successfully placing Indians in frame houses, it was possible to transform these liminal peoples into a known variable, to quantify them through the census (which was suggested by Alice Fletcher), to hopefully break their ties to the tribe, to make each actor "alone, perfectly individualized and constantly visible" (Indian's Friend 9/1889:4; Foucault:200). In its frame house, the Indian family would become isolated from the communal life of the tribe; the Indian woman, tied to her newly created domestic realm, would be the most constrained. For instance, one industrious Chemawa Indian man, and former school pupil, is a skilled mechanic and cabinet maker who has been forced by hard times to sell cut wood. His wife, a Chemawa "girl," is "helping him on by keeping the little cabin neat and clean" (Indian's Friend 7/1902). With the Indian family now permanently situated, a missionary would never again travel to an Indian camp to pay her calls, only to discover that the group had moved to another area. Instead, those who moved into frame houses could be visited regularly by the missionaries or field matrons who would assess their progress, encouraging the native inhabitants to continue in their now civilized lifestyle.

In other ways, as well, the Indians who moved into frame houses could be surveyed by those in power. The qualifications for obtaining a WNIA loan were stringent, and

applicants were subjected to intense scrutiny. Before granting a loan, the Home Building and Loan Department verified the "character and motives" of the native applicant with missionaries, teachers, agents, and other Anglos who knew the applicant (*Indian's Friend*: 2/1890:3). Successful applicants were to be "school-instructed" and "home-taught," the latter indicating that the wife should possess Western housekeeping habits (WNIA Annual Report 1886:12). As the home-building committee's leader was quick to note, investigation often proved "the unworthiness" of those who requested aid (Kinney:1888).

Reports on the inhabitants could be, and were, returned to the WNIA's main office and made public in several arenas, including oral reports at the annual meetings, written reports of the Home Building and Loan Department, and in *The Indian's Friend*. For, when loan applicants were chosen, their private lives became public knowledge. For instance, an 1888 report on home-building details the backgrounds of three successful applicants and their wives. All three men, the report announces, belong to the "Chilkat tribe, of the Thlinget Nation" (Kinney 1888:4). A brief description of the tribe follows, including its geographical location, trading activities, and general comportment: "They are a well favored and intelligent race" (4). Descriptions of the applicants tend to focus on their "civilized" accomplishments and moral nature. Two examples will demonstrate the scrutiny to which

loan applicants were subjected. The 21-year-old applicant Thomas Moore is exactly the type of Indian the WNIA wants to hold up as an example. He is "manly in appearance, obliging in disposition, agreeable in manners, and possesses more native refinement and dignity than any other boy in school" (4). Readers are told exactly how long he has attended school, the quality of his spoken English, his occupation, and his marriage plans. The second example is of "Jennie," the intended wife of another applicant. It is possible when reading about the saga of Jennie's life to see how her story would have served as an encouragement for Anglo-Americans who despaired that Indians would never progress. At age 12, Jennie was sold to a white miner for \$100, and taken to the mines. She only knew "a little concerning right and wrong," and hated her life of "slavery and sin" (Kinney 1888:4). Although the passage is unclear today, it carries the implication that Jennie was the enslaved concubine of the miner; if this is indeed the case, then it brings to new heights the public scrutiny to which applicants' future wives were subjected. Jennie's mother finally bought her back from the miner, and Jennie developed into a trustworthy Christian, and brought many relatives "into the kingdom" (Kinney 1888:5). Jennie's conversion no doubt assured donors that their money would be well spent.

In addition to being privy to sketches of the loan applicants, readers also are informed as to what the WNIA-

funded "cottage" homes look like. Those built in Alaska were 24 feet square, and one and a half stories high. Although they were, admittedly, but "cheap cottages," the homes significantly contained more than one room; each had a living room, kitchen, pantry, and wood-house on the first floor, and two bedrooms and a closet in the attic (Kinney 1889:3; Kinney 1888:5). Thus, WNIA members, potential fund-contributors, and anyone who purchased the WNIA pamphlet could learn who the three newly accepted home-loan applicants were, where they lived, their occupations, English language skills, moral comportment, sordid pasts, physical violations which had been inflicted upon them, and the nature of their new living accommodations. The visibility of Indian men and their wives to white authorities increased a hundred-fold upon their application to the WNIA for a home-building loan. Like inhabitants in a cell in the panopticon, the Indians had each become visible to the oppressive eye of the surveillant.

