A Genesis Story for the USA or the Beginning of the End: The Work of Mobilising the Mayflower Narrative in its 400th Commemorative Year.

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A GENESIS STORY FOR THE USA OR THE BEGINNING OF THE END

Amelia Lucy Mulcahey

Abstract

This thesis is an international study of the negotiation and mobilisation of the Mayflower historical narrative in its 400th year. While critical heritage discourse has called for greater attention to the affective relationships of communities with their heritage, the curator is often presented as detached and magisterial. Furthermore, this curator is principally assumed to be non-Indigenous. My research complicates established heritage discourse through an investigation of Indigenous informants and non-academic community members as audiences and producers of historical narratives. Exposing the overlooked diversity of roles and identities of those that interpret history, this thesis uses semi-structured interviews with: public historians, event organisers, local government representatives, critics of the commemorations, student groups and Mayflower descendants. My research applies a decolonised methodology and is produced in collaboration with Native American advisors. Informants are from the UK, USA and the Mashpee and Aquinnah Wampanoag, Shinnecock, Dakota and Cherokee Nations.

This thesis contends that historical interpretation is hard, emotional and even traumatic work. It argues that colonial misrepresentations and anti-Indigenous racism shape the interpretive work of Native American informants and complicate claims that the Mayflower commemorations are a strong platform for Indigenous cultural survivance. The 2020 commemorations, like the proceeding celebratory anniversaries, are shown to drive reinterpretations of the Mayflower narrative to meet changed audience expectations, notions of history and narratives of nationhood. The 2020 Black Lives Matter protests and Covid-19 pandemic are shown to provoke a significant change in these expectations. My research reveals that the Mayflower narrative is multivalent; however, by sensitively examining the processes by which historical interpretations are produced, my ethnography reveals how a dominant Pilgrim Mayflower narrative is preserved. This study contributes a timely insight for decolonising interventions in upcoming commemorations, by uncovering the pressures that shaped a significant contemporary moment of UK-Indigenous collaboration.

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THE WORK OF MOBILISING THE MAYFLOWER NARRATIVE IN ITS 400TH COMMEMORATIVE YEAR

Amelia Lucy Mulcahey

Masters of Arts by Research 2020

Historian, Christine DeLucia describes travelling in a canoe down the Boston Island River with Native American community members.[1] It was a waterborne commemoration which honoured Native ancestors who were incarcerated by English colonists and perished on Deer Island, Massachusetts. She was offered a space in the canoe, and she regarded this as the moment that she fully considered whether her role as researcher was that of an observer or a participant. In the language of the Wampanoag the word for canoe is mishoon. This thesis is my considered attempt to add the efforts of my paddle to the expert strokes of my Indigenous friends.

[1] DeLucia, "Memory Lands: King Philip's War."

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This thesis was written during a fast changing and truly frightening time. Its completion is testament to the expertise and kindness of a community with a shared recognition that the stories we construct about ourselves and others are deeply important. Kate, Richard, Tim and Darius, thank you for bringing the past alive and inspiring me with an unwavering commitment to the power of public history to open minds and build bridges. To my Indigenous friends, Kerri, Dylan, Andrew and Linda, thank you. This project would not have been possible without your expertise, determination and resilience.

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A WARNING.

During my research for this thesis I received many warnings. These were exclusively given to me by non-Native people.

“I don’t think Native Americans are really a thing anymore”

“Native people don’t want white people studying this”

“Only English people have this strange interest in Indigenous history”

“Native Nations never co-operate, so you can only speak to one”

“Native people get upset if you use,
Native American…
No, Indian…
No, Indigenous…”

I wonder how many researchers, at the urging of such warnings, have never spoken with Indigenous people and have drawn only from non-Native accounts of Native history and experience?

Introduction

A full size replica of the Mayflower is docked at Plymouth harbour, Turtle Island.[2] Wind ripples across its sails, unfurling flags bearing the cross of St George. Mayflower II was gifted to America by the British as a sign of gratitude for its support during the Second World War and as a symbol of shared heritage and friendship. In 1957, the replica ship braved the transatlantic journey of its namesake, leaving from Plymouth UK. The force behind Mayflower II, Warwick Charlton, described his inspiration:

> Her voyage, the very crossing of the Atlantic itself symbolic, is accepted as the first meeting point and the first point of departure of the histories of the two English-speaking peoples…Behind lay a common heritage, and it was Mayflower that took the accumulated, sifted wisdom of the Old World to the New.[3]

In 1970, the marking of the Mayflower voyage as a significant Anglo-American story was reaffirmed through parades in Plymouth Massachussetts and across the Atlantic in Plymouth UK. The tone of the 350th anniversary was overtly celebratory. American event organisers invited an Aquinnah Wampanoag elder, Wamsutta Frank James to deliver a speech.[4] This was perhaps intended to reaffirm the cross-cultural cooperation of the Wampanoag and English, as depicted in the dominant Pilgrim Mayflower narrative and Thanksgiving story. The organisers created space for an appreciative Indigenous comment on the arrival of the colonists, and Wamsutta penned his speech. The following is a substantial quotation, but it provides essential and emotive context for this thesis. That historical interpretation is hard, emotional work with significant contemporary implications is exemplified in Wamsutta's challenge to the dominant Pilgrim Mayflower narrative. His Mayflower interpretation is a fight against dehumanisation, a challenge to the validity of the US foundation story, and a contradiction to ideas of a neutral history that is dead and past. His speech began:

> I speak to you as a man — a Wampanoag Man. I am a proud man, proud of my ancestry, my accomplishments won by a strict parental direction ("You must succeed – your face is a different colour in this small Cape Cod community!"). I am a product of poverty and discrimination from these two social and economic diseases. I, and my brothers and sisters, have painfully overcome, and to some extent we have earned the respect of our community. We are Indians first – but we are termed "good citizens."... It is with mixed emotion that I stand here to

[2] Turtle Island is a common Indigenous term for the continent also referred to as North America. See Terminology, 13.

[3] Charlton, *The Second Mayflower Adventure*, 3.

[4] UAINE, "Supressed Speech."

> share my thoughts. This is a time of celebration for you – celebrating an anniversary of a beginning for the white man in America. A time of looking back, of reflection. It is with a heavy heart that I look back upon what happened to my People. Even before the Pilgrims landed it was common practice for explorers to capture Indians, take them to Europe and sell them as slaves for 220 shillings apiece. The Pilgrims had hardly explored the shores of Cape Cod for four days before they had robbed the graves of my ancestors, and stolen their corn and beans…Massasoit, the great Sachem of the Wampanoag, knew these facts, yet he and his People welcomed and befriended the settlers ... little knowing that it was the beginning of the end ... before 50 years were to pass, the Wampanoag would no longer be a free people. What happened in those short 50 years? What has happened in the last 300 years? ... History wants us to believe that the Indian was a savage, illiterate, uncivilized animal. A history that was written by an organized, disciplined people, to expose us as an unorganized and undisciplined entity. Two distinctly different cultures met. One thought they must control life; the other believed life was to be enjoyed, because nature decreed it. Let us remember, the Indian is and was just as human as the white man. The Indian feels pain, gets hurt, and becomes defensive, has dreams, bears tragedy and failure, suffers from loneliness, needs to cry as well as laugh.[5]

Wamsutta's speech was never delivered in the setting it was intended. It was barred by event organisers, not for issues of historical inaccuracy, but for the inflammatory challenge it posed to the dominant, celebratory Mayflower narrative.[6] Even in 1970, Wamsutta's own lived experience presented an unacceptable challenge to a the dominant narrative that the Pilgrims started American history and that Native Americans vanished in the face of this progress; a central and significant tension outlined in the title of this thesis. After being turned away from the event, Wamsutta led a protest to Cole's Hill near Plymouth Rock.[7] Protestors boarded the Mayflower and removed the Union Jack, replacing it with the flag that had flown over the liberated Alcatraz Island, a symbol of Native presence and resistance.[8] Since 1970, some Native Americans have celebrated a National Day of Morning, in stark contrast to the celebratory American Thanksgiving.

The centrality of the Mayflower story to the US national narrative cannot be underestimated. 50 years after Wamsutta's speech, the dominant narrative that emboldens the English colonists as Pilgrims, searching for religious freedom in a God gifted land,

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[5] UAINE, "Suppressed Speech."

[6] Wamsutta's speech drew on Mayflower Passenger William Bradford's own accounts, see Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation 1620-1647*; Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, 96.

[7] UAINE, "National Day of Mourning."

[8] For more on the occupation of Alcatraz Island, see Treuer, *The Heartbeat of Wounded Knee*, 297-300.

persists. In the image of the welcoming Wampanoag and kindly Christian Pilgrims, the US finds its core values and justification for its expansion. Therefore, Wamsutta's speech is still controversial. That contesting this dominant narrative is fraught, emotionally difficult and even traumatic work, is something Wamsutta's speech and its censuring makes inescapably clear. Despite these challenges, the 2020 Mayflower anniversary events were to be even more ambitious than their predecessors, with far greater UK involvement. Mayflower 400, the organisational body for the UK events, based in Plymouth, estimated that 'the national Mayflower programme will drive growth in the UK visitor economy of over 1.4 million visitors during the commemoration year, with an economic impact in excess of £76 million'.[9] The Mayflower narrative was expected to draw significant international attention and its appropriateness for 2020 was highlighted through two core changes, a new commemorative tone and the inclusion of Native American representatives. This involved the collaboration of the Wampanoag Advisory Board as the fourth member of the UK, USA and Netherlands partnership. This ambitious programme would not only articulate the Mayflower narrative on an international stage but draw public attention to central controversies that had been described by Wamsutta 50 years previously. Was the UK really prepared to engage directly with Native American historical experience and cultural survivance, and in doing so, have an open conversation about its colonial history?[10]

Personal Background

I encountered the Mayflower narrative as a historical interpreter at the US Plimoth Plantation museum in 2013 and 2016, where I shared the story with hundreds of visitors.[11] I was trained on the Mayflower historical story with particular focus on the seventeenth-century lifeways of the Wampanoag Nation and early Wampanoag - English interactions. As I researched primary documents and spoke with Native and non-Native historians and archaeologists, I became acutely aware of a significant gap in my school education. I had never been taught about European colonisation or anything about Native American historical and contemporary experience. This silence was also apparent in the surprise of my UK friends that Native American people still existed, that they were members of diverse Nations, and that their history was marked by English colonial violence. My shock at this UK based lack of knowledge was paled, only in comparison, to my concern at the surprise shown by American visitors that Native Americans were part of their own modern cultural landscape.

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[9] Lumley, "Over 13 Million US Citizens." Covid-19 disrupted travel and the commemorative events programme was cancelled, the economic impact remains unknown.

[10] Cultural Survivance is a term commonly used in Native American studies, see Terminology, 14.

[11] I will refer to the Museum as Plimoth Plantation, although a name change was announced during the final stages of my thesis. See Machemer, "Plimoth Plantation Will Change its Name."

That the erasure of colonial and Indigenous history could be navigated through historical interpretation work was taught to me by my colleagues, passionate Indigenous interpreters. That this work was tiring, emotional and fraught also became increasingly apparent as I navigated challenging questions from visitors: “are they real Indians?”, “ do they still live like this?” My continued working relationship with Plimoth Plantation gave me insight into the earliest preparatory stages for the 2020 commemorations. I was fascinated by how others would engage with this historical anniversary. Over the four years following my museum internship, debates around what constituted appropriate commemoration have grown. I was intrigued as to how these changes would impact the Mayflower historical story as it was articulated on an international stage. I was also concerned that these events, despite their new commemorative tone and the inclusion of some Indigenous voices, might reaffirm colonial misrepresentations of the Native peoples of Turtle Island.

Research Aims

Wamsutta’s speech exemplifies the central focus of this thesis. He engages in an act of historical interpretation, taking historical evidence of the colonists’ activities and contextualising them within a colonial ideological framework and his own lived experience. The primary aim of this thesis is, to borrow a term from Michael Carrithers, to ‘open the world’ of historical interpretation.[12] I define historical interpretation loosely as the work of navigating a historical narrative. It is both a descriptive term of a mode of work and a statement of intent for my research - to show the diverse professional and personal identities of heritage stakeholders. Taking as its study, the negotiation and mobilisation of the Mayflower historical narrative in its 400th year, my research reveals the rich complexity of interpretive practice. This thesis will pay particular attention to the emotional experiences of interpreting, and examine my informants’ affective ties with heritage. I will continue the work of post-colonial theorists in presenting a culturally embedded view of history, and the work of decolonisation theorists in asking, who is given space to interpret history?[13]

As demands for decolonising history grow, I believe it is essential to understand the mechanics and pressures of historical interpretation work. To discount those who continue to share a dominant and misrepresentative narrative is, in my opinion, unhelpfully reductive as

[12] Carrithers, “How to Open a World.”

[13] See MacDonald and Fyfe, "Theorizing Museums”; Vidali, “Native American Realities"; Tyrrell and Walvin, "Memorialising Britian's involvement in Slavery"; Raicovich, “the Myth of Neutrality”; Linda Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*; Miller, “Native Historians Write Back”; Picq, “Decolonizing Methodologies in International Relations”; Lee-Morgan and Hutchings, *Decolonisation in Aotearoa*; Weaver, “The Red Atlantic.”

we seek to understand how to create meaningful change. This study aims to sensitively and empathetically detail the pressures historical interpreters experience to preserve the dominant Pilgrim Mayflower narrative. This aim explains a noticeable absence in this thesis, President Donald Trump. Trump has of course actively employed racial slurs against Indigenous peoples and his administration has attempted to dismantle tribal sovereignty. However, the misrepresentation and erasure of these Native Nations began far earlier, in European occupation and US nation-building. Following the example of ethnohistorian Matthew Restall, I assert that to give this man further attention would be an unnecessary distraction in the complex work of dismantling a misrepresentative narrative that reasonable people continue to share.[14]

Chapter Outline

Each chapter of this thesis applies a different approach to achieve ethnographic closeness. In Chapter One, theory is positioned in the background, as I employed a close analysis of my informants' interpretive practice. This chapter begins the work of dismantling a limited image of heritage practitioners, revealing the complex, personal and affective relationships that a diverse community of interpreters have formed with the Mayflower narrative. I include several interviews with descendants of the Mayflower passengers, a community I assumed had strong attachments to the dominant Pilgrim narrative. This chapter will challenge that assumption. Within the Second Chapter, I 'open the world' of Indigenous historical interpreters.[15] I situate their lived experience and interpretive practice within a contemporary context of anti-Indigenous racism and lasting colonial misrepresentations. I then investigate how this context politicised and excluded Native historical narratives in the UK and US 2020 Mayflower commemorations.

The final chapter of this thesis is divided into two parts to illustrate how interpreters can produce historical narratives with limited knowledge of the pertinent work of other historical interpreters. I apply a similar approach to Chapter One, closely analysing my informants' statements; however, I also draw on ethnographic examples of historical interpretation work outside of the Mayflower narrative to contextualise my informants' practice. Within Chapter 3, Part I, I investigate how my informants navigated ideas of what constitutes appropriate commemoration. These considerations are shown to be intimately connected to a belief that the 2020 Mayflower commemorations would form a platform for Indigenous cultural survivance. I then investigate how these negotiations were altered and

[14] Restall, "The Trouble with 'America,'" 2.

[15] Carrithers, "How to Open a World."

given greater public scrutiny following the 2020 Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests and accompanying calls to decolonise education.[16] In Chapter Three, Part II, I draw on the diverse views of my Indigenous informants to reveal the complexity of Mayflower 2020 as a platform for cultural survivance. I examine the limitations of this platform and question its accessibility, drawing on a campaign to remove a school's Native mascot, and the Mashpee Wampanoag's use of the dominant Pilgrim Mayflower narrative to secure their tribal sovereignty.

Terminology

This thesis could only ever have been an intervention. So politicised are any efforts to share Native American experience or history, the fact that my thesis includes the diverse opinions of members of multiple Native Nations renders it an intervention. To meet the expectations of an accurate, academic paper I would not be able to avoid challenging the dominant Mayflower narrative which explicitly inverts the colonist – Wampanoag power dynamic in a manner that is unsupported by the primary sources of those same colonists.[17] Speaking with young, Native people, educated in their history and traditional lifeways, I could not rely on some of the most famous works in the ethnographic record, with their reoccurring representations of vanishing Natives.[18] This thesis seeks to be unsettling, reflecting my own experiences of shock and realisation. The terminology is carefully chosen to fulfil these aims.

Turtle Island, the common Indigenous name for the continent will be predominantly used over America or the United States. This word choice seeks to emphasise that this continent is a complex landscape of multiple Nations, diverse Indigenous cultures and of unconceded land. This choice also reflects a concern of historical methodology. Historians such as David Silverman have announced that they wish to "take Indian history seriously within the context of greater American history."[19] This thesis challenges this point, emphasising that Native American history stretches back more than 12,000 years and to attempt to force it into a foreign cultural framework of 400 years would be a diminishing and frankly impossible task. To use the US, in relation to discussions of the history, would of course be inaccurate as it was founded over 150 years later.

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[16] See Black Lives Matter, "6 Years Strong."

[17] See Bramen, *American Niceness: A Cultural History*; Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation 1620-1647,* 73-95.

[18] Bennett et al., "Boas and After: Museum Anthropology,"; Hoffman, "'The Vanishing Red'."

[19] Silverman, "This Land is Their Land."

Colonists, is the term used throughout this thesis to describe the Mayflower's passengers. They have been retrospectively emboldened by the name Pilgrim or Pilgrim Fathers, which I see as unextractable from the Christian mythology of this narrative. This thesis avoids all mention of settlers, following advice from my Plimoth Plantation informants. Settler appears misleading as this land, though depopulated by disease, was Indigenous and the arrival of the English Mayflower passengers was financed as a colonial venture. Separatist will be used in this thesis to accurately describe some of the colonists who had separated from the Church of England. However, it applies to less than half of the Mayflower passengers.

Native, Native American, Indigenous and Indian. I represent my Indigenous informants through this range of titles. This variation reflects the terms they used, and they would often employ two or three in any exchange. The interchanging of terminology was for some, a reflection that these terms are all "equally incorrect". That Indigenous peoples are presenting themselves through terms that do not represent their diversity or experience is important to note. That these terms, particularly apparent in the case of 'Indian,' are themselves colonial misrepresentations reflects the context through which Indigenous people present themselves and interpret their heritage. My informants also employed 'Indigenous' or 'Native peoples' to describe a shared experience across cultures and national boundaries. My informants stressed that wherever possible Native Nation names should be used, for example, the Mashpee Wampanoag Nation. I rarely use Indian and never any variant of this word. My training in historical interpretation was at Plimoth Plantation museum where 'Indian' was discouraged, and so I include the term only when quoted. I recognise that not all terms are available to me as a white English woman.

Cultural Survivance - This term is commonly employed in Native American studies and is credited to Anishinaabe theorist Gerald Vizenor.[20] He loosely defines this phrase as describing a 'sense of Native presence', encouraging a multiplicity of interpretations discussed in his 2008 collaborative work.[21] I apply this term over cultural survival, to suggest a state of cultural flourishing, beyond resilient existence. I wish to reflect the continued cultural development of Indigenous Nations and emphasise what is at risk through re-colonising narratives and attacks on Indigenous sovereignty. The invention of a 'new vocabulary' to discuss Native American diverse cultures and histories has been adopted with enthusiasm by Jace Weaver, and applauded in a review of his work by Elizabeth Cook-

[20] Vizenor, *Survivance: Narratives of Native Presence.*

[21] Vizenor, *Survivance: Narratives of Native Presence*,1.

Lynn.[22] These efforts speak to a wider attempt to move away from established academic frameworks with their troubling colonial history.

[22] Cook-Lynn, "That The People Might Live by Jace Weaver," 226; see Weaver, *That The People Might Live*.

Literature Review

This thesis sits at the intersection of several anthropological approaches, with previous studies in four key areas significantly informing the theoretical and methodological framework. Firstly, I examine post-colonial heritage studies that demonstrate that history is a product of cultural values and hierarchies, a characterisation that formed the starting point for this thesis. Secondly, I show that critical heritage studies provide a useful framework for the analysis of historical interpretation work. Thirdly, I contend that the work of ethnohistorians develops this framework through a recognition of emotion as a category of analysis, which offers insight into the texture of interpretive work and the impact of cultural and historical context. Finally, I demonstrate that decolonisation theory has far-reaching implications for heritage studies and supports a methodological approach that appropriately represents the work of Indigenous interpreters.

Post-colonial shifts in museum studies recognise the heritage site and historical discourse as culturally specific constructs, embedded in and producing hierarchical relations.[23] E.H. Carr argues in his 1961 lectures, that facts and values cannot be separated and that the historian's work is an interpretive practice.[24] I assert that this culturally embedded view of history is central to understanding the Mayflower historical narrative as a multivalent product of creative interpretative work. Numerous post-colonial studies of heritage sites have considered how historical narratives produce the other, the boundaries of a nation and define its values.[25] Tim Luke's investigation of American museums, published in 2011, and Alex Tyrrell and James Walvin's earlier work on the British memorialisation of the slave trade, reveal how museum heritage narratives can overwrite historical evidence in favour of preserving national values.[26] Luke investigates how renewed national identity is constructed in three US museums. He argues that exhibitions mediate intangible affect, constructing narratives with a 'slippage of memory' to preserve a particular nation-building 'mythic memory'.[27] Tyrrell and Walvin define memorialisation as a process of elevating myth above reality.[28] This observation resonates with the role of Mayflower celebrations and the Thanksgiving holiday in preserving a dominant Pilgrim Mayflower narrative. Carrie

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[23] See MacDonald and Fyfe, "Theorizing Museums"; Vidali, "Native American Realities"; Tyrrell and Walvin, "Memorialising Britian's involvement in Slavery"; Raicovich, "the Myth of Neutrality."

[24] Carr, *What Is History?*, 131-132.

[25] Luke, "A Nation's Memories"; Mookherjee, "The Aesthetics of Nations"; MacDonald and Fyfe, "Theorizing Museums."

[26] Luke, "A Nations Memories"; Tyrrell and Walvin, "Memorialising Britian's involvement in Slavery," 147-169.

[27] Luke, "A Nation's Memories," 7.

[28] Tyrrell and Walvin, "Memorialising Britian's involvement in Slavery," 160.

Bramen, in a study of the myth of American national 'niceness', characterises this historical interpretation as an inversion of historical power dynamics to suggest the Wampanoag were dependent on English kindness.[29] In their 2011 studies of museum artefact descriptions, both Jeremy Coote and Patricia Davison argue that historical interpretations can perpetuate racial hierarchies and colonial categorisations.[30] By investigating how South African rock art was considered beautiful while the Indigenous people who painted it were labelled 'primitive relics of a dying culture', Davison joins a growing movement considering the role of the heritage site in the denial of Indigenous co-temporality.[31] Such studies characterise heritage sites as sites of nation-building, with Sharon Macdonald and Gordon Fyfe presenting the museum as instrumental in the development of the modern nation-state, articulating spatial and temporal orders.[32] This research forms the starting point for my examination of the preservation of anti-Indigenous rhetoric within the Mayflower narrative.

Within existing heritage studies, the historical interpreter can be inferred to be a detached curator, practicing the work of nation-building.[33] Within Luke's comprehensive study, which situates the museum exhibition within its social and political context, curatorial practice is mentioned only once. Luke briefly defines this practice as the active reconstructing of historical narratives at the curator's 'discretion'.[34] This uncomplicated image of the curator does not consider the pressures they experience to preserve nation-building narratives and whether heritage practitioners share conflicting interpretations in the creation of the heritage site. My thesis will reveal that many historical interpreters, in fact, worked to challenge the dominant Mayflower narrative but faced significant resistance. I apply Nayanika Mookherjee's theory of 'nonnarration' to investigate the mechanisms by which interpreters experience pressure to not narrate narratives that challenge a self-affirming national identity.[35] I suggest that if we assume a simple top down hierarchy of historical interpreter and visitor, we overlook the significant and changing pressures applied by the expectations of visitors, funding bodies and heritage institutions.

Several ethnographic studies of the largest Native American run museum, The Mashantucket Pequot Museum and Research Center, show a shift to recognise that heritage

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[29] Bramen, *American Niceness: A Cultural History*.

[30] Coote, "Writing on, around, and about things"; Davison, "Interpreting Rock Art."

[31] Davison, "Interpreting Rock Art," 19.

[32] MacDonald and Fyfe, *Theorizing Museums*.

[33] Coote, "Writing on, around, and about things"; Davison, "Interpreting Rock Art"; Luke, "A Nations Memories," 65.

[34] Luke, "A Nations Memories," 65.

[35] Mookherjee, "Knowing What Not to Narrate."

sites can contest established silences and hierarchies.[36] In their 2008 articles, Patricia Erikson and Bill Anthes consider the challenges for curators in combatting the idea of the vanishing Native and asserting authentic Indigenous identity.[37] Recognising the role of historical interpretation in driving change is essential to understanding the motivation of many of my informants. It can also explain calls from the UK 2020 BLM protests for the transformation of the commemorative landscape and decolonisation of education.[38] These studies provide a foundation for the examination of historical interpretation, yet with reference to unnamed museum practitioners they disguise the diverse professional roles and personal identities of historical interpreters. I propose that historical interpretation requires greater ethnographic attention and that an investigation of this diverse community challenges naturalised historical discourse, and so presents a powerful tool for the post-colonial anthropologist.

Critical heritage studies call for increased attention to the affective relationship of communities with heritage sites. This attention to emotion provides a revealing analytical framework for understanding the diversity of ways in which informants identify with the Mayflower narrative. From grief, to feelings of national pride, or familial connectedness, the complex emotional experience of the heritage site visitor is examined by Laurajane Smith, Sharon Macdonald and Michalinos Zembylas. In her 2006 work, Laurajane Smith argues for an end to research which studies the past without recognition of its emotional and cultural impact on contemporary communities.[39] She defines heritage as centrally concerned with the production of individual and community memories, values and identities.[40] My thesis will consider how this interplay of memories results in an emotional reaction that is described as both personal and communal. More recently, Zembylas asserts that the visitors' most transformative and even traumatic affective reactions can be provoked through difficult heritage.[41] 'Difficult heritage' was coined in 2008 by Macdonald during a study of sites of Nazi history in Nuremberg.[42] She uses the term to describe an increasingly popular practice of marking, as significant, sites of heritage that were difficult for the nation's liberal sense of self. I suggest her characterisation of 'difficult heritage' is limited for this study of a settler-colonial society, where national narratives compete. To assert that representative history is constructed as 'difficult heritage' seems to assume the heritage worker's identity as non-

[36] See Kasper and Handsman, "Survivance Stories, Co-Creation"; Erikson, "The Mashantucket Pequot Museum"; Anthes, "Visualizing the Mashantucket Pequot."

[37] Erikson, "The Mashantucket Pequot Museum"; Anthes, "Visualizing the Mashantucket Pequot."

[38] Summer and Waller, "Inside Plymouth's Black Lives Matter."

[39] Laurajane Smith, *Uses of Heritage, 29.*

[40] Laurajane Smith, *Uses of Heritage*, 63.

[41] Zembylas, "Emotional Regimes of Reconciliation," 197; Zembylas references 'feeling rules' from Hochschild, *The Managed Heart*.

[42] Macdonald, *Difficult Heritage*.

Indigenous. I suggest that we should ask instead, to whom is this heritage difficult and is the categorisation of difficult heritage contested?[43]

While focusing on the exhibition itself and the emotional reactions of visitors, many post-colonial and critical heritage studies have underexamined the challenging work of the historical interpreter. Zembylas recognises the limitation of the curator's top-down power, reflecting on how efforts to evoke a particular emotional regime are complicated by individual and community feeling. However, he does not consider the curators' own embeddedness in this regime.[44] Autoethnographic accounts by historical interpreters, including artist Alana Jelinek, reveal that historical interpretation involves a fraught personal evaluation of multiple sources and narratives, and is shaped by the expectations of the audience.[45] I am sympathetic to Laurajane Smith's calls for a diversification of heritage stakeholders. [46] However, by arguing that these positions have been reserved for architects, historians and archaeologists, she overlooks the well-established interpretive work of guides, event organisers, and reenactors who she acknowledges but defines as 'non-experts'.[47] Contrastingly, Macdonald considers the views and work of a diverse community of historical interpreters, which she labels 'heritage workers', examining their challenging efforts to produce affect.[48] Building on Macdonald's work, I suggest rich insights can be gained by liberating the study of affective relationships with heritage from a singular focus on the visitor to the deeply personal experiences of historical interpreters.

A focus on how historical interpreters engage in the complex and affective negotiation of multivalent heritage discourses has methodological implications. In his 2003 article, ethnohistorian Michael Harkin, calls for the inclusion of emotions as a 'mode of experience and a category of analysis'. [49] He emphasises the impact of emotions on historical interpretation by revealing how Native American history can disappear because it is too traumatic to be spoken.[50] I share Harkin's concern that unspoken emotions should be carefully considered by the researcher. However, the defining of unspoken trauma as emotion has significant theoretical implications and could be accused of disregarding the

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[43] See Linda Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*; Miller, "Native Historians Write Back"; Picq, "Decolonizing Methodologies in International Relations"; Lee-Morgan and Hutchings, *Decolonisation in Aotearoa*; Weaver, "The Red Atlantic."

[44] Zembylas, "Emotional Regimes of Reconciliation," 197.

[45] Jelinek, "An Artist's Response."

[46] Laurajane Smith, *Uses of Heritage*, 34.

[47] Laurajane Smith, 34.

[48] Macdonald, *Difficult Heritage*.

[49] Harkin, "Toward an Ethnohistory of Emotions," 262.

[50] Harkin, 262.

distinctions of emotion, feeling and affect. Work to separate and define these terms is gaining significant traction, exemplified in Margaret Wetherell, Laurajane Smith and Gary Campbell's comprehensive collection on the subject.[51] They define emotion as a 'processing and packaging of affect' in 'familiar cultural categories' such as, grief and love.[52] Whereas affect is suggested to be an unnamed feeling, positioned within the body, emotion is considered a voiced experience.[53] Even as these researchers define these terms they voice concern that establishing a distinction misrepresents the fluidity of these concepts. I agree, and suggest further criticisms which have significant implications for this study. Can affect even be conveyed in 'cultural categories' of a settler-colonial society? The powerful autoethnography by Donald Fixico, describes a forced translation process whereby Indigenous people are required to shape their experience to fit a foreign cultural framework.[54] Drawing on his work, I argue that there are ethical concerns in expecting Indigenous, and indeed non-Native informants, to fit their feelings into imposed 'emotional' categories. Furthermore, we must consider which emotions can be expressed in the performative interview space. Harkin reflects on the potential political nature of emotions by considering the Western policing of emotional discourse.[55] Ethnohistorian, Restall similarly asserts that the study of emotion is essential to ethical research, arguing that the US treatment of Native Americans can only be appropriately recounted by conveying the emotions of horror and loss.[56] To focus on my informants' emotions and to write emotively is itself a form of intervention in a legacy of detached research on Indigenous communities. I will demonstrate that the politicising of emotion can be seen, in part, to explain the sanitising of the Mayflower narrative. To analyse the emotional work of historical interpretation and situations where emotional discourse contrasted with tone, I do not rigidly separate affect and emotion. I include within emotion feelings that are deduced through tone and body movement. My research continues a movement by Carrithers and Thomas Yarrow to provide ethnographic closeness by focusing on the rhetoric, intention and context of my informants' words and the construction of emotion in the relationship between myself and my informant.[57]

This thesis is significantly informed by decolonisation theory which asserts that colonial influences still structure lived experience linguistically, psychologically and

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[51] Laurajane Smith, Wetherell and Campbell, *Emotion, Affective Practices*.

[52] Laurajane Smith, Wetherell and Campbell, 1.

[53] Laurajane Smith, Wetherell and Campbell, 1.

[54] Fixico, *American Indian Mind in a Linear World*.

[55] Harkin, "Toward an Ethnohistory of Emotions," 265.

[56] Restall, "The Trouble with 'America.'"

[57] Carrithers, "Why Anthropologists Should Study Rhetoric"; Carrithers, "Humanism as method"; Yarrow, *Architects Portraits of a Practice*.

culturally. [58] In producing a workbook for Indigenous communities, Wahpetunwan Dakota writer Waziyatawin Angela Wilson and, member of the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara tribes from North Dakota, Michael Yellow Bird present decolonisation as a communal process of openly and critically dismantling bias.[59] They support the reader through the 'first step toward decolonization' which they define as questioning 'the legitimacy of colonization'.[60] Māori theorist, Linda Smith's renowned work on decolonising methodologies asserts that anthropologists have presented Indigenous people as objects rather than practitioners of research, a legacy which this thesis seeks to address. [61] She references Gayatri Spivak, a leading proponent of Subaltern Studies, in examining recent efforts to critically dismantle colonial representations that marginalise racialised or Indigenous persons from the role of expert.[62] She argues that decolonisation theory is a distinct theoretical and methodological approach, and that many Indigenous theorists 'actively resist participating in any discussion within the discourses of post-coloniality.'[63] She explains that some consider post-colonialism to be 'the convenient invention of Western intellectuals which reinscribes their power to define the world.'[64] This is a complex and contested claim, given that Subaltern Studies was founded in India and is explicit in its intention to give voice to those who experienced colonial violence and a vanishing from the academic record.[65] However, Linda Smith's statement highlights a broader effort to differentiate the work of post-colonialists from decolonisation theorists. Strikingly, post-colonialism is not mentioned in Wilson and Yellow Bird's work or Jessica Hutchings and Jenny Lee-Morgan's comprehensive study of decolonisation in Aotearoa.[66]

Indigenous decolonisation theorists have impacted recent historical interpretations of the Mayflower voyage and the broader history of the North Eastern Woodlands Native Peoples. Christine DeLucia references Linda Smith's work directly, as she describes the

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[58] See Linda Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*; Miller, "Native Historians Write Back"; Picq, "Decolonizing Methodologies in International Relations"; Lee-Morgan and Hutchings, *Decolonisation in Aotearoa*; Weaver, "The Red Atlantic."

[59] Hutchings and Lee-Morgan, *Decolonisation in Aotearoa;* Wilson and Yellow Bird, *A Decolonization Handbook*.

[60] Wilson and Yellow Bird, *A Decolonization Handbook*, 2.

[61] Linda Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 11.

[62] Linda Smith, 14; Spivak, *The Postcolonial Critic*

[63] Linda Smith, 14.

[64] Linda Smith, 14.

[65] See Spivak, *The Postcolonial Critic*.

[66] Wilson and Yellow Bird, *A Decolonization Handbook*; Hutchings and Lee-Morgan, *Decolonisation in Aotearoa.*

methodological influences for her study of the King Philip's War.[67] DeLucia describes consulting archival records alongside the oral history of Indigenous elders. Silverman, for his account of Thanksgiving, similarly worked closely with Indigenous experts.[68] Lisa Brooks was referenced by many of my Indigenous informants as having set a new standard for sharing Indigenous historical experience.[69] In her 2008 book, she interprets the early relations of English colonists and New England Indigenous peoples through the Indigenous framework of the common pot.[70] While the application of this methodology in printed academic accounts is a recent and growing phenomenon, I will consider how it is used as an established practice by Plimoth Plantation Indigenous interpreters. In the last five to ten years, academics from a breadth of disciplines have turned their attention to uncovering the impact of Native Americans on the UK, from what Coll Thrush describes as 'not the hiddenness of past events,' but 'an enforced silence'.[71] Like Thrush, the UK Arts Council funded project, 'Beyond the Spectacle' is consulting archival records to map and describe the significant influence Indigenous communities played in shaping the so-called centre of the Empire.[72]

Historian, Jeremy Bangs argues against the use of Indigenous cultural frameworks to re-evaluate colonial sources, suggesting that this approach lacks intellectual rigour. In an ill-natured footnote, he likened the work of Indigenous public historian Nanepashemet, who championed this approach, to the work of a child.[73] However, I suggest that the damage of a persistent and uncritical reliance on colonial categorisations of Indigenous people is illustrated in two of the most well-known historical fictions on the Mayflower voyage. Rebecca Fraser's 2017 book on the Winslow family and Nathanial Philbrick's 2006 *Mayflower*.[74] Fraser, an English writer, discusses Indigenous economic relationships in detail; however, she also resorts to images of the violent, mindless 'Indian', with 'Tomahawks ready to scalp'.[75] This dehumanised representation evokes the narrative of Western films, which in turn played on fearmongering images that sought to justify policies

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[67] DeLucia, "Memory Lands: King Philip's War." See also, DeLucia, *Memory Lands King Philip's War*.

[68] Silverman, *Troubled History of Thanksgiving*.

[69] Brooks, *The Common Pot.*

[70] Common pot appears in eighteenth and nineteenth-century North Eastern Woodlands Native writings to describe a framework of shared resource and responsibility, which guided the actions of Indigenous people who sought to restore balance after the arrival of the Europeans.

[71] Thrush, *Indigenous London*, 6.

[72] Stirrup, "Beyond the Spectacle."

[73] Bangs, *New Light on the Old Colony Plymouth*, 453. See also Ancientlightsvideo, "Nanepashemet Interviewed."

[74] Fraser, *The Mayflower Generation*; Philbrick, *Mayflower A Voyage to War*.

[75] Fraser, *The Mayflower Generation*, 148.

of Indigenous removal. Philbrick's fast-paced, sensationalist work was described by my informant, public historian Linda Coombs, as 're-colonizing'. [76] She stated in a published review of the book, 'He [Philbrick] has used deeply ingrained stereotypes, misconceptions, and gross cultural error to create a sensationalistic setting to recreate this history'.[77] That historical interpretations carry a danger of reaffirming colonial misrepresentations is emphasised by Coombs and considered throughout this thesis. Coomb's article, published in the quarterly magazine of *Cultural Survival*, which is an organisation fighting for Indigenous rights, emphasises that an active community of Indigenous peoples are dismantling these representations through their historical interpretation work.[78]

Decolonisation theory is not just a theoretical framework but calls for the transformation of academic methodologies and liberating change. Wilson and Yellow Bird call for researchers to be 'practitioner-activists,' applying decolonisation to their own lifeways while encouraging others to do the same.[79] Linda Smith, speaking to a broader audience of non-Native academics, emphasises that researchers must work collaboratively with communities, respect Indigenous peoples as knowledge bearers and represent them within an Indigenous framework.[80] It is important to note that there are multiple interpretations of decolonisation, with Eva Tuck and Wayne Yang defining decolonisation not as a metaphor, but as a call for repatriation of Indigenous land and lifeways.[81] Though the analytical framework and methodology of this thesis predominantly draws on decolonisation as defined by Linda Smith, Wilson and Yellow Bird, it provides insight into the core misrepresentations that limit Indigenous efforts to maintain sovereignty over their homelands and cultures. Māori researcher, Mera Penehira asserts that the decolonising researcher must ask themselves, 'what are the historical and contemporary research context that need to be accounted for?'[82] This thesis draws on research from across disciplines to explore the challenging context of power dynamics within which Indigenous historical interpreters work. I draw on the work of ethnohistorians Restall, Andrew Lattas and anthropologist Ter Ellingson, who each consider the role of colonial categorisations in producing racial hierarchies with contemporary implications.[83] Ellingson, looking at the European colonisation of Turtle Island, demonstrates that ideological categorisations of

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[76] Coombs, "Mayflower: A Story of Courage"; Philbrick, *Mayflower A Voyage to War*.

[77] Coombs, "Mayflower: A Story of Courage."

[78] Cultural Survival, "Advancing Indigenous Peoples' Rights."

[79] Wilson and Yellow Bird, *A Decolonization Handbook*, 3.

[80] Linda Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*.

[81] Tuck and Yang, "Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor."

[82] Lee-Morgan and Hutchings, *Decolonisation in Aotearoa*, ch 9.

[83] Restall, "The Trouble with 'America'"; Lattas, "Savagery and Civilisation"; Ellingson, *Myth Noble Savage.*

racial inferiority inscribed power relations that sought to justify colonial expansion and genocidal warfare.[84] Lattas, focusing on the cultural construction of Australian Aborigines in dominant class discourses in 1788-1830, similarly argues that hegemony is not the effect of racist categorisations but that racist discourse is itself an act of domination.[85] My research details my informants' experiences of the structuring power of these colonial categorisations, with particular attention to their emotional impact. Inspired by Ellingson's analysis of the foundations of the Noble Savage discourse, my research will demonstrate the deep rooted history of these categorisations in European thought. I will support the claims of Ellingson, Lattas and Restall by similarly demonstrating that racist colonial categorisations bear no resemblance to Indigenous people and yet shape their contemporary lived experience. My thesis presents detailed insights for a researcher of strategic essentialism; however, I intentionally move away from this phrase and associated studies of the politics of Indigeneity. While I seek to contextualise Indigenous interpreters' practice, I wish to highlight similarities in the challenges and negotiations faced by Native and non-Native informants as they seek to dismantle dominant misrepresentations while engaging a broad audience. This approach best reflects my ethnographic findings, that revealed Indigenous identity to be part of a complex matrix of identities that affect the interpretation of the Mayflower narrative.