Yet, not only were the native inhabitants in their new houses constantly visible to the Anglo-American religious and civil authorities, but also to other members of the tribe. Although the WNIA would have had its readers believe that all but the most heathen and savage saw the supremacy of allotment and frame houses, differing accounts of Indian reactions to allotment and frame houses are available. The WNIA's official stance perhaps culminates in an article by Dr. Susan La Flesche, a Native American woman whose medical

schooling was financed in part by the WNIA. La Flesche asserts that when Indians build and move into a frame house, they begin to live "in *the right way*, . . . the white man's way," which, all Indians will admit, is "the best" way (Indian's Friend 7/1889:1). However, history testifies to the fact that Native Americans were not and still are not passive recipients of Western domination. It is essential to realize that many Native Americans were able to avoid moving into frame houses, thus resisting attempts to "civilize" them through this method. For example, full-blood Creeks in Indian Territory strongly opposed the allotment policy by appealing to Congress through memorials and petitions, by forming groups determined to salvage tribal government, and by grassroots organizing to combat assimilation within their own tribe (Congressional Record:781; House Miscellaneous Document:2; Debo 1940:54,55,162-4; Debo 1941:180,338). In addition, many full-blood Creeks openly defied the policy by refusing to register for allotments and ignoring allotments which were forcibly made (Bolt 1987:171; Debo 1940:58).

*Instilling an Ethic*

A much-emphasized facet of the WNIA's home-building project was that Indians who received loans were required to pay them back, rather than treat them as gifts. In so doing, the couple would "earn" their home (Kinney 2/1890:1). It would also teach them the Protestant ethic, to "work hard to pay for" their home (Kinney 2/1890:3.) In addition, as Kinney notes, repaying the debt would teach Indians "our ordinary business methods," knowledge which was essential for conducting "business relations with white men" (Ibid:3). The Indians would learn the intricacies of surviving in a capitalistic world. Of course, Kinney and other leaders were not completely idealistic; the chief concern held by WNIA members and donors to the Home Building and Loan fund was that the native recipients would fail to repay their loans. Nevertheless, in the official rhetoric, the WNIA strived to demonstrate that loan recipients were indeed honoring their debts.

The attention devoted by the WNIA to instilling in Native Americans business acumen and a Protestant work ethic is significant. Within the pages of *The Indian's Friend*, educated, money-earning Indians are held up as success stories for all to see. For instance, readers can learn about a Chemawa man who earns \$90 a month as an engineer on a steamship (Indian's Friend 7/1902:8). Suggestions and requests for Indian modes of industry also appear. The focus tends to

center on manual labor or working-class jobs; this emphasis would have reinforced class differences between Indians and Anglos. For instance, one article proposes that "Indians plant broom corn and make brooms" (Indian's Friend, Untitled. 12/1892:2). In another article, a woman doctor in the field implores the WNIA to send her a sewing machine so she can teach the Coahuilla women to become productive homemakers:

If I teach women to use a sewing machine, thus creating a(n) appetite for swift sewing, and then sell their baskets for them till they can buy a machine, the result will be many machines and better dressed children, men and women (Indian's Friend 5/1893:2).

The need to obtain a money-earning job pervades the official rhetoric. In one article, Indian "girls," says a missionary, "ought to earn a living"; that is, until they are married (Indian's Friend 2/1890:3). The WNIA even created a special "Indian Civilization Work" Department which was intended to serve as a labor bureau to help Indians, especially "returned students," obtain "civilized work . . . at self-supporting wages" (Quinton, 11/1890:7).

The education of women and children was seen as paramount to the civilization of the Indians, and native peoples were taught by civil and religious servants in the homes and in day schools. Children at mission schools were forbidden to speak their native tongues, underwent severe haircuts, and donned the dress of Anglo society. School children under the WNIA women's tutelage awoke "not to a day

of pleasure, but to a day of busy school life or industrial work" in preparation for becoming fully functioning members of capitalist society (*Indian's Friend* 1/1891:1). Boys and girls were taught how to be "industrious," in the Western sense of the word, with the learning of girls focusing specifically on the domestic ideal. Clearly, the WNIA used children as a site of ideological penetration.

Articles on girls' education appear frequently in *The Indian's Friend*. It is in these articles that the missionaries and "field matrons," who were church and government-sponsored civilizers, described what they saw as the domestic ideal for girls and women. That the Anglo women's own behavior did not follow the model appeared not to matter, for they saw their commission, to teach their "savage sisters in heathen darkness" the way to the Lord, as a logical extension of their own domesticity.