Indigenous and non-Native historical interpreters work to engage broad audiences and in doing so can mobilise dominant colonial misrepresentations. Anthes and Beth Conklin demonstrate that the mobilisation of exotic or misrepresentative imagery should not be considered paradoxical to efforts for cultural survivance, something I reflect upon in the Mashpee Wampanoag's February 2020 use of the Mayflower narrative.[86] Anthes argues that we should not compartmentalise Indigenous uses of popular representations of 'Indianness' from efforts to challenge misrepresentation. In a revealing ethnographic analysis of the contrasting self-representation of the Mashantucket Pequot Nation in their Foxwoods Casino and their Museum and Research Centre, Anthes discusses the symbolic capital of 'playing Indian'.[87] He explains that by appealing to pan-Indian stereotypes in the casino, such as prehistoric kindly or warrior figures, the Mashantucket Pequot assert historical continuity, land based identity and generate the investment which funds the Museum and Research Centre. While having a continuous heritage is integral to national identity for any community, Anthes demonstrates that the historical context of Native Americans having to

[84] Ellingson, *Myth of the Noble Savage.*

[85] Lattas, "Savagery and Civilisation," 39-40.

[86] Anthes, "Visualizing the Mashantucket Pequot"; Conklin, "Aesthetics and Authenticity"; see Rickert, "Interior Department to Appeal."

[87] Anthes, "Visualizing the Mashantucket Pequot," 207.

prove their Indigeneity to secure land rights, makes this particularly significant. Although Conklin's work focuses on Amazonian Indian activism and was written eleven years previously in 1997, she describes a similarly fraught practice of Indigenous communities employing exotic imagery to assert claims to authenticity.[88] Conklin reveals that Indigenous bodies are expected to reflect a Western notion of Native identity. She challenges the representation of Indigenous communities as pre-modern and yet repeatedly presents her Indigenous informants as recipients of innovation rather than its producers, regarding the t-shirts, shorts and technology they use to be 'Western' and non-Indigenous.[89] Decolonisation theorists have shown that such bias appears even in the work of Indigenous people. They therefore call for researchers to open their work to feedback and include a self-conscious reflection of their changing assumptions during the research process.[90] I seek to do this throughout my study.

[88] Conklin, "Aesthetics and Authenticity."

[89] Conklin.

[90] Wilson and Yellow Bird, *A Decolonization Handbook*.

Methodology & Ethical Considerations

A significant consideration throughout this research was the legacy of exploitation and erasure of Indigenous peoples by anthropologists. The reputation of our discipline shaped my interactions with Indigenous informants, who on several occasions described anthropological research as synonymous with dehumanising stereotypes. I sought to break from a hierarchical research model that decolonisation theorists have argued represents Indigenous communities as objects of analysis, rather than expert knowledge producers.[91] This literature demonstrates that despite my experience working closely with Indigenous people, it was essential that I recognise the limits of my understanding as a non-Native person. I developed a collaborative decolonised methodology in order to address the inaccurate representations of Native Americans in the ethnographic record. I recognised that I had to be self-reflective and also offer my informants the opportunity to recontextualise their statements and challenge my conclusions. Research questions were openly considered and redesigned in discussion with all of my informants and I asked each to contribute recommendations to my reading list. My Indigenous informants, all of whom were academics and public historians, are acknowledged throughout this thesis for their expertise in their Nations' history and the Mayflower story. Several of my Indigenous informants became key advisors on this project, offering guidance and feedback.

To comprehensively meet my research aims, I conducted semi-structured interviews with more than 30 informants from the four nations engaging in the Mayflower commemorations. While the event organisers predominantly worked with the Wampanoag Nation, through an advisory board, I wished to investigate diverse Indigenous perspectives and therefore also spoke with members and descendants of the Cherokee, Shinnecock and Dakota Nations, as well as several members of the Mashpee and Aquinnah Wampanoag. To demonstrate the diverse identities and professional roles of historical interpreters, I interviewed; event organisers, curators and local government representatives, Mayflower descendants, public historians, academics, students, and groups critical of the commemorative programme. I conducted all interviews, in person or online, between September 2019 and August 2020. Initially, I identified informants over LinkedIn, sending an introductory email explaining my interest and requesting a meeting. This was almost always unsuccessful. I revised my approach and began building my network from contacts I already knew well, including those I secured during my 2016 internship at Plimoth

[91] See Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*; Miller, "Native Historians Write Back"; Picq, "Decolonizing Methodologies in International Relations"; Lee-Morgan and Hutchings, *Decolonisation in Aotearoa*.

Plantation museum. I asked each contact to recommend two others. I was either introduced by email to these new informants or encouraged to state that my existing contact had recommended me. Through this approach, I began each conversation with the trust of my informants and built a strong and lasting network.

Primarily, this thesis employs semi-structured interviews conducted at a place chosen by my informant, often a coffee shop and occasionally their home or place of work. I travelled to South West England and to the US to secure in-person interviews. Familiar spaces offered a comfortable and creative environment for my informants to share personal insights and for us to engage in collaborative idea building. Creating a safe space for expressing emotions was essential to uncovering the emotional impact of historical interpretation work. In these spaces, my informants discussed experiences of losing family members, of racist abuse and of sexual assault. During the lockdown, these in-person interviews were replaced by Zoom calls. The stress of the pandemic, as well as our physical distance, often reduced the openness of these exchanges. However, those informants engaging in the Mayflower narrative in a professional capacity seemed more comfortable sharing their criticisms now they were outside of the office. I also found that by preparing a greater number of questions I could extend the length of the conversation and give the informant time to speak more openly.

The personal nature of my exchanges with informants required a considered review of the data I had collected and a strong ethical framework. I removed or anonymised any content that might be harmful to my informants. Several of my interviews were conducted with staff at Plimoth Plantation museum and so I was talking with friends in an informal capacity. These conversations were enormously rewarding but could be difficult to navigate ethically, with some informants voicing concerns that private conversations would be recorded. Therefore, I differentiated times for taking interviews. Consent was secured for in-person and online interviews, and for the recordings, including extensive handwritten notes, voice recordings on my iPhone and video recordings on Zoom. My research only involved adults, most of whom worked in academia or museums and therefore had a strong understanding of research ethics policies. Informants in the US and the UK received the same level of data protection in line with GDPR guidelines. I also made it clear that informants could request that data be anonymised or removed up to the point of thesis submission.

The thesis was designed to present an immediacy to the ethnographic data. I added thick description to my interview notes, recording emotion, intent and reflecting on the impact of the individual's cultural identity and professional role. I also considered how the

conversation was affected by the location of the exchange and the nature of our relationship. Contextualising the discussion within its immediate and historical context, I depicted the significance and intent of the rhetoric. In order to achieve this, I read primary colonial and Native writings, the work of contemporary historians, and contacted public historians and academics, many of whom became my informants. This established my relationship with the informant as one of teacher and student. This allowed me to uncover the practice and navigations of historical interpretation work as my informants clearly and patiently taught me their interpretation. I prepared for semi-structured interviews, whenever possible, by reading my informants' published articles and reviewing their radio or TV work. I expected this stage would allow me to design relevant questions, which would form a supportive but flexible framework for the interview. I discovered that this approach also accelerated my relationship with informants, as I could ask specific, detailed questions and receive more personal reflections. Within these one-on-one settings, informants more readily reflected on the limits of their knowledge, could be more critical of others, and were likely to discuss their own and predict others political orientations. Informants responded well to my preparatory efforts and were excited to elaborate on topics they had shared publicly. As much as possible, I sought to have several engagements with each informant, either across email or through multiple interviews. This built trust and offered me an opportunity to consider previous comments and seek clarification or elaboration.

Participant observation proved a valuable methodological tool to contextualise and thicken my qualitative interview data. I shadowed Mayflower 400 volunteer coordinator, Neil, attending training to become a Mayflower Maker - the local community group welcoming and educating visitors during the UK commemorative events. I also conducted participant observation at Plimoth Plantation museum in the US, including attending a programme on Wampanoag lifeways delivered to visiting students. Unfortunately, due to Covid-19 my planned observation at three US Indigenous-run museums was cancelled. I was also unable to return to any of my fieldsites in the UK. I adapted to digital participant observation. I attended lectures Plimoth Plantation museum delivered on the Mayflower narrative to a paying audience over Zoom. The analysis of online content also included social media posts, websites and press coverage surrounding the commemoration. Mayflower 400 UK and Plymouth 400 US both have content rich websites that were amended to reflect their own changing interpretation of the Mayflower narrative. The commemorative organisations' social media platforms facilitated direct interaction between them and their audience and so, alongside the lectures, offered a strong platform for my analysis of the co-creation of Mayflower narratives.

Chapter One

"Hitting the heritage lottery."
The complex work of identifying with heritage.

We were sitting in a heaving 1940s tea room in Hexham, a small historic town in the North East of England and the hometown of my informants, Sarah and Greg. I handed a fork over to Sarah and we started sharing an enormous slice of chocolate cake that Greg had bought me. My informants almost never let me pay for anything, "you're an impoverished student!" The room overflowed with a romantic and nostalgic semblance of 1940s Britain, not a recollection of war time and rationing but a cosy space in which to unapologetically revel in a particular image of Britishness. The slogan 'Keep Calm and Carry On' could be found on every poster. Plates had been stacked high with scones and clotted cream, the walls decked with Union Jacks and the hubbub punctuated by the voice of a nation, Dame Vera Lynn.[92] Would my grandmother recognise her youth in this room? Unlikely. The tea room represented the stories we tell ourselves about our history, engaging the visitor in willingly suspended disbelief. It was a strikingly appropriate fieldsite for our conversation. Greg is Sarah's father, born in Texas he moved to England where he raised his family. The family therefore transcends US - English national boundaries. I initially spoke to Greg and Sarah over email, following an interview request I made to the newly formed European chapter of the General Society of Mayflower Descendants (GSMD).[93] The formality of my emails, which laid out my intent and project focus, was met with Greg's friendly informality: 'If you haven't been to Hexham before it is a nice town to visit (recently announced as the happiest place to live in the UK by a survey carried out by Rightmove).' I laughed at his choice to support his opinion of his hometown with a source, and felt my own academic formality was being jovially pointed out. Sarah and Greg can trace their ancestry to Mayflower passenger William Mullins and are both active GSMD members.[94] Sticking her fork into the cake, Sarah explained how a friend reacted to her ancestry with, "wow, that's like hitting the heritage lottery for an American!"

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[92] The Voice of a Nation was the title of a documentary produced by The London Mint Office in 2020, emphasising Vera Lynn's role in English national identity. See The London Mint Office, "The Voice of a Nation."

[93] General Society of Mayflower Descendants, "Welcome!"

[94] Born in Surrey, Mayflower Passenger William Mullins has been commonly referenced in the 2020 Mayflower events' coverage because of his surprising cargo. He was a shoemaker and took 250 shoes and 13 pairs of boots on the voyage.

How does a deeply personal connection such as biological relatedness interplay with a national narrative to render Mayflower descendants "heritage lottery" winners? This chapter seeks to provide an immediacy to the ethnographic material and examine the interplay of national and personal identity, the texture of historical interpretation work and some of its complex negotiations. I seek to position the analysis largely offstage, to focus on my challenged assumption that a community could be predicted to engage with the Mayflower narrative in a particular way. My positionality as observer and interpreter was affected by an interest in post-colonial studies of heritage sites as sites of nation-building. In this chapter, I consider whether we are limited by a representation of the historical interpreter as the magisterial curator, sharing a nation-building narrative. How might a diverse community relate to and interpret the Mayflower narrative in a manner that contests or subverts a self-affirming nation-building story?

A real sense of pride

Sarah and Greg are among more than 150,000 registered and verified members of the global network of the GSMD. This represents a tiny portion of the tens-of-millions of individuals that can trace their ancestry to the passengers of the Mayflower. The GSMD requires substantial verifiable genealogical evidence for membership, far beyond that needed for other such societies. Why do so many join this society with its stated mission to 'honour Pilgrim ancestors and to keep their story alive'?[95] Sarah, referencing her English identity, positioned herself as an outsider when considering the excitement of being a Mayflower descendant. She asserted confidently that the "real sense of pride" is held by Americans. Sarah reflected here on how intimately personal connections such as biological relatedness are articulated and given affective meaning within a national narrative:

> I guess the equivalent would be if you are English and you can trace your ancestry back to the Royals because it [the Mayflower narrative] is such a big part of American history. To find that you have a direct connection to that, especially to Americans, I think it means a lot more. I mean I find it quite fun but maybe if it was something I was taught about at school, I'd be like, oh wow!

Sarah spoke with excitement and passion about her connection to the Mayflower colonists and appeared practiced at considering differences in US and English culture. I suggest therefore, that Sarah's statement cannot be interpreted as an assertion that the Mayflower narrative is not engaged with by English descendants. Instead, she suggested that the

[95] General Society of Mayflower Descendants, "Membership Information."

Mayflower's significant role in the US national narrative renders Mayflower descendancy, for an American, significant at the level of personal and national identity. The role of the story in the national narrative shapes the emotions of the descendant, as such it is the American and not the English person that wins the "heritage lottery". "hitting the heritage lottery" is a notably British phrase. The National Heritage Lottery Fund connects 'people and communities to the national, regional and local heritage of the UK.'[96] That heritage finds meaning in the inter-relationship of local, regional and national narratives is embedded in the logic of this well-known organisation. Reference to this UK project emphasises that Sarah presented an English evaluation of American culture. By evoking a comparison with descendancy from the British Royals, Sarah described the Mayflower narrative as a central and even structuring force in US national history. The Mayflower colonists are often represented as the starting point of US history, popularly referred to as the Pilgrim Fathers.[97] Greg jovially recounted that when his son worked in America he was "sort of challenged by friends" who boasted that they were descended from early American revolutionaries. Greg explained that his son wished he had known then that he was a Mayflower descendant. Despite this being a friendly exchange, the implication is clear, a connection to the earliest figures in the US historical narrative offers superior cultural capital.

In a telephone interview some months later, Mayflower descendant Mary Ann recounted a related but meaningfully different anecdote. My conversation with her took place over the phone after a short email exchange. I had assumed that as an older, established member of the GSMD, Mary Ann would be invested in a celebratory, nation-building narrative, evoking the dominant Pilgrim story of the Mayflower voyage as the founding moment of US history. Within the opening minutes of our call my assumptions were proved wrong. Mary Ann argued that the dominant narrative promoted a damaging ideological conceptualisation of civilisation as the destruction of land:

> Because I am *political*, it is important to me to know that my ancestors destroyed Indigenous culture and their way of life, not just through disease but through conflict. It's about our cultural position, in the 1870s they thought Indigenous people were savages for not killing the land! We have lost so much by losing the Indigenous cultures, we are in a climate emergency, we need to be connected to the land. People keep things separate, we want less air

[96] National Heritage Lottery Fund, "Funding Check What We Fund."

[97] Jamestown, Virginia was in fact occupied by English colonists first in 1607. For an exploration of the role of the Mayflower in the US national narrative, and a criticism of its colloquial representation as the first English settlement see O'Brien, *Firsting and Lasting;* BBC, "The Mayflower Pilgrims: Behind the Myth."

> travel but these [UK Mayflower 400] events will bring lots of Americans here, without thinking about the climate emergency, it's all about tourism.

Mary Ann described herself as "*political*" and took care to identify her points of privilege as she recounted her commitment to environmental activism. She reflected the kind of activist energy that I had wrongly assumed was reserved for people in their early twenties. Her criticism of the Mayflower narrative and thus her relationship with her own heritage, as well as the 2020 commemorative events, was navigated through this "*political*" positionality. Her environmental activism also impacted her interpretation of Indigenous culture and she evoked an image of Indigenous peoples as in harmony with nature. This image resonated with the descriptions some of my Indigenous informants shared with visitors at Plimoth Plantation museum. Mary Ann also echoed their assertion that colonisation was a violence towards both Indigenous culture and the environment. Mary Ann mentioned the 1870s as a reference to her great-grandparents, whose journey across the US she had recreated, considering their contrasting experience and views with reference to their diaries.[98] Within an ethnographic study of genealogists in East Anglia and the popular UK show, *Who Do You Think You Are?,* Fenella Cannell asserts that her informants built a positive emotional connection to their ancestors, whose hardship and suffering evoked empathy and solidified a sense of kinship.[99] Her article does not consider the complexity of building these relationships across drastically different ideological positionalities. Although Mary Ann worked hard to consider her Mayflower ancestors and great-grandparents as reflecting the views of their time, that their differences in values complicated the relationship building process was apparent in her frustrated tone. Though overlooked in Cannell's article, we also see this complexity on *Who Do You Think You Are?* as TV personalities discover their ancestors had beliefs antithetical to their own sense of self, such as being a slave owner.[100] Mary Ann has, over time, been able to forge a relationship with her ancestors but it is one that is difficult and continually renegotiated.

Mary Ann is an avid traveller and like Greg moved to England from America. She became a British citizen and has lived in England for more than 50 years, which she described as giving her a "more nuanced view, though a middle class and educated view [of the Mayflower narrative]." Similarly to Sarah, Mary Ann described a physical distance from US culture as enabling a more critical view of the dominant Pilgrim Mayflower narrative.

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[98] Hooper, *Across America and Back.*

[99] Cannell, "The Moral Possibilities of Popular Genealogy."

[100] BBC, "Who Do You Think You Are?"

She reflected on her Mayflower connection when voicing frustration at often being seen as an outsider or tourist in her own home:

> It always interests me that when I am talking to British people they assume I am visiting [because of her American accent] but I am probably more British than you.

As with Greg's son, a personal relationship to the Mayflower passengers is mobilised as cultural capital to assert belonging to a place and a national identity. The multiplicity of ways genealogy is considered meaningful is revealed by Cannell, as she argues that for her informants, genealogical work involves 'deliberately enlivening their sense of the dead as 'persons', and thus overcoming 'distance' and activating relatedness.'[101] Mary Ann, and Greg through the anecdote of his son, appeared to surmount this distance by marking their relationship with the seventeenth-century Mayflower passengers as meaningful. They also emphasised this 400 year distance as proof of a long established connection with place or national identity. Employing a connection to the Mayflower to assert her Britishness, Mary Ann presented an alternate interpretation to that of Greg's son, locating the Mayflower voyage not at the start of US history but within a canon of English history. This interpretation seems in keeping with her work to become an English national, though it also appears to subvert the idea that belonging to place is determined only through citizenship. While Mary Ann asserted her national identity through her Mayflower ancestors, this relationship building remained fraught because of the harm she believes these colonists had done.

Primary sources support Mary Ann's claim to English identity through her Mayflower ancestors. The Mayflower passengers were English and even those fleeing the country saw themselves as English men and women building a new England.[102] Greg also acknowledged that the Mayflower historical narrative has a meaningful relationship with England, though he emphasised that this was not one emboldened through a popular national narrative. Greg stressed that he felt the role of Mayflower 400, the organisation coordinating the UK commemorative events programme, should be to identify and mark the physical English sites connected to the Mayflower and her passengers. He considered their failure to do so as indicative of an insufficient commitment to the historical story. He voiced disappointment at the lack of accurate signage at churches and houses linked to the Mayflower passengers. He particularly stressed the importance of memorialising Tisquantum (Squanto):

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[101] Cannell, "Possibilities of Popular Genealogy," 465.

[102] See Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation 1620-1647*.

> Squanto, he lived in London and I don't know the exact address but they have narrowed it down. He was critical to the Pilgrims' survival because he could translate. He was taken out as a slave to Spain, then given to Friars and another ship captain found out about him and took him to England. Another company then take him on and teach him English, thinking if we go back he can act as a translator with the locals. It was for business purposes. I would like to do research to say Squanto lived here and put a blue plaque on the building. That's where I think that Mayflower 400 could have gone a bit more in depth, instead of saying we are having a regatta.[103]

Greg considered that a historically accurate commemoration should attend to the English history of the Mayflower passengers, though he did not consider his biological connection or active role in society meetings as making him either more English or American: "I grew up in the States and didn't move here till I was 25-30 so I have always been American." Mary Ann's transition between nationalities unsurprisingly led her to mobilise a different kind of belonging through her genealogy. The dominant Mayflower narrative, which claims these English families as Americas' founding families, forms part of the established fabric of Mayflower narratives that renders meaningful claims by descendants to being either British or American.

The GSMD was itself established with the logic of asserting claims to American national identity. Greg explained that these societies, that limit membership to provable descendants, were intentionally "exclusionary". He reflected that in the late 1800s with large scale European migration, established Americans wanted "to keep to their own group". Sarah added that in the same manner people "maybe get a bit boastful of their membership today". Sarah suggested that pride in descendancy is mobilised by some to assert claims to cultural capital. I recounted to Mary Ann the idea of Mayflower descendants winning the heritage lottery and she responded emphatically: "There are 35 million of us. I don't feel that it makes me any more important". Mary Ann stressed that her Mayflower descendancy did not make her "special" but that: "I am just lucky to have so much information about my ancestors. Some don't, some are adopted." Mary Ann spoke sadly of those who were unable to trace their ancestry, not surprising considering she seemed to experience her heritage as a feeling of being personally rooted, not only within a national identity but a specific kinship relationship. Though Sarah, Greg and Mary Ann recognised that the Mayflower narrative held cultural capital, was central to the US national narrative and

[103] Tisquantum or Squanto, acted as a liaison between the Mayflower colonists and Wampanoag Sachem Massasoit, helping to establish a peace treaty. Squanto had been captured by Thomas Hunt in 1614 and sold in England. See Silverman, *Troubled History of Thanksgiving*.

deeply rooted in English history, they met assertions that their lineage made them special with great discomfort. Greg stressed that neither he nor Sarah would bring up their ancestry "out of the blue". This could be interpreted merely as an effort to avoid appearing boastful, however, Sarah revealed that this positionality reflected a quality of her relationship with her ancestors:

> At least for my experience it [the Mayflower narrative] is more something that I engage with because I find it interesting, it has direct links to me. I wouldn't say, well I tell people about it, but that is not with the intention of helping them to learn more about it, or me wanting them to learn more. I never feel any kind of responsibility to carry the torch. I never really think about sharing the story with other people.

There is seemingly a contradiction, a recognition that a personal connection to such a significant cultural narrative gives the descendant a particular social positionality, and also an emphasis that their connection is only of personal or private value. Sarah recounted several incidents in which she shared the Mayflower narrative, however, she emphasised that she did not feel compelled to do this through a sense of personal responsibility as a descendant or society member. Even so, Sarah, Greg and Mary Ann, through their interest and engagement with the GSMD and their considered interpretation of the Mayflower historical narrative, in many ways upheld the GSMD mission to 'keep their [the Mayflower passenger's] story alive'.[104]

Happy Thanksgiving

There is a vibrant warmth to a New England Thanksgiving. Fall trees glow red and pumpkins are piled high in the supermarkets. I experienced my first Thanksgiving in 2016, as an intern at Plimoth Plantation museum. I had been in America since September and was regularly asked if I had plans for the holiday. Spending Thanksgiving on your own was clearly considered antithetical to the spirit of the holiday. I was staying with family friends and was overwhelmed by the preparations: pumpkin pies and macaroni and cheese were cooked in staggering quantities, soft toy turkeys appeared everywhere and the kitchen suddenly had napkins with smiley Pilgrims with big gold buckled hats.

Thanksgiving has been given historical significance through a dominant interpretation which connects this meal to the Mayflower voyage. American school students are taught that the Thanksgiving meal is a celebration of the first successful harvest meal that

[104] General Society of Mayflower Descendants, "Welcome!"

the English colonists had with the Wampanoag in 1621. The taught narrative often inverts historical power dynamics to suggest that the Wampanoag were dependent on the kindness of the colonists, who are in turn depicted as healthy, kindly, Christian people.[105] The narrative further decontextualises the Mayflower voyage from wider colonial activity, the impact of European disease, violence and the start of the transatlantic slave trade.[106] That this dominant but misleading Mayflower narrative is preserved by Thanksgiving celebrations was reflected on by Stephanie, a UK based art historian and member of the Dakota Nation. Stephanie invited me to her home, an old house draped in purple flowers. She was waiting outside waving and gave me a big hug before introducing me to her husband who was "drowning in footnotes" for his most recent book. In the manner of Thanksgiving, our conversation took place rapidly between mouthfuls of homemade food. Stephanie reflected on the role of Thanksgiving in deeply embedding a "Christianised" Mayflower narrative into US history:

> It's a *violence* towards the reality of the situation, in other words, that we must deny that there are these other people in our view of what America is. And that is very much part of the Thanksgiving, Mayflower story. Yes you get there and you are *not really seeing what is there* and you are creating your own representation in this 'new Plymouth idea', this 'city on the hill', this whole Pilgrim, Puritan view. And it is very Christianised, it is very Christianised. Almost like they were the lost tribes in the wilderness looking for the holy land. You know, some kind of *epic biblical* twist to it and I think it is so embedded in American culture it is very hard to pick it out of American culture. Therefore apologising to somebody because you took their land, it doesn't make sense if you are looking at it from a Christian viewpoint because it was God's will that they came there, it was God's will that they survived.

Stephanie presented empathetic and considered criticism in a powerfully affective manner. She was practiced at discussing these subjects with a broad audience through her work as a cultural ambassador for her Crow Creek Dakota Tribal Council. Though the above statement appears confidently opinionated, Stephanie recognised that sharing this view and advocating for change in Indigenous representation carries real risk. She had recently spoken out about the racist mascot of the Exeter Rugby Club, which is a caricatured Native person with feathered headdress and tomahawk, and she received terrible threats in response.[107] She had also been warned by a friend to be less "searchable online", his concern being that her

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[105] In the early years, the colonists were entirely dependent on the Wampanoag for trade, protection and farming techniques. See Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation 1620-1647*.

[106] See Silverman, *Troubled History of Thanksgiving*; Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*; Reilly and Cushion, "Mayflower Myths."

[107] Oldfield, "Exeter Chiefs Should Work with Real Native Americans."

criticisms of the Mayflower commemorations might lead people to try to contact or even find her. Stephanie's interpretation, far from being silenced by these risks, appears drawn from them. She spoke knowingly of the harm of the dominant Mayflower and Thanksgiving narrative, drawing on her own experience of trauma and marginalisation, and that of her direct family and Indigenous people as a community across Nations. Thanksgiving is therefore presented itself as an act of "*violence*". This interpretation reflected her experience of settler colonialism, defined by Stephanie as a continuation of colonial violence into the present:

> I think that what you also have to understand about American Indians is that they are living in colonialism. They are living inside of a society that considers itself the most advanced, the most civilised. Yet they are pockets of colonial history and colonial division. You know, the whole impact of colonialism is still being felt by American Indians daily.

Stephanie spoke of the Mayflower commemorations as a potential opportunity to educate people about the trauma Indigenous people hold, and to consider "what are the steps we need to take to not repeat this". However, Stephanie was critical of Mayflower 400 and voiced concern that they were not sufficiently dismantling this "*epic biblical*" story.

Stephanie positioned herself as navigating the Mayflower narrative as an outsider, as an Indigenous person who is not the assumed audience of the Thanksgiving story. She explained that this narrative is significant to numerous Native Nations due to the historical impact of the Mayflower colonists across the North Eastern Woodlands region and the later impact of this narrative in shaping the representation of Indigenous peoples across the US. She was uneasy that Mayflower 400 were providing a platform only to a few members of the Wampanoag Nations, which she feared would prevent the diversity of Indigenous cultures and experiences from being shown. Far from the celebratory narrative presented in the Thanksgiving story, Stephanie's heritage, personal experience and her knowledge of the primary colonial sources, challenged the dominant Mayflower narrative and rendered Thanksgiving meals painful and harmful. She explained:

> Yes, so I think of Thanksgiving in all of its inanity, when you talk to the average American about it they say that Thanksgiving is a big meal. We sit around and eat a big meal and watch the sport. What they don't see is that they are sitting on top of all the people that suffered. We are not recognised. It is a complacency that is so profound.

Eating together, Stephanie and I developed our relationship and I felt welcomed and warmed by the gift of homemade food. This formed a closeness that facilitated an empathetic

discussion of difficult topics. She echoed the actions of the colonial English in the complacency of modern Americans to stress a continuation of "*not really seeing what is there*". Our meal therefore seemed in stark contrast to the complacent Thanksgiving meals she described. I responded, "It must be painful?" and she asserted with great feeling, "It is painful". Stephanie's pain was presented as personal and communal, her emotions therefore appeared as a claim to membership within a wider Indigenous community, bounded by shared experiences of trauma. Stephanie reframed these intimate familial acts of Thanksgiving to show how they informed a wider national narrative that erases the violence done to Indigenous peoples. It begs the question, who is the dominant Pilgrim Mayflower narrative for?

My informant, Tim posted on Facebook over the 2019 Thanksgiving weekend, describing the psychological toll of engaging with this national holiday. Tim is an experienced interpreter of the history and lifeways of the Wampanoag Nation, with a managerial role on Plimoth Plantation's Wampanoag Homesite.[108] He also runs educational outreach programmes into local schools. I have known him for many years and we talk often. While vocal on Facebook, drawing attention to Indigenous causes and not shying away from being pointedly critical, he has diplomatically built a diverse network of Indigenous and non-Native contacts. I arranged a call with him and he was excited to hear from me. We discussed his work and I asked about his Thanksgiving post, he responded emphatically, "yes it's like a band-aid gets ripped off and opens scars and wounds." A passionate public historian, he also spoke openly and sadly of the difficulty of his work. He explained that for "Native people this is a difficult story". Tim often referred to Indigenous communities as a collective group with shared experiences and causes. Tim is a member of the Cherokee Nation and in his professional role he educates on the history and culture of the Wampanoag Nation. I asked if he felt he was not able to tell his own story, meaning that of the Cherokee. Tim considered and answered:

> Not my story but a story that needs to be told. My story is being told, about Andrew Jackson and the Trail of Tears.[109] It's one of the most well-known though it is marginalised and softened. There are not enough Wampanoag people, I am here and I can help this story. As Native people we see each other as brothers and sisters, we've gone through the same thing, colonisation, so there is a kinship.

[108] Plimoth Plantation's Wampanoag Homesite is the oldest Native American living history site in the US, depicting the lifeways of the seventeenth-century Wampanoag.

[109] For a brief outline of the Trail of Tears and information on the contemporary experience and history of Cherokee people, see Museum of the Cherokee Indian, "Trail of Tears."

Tim regarded telling Wampanoag history as a necessary pausing of his Cherokee story and like Stephanie, described a notion of Indigenous kinship through the shared experience of colonisation. Tim recognised his own story as shaped by colonial violence, the Indian termination policy and the genocide of Cherokee people. Tim regarded historical interpretation work as an essential methodology for combatting misrepresentation and the erasure of Indigenous peoples and their history. In his professional role, he works tirelessly to contextualise the Mayflower voyage within the history of the Eastern Woodlands Indigenous Nations, challenging the central tenants of this dominant narrative. Tim asserted that this is an essential intervention despite the psychological toll it takes.

Tim suggested I investigate the origins of Thanksgiving, "so fascinating and political" which "many people don't know". The connection between the American Thanksgiving holiday and the harvest meal between the Wampanoag and the English colonists, was not established until the nineteenth century.[110] The link would ultimately be found in a footnote. In 1841 antiquarian, Alexander Young included a primary account of the 1621 harvest meal in his *Chronicles of the Pilgrim Fathers*, labelling this, in the footnote, as the first Thanksgiving.[111] This meal was not actually described by the Mayflower colonists as a Thanksgiving, which for the Puritan English was a time of fasting and reflection. It would not be until the 1700s that Thanksgiving would be characterised by a celebratory feast with extended family. Young, having enjoyed such meals, saw striking similarities between contemporary Thanksgiving and the 1621 harvest meal. When Young wrote his footnote, Thanksgiving meals were celebrated in every State but the more formalised national holiday enjoyed today was not established until 1863 by President Abraham Lincoln.[112] This was at the bequest of Sarah Josepha Hale, a committed campaigner for a national Thanksgiving holiday and an influential editor of a popular women's magazine.[113] For the President, this holiday was an explicit act of nation-building, forging an established history of a unified US after the Civil War and asserting the values of the North as those of the US as a whole. One of my informants, an experienced public historian, asserted that during the mid 1900s this national holiday was mobilised to teach children and immigrant families about US values and how to be good citizens. Thanksgiving even became an essential tool during the Great Depression, as President Franklin D. Roosevelt formalised the date to extend the Christmas shopping season.[114] The dominant Pilgrim narrative therefore grew from Young's

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[110] Information from Plimoth Plantation History@home lecture, *Fact or Fiction? Investigating the First Thanksgiving*, April 2020. See Plimoth Plantation, "Thanksgiving History."

[111] Young, *Chronicles of the Pilgrim Fathers*, 231.

[112] Lincoln, *Thanksgiving Proclamation from October 3, 1863*.

[113] Kirkpatrick, *The Holiday at the Heart of the American Experience*. Chap.5.

[114] Roosevelt and Hoover, "Presidential Thanksgiving Proclamations 1930-1939."

interpretation, based on his personal experiences as a New England resident, and was then shaped by multiple acts of nation-building.

The close association of the 1621 harvest meal with the celebratory Thanksgiving narrative is, Tim argues, an attempt to spin a historical narrative, that "you can't spin positively". Tim explained that primary court records reveal that instead of a time of peace and goodwill between the Indigenous North Eastern Woodlands Nations and the English, the relationship even with the Wampanoag was strained. Tim emphasised that claims of 50 years of peace with the Wampanoag should be better described as "50 years of not war," and that this narrative erases violent altercations with other North Eastern Woodlands Native Nations. Tim explained that thanks were given after the murder of five Indigenous men at Wessagussett, including warrior Wituwamat by Mayflower passenger Miles Standish. Historian, Silverman describes how this violence terrified neighbouring communities and the Cape Wampanoags fled to the swamps, where crowded together they were cut down by disease.[115] The English would gain a new name, Wotowequenage, which is translated as cutthroats.[116]

Indigenous Nations of Turtle Island have a deep rooted relationship with celebrations of thanksgiving. I learned about this practice in an animated conversation with Kerri, the Indigenous Cultural Programmes Manager at Plimoth Plantation. I had my phone balanced precariously on the edge of her office table. She had welcomed my questions and suggested I record the conversation so that we could talk more easily. The office was filled with beautiful handwoven bags and baskets, pieces of corn and other objects that would be taken down to the Wampanoag Homesite for visitors to engage with. Kerri adjusted her chair so she could maintain eye contact and engaged with me warmly. She explained her Indigenous heritage, "I am enrolled Mashpee Wampanoag but I am also Mohegan, Pequot, Narragansett and Mohawk". She gestured out of the window and considered the Wampanoag Homesite below as a space where "Wampanoag people tell our story from our own mouths". A site run by Indigenous people who share their Nations' history, which challenges core tenets of the dominant Mayflower narrative captured in Thanksgiving celebrations. I asked her if she believed that people were now more critical of the dominant Pilgrim Mayflower story? She considered and responded:

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[115] Silverman, *This Land Is Their Land,* 199. See Silverman's work also for an overview of several key conflicts including the Pequot War and the King Philip's War. For these see also, DeLucia, *Memory Lands King Philip's War*; Cave, *The Pequot War*.

[116] Silverman, 199.

> Yes, for sure, I just feel like for the *boomers* no. But I feel like younger people in general, people are just more awake. I am sure you know what I mean. But you know thanksgiving, thanksgiving is always important to us [the Wampanoag], we have thirteen of them, we have one for each moon in our thirteen stage calendar. So giving thanks, you know we are never going to see that as something bad. Families coming together, celebrating, praying – that is all important to us. But for American Thanksgiving, we fast. It's a day of mourning for us, a day of reflection really.

Kerri spoke with wary optimism as she suggested that change was happening and laughed as she tried to rephrase 'woke' to suit the sentence structure. Woke is colloquially used to describe those who think critically and who have woken up to power imbalances, and in this case to how Indigenous historical experiences have been marginalised and erased. "*boomers*" is contrastingly a phrase used commonly across social media to describe the baby boomer generation, and to suggest the group are out of touch with contemporary social issues. Kerri therefore appealed to a popular argument that the younger generation are driving social change despite the resistance of older generations. Kerri emphasised that thanksgiving as a practice is deeply rooted in Indigenous values. However, the stark difference between Indigenous historical and contemporary experience and the US Thanksgiving narrative of mutual care and support is experienced by Kerri, and a large community of North Eastern Woodlands Native peoples, as grief.[117] Within the context of a dominant celebratory Thanksgiving narrative, Kerri's historical interpretation work and even her experience of grief can be interpreted as an act of resistance. Kerri reflected that her grief refuses to conform to the affective quality of the dominant Mayflower narrative, experienced by Americans with excitement and a sense of national belonging. As with Stephanie and Tim's descriptions of pain, emotions are articulated by Kerri as a form of kinship claim between Indigenous communities, bounded from the American other who celebrates Thanksgiving. However, her identity as Mashpee Wampanoag is also claimed through a positive feeling towards the practice of giving thanks. We see that the multivalent nature of the Mayflower narrative produces a complex and challenging affective quality, which is self-reflectively interpreted by Stephanie, Tim and Kerri through their membership in a broad Indigenous community, and through the specific values of their Nations.

Mormons love the story

[117] Some Indigenous people commemorate Thanksgiving as a National Day of Mourning as discussed in the Introduction, 9. See UAINE, "National Day of Mourning."

My research has revealed that my informants formed complex affective relationships with the Mayflower narrative and passengers, which were negotiated through personal values, experience and national identity. I discussed my findings with two Plimoth Plantation guides who recommended that I talk with Amish or Mormon representatives, "they love the story". Michael and Kittie are retiree volunteers who I fondly refer to as my American grandparents. Kittie was a teacher and Michael, an Anglican preacher. They are practiced public historians, avid history buffs and expert storytellers. I had planned to meet them at their home but lockdown forced me to return to the UK and arrange a call over Zoom. We went back and forth several times before everything was working and everyone's screens were the right way up. They were sitting in their bedroom, which they commented on and laughed at the strangeness of it all. After lots of catching up I steered the conversation to the Mayflower. They described learning about the Mayflower voyage at school through the *Weekly Reader*, which Michael excitedly explained meant they were both learning the same things even though they grew up states apart. [118] I suggest that textbooks appear as a powerful apparatus for crafting the Mayflower historical story as a shared national narrative.[119] Kittie revealed her shock at discovering a detailed school essay of hers, describing the Mayflower. She had assumed she had only ever learned the dominant Pilgrim Mayflower narrative and Thanksgiving story, and even now felt that this essay had likely only been a handwriting assignment. We discussed the groups that this national Mayflower narrative resonated with and Michael explained:

> Mormons are enthralled by this story and other right-leaning groups like the Amish. Of all the people we show round the museum [Plimoth Plantation] they are the most interested – they *love* the story.
> Kittie: The *myth*
> Michael: It resonates with the struggles they have – their way of life. Develops their position in history. Trump will enhance this narrative. He will give scant attention to the Wampanoag.

Michael drew on his experience as a guide and as a preacher, stressing the importance of recognising how the seventeenth-century Puritan and Separatist religions, or at least our interpretation of them, resonate with modern American faith. Michael assumed that right-leaning [Republican] communities would see their political ideology reflected in the dominant Mayflower narrative. He described a strong emotional reaction, "*love*", which suggests that shared values support comfortable relationship building with historical figures. Michael drew from his experience guiding Mormon and Amish visitors and predicted that

[118] The Weekly Reader is a weekly US wide educational classroom magazine started in 1928.
[119] See Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*.

his description might suit the community as a whole. He referenced contemporary politics and later specifically the mantra of "Make America Great Again" to show how the Mayflower historical story is interpreted through the lens of contemporary politics. [120] Michael also asserted that the affective power of the Mayflower narrative can be mobilised or enhanced through nationalistic political rhetoric to build a community of Trump supporters. It is typical of Michael to construct his position out loud, deliberately opening his thought process for discussion, while Kittie, presents her ideas completely formed. I asked if they felt that those looking to revise the story were more politically liberal, which is how Kittie and Michael would likely describe themselves. Kittie said they were, but Michael mused that he was still thinking about it. He explained that "people from Pakistan and India are also very interested in this story," though he has not decided yet what that meant. This thinking aloud occurred throughout my interviews and spoke to the informality of these exchanges and a willingness among my informants to recognise the limits of the known. These open discussions illustrated that my informants were comfortable reconsidering the Mayflower history, reflecting on it as a multivalent narrative, constructed through national or personal values and with particular intent. While my informants could easily recount the Mayflower "*myth*" or dominant Pilgrim narrative, they considered the questions of why it was so embedded in American culture and who was propagating it to be multi-layered and beyond complete understanding. In suggesting answers to these questions, communities bounded by religion, race or society affiliation were assumed to have a shared interpretation. My research revealed far greater diversity.