Cleanliness and European-style industry were the main subjects taught at mission schools; even playtime was to be conducted with purpose and industry. Girls were taught to sweep, dust, make beds, iron, and were drilled with the idea that "homelessness breeds vagabondism and viciousness" (*Indian's Friend* 8/1894:8; see also 1/1891:1). Mrs. Dorchester at the Navajo agency provides a vivid description of female training:

If the Indian girls have learned to knit and crochet, if they can fashion pretty socks for babies, and becoming

hoods for themselves, if they know how to put simple frames round their pictures, and add lace to the window curtains, if they have taken these rudimental steps in the art of home adorning, it will make their homes better and more permanent, besides preventing much gadding about and gossip, by keeping young mothers at home and industrially employed (*Indian's Friend* 6/1890:3).

In very rare circumstances, acts of resistance against the domesticity which was so closely tied to the allotment policy are documented in the pages of *The Indian's Friend*. In one case, a missionary obtains a bed, a necessary appliance of civilization, for a sick girl in order to spare her from having to lie on the earthen floor. However, the girl complains that the bed is cold, and that she prefers the ground. Later, the missionary returns, only to find the girl "lying over a warm brick eating parched wheat while the chickens and dogs picked about her" (*Indian's Friend* 5/1893:2). The missionary attributes the girl's choice to improper morality, but in this Native American's actions can be seen a resistance to and rejection of Western ways.

These vivid examples demonstrate the various ways in which the WNIA participated in the imposition of capitalism and gender-based roles of production on native societies. Whether it was through drafting loan agreements with native home-builders, individually teaching women and children how to be more industrious, or allowing a work ethic to pervade their official rhetoric, the WNIA women aimed to instill the Protestant ethic in their Indian "friends".

*The WNIA and "Imperialist Nostalgia"*

Although the prevailing ideology espoused by the WNIA held the home and its civilizing accouterments in highest esteem and viewed the Indians as an unclean and degraded people, voices which appear to contradict that ideology occasionally surface in the official rhetoric.

One article chronicles the problems which the imposition of Western culture has created for native women. Although this article is somewhat uncharacteristic of most WNIA articles, its inclusion indicates that the discourse of the WNIA was not a monolithic, unified whole, and that the general attitude toward assimilation may have been changing. In this 1899 piece, noted anthropologist and WNIA member Alice Fletcher criticizes "the white man's authority backed by the unseen hand of the law," which confined the Indian woman to the home, removed her property rights, and put her under a previously unknown domination by her husband. Fletcher, who ten years before had served as allotment agent, now appears to be criticizing the allotment policy's effects on native women. Formerly, the Indian woman was in the "free fresh air" all day. However, now as she toils at cooking, washing, ironing, sewing, and scrubbing, "the picturesque has gone out of her life" (*Indian's Friend* 10/1899:1). There is no laudatory place in this article for civilizing appliances; here, they are only seen as the Indian woman's "silent and inexorable companions". The lines in this article taken from

Alice Fletcher display a romanticized version of the "olden times". Fletcher sees the Indian woman as a noble savage who has become degraded since contact with Western society, especially Western males.

Such voices may at first glance appear to undermine the WNIA's official stance on Native Americans. However, as Renato Rosaldo has demonstrated, opposing views can be assimilated into one ideology; in fact, "ideology can be at once compelling, contradictory, and pernicious" (Rosaldo 1993:73). In some cases, the contradiction surfaces in what Rosaldo defines as imperialist nostalgia, in which one mourns for what one has destroyed. Imperialist nostalgia, Rosaldo argues, occurs in conjunction with a "civilized" nation's sense of mission to uplift "savage" nations. In essence, "imperialist nostalgia uses a pose of 'innocent yearning' both to capture people's imaginations and to conceal its complicity with often brutal domination" (Rosaldo:70). This phenomenon is clearly visible in the WNIA's official rhetoric. At the same time the WNIA was publishing articles such as "Indian Cradles," which presented a romanticized view of Indian crafts and childhood, it was urging the eradication of native material culture and supporting mandatory schooling (Indian's Friend 6/1906:10). The particular brand of imperialist nostalgia which surfaces in the WNIA's official rhetoric served to make more benign the imperialist project in America.