I wished to speak with a member of the Amish or Mormon community. Lockdown required me to engage with a group I could video call and so I reached out to a Mormon contact. Kristin lives in Salt Lake City with her family, though she grew up in New England. She is a descendant of Richard Denton who is considered to be the father of the US Presbyterian Church, although I did not know this before our email exchange. I felt uncomfortable about approaching her with questions about the Mayflower narrative, which I only assumed would resonate with her strongly because of her religious beliefs. I had little knowledge of Mormonism and none of Kristin's interpretation of the faith. Furthermore, I knew full well, as a lapsed Catholic, that just because someone is Mormon does not necessarily mean they interpret history through that lens. I therefore rang Kristin with some trepidation and was met by a lovely, engaged and animated informant. She is a well-travelled academic and a fierce Obama supporter, not the political leaning Michael had alluded to. She was making her son breakfast which meant the video camera was catching glimpses of the toast and toaster and her moving about. I was concerned that this was not the right time to

[120] Make America Great Again, slogan of the Trump Campaign 2016

talk but she exclaimed "perfect timing thought I'd do this during breakfast. What do you want to know?" I was struck again by the informality of the exchange. I had begun my research from the perspective that I was engaging in a national story; however, the insights of my informants and the informality of these exchanges revealed the deeply personal ways with which ancestral connections and the Mayflower narrative was related to. Although Kristin's ancestor Richard Denton was not a Mayflower passenger, arriving later in 1635, this connection was identified by Kristin's family as having meaning in the US national narrative:

> My parents researched it and saw that I could be a member of the Daughters of the American Revolution but I never actually got the membership. [121]It was just to know that we had roots way back and helped settle America.

Kristin seemingly distanced herself from this desire to trace a connection to these early colonists, emphasising that it was the work of her parents and that she did not become a member. Even so, she emphasised that this positive narrative of American 'settlement' is profound, "growing up in New England, the Thanksgiving story is a big deal." Interestingly, she explained that time studying in France gave her a revised, almost outsider's perspective on the US. We again see the idea that outside of the national framework a more nuanced view can be taken. Unlike my UK based informants Sarah and Mary Ann, Kristin did not present this distance completely positively. She described how she became "disenchanted and very disappointed" with the US, though over time she had learned to appreciate her country again. Kristin confirmed that her interest in her heritage was sparked by her conversion to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints:

> A lot of what I learnt about my ancestry I learnt as a Mormon. *They believe* you can be sealed together for eternity, so they do temple ordinances. A bit like the Catholic belief of Paul in Corinthians doing baptisms of the dead. *If it is true*, that Christ is returning, then what about the people who lived in the time he did not return? So we reach back to our ancestors and this ordinance brings people together to prepare for Christ and for the plagues. So people do genealogical work. I gained more of an appreciation of history from this.

In explaining this religious practice, Kristin drew on her Catholic upbringing, one we had in common, to create a shared framework of understanding. Kristin seemed to distance herself from the Mormon tradition with, "*they believe*" and, "*if this is true*". I did not interpret this as reflecting on the strength of her own belief but that, as an accomplished academic, she

[121] Daughters of the American Revolution is a genealogical society for descendants of American Revolutionary soldiers. See Daughters of the American Revolution, "Who We Are."

was practiced at explaining new information in a formal, detached voice. The idea of reaching back was practiced also by several of my informants, who similarly carved their own unique path to engage with particular ancestors. Kristin related that her experience as an adult convert and belief in the "psychic" made her feel most connected to Richard Denton's grandson Jacob: "I felt so connected to him. He believed in psychic matters and he also has the same birthday as me!" Kristin voiced this as a meaningful, perhaps fateful, connection. She built on this idea of a supernatural connection as she described, in the manner of recounting a ghost story, how "I visited the cemetery and it was all grassy and overgrown except for one plot – that was the one plot that was his. Someone must take care of it, perhaps relatives." Kristin considered why this plot alone might be maintained but left it open to consideration, like all good suspense stories. The well-kept grave revealed that others are also engaging in a relationship with her ancestor, despite him being long deceased. While Richard Denton plays a vital role in the national narrative, Kristin had learnt very little about him, her personal experience as a convert guiding her pursuit of the past and her relationship with her ancestors. She described her relationship with Jacob:

> My conversion to the Church was very upsetting to my family – they saw it as a cult. I feel like a pioneer on a different path – I am proud of my ancestor [Jacob] then for doing what he believed in.

Kristin finds strength and companionship in her ancestors' stories, not through the ancestor most renowned in the national narrative, but through Jacob, whose experience most closely aligned with her own. That the national narrative might value certain connections over others was recognised, though similarly subverted, by my UK based informants. Greg explained that his three brothers and sister took "no interest at all" in their Mayflower connection, though his sister did join the Daughters of the American Revolution. I wondered why this connection better resonated with her. Greg's children (excluding Sarah) also showed no active interest in the Mayflower connection. Despite her GSMD membership, Mary Ann was most interested in the lives of her great-grandparents, whose diaries offered access to a closer personal relationship. That the dominance of the Mayflower national narrative does not define individual interest or interpretation, continues to complicate theories of interpreters as active nation-builders. My research has challenged claims that a particular community will form a predictable affective connection with the Mayflower narrative.

People from your little village changed the world

In 2013 Plymouth UK narrowly lost to Hull for City of Culture. The City of Culture, organised by the British Council, is a highly competitive opportunity to build international partnerships, receive investment and assert a city's identity on a global stage. Disappointed

by their loss, Plymouth's local government began to consider further opportunities for the rejuvenation of the City. In a meeting in 2014, the 2020 anniversary of the Mayflower voyage was considered. Plymouth was practiced in delivering Mayflower commemorations and they felt that further attention and investment could give them their City of Culture moment. Kathy McArdle of the British Council, explained that City of Culture is about global cultural engagement, an act of international relationship building that showcases a city's global history. [122] The Mayflower historical story was considered well suited to position Plymouth on an international stage and raise revenue for local initiatives through external funding and tourism. Did they then recognise that individuals relate to the Mayflower in complex, deeply personal ways that often complicate the national narrative? Director of Mayflower 400, Charles suggested that in these initial meetings the complexity of choosing this narrative was not fully understood. Plymouth Council established Mayflower 400 as an umbrella committee to coordinate the ambitious transnational and international commemorative events programme, which grew to include eleven core UK destinations. Charles took over as director with a team predominantly made up of council workers seconded from other local government departments. He described the organisation as a "partnership of partnerships" including international relationships with the US, the Wampanoag Nation and Leiden in the Netherlands. I spoke with Charles over the phone and we later met in the Plymouth Council building. A small space among a mass of desks had been commandeered for Mayflower 400. Charles explained how this complex international events programme and national narrative would be experienced as unique personal interactions by the people of Plymouth:

> If you live in Plymouth what this [Mayflower commemoration] means to you is an interruption of the everyday routine. Who are we to say this is less important. People from your *tiny village* shaped the world, even if it was not 100% good or bad. We can *inspire* people with *interconnectedness*.

This interruption of Plymouth life would take multiple forms, through an extraordinarily broad programme of 130 events. Charles argued that rejuvenation efforts required a narrative and that the Mayflower voyage provided the needed "scope" and would attract international attention. Charles explained that delivering a meaningful international project would establish Plymouth as an important cultural centre. The '*interconnectedness*' would thus operate on multiple levels, through international, national and local partnerships.

My meeting with Charles had started a little late. He was waiting for me outside of the Plymouth Council offices though I had already been brought in by another informant,

[122] McArdle, "City of Culture."

Mayflower 400 staff member Neil, with whom I had spent the day. This moment of confusion reminded me of the difficulty of positioning the anthropologist, both a visitor to be formally welcomed and as a knowledgeable insider. Several months previously, I had started our first telephone interview by asking Charles about his professional background. I had seen on his Linkedin profile that he worked for GlaxoSmithKline and I wished to know how he came to his role with Mayflower 400. He was surprised that my questions were not solely focused on his current professional role: "Haha yes, we can start there. It is a personal thing. Not that I have a problem with talking to you about it." He clarified quickly that though personal this information was not private; however, it was clear that he had expected that this conversation would inhabit a separate professional mode. Unlike my Mayflower descendant informants who approached the conversation informally, Charles and I were contending with professional expectations. During the telephone and in-person interview we moved through several such modes, which he noted, "If you don't want a company line?" Charles focused on practical considerations and the challenge of juggling the expectations of his professional role. He also drew on his personal opinions and educational background, having studied Classics at university. He explained that his studies had focused on the *Aeneid* and the *Odyssey* and that he firmly believed in the importance of such nation-building narratives.[123] Charles' description of the Mayflower narrative as an inspiring tale about the international impact people from a '*tiny village'* can have, seemed to reflect his association of the Mayflower with these Classical heroic journeys. The *Aeneid* was written by Virgil at the bequest of Augustus who wished to establish a narrative of a unified Roman foundation that would drive the country forward after years of civil wars.[124] Strikingly, the Mayflower was also popularised after the American Civil War by Abraham Lincoln. Charles explained that it was his interest in national stories that inspired him to take on the Mayflower 400 role. Charles presented his work to rejuvenate Plymouth as a separate, professional responsibility: "Ah we are shifting away from the history here." Charles moved from speaking with a fond nostalgia for his university subject, which shaped his personal Mayflower interpretation, to a professional discourse that emphasised practical requirements.

Plymouth could have chosen many other historical stories for their City of Culture moment, to which they were far more significantly connected. Charles noted this and provided as examples, the defeat of the Spanish Armada and Charles Darwin's voyage on the Beagle. Plymouth's historical connection to the Mayflower was circumstantial. In July 1620, the Mayflower was docked in Southampton. It was met by the Separatists who had travelled from Leiden in the Netherlands on a smaller ship, the Speedwell. Both ships were to cross

[123] Virgil, *The Aeneid*; Homer, *Odyssey*.

[124] Virgil, *The Aeneid.*

the Atlantic to Virginia carrying Separatists and Strangers.[125] The Speedwell (now colloquially referred to as the Sinkwell) almost immediately began taking on water. The crew was forced to dock at Dartmouth where the ship was repaired. They headed out again and made it 300 miles clear of England before the Speedwell began to sink again. They were forced to return to the thriving port of Plymouth where the Speedwell would be abandoned and some of the passengers would give up on the voyage. Despite this circumstantial connection, Charles explained that the Mayflower narrative had "the scope" required for the ambitious rejuvenation effort. I suggest the power of this narrative can be found in its affective potential, as Charles described how Mayflower 400 will mobilise the narrative to "*inspire*" and build community pride. Charles focused asserted the narrative would resonate widely by tapping "into the current zeitgeist, and the US - British relationship is still a huge story." Of course, the original Mayflower sailed by the Separatists in 1620 had nothing to do with British - US relations. The United States would not be founded for another 156 years and the Separatists were hardly English ambassadors but unwelcome religious radicals. However, the central role of this narrative to US national history renders this a politically relevant story for contemporary English - US relations. E.H. Carr would support Charles' suggestion, arguing that events are emboldened as history only if they have contemporary resonance.[126] Efforts to affirm the Mayflower as relevant have produced an interpretation that contradicts primary accounts. Marked by its silence, it was not mentioned by my Plymouth UK informants that in 1616 another ship had arrived in Plymouth, four years before the sailing of the Mayflower and travelling in the opposite direction. This ship carried Powhatan princess Pocahontas, her husband John Rolfe, their son, and eleven Powhatan on a diplomatic journey to London.[127] The Mayflower voyage was just one in an established transatlantic network frequented by Native and non-Native merchants, diplomatic envoys, colonists and enslaved Native American and African people.[128] The Powhatan voyage subverts many of the dominant Mayflower narrative's claims, demonstrating that the Mayflower passengers were not the first English colonists and were in fact engaging in an established practice of English-Indigenous trade and complex power negotiations.

Make a difference for Plymouth

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[125] Passengers that were not part of his Separatist congregation were described by William Bradford as Strangers. See Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation 1620-1647*.

[126] Carr, *What Is History?*

[127] See Neill, *Pocahontas and Her Companions*, 20. Neill draws on primary accounts that describe Pocahontas' arrival and also reveal the dehumanising language used to describe Pocahontas and her Powhatan companions, including, 'savage', 'barbarous' and 'diabolical'.

[128] See Weaver, "The Red Atlantic."

The Plymouth based Mayflower events programme were delivered by a team of local volunteers, named Mayflower Makers. In February 2020, I travelled to Plymouth to attend their induction workshop. The Mayflower Makers are modelled on the Games Makers of the 2012 Olympics who were seen to embody and convey British national pride. The Mayflower Makers would eventually number 400 Plymothians, who in their blue shirts would enact their tag line, 'Make a difference for Plymouth'. Under the management of Neil, who was seconded from Public Health, Mayflower 400 rolled out a novel volunteering approach. By offering a range of short-term and long-term volunteering opportunities, Neil aimed to encourage a diverse group to volunteer. A legacy of community engagement he hoped would stretch beyond the anniversary year. During the pandemic, this community was mobilised locally to support vulnerable people. I wrote of the induction workshop:

> I had struggled to find the Mayflower Makers headquarters, now housed in the previously abandoned second floor of a City College building. It strikes me that this donated space, now filled with workers seconded from other Plymouth institutions and local volunteers, exemplifies the Mayflower 400 vision - a city wide collaboration that would build community spirit.

The room was packed and the induction session began with a brief explanation of the benefits of volunteering for personal wellbeing. Neil then asked each volunteer (there were around fifteen in this session) to explain why they wanted to be involved. An answer that was repeated was, "people are not always positive about Plymouth, but I want to help visitors enjoy it - I feel very fortunate to grow up here." According to Neil this answer exemplified those given at proceeding inductions. Among the volunteers there was a dejected recognition that Plymouth has a negative reputation, one which through their own pride in their Plymothian identity, they felt was ill deserved. The Mayflower 400 commemorations were therefore interpreted as an intervention opportunity by volunteers to act as community ambassadors. Mayflower Makers also voiced a range of other motivations for volunteering, such as: "I want to learn more about Native American history and experience after reading a brilliant book"; "I want to learn more about running a heritage project to help my work at a local museum" and "As a sailor I am interested in learning more about Plymouth's naval history." Personal experience and professional role informed engagement and motivated interest. Several of the volunteers had recently arrived in the City and saw an opportunity to strengthen their personal connection to Plymouth and England. A young woman explained that she had moved to England with her husband, who was from Plymouth, and that she saw volunteering as an opportunity to improve her English. By being a Mayflower Maker she hoped therefore to build a local Plymothian identity. A young man from mainland Europe explained: "I have heard that this is apparently a big event for English people and I'd like to learn more". His statement reflected that Mayflower 400 events were

raising the profile of this narrative as an English story. How would these motivations shape the Mayflower Makers' interpretation of the Mayflower narrative? Neil explained that he saw his professional responsibility and passion for diversifying the City's volunteers reflected back at him in the Mayflower story:

> It's a funny one because I have heard the story so many times and something pops out every time. But for me it's about relationships with each other and communication. With volunteers, it is about diversity. I know this is one of those groan words but you don't want one type of volunteer, you want different people. I am trying to bring a diverse group of people together. That's what happened during the Mayflower. People think that most people on the ship were religious but they were not all, and it was such a confined space to get on. Forget the practical things. Just different people and real diversity.

Neil's professional role and personal passion informed his interpretation of the Mayflower narrative. He referred to the journey itself in which Separatist passengers were cramped in with others who sought economic opportunity. Neil's interpretation was influenced by its source, he had heard the history from Mayflower 400 Curator and Content producer, Jo and Plymouth University Professor Kathryn, who shared their interpretations in a lecture style format at each of the volunteer induction sessions. Both stressed the importance of recognising that not all passengers were Separatists, a subversive argument to the dominant Pilgrim Mayflower narrative that suggests the Mayflower passengers were Pilgrims fleeing persecution. Having heard these interpretations, Neil stated that not all of the passengers were religious. Though over half of the passengers were not members of the Separatist faith, they would have been Christians and have attended church as English men living under the church of England. Neil's description emphasises that interpretations are altered as they are shared from person to person. Interpretation appears again as a deeply personal and affective practice. Neil spoke with excitement and seemed inspired by the challenge of the Mayflower journey. That Neil found inspiration and guidance in this historical interpretation, which challenges the dominant story, emphasises the multivalent nature of the Mayflower narrative.

This chapter has revealed interpretation to be a complex and affective process of negotiation, in which individuals construct diverse, personal narratives. My informants were strikingly self-reflective, describing how affective relations were formed with the Mayflower narrative through changing national, international, religious and political affiliations. This analysis expands on Cannell's notion of genealogical work as a form of relationship-building, revealing how informants made claims not only to kinship but national identity, political affiliation and Indigeneity. That the significance of the Mayflower in the national narrative did not determine emotion, affect, or historical interpretation, presents a challenge

to critical heritage and post-colonial museum studies that have presented a limited view of the heritage practitioner as nation-builder. This chapter has uncovered the insights available if researchers move away from a limited view of the heritage stakeholder, by revealing how a diverse community of descendants, event organisers, volunteers, and public historians are sharing and reinterpreting the Mayflower narrative. The following chapter continues to reflect on the forces that shape historical interpretation work by contextualising the interpretation of the 2020 Mayflower narrative within a colonial legacy of Indigenous erasure and misrepresentation.

Chapter Two

"A fight everyday to convince people that we are human." The construction of the Native American other.

Within the nushwetu's curved shell the sunlight was dimmed and the flames cast their colour across the dusty floor and the wooden benches that skirted its sides.[129] I sat cross-legged, precariously balancing my notebook on my knee as I moved my pen rapidly across the page. I could not feel the sturdy beams of the bench beneath me, covered as it was by a rich carpet of furs; a cacophony of reds and oranges, and the sparkling vanilla coats of deer. Weaved baskets, cradleboards and quivers hung on the walls, with the home's pronounced curve causing them to angle inward. This space, the nushwetu, was well known to me. I had spent my internships interpreting its architecture, the techniques used to hunt for its furs and explaining to visitors that, during the seventeenth century, up to eighty members of the extended family would have gathered in such a home for the winter months. The image was a homely one, separated from nature with its cold, turbulent winds while seemingly in a respectful continuation. The very shell of the nushwetu itself, with its curved foundation of trunks encased in a deep brown bark covering, appeared like an enormous overturned mishoon.[130] The hands that twisted in front of me, coaxing the fire and sending out waves of warmth were those that could build it. Dylan and Andrew leant back on the bench opposite, their moccasinash leaning against the fire with confidence – the self-professed bad boys of this museum.[131] Andrew stated emphatically, "90% of our day is spent dealing with stereotypes because American history doesn't portray us and so visitors do inappropriate things." Dylan continued on Andrew's thought almost without pause:

> It has got better. When the kids came in the past they would do war woops – we still hear people doing that on the way to the site but it's rare for them to do it in front of us – they seem to get that that is not okay.

Dylan and Andrew are historical interpreters at Plimoth Plantation's Wampanoag Homesite and are of Shinnecock descent. In his statement, Dylan reflected a shift by children to recognise war woops as offensive acts, however, he presented this as a limited reframing given that the noise of war whoops still regularly echoed down from the path to the site. The speed with which the brothers bounced ideas between one another, finishing or reframing

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[129] Nushwetu translated as three fire home. These traditional seventeenth-century Wampanoag dwellings have been recreated at the Plimoth Plantation museum's Wampanoag Homesite.

[130] Mishoon, Wampanoag word for canoe, made by burning out the inside of a large, felled tree.

[131] Moccasin in the Wôpanâak language describes a single shoe whereas moccasinash describes a pair.

each other's thoughts, soon took the conversation to a passionate tempo that I struggled to note down. The exchange conveyed anger and exasperation, but also a friendliness towards myself. We are of similar ages and they knew I had worked on the Homesite before, which supported an assumption, on both sides, of similar social and political opinions. The Wampanoag Homesite is the oldest Indigenous living history site in the US, depicting seventeenth-century homes and lifeways through the creative skills and interpretive practices of Native peoples. Although not all of the Indigenous interpreters are Wampanoag, they interpret Wampanoag history through a framework of their experiences as Native people and will also answer questions about their own Nation's culture. Therefore, a notion of shared Indigenous identity is central to the very running of the site. Indigenous interpreters, throughout their engagement with the Mayflower narrative, contended with anti-Indigenous slurs and uninformed questions that recycled harmful stereotypes. This experience shaped the interpretive work of my informants and marked the Mayflower quadricentennial events. Andrew said with frustration, "They think that all Native people look the same". Dylan edited Andrew's statement and declared emphatically, "They think we all are the same." Pointing to the walls of the Nushwetu, Dylan continued,

> they think that they are going to see Tepees and they want to know where the horses are. We are probably fifty times more diverse than Europe. Some tribal groups might look similar but many don't and we have been intermarrying with non-Natives.

Dylan, exclaimed, "I could go on and on," as though it had been him who had just spoken. They spoke on this topic with a shared voice, and continued with a rapid back and forth, describing the questions they received from visitors:

> Dylan: "Do you go to school for free?"
> Andrew: "Do you have a casino?"
> Dylan: "People think we live here!"
> Andrew: "Some people think we roll around in the dirt."
> Kerri: 'What?'

Kerri, the Wampanoag Homesite manager, had entered the nushwetu carrying an armful of furs. She skilfully pulled aside the hide doorway with her foot while ducking through the entrance, a well-practiced movement. The work day over, she sighed and placed the furs down on the bench and sat on top. The site was now left silent but inside the Wetu the four of us spoke animatedly, the fire and the warmth continuing to grow. Andrew responded to Kerri's incredulous, "What?" "Yes, some visitors came up to me and pointed at the interpreter and asked if he rolled around in the dirt!" Kerri laughed and said, "he probably

does". The humour appeared as a practiced method to remove the sting of this racist description, to transform this into a moment of banter among friends. The pain of it lingered on in a tiredness that was visible in the group despite their youth and athleticism. Within this context, their interpretive work was described by Andrew as "a fight for our identity" and by Dylan as,

> a fight every day to convince people that we are human – we get so dehumanised. 90% of the work we do is just straight up defending our humanity and our right to be.

Neither Andrew or Dylan explicitly categorised their feelings and yet they persuasively replicated for me, in the rhythm of their back and forth, how such dehumanising statements formed a constant, exhausting bombardment. They characterised their interpretive work as a frontline battle against the dehumanisation of Indigenous people, which was marked with their mantle as the "bad boys" passionately speaking out against embedded misrepresentations.

Through the experiences of my Indigenous informants, this chapter seeks to reveal the context within which they carry out interpretive work and from which the Mayflower commemorative events would emerge. It reveals that these commemorations were articulated within an established erasure of Indigenous history and colonial violence. Incorporating stories of continued trauma, I seek to reveal how historical interpretation by Indigenous people can be experienced as deeply affecting and painful work. I will consider the use of humour as an interpretive practice, applied to navigate dehumanising representations. To sanitise Indigenous experience would, as this chapter will establish, join a long and harmful tradition of erasure and vanishing. I will investigate five conceptual frameworks that continue to impact Indigenous interpretation work and which historically justified violence and genocide against the Native Nations of Turtle Island: savage, noble savage, Manifest Destiny, vanishing race and the New World. The chapter will demonstrate that these representations of Indigenous people were tools of colonial expansion that, far from reflecting Indigenous reality, sought to crudely assimilate Indigenous peoples into established European hierarchies as subordinates. Far from being shipped to England during the 2020 commemorations, these representations will be shown to have a much earlier foundation in European thought than academic literature has suggested. In writing this chapter, I considered a quote by Akala, a Black British writer, rapper and activist:

> It's easy for people just slightly younger than myself, and born into a relative degree of multiculturalism, to forget just how recently basic public decency towards black folks was won in this country. [132]

I include this statement in the vein in which it was meant, not as a denial of the persistence of anti-black racism and indeed racism against a much broader community of racialised persons, but as a recognition of a shift in public representations and interactions. This chapter demonstrates that Indigenous peoples have experienced no such shift in the US or UK. As such, this chapter is intended as an intervention, motivated by a firm agreement with ethnohistorian Restall, that we should all be greatly concerned that racist slurs about Indigenous people and representations that erase or perpetuate the historical violence done to them are stated without criticism.[133]

Not being human, not having a culture

Lattas explains that power formation in early European society was concerned with 'anthropological discourse about the essential nature of humanity' and at the heart of these debates was the Indigenous person.[134] The Indigenous person was considered a problematic primordial man, the other against which white society and particularly white bourgeoise society was constructed.[135] Lattas emphasises that colonial dehumanising categorisations of Indigenous people were not merely descriptive representations but structuring phenomena that defined power relations.[136] Restall describes the representations of the Indigenous other of Turtle Island as falling into two main categories.[137] From the era of Columbus and for three centuries following, Native Americans were depicted as 'the noble savages, innocent and childlike, who accepted—even embraced—Christian civilization; and the bloodthirsty barbarians who resisted'.[138] Anthropologist, Ellingson echoes this statement, explaining that visceral generalisations such as 'warlike' or 'docile' had significant implications for colonial administration, as the civilising of 'savages' did not require diplomacy as would dealings with the Chinese or Ottoman Empires.[139]

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[132] Akala, *Natives Race and Class*, 5.
[133] Restall, "The Trouble with 'America,'" 3.
[134] Lattas, "Savagery and Civilisation," 40.
[135] Lattas, 48.
[136] Lattas, 48.
[137] Restall, "The Trouble with 'America.'"
[138] Restall, 12.
[139] Ellingson, *Myth of the Noble Savage*, 219-2020.

Dehumanising colonial representations reappear over 400 years later in the questions frequently asked of Mashpee Wampanoag informant Darius, in his role as Director of Plimoth Plantation's Wampanoag Homesite. I had hoped to speak with Darius in person but lockdown forced us to communicate over Zoom. We had met several times before and I really enjoyed his presence; a warm, welcoming man with a lively sense of humour. Darius is an experienced historical interpreter, who employs an informal tone and opens up his interpretive method, so much so that you feel he is considering the material for the first time. He uses phrases such as, "I think it is most likely that…" or "If we were in their shoes we might have…". I had observed this interpretive practice as he spoke to visitors on the Wampanoag Homesite, in his delivery of an online lecture during lockdown, and during our call. He personalised Wampanoag history by discussing "my people" and "our beliefs". Darius therefore openly interpreted archaeological evidence, primary written documents and proceeding historical interpretations, through the framework of his cultural knowledge as a member of the Mashpee Wampanoag. That this history was personal to Darius was recognised by visitors as they applied stereotypical representations of Indigenous people to his Nation and him specifically. Darius explained, "You hear the two terms, are your people warlike or peaceful?", to exemplify that visitors did not enter the Wampanoag Homesite with a strong knowledge of Wampanoag people, but drew on "wrong information from TV, movies and schooling". He explained:

> You know you can't describe a culture or any culture around the world like that, that's ridiculous. You know, everybody goes to war for one reason or another and you don't just wake up in the morning - oh my *God, that's right, I am a warlike person*, I must go kill somebody today. That's ridiculous, and that's how our people have been described over the years: not being human, not having a culture, not having language, not knowing what we are doing, running wild around the woods acting crazy.

Darius delivered this statement with an exasperated laugh, employing a tone of mock enthusiasm when stating, "*God, that's right, I am a warlike person*". His rhetoric was critical, he unequivocally stated that this was a dehumanising, erasing and hurtful representation. The tone of this statement, however, began as jovial. He laughed, appealing to me as another who would see the ridiculousness of this representation. While Kerri's laugh, described in this chapter's opening scene, sought to bring together those who were the recipients of racial stereotypes, Darius suggested the power of laughter to disrupt these misrepresentations while retaining the visitors' interest and good humour. Darius acknowledged that certain emotions cannot be shared on the Wampanoag Homesite. He explained that they must not "raise their voice", as he believed this was antithetical to their mission to educate:

> If they see you getting upset, emotionally getting upset vocally and what they gonna do is turn off. They are going to look at you and say no thank you and walk away. You are losing a *learning point*. We have the power to change a person's way of thought when they come into the Homesite, how they come to the Homesite and how they leave is up to us.

Darius described a professional performance in which emotion, though felt, is not voiced. This presents a significant complication to the division of emotion and affect. Laurajane Smith, Wetherell and Campbell, reflect on a traditional definition of affect as a more generic embodied feeling that can be consciously parcelled into categories of emotion.[140] They begin their compiled work with a description of emotion in the "curl of a lip and a shrug of the shoulders", physical reactions a researcher could attempt to interpret into disgust or relief, for the purposes of its description.[141] This exchange with Darius left me with many such moments. It was clear that the performance of emotion was not limited to the professional setting of the Homesite. Within our interview, Darius diffused his frustration and anger through humour. He asked if English people learnt about Native slavery, and was shocked and appalled at my response, "we really don't learn anything about Indigenous people anywhere". He exclaimed with indignation, "Not even Squanto, he lived there [in England] for 5 years!" Moments later he had composed himself and began to detail the life of Squanto. Our interview space mirrored the relationship of visitor and Indigenous interpreter on the Homesite, as Darius answered my questions, mediating his own emotions in order to comfort me in this "*learning point*."

Darius described how Indigenous people were depicted historically as "savage and barbaric". William Bradford, Separatist Mayflower passenger and governor of Plimoth Plantation, describes the 'savage' Native peoples as 'cruel, barbarous, and most treacherous, being most furious in their rage…delight to torment men in the most bloody manner that may be.'[142] Bradford reflects a common seventeenth-century image of the violent animalistic Native, overcome by emotion. Ethnohistorian, Harkin explains that Native Americans were described as 'red' in order to depict them as controlled by passion.[143] Darius argued that despite a shift away from these terms, the representations persist and can be found today in films, textbooks and in such "*warlike*" depictions. Within this context, Darius's management of his own frustration and his suggestion that other Indigenous interpreters do the same, can

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[140] Smith, Wetherell and Campbell, *Affective Practices*, 1.

[141] Smith, Wetherell and Campbell, 1.

[142] Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation 1620-1647*, 27.

[143] Harkin, "Toward an Ethnohistory of Emotions," 265.

be understood as an act of resistance against colonial misrepresentations of the Native person. I asked Darius if he thought these categorisations had, in the 1600s, come from a place of ignorance or whether this was an active policy that the Europeans employed to justify taking Indigenous land. Darius responded:

> It was definitely purposeful in *my opinion*, no question about it, you know. Yes definitely, it happened all around the world, didn't just happen to our people.

Though Darius acknowledged that this is "*my opinion"* he was assertive and pointed to the experience of Indigenous people internationally to demonstrate dehumanising rhetoric as a tool of colonisation. Ellingson, stresses that any employment of 'savage', whether noble or otherwise, has obvious political qualities.[144] He argues that the concept of 'savage' refuted Indigenous diversity and justified violence by likening the task of colonial administration to 'the management of livestock'.[145] Ellingson categorises 'savage' as an oppositional term with a 'polarized discursive energy' with the terms civilised or domesticated.[146] This 'energy' is a revealing description, as through this opposition colonial activity was presented as a necessity, supporting 'totalizing control moves that were not possible in political interactions with [perceived] established states'.[147]

A potent and degrading word in a children's movie

Interpretation, as an act of rearticulating the past into the present, can carry and reassert colonial categorisations. These categorisations may be decontextualised from their historical application, as was apparent in the use of 'savage' in Disney's 1995 animated film, *Pocahontas*.[148] *Pocahontas* joined a resurgence of films depicting Native American peoples. Much transformed from the John Wayne Westerns which represented them as warlike, these films presented gentler and more sympathetic narratives. As argued by Darius, I agree that the colonial binary of peaceful or warlike is preserved and popularised through this media. *Pocahontas* received a mixed reception among Indigenous communities. Some applauded the film's recognition that the English were aggressive and in pursuit of personal gain, and many were delighted at having a Native woman depicted positively in film.[149] Damning criticism suggested the film engaged in a 'what if history' erasing the violence against

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[144] Ellingson, *Myth of the Noble Savage*, 219.

[145] Ellingson, 230.

[146] Ellingson, 219.

[147] Ellingson, 219.

[148] *Pocahontas*, Disney.

[149] Edgerton and Jackson, "Disney, the 'White Man's Indian.'"

Pocahontas and joining a colonial narrative that proclaimed her as proof of a 'Christianised and civilised' Native American.[150] 'Savages' is the title of the film's climactic musical number, sung by both the English colonists and Powhatan people.[151] The song follows John Smith's capture for the murder of Powhatan warrior Kocoum and shows the English colonists and Powhatan Nations preparing for war. Led by the movie's villain, the English soldiers sing:

> What can you expect/ From filthy little heathens?
> Their whole disgusting race is like a curse/ Their skin's a hellish red
> They're only good when dead/ They're vermin, as I said
> And worse/ They're savages! Savages!

In response the Powhatan sing:

> This is what we feared/ The paleface is a demon
> The only thing they feel at all is greed/ Beneath that milky hide
> There's emptiness inside/ I wonder if they even bleed
> They're savages! Savages![152]

'Savages' is here sung by both the English and Powhatan and so rendered merely a hurtful term indicative of misunderstanding and prejudice. Lattas and perhaps Ellingson, would likely argue that savage cannot be liberated from its historical, colonial employment as a racist representation of Native and not English peoples.[153] Lattas explains that 'hegemony is not an effect of these representations but a process inscribed and internal to its production of meaning.'[154] Savage was not merely a hurtful term, but a structuring conceptualisation that imposed a racial hierarchy at the expense of Indigenous people. The erasing of its specific colonial context enables Disney to include it in a PG rated movie, a choice met with shock by anthropologist Pauline Strong:

> For many Native Americans and other colonized peoples, 'savage,' is the 'S' word, as potent and degrading as the word '*igger.' I can not imagine the latter epithet repeated so often, and set to music, in a G-rated film and its soundtrack. It is even more shocking to write it in a review. Is 'savage' more acceptable because it is used reciprocally? But then does this not downplay the

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[150] Edgerton and Jackson, "Disney, the 'White Man's Indian,'" 91. See also Restall, "The Trouble with 'America.'"

[151] *Pocahontas*, Disney.

[152] *Pocahontas*, Disney.

[153] Lattas, "Savagery and Civilisation"; Ellingson, *Myth of the Noble Savage*.

[154] Lattas, "Savagery and Civilisation," 39.

> role the colonial ideology of savagism played in the extermination and dispossession of Indigenous people?[155]

Strong emphasises that the fact that racial slurs towards Indigenous peoples are stated publicly and designed to be sung by children, demonstrates a dramatically different relationship with Indigenous experience and history than with African American or Black British history. Within my thesis, this is acknowledged through the censuring of the n-word and not of savage. *Pocahontas* is not the only Disney film to employ Indigenous slurs in songs for children. Forty years previously, Disney had produced a musical adaptation of J.M. Barrie's *Peter Pan*, with the song 'What makes the Red Man Red – why does he ask you How!'[156] Native people, of no particular Nation, are depicted in feathered headdresses with bright red faces, smoking pipes and dancing in front of tepees.[157] They make war woops and the song's main chorus uses a bastardisation of the word Indian. This term was one informant Stephanie, member of the Dakota Nation, explicitly identified as a slur that I should not include in my thesis.[158] I did not know that this shortening of the term Indian was derogatory, I therefore censure it within this thesis to establish it as a slur for the reader and better emphasise its harm. The repetition of such terms and reductive representations in film and textbooks, demonstrates the continued, uncritical use of colonial misrepresentations of Indigenous peoples. That these misrepresentations render historical interpretation a complex and emotionally difficult task was apparent in the fatigue of my informants, in a frustrated sigh or an indignant laugh.

'Hello' will win many more smiles than using the Hollywood stereotype 'How'

Plimoth Plantation museum has taken steps to discourage racist slurs and representations by visitors to the Wampanoag Homesite. This message is presented in several forms across the museum's website and on an old, faded sign on the route to the Wampanoag Homesite. These signs are emphatic requests with detailed directions for, 'Visiting the Wampanoag Homesite Respectfully'.[159] The text is from the museum website and forms a significant part of the preparatory information given to chaperones of school trips:

> Help your students show respect to their Native hosts. No war whoops, please. A simple 'Hello' will win many more smiles than using the Hollywood

[155] Strong, "Pocahontas Review," 4.

[156] *Peter Pan*, Disney.

[157] *Peter Pan*.

[158] It is worth noting that the term is beginning to be reclaimed by some Native people.

[159] Plimoth Plantation, "Chaperone Guide."

> stereotype ‘How’ for a greeting or addressing the staff as ‘squaw’ or ‘chief.’ Without tepees and feathered headdresses, our Wampanoag Homesite and our Native staff might look different than your students expect. A visit to Plimoth Plantation is an opportunity to discover the unique history and culture of America's Eastern Woodland Nations.[160]

It could be argued that this mirrors signs we are accustomed to seeing at UK transport sites, which implore passengers to treat staff with respect. The Wampanoag Homesite signs are, however, unique to a general call for respect and instead explicitly ask visitors to not employ racialised slurs against Indigenous staff members. This statement also recognises that these representations are rooted in popular depictions of Indigenous peoples in film. Hollywood has decontextualized Indigenous language and failed to represent the diversity of Native American Nations. Chief, when readily applied to all Native men, undermines the importance of this title. Squaw, though perhaps inspired by an Algonquin word for wife or mother, has been used in its anglicised form as an ethnic and sexualised slur. The Hollywood Native American stereotype is shown to so completely misrepresent Native people as to render Indigenous interpreters, dressed in Wampanoag clothing and practicing traditional lifeways, unrecognisable to the visitor.

I relaxed in my informant Stephanie’s kitchen in the UK. She appeared as a friend and teacher, actively encouraging my questions, suggesting new points of focus and openly sharing her own experience. She reiterated that Indigenous people are not recognised as they are so distinct from the image held in Euro-American imagination:

> The huge problem with American Indians is that they have been mythologised so much, they have been romanticised so that nobody really wants to see you unless you fit the stereotype. They will recognise the Native person if the person presents as a Native person, in other words, talks in a certain way, has darker skin, has long black hair. A Native person to most people is that. I mean that is a racial and cultural stereotype.

Stephanie emphasised that this representation resulted in a removal of power to speak as an authoritative Indigenous person to a non-Indigenous community. Her tone shifted between resignation and frustration, seeming to reflect a complex of emotions that had developed through repeated experiences of having her Indigenous identity denied. Stephanie suggested she had not been recognised as a knowledgeable Indigenous voice by UK commemorative events organisers. She was outspokenly critical of Mayflower 400 and her words were edged with disappointment and concern that the organisation was failing to represent the diversity

[160] Plimoth Plantation, “Chaperone Guide.”

of Indigenous communities. By collaborating with a small community of Native people, predominantly from the Wampanoag Nations, Stephanie argued that Mayflower 400 could perpetuate a misrepresentation that Dylan and Andrew had vocalised, "they think we are all the same". She explained that Native people are held back by this nineteenth-century view of the authentic Native, which prevents them from being seen or listened to. I suggest that the power of popular cultural representations to define authentic Indigeneity demonstrates the importance of accurate representations in the movement for Indigenous sovereignty and survivance.

During the course of this research, I spoke with Indigenous informants in the UK and US, from five different Nations. Although culturally distinct, each described contending with strikingly similar misrepresentations and stereotypes. The artwork below was part of the 2013 exhibition at the Agua Caliente Cultural Museum in Palm Springs, which explored the misrepresentations of the Agua Caliente band of Cahuilla Indians that shaped visitors' questions.[161] The exhibition was entitled, 'Where are the Tipis?' Changing Perceptions About Indians'.

Figure 1. John Branch Cartoon (1995) from Agua Caliente Cultural Museum exhibition. Source: Nolan, "Native American Representations."

This cartoon echoes Stephanie's assertion that popular representations not only recycle hurtful colonial categorisations but determine who is recognised as Native American. Disney's *Pocahontas* occupies the largest space in the thought bubble, accompanied by an

[161] Nolan, "Native American Representations."

image of a horse, a reference to Western films.[162] Sporting mascots are also featured, including the recently abandoned Washington Redskins mascot.[163] That Hollywood representations shape popular perceptions of Indigenous peoples is as pronounced in the UK, where North American Indigenous history is not part of the national curriculum and a smaller number of Native Americans live. I discussed this with four final year undergraduate students from Durham University. They are chatty, confident and high-achieving, however, during our interview they appeared uncomfortable, were soft spoken and there were often long silences. They all reflected that they knew very little about Native American history or cultures. Niamh revealed that she had critically analysed Disney's *Pocahontas* once at school and Izzy remembered that she had taken part in a "school nativity play called the Golden Arrow." Within the play she'd been made to dress up as a Native person, though she stressed that she was told nothing about the culture of any Native Nation. Overall, they felt that the little they did know came from Hollywood films. After a long silence I asked:

> Me: Before I started having this conversation with you, were you aware that there are Native American people in America today?
> All: Yes.
> Me: You'd be surprised how many people don't think of Native American people as in the present. Despite my research I was actually surprised when I met an Aztec person.
> Katie: I would have thought of them as in the past like in the Horrible Histories series.[164]
> Izzy: I wouldn't have thought that there were still Aztec people.
> Niamh: I don't know if this sounds really stupid but to be honest, I think that partly one of the reasons – this is going to sound awful and embarrassing – that I know Native American people exist in modern America is because of Twilight.
> Katie: Yes, I don't know anything about modern Native Americans – I wouldn't be able to tell you anything at all.
> Keir: It's because our idea of Native Americans is set in the past
> Katie and Izzy: Yes absolutely.