However, we may infer from the WNIA's brand of imperialist nostalgia something more, a dissatisfaction of Anglo-American women with the roles society had defined for them. For their writings do not merely display a general longing for "the very forms of life they intentionally altered or destroyed". Their longing is often very specifically aimed at the freedom of lifestyle that "uncivilized" Native American women possessed—a lifestyle which "civilized" women in that era were not expected to have.

Several articles indicate the WNIA women's possible dissatisfaction with their own status. These articles appear to applaud the lifestyles of native women, but without lamenting their loss of freedom, and with no call for reforms. For instance, "The Way of a Hopi Maid" celebrates the Hopi girl's freedom in choosing a mate (*Indian's Friend* 4/1902:12). In addition, "Hopi Prototypes of the 'Suffragettes'" applauds the Lysistrata-like efforts of ancient Hopi women who, "tired of bowing to the caprices of their lazy lords and masters," holed up on a distant mesa until their husbands agreed to grant them mastery over the household (*Indian's Friend* 4/1909:10). Unlike other tribes in which the "squaws" are "little more than household drudges," the Hopi "women" are "the real arbiters of destiny for the male population". Not only do the women own the homes, they also depend on the men to do all field work, blanket weaving,

stocking knitting, and "even helping with the household tasks and sometimes minding the babies". Finally, the prospective Hopi groom, whom the woman herself has chosen to marry, must weave his bride's dress. Surely, this article, which in no way condemns the Hopi way of life, conveys more than simple imperialist nostalgia. Its reference to the Hopis as the first suffragettes indicates that the WNIA may have been waking up to the issues of women's rights that were already in existence by this time.

However, other, more frequent articles overlay the longing for the noble savage with pity and messages of reform. For instance, the romanticized view of Indian women as noble savages appears in the first paragraph of an article titled "The Indian Girl". The article begins in a descriptive fashion, imaging a woman who wears exotic jewelry and clothing, including earrings "half a yard long," a necklace of elk teeth, and embroidered moccasins. "She gather flowers and wild fruits, digs the wild turnips, and chews the gum gathered from the prairie plants" (*Indian's Friend* 12/1899:10). As depicted here, the Indian woman is a free, beautiful, and uninhibited creature. The second paragraph then adjusts its tone to one in which Indian women are pitiable, since they have never bathed, never been "tenderly kissed and snugly tucked into bed," etcetera. Finally, the article ends with a plea to *Indian's Friend* readers to "carry

the light to these dark sisters," bringing the love and joy which they have never known.

Many WNIA writings such as "The Indian Girl" use both the presumed evils of Indian culture and pity for Indian women to justify the destruction of native ways of life. The WNIA glorifies the Indian women as victims while native culture is cast in the role of the adversary at the root of Indian women's poor condition. The WNIA women set for themselves the task of wrenching the victims, their "sisters," away from Native American culture; native women's degradation serves as a reason for imperialism. Thus, it was possible, even in the confines of one article, for imperialist nostalgia to surface in the description of Indian women as noble savages, and for imperialism itself to surface in the call to uplift the heathen savages. In the process, the longing of Anglo women for a less-constrained lifestyle tends to be obscured by overtones of domesticity and benign imperialism.

*The WNIA and State Formation*

In the nineteenth century, the United States was a nation still in its formative years, run by Protestant people of European descent who believed in manifest destiny. Their ideas were based on the racist notion that native ways were inferior and immoral. Through their assumption of duty to the Native Americans, the WNIA women and the government at large normalized Western epistemological and ontological beliefs and, in so doing, imposed a system of moral regulation upon indigenous peoples. Their moral regulation involved

a project of normalizing, rendering natural, taken for granted, in a word 'obvious', what are in fact ontological and epistemological premises of a particular and historical form of social order (Corrigan and Sayer:4).

When couched in terms of morality, their destruction of native culture was legitimated by a higher cause.

Every native act, object, belief, and tradition was held up to Christian/Western standards for scrutiny. If found to be immoral, the object of scrutiny could be assaulted through a complex amalgam of religious and legislative weaponry that often employed methods designed to infiltrate the domestic spheres of native peoples (the domestic sphere, it must be noted, was imposed upon the native peoples by non-Indians such as the WNIA women). During the latter part of the nineteenth century, Donzolet observes, areas which were frequently taken to be outside of politics, such as hygiene,

family structure, and sexuality, were targeted for state intervention (Rabinow 1986:260). These were precisely the subjects about which women of the WNIA were claiming to be the experts. Their innate knowledge about these areas, which was backed by a superior morality grounded in domesticity, indicated that they should lead the charge against savagery, paganism, and tribalism. Thus it was that the two WNIA missionaries at Round Valley, California, felt justified in destroying native culture, including the use of "a Saturday evening sociable to displace Indian dances" (WNIA 1886:11). Reformers such as the WNIA women went to work with the best of intentions, and they believed their reforms—which entailed the eradication of native culture—would spiritually and practically save the Indians from destruction.

The home, as both a frame house connected to the allotment policy and as an idea representing domesticity, purity, cleanliness, and Christianity, served as a weapon which was aimed at destroying indigenous beliefs and lifestyles, and ultimately, tribalism and communal land holdings. In the end, the eradication through allotment of large tribal land holdings such as those in Indian Territory would aid in state formation by enabling the United States to fulfill its manifest destiny through westward expansion. In the process, Native Americans would be robbed of their land and much of their cultural heritage.

The WNIA's teachings were based on historically situated ideas about superior female morality and inferior Native American culture. Their focus on Indian women was calculated to strike at the person in the family who, it was thought, was the bearer of culture and thus could bring about the most change once reformed. In addition to redefining gender roles, the WNIA women perpetuated official ideologies of racism. Within almost any issue of *The Indian's Friend* can be found pitying discussions of Indian women, who are portrayed as "brown" or "dark sisters," "poor squaws," "primitive," and unclean until civilized and Christianized. Mohanty has argued that this type of differentiation aids state formation, because

colonial states created racially and sexually differentiated classes conducive to a ruling process fundamentally grounded in economic surplus extraction. And they did this by institutionalizing ideologies and knowledges which legitimated these practices of ruling (Mohanty, Russo, and Torres 1991:18).

By perpetuating racist ideas about Native Americans, especially in *The Indian's Friend*, the WNIA served the larger government project, which was hungry for Indian lands and natural resources. It was much easier for legislators to soothe their consciences about taking land and resources away from "savages" and "heathens" than it would have been had Indians been viewed as civilized folk. In addition, the WNIA's domestic morality, in its dependence upon "symbols of docile and submissive womanhood," contributed to the United

States' attempts to subjugate Native Americans (Alexander 1991:133). Confining Indian women to the home meant removing them from the public sphere and fitting them into a new gender-based mode of production. Thus, by couching ideas about gender and race in terms of Christian morality, the women of the WNIA successfully legitimated and participated in the federal government's attempt to assimilate Native Americans into the conquering society.

The concept that "state forms are always animated and legitimated by a particular moral ethos" is crucial for understanding the ideological setting in which women of the WNIA worked (Corrigan and Sayer 1985:4). Their morally grounded actions, which were sanctioned and partially funded by the government (through supplying missionary housing), were calculated to ultimately destroy all vestiges of tribal life and culture. By infiltrating the quotidian activities of Native Americans, the WNIA women were able "to introduce economy and order (i.e., government) from the top of the state down through all aspects of social life" (Rabinow 1984:15). This leaves no doubt that the WNIA and its missionaries served as tools of the United States. At the same time, through the WNIA's influence in politics via lobbying efforts, public lectures, and petitions, the WNIA helped to form federal policy regarding Indians.

Thus, viewing the WNIA women as merely passive tools of the State is reductive. Although some amount of control was

undoubtedly imposed upon WNIA women by their own organization, they actively participated in defining their personal roles as bringers of civilization. As self-designated tools, the women themselves were responsible for defining the targets for Church and State intervention: the home, Indian education, native women's spheres, and domestic life.

As their official rhetoric demonstrates, the women in this association, many of whom also happened to be unmarried or widowed, consciously chose to reshape notions about Anglo women's spheres. As a result, WNIA women benefited by being able to move into an expanded women's sphere. The ideology of domesticity, which was grounded in women's superior morality and knowledge about the home, enabled them to accomplish this. In this sense, the women of the WNIA were able to subvert patriarchy.