While the group recognised that Native Americans still "exist in modern America" they could not name a Native Nation by name. They remarked that this was reflective of their broader lack of knowledge of Indigenous people, including the Māori who they knew only through the All Blacks Rugby team, and for Katie, a short class on phrases and games in primary school. Niamh suggested that they were more aware of Native Americans because

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[162] *Pocahontas*, Disney.

[163] The role of mascots and their recent renaming will be considered in Chapter Three Part II, 93-7.

[164] See "Horrible Histories," CBBC educational TV series for children often covering gruesome historical events.

they were represented through TV and film. However, her discomfort revealed that she was aware her frame of reference was a misrepresentation and felt embarrassed that she knew nothing else that she could draw upon. I suggest that their discomfort reflected not academic pride, but that recognising how little they knew was uncomfortable to their liberal sense of self. I worked to employ a jovial tone and humour to break through my informants' fear of saying the wrong thing and revealing the limits of their knowledge. The Palm Springs exhibition was similarly intended to be both humorous and challenging. The curator explains that it engaged in a careful process of guiding the visitor: 'with a gentle sense of humour, so that people aren't totally offended, but do emerge from here with a new perspective.'[165] Again, we see the employment of humour as a practice of interpretation, intervention and relationship building. I sought to be transparent about my experience of navigating vast silences around Native people in UK culture, acknowledging my own internalised misrepresentations. Despite my research revealing a harmful popular perception of Native peoples as historical, I had continued to assume Aztecs, or more accurately Nahua, were a long lost Nation. That my own perceptions of Indigenous people were significantly influenced by Hollywood representations, was made inescapably clear to me by a non-Native informant. I described in my fieldnotes:

> I was discussing with my informant how little is known in the UK of Native American history and culture. In response, she asked me to name the first Indigenous woman who came to mind. I said Pocahontas, as she had predicted. I had conjured the image of an animated Disney character before naming the Native American woman I had just finished having lunch with! Or the many inspiring Indigenous women I have worked with! I was more than a little bit embarrassed.

I include these incidents here in agreement with the call of decolonisation theorists for greater openness by academics about their own bias and positionality.[166] I was born in 1994, so the 1995 *Pocahontas* film was almost certainly the first depiction of a Native American I ever saw. I grew up watching John Wayne films with my Grandad and attended Cowboy and Indian themed birthday parties. However, I had also visited Plimoth Plantation museum regularly, my parents filled the house with First Nations' art and I have since travelled across the world and met diverse Indigenous peoples. I was therefore shocked that despite this, the prancing Disney princess was still my default point of reference, and even more ashamed to realise how little I knew about the real woman.

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[165] Nolan, "Native American Representations."

[166] Wilson and Yellow Bird, *A Decolonization Handbook*.

Our first missing and murdered Indigenous woman

Dehumanising representations of Indigenous peoples have a contemporary cost; this can be seen in the psychological toll of interpretation work, the limited visibility and platform given to Indigenous peoples, and also in incidents of brutal violence. How have colonial representations of Native people laid a foundation for the epidemic of missing and murdered Indigenous women? Kerri and I were sitting in her office, overlooking the Wampanoag Homesite as we discussed the impact of popular misrepresentations. I mentioned Pocahontas and she stated emphatically:

> You know Pocahontas is really one of our first missing and murdered Indigenous women. She was a child. She was basically sold into the sex trade as a pawn. Her story is awful and the story that Americans know is completely *fabricated*. It's awful.

Throughout our conversation, Kerri, a member of the Mashpee Wampanoag, distanced herself from Americans for whom she explained that history has been "*fabricated*" to be made more palatable. As with Thanksgiving, Kerri described an unequal emotional burden for Indigenous peoples who reject the sanitised narrative and carry knowledge of the horror of Pocahontas' exploitation. I suggest that Disney not only sanitised Pocahontas' story but joined an established colonial dialogue that presents Indigenous women as fertile, welcoming bodies for the masculine, European colonising venture. Restall describes how Pocahontas was represented, by English popular culture and later eighteenth-century American artwork, as a success story for the acculturation of Native peoples. She was depicted as a 'demure maiden' in contrast to the 'passive, prone, half-naked, loosely sexualized' Native women and the barbarous, violent Indigenous men yet to be civilised.[167] Restall explains that the fascination in Europe with the Native other and the perception of their taming as an example of the great victory of civilisation over savagery, was popularised in the 1800s and was fundamentally gendered. The use of women as a symbol of virtue and a fascination with her vulnerability to male strength, has a profound legacy in Classical art. Depictions of the rape of Persephone or of the Sabine women capture male strength and female virtue in an almost stylised dance.[168] These images turn conquest into romance, as does Disney's *Pocahontas*, in which Pocahontas falls in love with John Smith.[169] Through this relationship, a union is built that presents occupation as peaceful and welcomed. Restall explains that the romanticised depictions of the female Indigenous other masked the brutal

[167] Restall, "The Trouble with 'America,'" 11.
[168] See Richman-Abdou, "A Detailed Look at Bernini"; Pritchard, "Abduction of a Sabine Woman."
[169] *Pocahontas*, Disney.

reality of a colonial sex trade of young girls, ripped from their families as European colonists hunted the 'good Indian' women.[170] These representations not only hid violence but motivated it. Andrea Smith explains that colonial dialogue presents Indigenous women as polluted by sexual sin. She quotes a minister in Virginia who wrote in 1613: 'They live naked in bodie, as if their shame of their sinne deserved no covering.'[171] Andrea Smith explains that this language of inherent impurity suggests that Indigenous women were not entitled to bodily autonomy.[172] These representations have persisted and the crisis of missing and murdered Indigenous women continues.

Native women and girls experience violence at far higher rate than non-Native peoples across Canada and the US.[173] The US centre for Disease Control and Prevention reported that murder is the third-leading cause of death among Native American and Alaska Native women.[174] This epidemic of violence was recognised by the Canadian government in 2019, though it has been little acknowledged by the US government. Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, stated that: "for many decades Indigenous women and girls across Canada have disappeared, suffered violence or been killed and our justice system has failed them".[175] Trudeau's address began with an acknowledgement that he stood on unsurrendered land and that reports of missing Indigenous women were systematically deprioritised by Canadian law enforcement.[176] His speech therefore recognised the continuation of a historical erasure of Indigenous rights to land and bodily autonomy. A BBC documentary by Stacey Dooley reveals that when Indigenous families registered their loved ones as missing, the assumption was that these young girls were just acting out, that they were alcoholics, drug dealers or sex workers.[177] Andrea Smith draws a comparison between the colonial silencing of women through the representation of their bodies as violable, with modern representations of sex workers: 'prostitutes have almost an impossible time being believed if they are raped because the dominant society considers the prostitute's body undeserving of integrity and violable at all times.'[178] The continued sexualisation of Native women and their false representation as somehow sexually violable, perpetuates colonial violence and ensures that efforts to make

[170] Restall, "The Trouble with 'America,'" 15.
[171] Smith, "The Sexual Colonization of Native Peoples," 73.
[172] Smith, 73.
[173] Urban Indian Health Institute, *Data from 71 Urban Cities*, 2.
[174] Urban Indian Health Institute, 2.
[175] Trudeau, "Not a Relic of Our Past."
[176] Trudeau.
[177] "Canada's Lost Girls," Dooley.
[178] Smith, "The Sexual Colonization of Native Peoples."

these communities safer are not enforced. The epidemic of missing and murdered Indigenous women is powerfully explored in Cannupa Hanska Luger's work, *Every One*.[179]

Figure 2. Image of *Every One* artwork by artist Cannupa Hanska Luger. Source: Luger, "Missing and Murdered."

This piece is composed of over 4,000 individual clay beads, handmade by communities across Turtle Island, including First Nations communities. Each of these beads represents a missing or murdered Indigenous woman or girl. The collective art piece humanises and materialises this data which is scarce and little acknowledged. Luger also draws attention to those often excluded from data collection, LGBTQ2S peoples, an acronym that acknowledges two-spirit peoples.[180] A New Mexico based Native artist raised on the Standing Rock Reservation in North Dakota, Luger was invited by Mayflower 400 to establish an art installation in Plymouth UK. *Settlement* will be a decolonising art installation with Indigenous artists taking over a public space to discuss issues of trauma, colonisation and demonstrate Indigenous resilience.[181] Unfortunately, due to Covid-19 this has been delayed. By looking to Luger's previous work on missing and murdered Indigenous women, we see how violence towards Indigenous people provides a contexts that shapes artistic and

[179] See Luger, "Missing and Murdered."

[180] Two-Spirit, umbrella term used by contemporary Indigenous people, with Nation specific definitions. Generally describes a third gender that was a respected part of many Native American cultures. See Neptune, *What Does "Two-Spirit" Mean?*

[181] Mayflower 400, "Settlement Project in Plymouth."

interpretive work. These systemic problems require a platform. Whether the 2020 Mayflower commemorations can provide that platform will be discussed in Chapter Three, Part II.

We are Still Here: The myth of the Vanishing Race

Native American history, if not entirely silenced in classrooms and popular culture is presented as a narrative of 'diminution and death'.[182] Anthropologist, David Treuer explains that within this context, 'That we even have lives - that Indians have been living in, have been shaped by, and in turn have shaped the modern world - is news to most people'.[183] That Indigenous people have vanished from the face of Turtle Island is a deep and pervasive myth rooted in representations of Indigenous people that refute their cotemporality; savage, noble savage and inhabitants of a new world. These colonially constructed Natives are presented as antithetical to ideas of progress and modernity. That Native people faced imminent extinction was used to justify the violent vanishing of Indigenous people by European colonists and later the US State. The vanishing race discourse appears well rooted in the Mayflower passengers' belief that they had a divine mandate to civilise this new world. This would transform, in the nineteenth century, into a doctrine of Manifest Destiny which presented western expansion as 'inevitable, justified and benevolent.'[184] The vanishing race discourse has further erased traces of this active, violent removal from vernacular history, presenting Native people as merely fading into the background, or being passively removed through diseases. The silencing of Native American history and the power of the vanishing race myth was discussed by my informant Mary Ann, in her insightful travel account.[185] She recounted that growing up she had learnt that her home state of Vermont did not have Indigenous people and that eighteenth-century politician Ethan Allen was a hero to be celebrated. She explained that it was many years later that she discovered that Abenaki Native Nations lived in the state of Vermont and that Allen was responsible for their removal. She wrote, 'I was horrified to find that the notion of the 'Vanishing Race' was sometimes a cover-up for actively trying to make them vanish, even in my beloved home state.'[186] That this myth was supported and furthered by the founding fathers of Anthropology, is a legacy modern anthropologists must reckon with.

[182] Treuer, *The Heartbeat of Wounded Knee,* 1.

[183] Treuer, 1.

[184] Kuchera, *"*Manifest Destiny*."*

[185] Hooper, *Across America and Back*.

[186] Hooper, 112.

My informants, Kerri, Andrew and Dylan, sat in the Nushwetu in the Wampanoag Homesite. We were discussing the stereotypes they commonly encounter from non-Native people. Following a rapid back and forth of examples, Dylan, explained that,

> They think that we are super primitive, that we are not social, that we roll around in the dirt. They don't see that we are a complex society. It's these stereotypes from early anthropologists.

They all laughed and exclaimed 'anthropologist', as though it was a dirty word and the harm that the discipline had done was clearly apparent. While Native Americans might be the most extensively documented group in the ethnographic record, decolonisation theorists have demonstrated that they have been theorised through paradigms with no resemblance to the ways they explain or understand themselves.[187] In the mid-nineteenth century, the dominance of Social Darwinism framed Native American assimilation as a pressing and positively regarded responsibility. Among its key proponents we find many of Anthropology's founding fathers.[188] Anthropologists examined Native American social structures as examples of the early steps of human civilization. Franz Boas is heralded as having fought against this evolutionary perspective, his culture concept paving the way for the likes of Radcliffe-Brown and other anthropological superstars.[189] However, these anthropologists were motivated by the frankly obtuse, if not structurally racist, assertion that they were saving a dying race, a myth that was in fact deeply embedded in theories of social evolution. Writing during the western expansion of the United States, Boas appears influenced by the popular theory of Manifest Destiny. For example in 1898, Boas proposed an ambitious survey of the 'Vanishing Tribes of North America.'[190] Central to Boasian theory was the 'primitives,' that unlike his colonial predecessors he recognised as having a culture but still maintained they had 'no complexity, class or history that really mattered'.[191] While his culture concept might have complicated the Social Darwinism argument, ultimately the discipline under Boas still subscribed to a notion that the primitive other was vanishing in the face of progress. Described as salvage ethnography, Boas and his students were inspired by, and propagated, a pervasive myth of the vanishing race. With each collected artefact and published research paper, anthropologists justified their emancipatory role while furthering

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[187] See Miller, "Native Historians Write Back"; Fixico, *American Indian Mind in a Linear World*; Linda Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*; Lee-Morgan and Hutchings, *Decolonisation in Aotearoa*.

[188] DeMallie, *North America Indian Anthropology Essays*, 3.

[189] DeMallie, 3; see Bennett et al., "Boas and After: Museum Anthropology."

[190] Bennett et al., "Boas and After: Museum Anthropology," 136.

[191] Troulliot, *Global Transformations*, 102.

the misrepresentation and erasure of Native Americans. It was as Hoffman describes, a fiction conjured by 'white imagination'. [192]

Living with a foot in two canoes

The continued presence of the vanishing race myth is apparent through a denial of Native American cotemporality. My informant, Kerri gestured toward the Wampanoag Homesite, "people ask if we live here," she said with an exasperated tone. She explained that when wearing traditional clothing they are not considered to be modern people. Due to this perception she stressed the importance of also having Indigenous interpreters in "*modern clothing*":

> We try to have people not just dressed in *traditional clothing* but in *modern clothing* too. I think Native Americans in general are the only culture that is expected to be stuck in time! To tell people that we do still eat skunk and deer but not to say we don't still get a pizza on the way home. We call it living with a *foot in two canoes*.

Kerri stressed that this denied cotemporality is racialised. At Plimoth Plantation museum the white American actors re-enacting the lives of the seventeenth-century English colonists are understood by visitors as modern people describing the past. Indigenous lifeways are contrastingly expected to have not changed since the seventeenth-century. I found "*a foot in two canoes*" to be a beautiful and powerful description, revealing a multi-layered culture that, like any other, is influenced by both its own and outside traditions and values. "*Traditional clothing*" is worn by Kerri in many of her social media photos, I therefore found it interesting that her statement included a binary of "*traditional*" and "*modern*". This choice felt incongruous with her overall argument that Indigenous people are modern, whether they wear t-shirts or deerskin skirts. Anthropologist, Beth Conklin makes a similar argument and language choice. Conklin examines the challenges the Kayapo face in asserting themselves as culturally distinct, authentic Indigenous people, as well as modern people to be taken seriously in local negotiations.[193] She emphasises that this binary is produced by audience misrepresentations; however, in her language choice Conklin suggests a distance between Kayapo peoples and innovative technology or modern clothing which she describes as 'Western'. Fixico emphasises the complexity of describing Indigenous experience through the English language, deeply embedded with colonial ideological constructs.[194] I believe Kerri and Conklin's language choice reflects this difficulty. The

[192] Hoffman, "'The Vanishing Red'," 101.

[193] Conklin, "Aesthetics and Authenticity."

[194] Fixico, *American Indian Mind in a Linear World* .

complexity of being recognised as Indigenous while avoiding being marginalised as historical, was described by my informant Dylan. He shared a photo of himself standing in Times Square as part of the New York Times Travel Show.

Figure 3. Image taken of Plimoth Plantation museum interpreters in New York Times Square. Source: provided by informant.

Dylan explained how fond he was of this photograph:

> I guess I really like that picture because it is in a surrounding you never thought you'd see anyone dressed like that. I mean it's almost like we jumped out of a time machine and ended up in Times Square. But it also shows that Native people are still very much modern and around, I mean if we didn't have our traditional clothing we would just blend in.

Within the context of the vanishing and misrepresentation of Indigenous people this very image appears as a defiant act. Dylan acknowledged that it is within the context of denied cotemporality that the image finds its power. Indigenous peoples in traditional dress appear in juxtaposition to the modernity of Times Square. The photograph both uses and fights against this perception by unequivocally demonstrating that Native people are a significant part of the modern American landscape, and continue to shape Turtle Island. This image joins a growing body of Indigenous images that reject the colonial or settler colonial gaze and the denial of cotemporality. My informant Stephanie suggested I look at the work of artist Jamie Okuma, who had produced ornately beaded high-fashion boots. The boots depict, in coloured beads, two horses standing on their hind legs, an art piece that captures how 'many contemporary Indians negotiate the balance between mainstream life and

traditional responsibilities.'[195] These visual statements are also more immediately and informally produced across social media. A young Nishnaabe man under the handle @the_land has turned TikTok into an platform for Indigenous advocacy.[196] His videos poke fun at misrepresentations and draw attention to Indigenous experience. In one video he explains the significance of his braids, and describes how he smudges and cleanses them with sage and sweet grass to honour the generations before who had their hair cut as part of the assimilation policies.[197] That traditional practices are part of modernity, and that they have taken on renewed importance in light of colonialism and settler colonialism, is embodied in the images taken and shared by Indigenous peoples.

Erased from the curriculum

To depict the ideology of Manifest Destiny and the figure of the disappearing Native, I need only turn to the dominant Mayflower narrative. An over-emphasis on the Wampanoag - English peace treaty, an ending of the narrative before the King Philip's War, and a single-minded focus on relations with the Wampanoag rather than the Pequot or Massachusett, enables the erasure of the tensions and conflict that characterised the Mayflower colonists' early years in Turtle Island. [198] Massasoit was not the only 'welcoming' Native in the dominant Mayflower narrative, Squanto became an icon in the twentieth century, 'as a symbol of virgin land available for the taking and the imminent demise of Indian people who had once claimed this land as their home.'[199] Kerri explained that:

> In American Public schools, the only time you hear about Native people is if they are helping Manifest Destiny. That is why you hear about Squanto, you learn about Massasoit and Sacagawea. Now you hear about teachers not so much teaching about Massasoit but his son Metacomet, so it is, I feel like it is, a *big change*.

Kerri has young children and so has re-encountered the American public school system and its narratives of Indigenous history. She acknowledged that her son's experience marks "*a*

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[195] Okuma, "Horseshoes."

[196] Kicknosway, Theland (@the_land), "Hair Teachings w/ my Family."

[197] The shaving of Native American children's heads was part of the 'civilizing process' of the Indian boarding schools that sought to 'kill the Indian in him, and save the man.' See Treuer, *The Heartbeat of Wounded Knee*, 132-143.

[198] See Reilly and Cushion, "Mayflower Myths"; "The Mayflower Pilgrims: Behind the Myth," Burns.

[199] O'Brien, *Firsting and Lasting*, 108.

big change," but that Wampanoag history, both pre-contact and after Thanksgiving, is still not part of the mainstream curriculum, taught only by "rogue" teachers. Kerri emphasised that named Indigenous people enter vernacular history only to the extent that they can drive forward the US national story, then stepping back and vanishing in the face of progress. Debra Vidali echoes this as she recounts asking 23 students at Emory University to name ten Native American tribes - only one student could.[200] She then asks that they name five famous Native Americans, ten named Sacagawea and Pocahontas. Supporting Kerri's argument, Vidali muses that the question could aptly be reworded as 'How many Native American women who helped white men can you name?'[201] Kerri's son's educational experience is dramatically different from her own. She explained that the Wampanoag Nation was not named by her teacher, even as they recounted the narrative of the First Thanksgiving. The teacher then presented the unnamed Nation's history as having ended in 1621, despite the fact that the she had Kerri, a Mashpee Wampanoag student sat in front of her. Andrew and Dylan presented a damning inditement of the schooling system and its vanishing of Indigenous history, despite going to "a pretty progressive private school". Dylan explained that he was being taught completely inaccurate information about the Iroquois Confederacy, and when he tried to correct his teacher she just pointed to the textbook and silenced him. Andrew explained that Native history is almost entirely erased from the curriculum. Through these US educational experiences, we can see how the vanishing race myth persists, through a vanishing by omission, the sharing of vanishing race narratives and by silencing Indigenous students who try to correct these representations.