## CONCLUSION

At the peak of Indian reform in the 1800s, powerful groups of Christian women affected Indian reform legislation and brought about change in the lives of many Native Americans. Such organizations deserve attention, for women have too often been written out of history. However, the question of how to study these women's organizations becomes problematic when examining the effects of Indian reform. There are two difficulties. First, major governmental policies during the nation's formative years attempted to exterminate Native Americans, to assimilate them into Anglo society, and to remove them as far west of the Mississippi as possible. The end result of nearly every policy was the destruction of native ways, dignity, and life. Second, it has been suggested that the changes wrought by colonizers may have destroyed far more than scholars have traditionally acknowledged. Paula Gunn Allen charges that a chief effect and purpose in the colonization of America was the decimation of the gynocratic, or woman-centered, nature of Native American society (1986). In its place was instituted a patriarchal, capitalist system of power.<sup>5</sup> Supporting this assertion, K. Tsianina Lomawaima in a recent article suggests that the federal government aimed in Indian education to make girls subservient and submissive to authority (229). Finally, the example of the WNIA demonstrates how Anglo-American women imposed Western ideologies of domesticity, involving reduced

spheres and models of docile womanhood, on Indian women. Because so few WNIA missionaries were actually out in the field, the impact of these women on individual Indians' lives would have been minimal. On the other hand, the allotment act, which itself was grounded in an ideology of domesticity, affected thousands of Native Americans.

The WNIA is a prime example of a missionary and reform organization which played a role in the colonizing project of the United States. By examining the rhetoric of the "home," this paper has explored the relationship between the WNIA, the federal government, and Native Americans. Taken merely in its religious context, the frame house was seen by WNIA women as the entrance to heaven for Indians. Through their insistence on "homes" for Indians, the WNIA attempted to impose a gender separation on natives which placed women in a restricted sphere. Because only certain people could live inside a "home", the WNIA redefined the nuclear family as the economic unit for Indians. Of course, the only economic mode which was acceptable to these women was capitalism. Finally, through its support of allotment and home-building loans, the WNIA helped to introduce to Native Americans a new system of land tenure and the notion of land as personal property. Once Indians adopted—by choice or by force—the new system, government and religious surveillance and domination could be more easily carried out.

When examined in the context of the evolutionist-theory driven nineteenth century, it is not surprising that the WNIA participated in a campaign which destroyed indigenous culture and contributed to the spread of patriarchy. Indeed, their example lends support to the argument that:

Women have not been merely passive victims of patriarchy. But neither have women been free agents; they have always faced ideological, institutional, and practical barriers to equitable association with men (and indeed, with other women) . . . Women's support has always been crucial to the endurance of patriarchy (Judith Bennett, qtd. in Chaudhuri and Strobel 1992:4).

The Women's National Indian Association's negotiation and manipulation of the ideology of domesticity shaped the roles which were available to both Anglo and native women in late nineteenth century America. By using their superior knowledge about domesticity, the WNIA women escaped one aspect of patriarchy by expanding their own spheres. However, through the use of this same ideology of domesticity, the WNIA asked Indian women to occupy a sphere which they themselves had escaped. Even if the WNIA women did not consciously detect this contradiction between their own beliefs and actions, their rhetoric implies that at some level, the WNIA women were conscious of the predicament. For at the same time that the WNIA women were domesticating their "dark sisters," they were also experiencing imperialist nostalgia for the way of life they were destroying. However, this experience of

nostalgia appears to be the closest that the WNIA women ever came to realizing that their work constituted a thinly disguised imperialism.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Couched in terms of domesticity, women's philanthropic work in the nineteenth century has previously been viewed as a case of women operating within an extended private sphere. However, as Kathy Peiss argues, religious organizations, which women frequently controlled, must be understood as an "alternative public arena" (820). Organizations such as the WNIA gave women "an institutional base for public involvement and a model for their political associations" (Peiss:820).

<sup>2</sup> As Welter notes in her landmark essay, although social reform and missionary movements represented the perfection of True Womanhood, they would ultimately serve to undermine the domesticity ideology of the nineteenth century (115).

<sup>3</sup> This aspect of superiority is arrived at metonymically. "The Lord," as the twenty-third Psalm points out, "is my Shepherd." God is also divine and thus superior to human beings.

<sup>4</sup> In the end, contrary to reformers' hopes, the allotment policy failed to secure permanent lands for many Native Americans. After the Dawes Act was passed, subsequent legislation and corrupt individuals managed to finagle many allotments away from Native Americans. For a history of

allotment, see *The Dawes Act and the Allotment of Indian Lands*, by D. S. Otis. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1973); also, see Blumenthal.

<sup>5</sup> Paula Gunn Allen's assertion of universal gynocracies among pre-contact Native American societies is disputable. However, there is substantial evidence that colonial powers in America generally strengthened patriarchal forces, which thus worked to subjugate native women.

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