The US education system has a historical legacy of being mobilised to vanish Indigenous cultures. In the mid-nineteenth century, Delores Huff explains that efforts to defeat Indigenous People were no longer so much by military force but by restructuring the institution of education to mould a colonial belief system: 'Colonialism that imprisons young minds with the concept of 'racial/ethnic inferiority' is by far more tyrannical than brute force.'[202] The early 1800s policy of assimilation, focused on destroying Native American culture, under the guise of protecting Indigenous people from their inevitable extinction in the face of progress.[203] This policy brought with it the Residential Schools which ripped Indigenous children from their communities and culture, shaving their heads, changing their clothes and punishing those who spoke their Native language. My informant, Stephanie explained that these schools and some of these traumatic practices continued from 1879 into the 1990s. Her father attended a residential school where his friend died. She explained that

[200] Vidali, "Native American Realities," 42.

[201] Vidali, 42.

[202] Huff, *Institutional Racism and American Indian Education*, 1.

[203] See Treuer, *The Heartbeat of Wounded Knee*, 132-143

in comparison to the Wampanoag who have "faced centuries of abuse, oppression and acculturation" some on the Dakota reservation, her father's home, remember life before the reserves. We turned to the topic of her family's experience late in our conversation and she described carefully and with sadness the trauma her father held:

> Just to give you *an example*, my father, and he was an older father, he was in his 40s when he had me. He was born in 1916, so he was at the apex when the United States wanted to get rid of the Native people – they actually call it the *termination period*. They did not want Native American people any more. I mean they would accept them but they would be acculturated – you speak English, you cut your hair. So it was another form of genocidal policy. So 1916, I am born in 1958, I'm talking to you now. I can still remember what he was like and how traumatised he was. So this is not for me a story of centuries ago. It's real, I carry these things, I carry the memories, the *cultural trauma* of that. So I am starting to talk now and talk in public about this. That is something that British people maybe don't know, is that colonialism was a terrible time and it did actually hurt a lot more people than just the Indigenous people. I think that colonialism is a violence against all of us. But the Indigenous people who were the powerless in this – let's put it that way. They were carrying that trauma which is now, in a sense, playing out. Before you can even talk about something when you're in trauma – say you have been raped – you are still in trauma and you can't talk about it. It takes, maybe, years. The Native people, the Indigenous people in North America are just now able to start talking about this because the trauma was so real and so oppressive in the early twentieth century. It took through the late twentieth century and now the twenty-first to bring these people forward. So for people in England that might seem like – wow that is such a long time ago – oh how does this affect me?

Stephanie depicted the contemporary impact of what has been a far reaching history of violence and repression. The use of genocide to describe the atrocities committed against the Indigenous peoples of Turtle Island still faces significant resistance. Stephanie stressed, however, that the US government unapologetically employed genocidal rhetoric, "*the termination period*". Stephanie's heartfelt description of her father's trauma makes real this history and its contemporary impact. The comparison to rape is striking and echoes how discourse around rape changed during the 2017 #metoo movement. It is now more broadly understood that victims of violence come forward years later, once the trauma has been processed. The comparison appropriately resonated with the recasting of victims as survivors, emphasising the resilience of Indigenous people. Stephanie's description echoes Harkin's claim that the strongest emotions cannot be articulated.[204] Her description of this

[204] Harkin, "Toward an Ethnohistory of Emotions," 262.

trauma as a kind of carried weight, perhaps supports its categorisation as affect rather than emotion. However, I assert that this labelling misleadingly suggests that trauma is unconsidered, whereas Stephanie suggested it shaped everyday activities. She described this trauma as both collectivised and personalised, reflecting policies that affected Indigenous communities from all Nations though which individuals continue to encounter in unique ways. "*Cultural trauma*" illustrates that attacks on Indigenous people sought to destroy their culture by banning their languages, lifeways and re-writing their history. Stephanie referred back to our broader conversation about Mayflower 400 and reflected empathetically on English questions about the relevance of this history. However, through her honesty, she clearly demonstrated that to suggest that history does not impact the present is a privilege that Indigenous people do not share. That Stephanie's story is just '*an example*' among thousands, highlights a profound disconnect between English and American understanding and Indigenous experience. My informant, Mary Ann reflected this as she explained how the prominence of vanishing Native narratives and the accompanying silence on Indigenous history impacted her perception of Native peoples in America. In her book, she recounted a diary entry for a trip she made in 1965 and cringed at her 'naïve assumptions', though she recognised that they were shared by many at the time:

> It's sad that the present Blackfeet live in apathetic poverty on these lands, not wanting to improve their lot…If I were a Blackfoot, I would *welcome* government support.[205]

Mary Ann's openness to admit her own mistake seems to mark a wider movement to recognise internal bias and past misconceptions. Without historical context, poverty in reservations can, and is, interpreted as the fault of Native Nations and not the culpable institutions that are instead recast as the solution - if only Native people would '*welcome*' them. The distance between the popular representation of Native people and their reality has enabled the persistence of the vanishing race myth despite continued Indigenous presence. In this environment, as will be discussed in Chapter Three, Mayflower commemorations offer a complicated platform to draw attention to contemporary issues.

Zeus turns his glowing eyes to the distant lands of the just Abii

To investigate the foundation of dehumanising conceptualisations of Indigenous peoples, I will consider their historical foundation alongside their modern usage. I will reveal that deeply rooted in European thought, these are not Indigenous concepts nor designed in direct relation to the Indigenous people of Turtle Island. Despite academic suggestions to the

[205] Hooper, *Across America and Back*, 61.

contrary, an investigation of the roots of the noble savage reveals a deep foundation in European thought, far proceeding the meeting of Europeans and Native American peoples. Philosophers, Arthur O. Lovejoy and George Boas explain that a 'primitivistic form of exoticism' had for the Greeks of the Classical period, the authority of Homer.[206] We find in the *Iliad*, written in 799 BC, 'the justest of men', the Abioi, a nomadic people who were thought to preserve the innocence of a pre-civilised state.[207] We are presented with a figure akin to the noble savage, though depicted thousands of years before the birth of Rousseau, to whom this concept is often credited. These exotic others, such as the Amazons, were located on the outer reaches of Greek society and were considered to live in an enviable state without the limitations of civilisation. The ancient Greek philosopher Strabo, explains that this perceived superiority of the culturally primitive state was not in fact the invention of Homer, but existed before his time.[208] The concept reappears later in Tacitus' *Germania*, considered to be the first ethnography.[209] Tacitus describes the exotic other as a technologically backwards people who in their less urbanised state display greater moral virtue. It is therefore within antiquity that we find the roots of a romanticised exoticism, a categorisation of the other as uncivilised and moral.

Chronological primitivism appears as the second conceptual framework in which we find the foundations of the noble savage. Ellingson's study of the wrongful attribution of noble savage to Rousseau, argues that its roots can be found in this second Classical narrative, the Golden Age discourse, that lingers in the European travel-ethnographies of the eighteenth century.[210] The Golden Age, rather than applying to an exotic other, is a philosophical theory of the development of mankind. Lucretius, in line with his philosophical school the Epicureans, argues that early man in the founding stages of civilisation lived in a plentiful environment and had himself greater physical strength.[211] This framework was applied to Turtle Island through the construct of the New World. The French Renaissance philosopher Montaigne writes:

> Our world has just discovered another one: and who will answer for its being the last of its brothers, since up till now its existence was unknown to the daemons, to the Sybils, and to ourselves? It is no less big and full and solid than our own; its limbs are well developed: yet it is so new, such a child, that we are still teaching it its ABC; a mere fifty years ago it knew nothing of

[206] Lovejoy and Boas, *Primitivism And Related Ideas in Antiquity*, 287–88.
[207] Homer, *Iliad*, 217.
[208] Lovejoy and Boas, 290.
[209] Tacitus, *Germania*.
[210] Ellingson, *Myth of the Noble Savage*, 12.
[211] Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura*, 137-178.

> writing, weights and measures, clothing, any sort of corn or vine. It was still naked at the breast, living only by what it's nursing Mother provided.[212]

Montaigne writes of South America, however, the language of the New World was applied liberally to both continents. He depicts a freshly born country, not only without civilisation but without culture, appropriate for the people of the Golden Age. However, Ellingson argues that there is little to indicate that eighteenth-century travellers who wrote of Native people as uncivilised exotics or chronologically primitive others, sincerely believed they had an innate nobility.[213] Instead, Ellingson contests that nobility was ascribed to traits of specific Indigenous people.[214] This position is difficult to prove given the diversity of European thought on Native Americans and colonisation. Montaigne presents conflicting views, although often overtly critical of European violence and interference in the Americas, he presents the Europeans as essential teachers. This variation likely reflects the diversity of accounts he received, as he himself never visited the continent. Even so, it is clear that the noble savage was a conceptual framework constructed far before the birth of Rousseau. I suggest scholars attribute this representation to Rousseau to erroneously suggest that it was designed with direct reference to the Native cultures of Turtle Island. This was certainly how it was taught to me as a student of Political Theory. In this way the noble savage is constructed as a primary source and held in higher esteem by the researcher. I argue that this representation tells us a great deal about the mechanisms of colonisation and its Classical justifications, however, it tells us nothing about historical Indigenous culture.

The day the Pilgrims left Southampton for the New World.

Throughout the coverage for the 2020 Mayflower commemorative activities, there were reoccurring depiction of the New World and Turtle Island as a harsh wilderness. The New World appeared across the Mayflower 400 website, forming eye-catching titles: 'The day the Pilgrims left Southampton for the New World.'[215] The BBC Radio 4 series 'You're Dead to Me', devotes an episode to the Mayflower voyage, in which presenter and public historian Greg Jenner refers to the New World twice in the opening three minutes: "today we are packing our bags and setting sail to the New World."[216] He clarifies his meaning with, 'or America, which is a slightly less exciting name'.[217] Describing Turtle Island, populated

[212] Montaigne, *The Complete Essays Montaigne*, 1029.
[213] Ellingson, *Myth of the Noble Savage*, 6.
[214] Ellingson, 6-9.
[215] Mayflower 400, "Mayflower left Southampton." This title was changed removing references to the New World after the 2020 BLM movement, see Chapter Three, 91 for a discussion of these changes.
[216] Jenner, "You're Dead to Me: The Mayflower."
[217] Jenner.

for at least 12,000 years, as new erases Indigenous history. My informant, Stephanie had stressed to Mayflower 400 curator, Jo that this phrase should be abandoned:

> I didn't want her to call it the New World, and they consistently, on the website, talk about the discovery of the New World. I am sorry, but the people who are living there certainly didn't see it as a new world.

Stephanie emphasised with frustration that the New World was a "kind of linguistic ideological hangover from the Renaissance". An accomplished art historian, Stephanie explained the foundation of the New World concept in early European cartographical drawings, referring to the Hereford Mappa Mundi, which dates from the 1300s:

> This map shows the world as a great big ball. In the centre is Jerusalem, and that has three rivers coming out of it, dividing the world into three. There is no room for America at all obviously. So the New World does come from the cartographical understandings, but that hangs on for four to five centuries, and even up until today.

This map showed Christian notions of the world, essential to understanding the colonial project. Robert Williams, expert in federal Native American law, explains that it was in the fifth and sixth Crusades that the legal foundations for colonisation was established.[218] During these later crusades, land was taken that had never been part of the Constantine donation and as such could not be justified as 'just war' under existing legal frameworks. An elaborate legal structure was therefore built, the Doctrine of Discovery, declaring that the Pope could wage just war on 'all those that violate the law of nature - heathens, infidels and savages'.[219] From this foundation, representations such as the New World were built. Stephanie reflected that the persistence of this concept "basically means we are stuck somewhere in about 1492. We have still not, we haven't moved on and I would have thought we could stop repeating these things." She spoke with frustration that Mayflower 400 could not see the ridiculousness and harm of such a representation.

Throughout the 2020 commemorations, the use of the New World was often justified by positionality – a claim that to the colonists this world was new. We should therefore ask, is the continued application of the New World not an ideological conceptualisation but merely an interpreting of history from the perspective of the colonists? This positionality would, of course, complicate the assertion that the Mayflower quadricentennial was marked by a uniquely representative interpretation. The extent to which Turtle Island was new to the

[218] Williams, 'The Rights of Indigenous Peoples."
[219] Williams.

seventeenth-century Mayflower passengers and crew, was in regards only to the New World framework, founded in antiquity and dominating colonial thought. The colonists had handled trade goods from the area and met with Europeans who had visited. The Mayflower passengers and crew may even have met Native American people in England. There was a significant movement of Indigenous people across the Atlantic, as cultural ambassadors, slaves, and specimens to be examined.[220] We know for certain that one of the Mayflower's passenger, Stephen Hopkins, had visited Turtle Island - in fact his shipwreck is well known, having soon after been depicted in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*.[221] The colonists also had a map purchased from John Smith which labelled the area in detail, along with the water ways and place names. The Mayflower trip was funded under the understanding that the colonists would bring back tradeable goods, goods they would buy from the Native Americans. I therefore assert that the claim that this was a new world speaks to a lasting misrepresentation of Native American peoples rather than a reality of the Mayflower colonist's experience.

Darius demonstrated on our Zoom call that the New World concept persists in the representation of Indigenous peoples as helpless and childlike. He again pointed to the questions of Plimoth Plantation museum visitors:

> Oh my God we get questions like '*how did you* guys survive back then?' *How do we* survive? We don't even use that term, we've been *living in our homelands for over 12,000 years* and that's another thing, you just don't wake up in the morning and ask, oh, where am I gonna get food today? How am I gonna live, am I gonna starve today? There's a system set up for 12,000 years. People knew what to do, people knew when to go fishing, people knew when to plant, people knew when to hunt and people knew when to gather nuts and berries. We [the Wampanoag Nation] go by a thirteen moon system. You [a Wampanoag person] would know this, this was how you were raised and it's different today because most people work an eight hour schedule, you know nine to five. They specialise in what they are and they get their pay check at the end of the week and they go purchase what they need. But all the [Wampanoag] men knew how to fish, all the women knew how to plant, all the men knew how to hunt and all the women knew how to weave. The elders today still hold onto the stories, they are the ones who have the wisdom and knowledge and so it's their responsibility to pass that oral history down, to keep those stories together.

Darius identified that such questions come from a lack of understanding of the long and successful history of North Eastern Woodland's Indigenous people. He changed tenses from

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[220] Weaver, "The Red Atlantic."

[221] Shakespeare, *The Tempest*.

"*how did you*" to "*how do we*", interpreting this question as reflecting a contemporary misrepresentation of the Wampanoag. The question assumes that Turtle Island was a harsh and dangerous landscape, a conceptualisation notably distinct from the Golden Age discourse of plenty. It reflects a central justification for colonial expansion, the claim that Native people were incapable of cultivating the land.[222] Darius applied historical interpretation to intervene in this perception, "*we have been living in our homelands for over 12,000 years*." His anger was apparent in the short, pointed questions, yet his interpretive approach transformed this moment from an explicit statement of the frustrations of historical interpretation work, to a '*learning point*'. The persistence of the New World demonstrates the difficult work of dismantling misrepresentations cemented in public understanding through events such as Thanksgiving and the dominant Mayflower narrative.

By examining my informants' reflections on, savage, noble savage, vanishing race, Manifest Destiny and the New World, this chapter has revealed how these colonial frameworks continue to structure power relations, shaping contemporary representations of Native Americans. These frameworks have been propagated by and supported the dominance of a Pilgrim Mayflower narrative, featuring a barren wilderness and naïve, welcoming Natives. My informants revealed that, within this context, historical interpretation is deeply personal and emotionally difficult work. However, they rarely 'packaged' their feelings into the cultural categories Laurajane Smith, Wetherell and Campbell suggest are traditionally defined as emotion.[223] I suggest the reoccurring use of humour also challenges a rigid distinction between emotion and affect. Within the context of my informant's tone, physical indicators of feeling and the reality of race relations, this familiar cultural category of joy was in fact used to mitigate the sting of a racist comment, to vent frustration or to strengthen our relationship within the interview. It is also significant to consider how emotions were limited by the interview space, tone was measured and humour was positioned as appropriate in a way that anger would not be. In the context of misrepresentative images of warlike and overly passionate Native Americans, anger and frustration are politicised and thus rendered unavailable to the Indigenous interpreters seeking to challenge their misrepresentation. Stephanie's assertion that trauma cannot easily be articulated, also suggests the researcher sensitively look beyond 'packaged' emotions. Despite the challenge of historical interpretation, informants continued to value this work as a method to challenge and dismantle harmful misrepresentations. I will continue to explore this tension in Chapter Three. I will also investigate the complex work of producing a

[222] Williams, "The Rights of Indigenous Peoples."

[223] Laurajane Smith, Wetherell and Campbell, *Emotion, Affective Practices*, 1.

Mayflower narrative that engages an audience whose perception of colonial and Indigenous history appears distinct from Indigenous experience.

Chapter Three Part I

Negotiating an appropriate commemoration

The quadricentennial Mayflower anniversary has been distinctively defined as a commemoration by both UK and US event organisers. Historian, Nicholas Thomas reflects that a change in the 'tenor of commemoration' is common to many recent anniversaries.[224] He argues that this reinterpretation is closely linked to a growing awareness of how damaging colonisation was to Indigenous communities.[225] This chapter will reveal that these changes are highly politicised and contested. I will demonstrate that the challenging work of producing an appropriate commemoration was central to the practice of Mayflower 400 UK and Plymouth 400 US interpreters. This was often linked to the belief that the quadricentennial could form a platform for Wampanoag or Native American cultural survivance.[226] I present this chapter in two parts, to visually demonstrate that this interpretive practice occurred amid, and often with limited knowledge of the emotive and tiring work of Indigenous historical interpreters, who navigated the complexity of the claim that the Mayflower quadricentennial could be a platform for survivance. This chapter will demonstrate the diverse experiences of interpreters and their contested views on the impact of the Mayflower 2020 commemorations.

An appropriate commemoration

Organisational committees on both sides of the Atlantic recognised that a 2020 interpretation of the Mayflower voyage called for a shift to a commemorative tone and a broadening of the events' focus to include Native American historical experience and Indigenous contemporary voices. My interviews reveal that by early 2020 the question of what constituted an appropriate interpretation was a central and challenging point of navigation. This navigation was required, in part, due to a lack of a standardised definition for appropriate, or more formal framework for what constituted commemorative interpretive practice. This first part of the chapter, will examine the texture of this negotiation work, with attention to my informants' feelings of personal and emotional effort.

As the Curator and Content Producer of Mayflower 400's flagship exhibition, Jo was navigating the question of appropriate commemoration to produce material outcomes. We

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[224] Thomas, *Discoveries The Voyages of Captain Cook,* xv.

[225] Thomas, xv.

[226] British and US Newspapers, 2019-2020, led with such claims. See, Richard Brooks, "Native Americans Will Take Centre Stage"; Lawless, "After 400 Years, Native Stories."

met in her favourite coffee shop in Plymouth UK, a snug spot with wide tables that were occupied by chatty diners and students surrounded by their laptops and books. Jo arrived a little late and was on a phone call when she scanned the coffee shop. She said an animated goodbye to her caller, hung up and announced that she was delighted to see me seemingly all in the same breath. She sat down and immediately wanted to know about my research and how she could help. I had been told by another Mayflower 400 informant that Jo committed to every conversation far more than her busy schedule allowed. I was happy that this exchange was no different. Jo was open about the hard work of producing an appropriate exhibition, which she positioned as central to her professional goal. She was practised at producing sensitive representations of overlooked stories, having worked on the BBC series, "The Listening Project".[227] However, Jo explained that what constituted appropriate interpretive practice could not be easily defined and that her understanding had developed throughout the production of the exhibition. In the most part, Jo used the word appropriate when discussing how the exhibition would represent the Wampanoag people. She described a range of experts she had relied on to construct the exhibition, but revealed that what constituted appropriate representation was contested. Jo reflected on a particular incident:

> The Wampanoag Advisory Board consistently said that you need to represent us with a wide variety of objects. So, if we used bows and arrows we would expect you to put that in. British ethnographers, however, were saying to me, don't put those in and don't use anything stone because you are making the suggestion of primitivism. I was confused by that. Wait a minute, I have British ethnographers on the one side saying this isn't appropriate and Native Americans on the other side saying this is really what they want.

This incident exemplifies the difficulty of historical interpretation and I suggest, presents a cautionary tale for researchers. As I investigated in Chapter Two, misrepresentations of Indigenous people can cause significant harm, often furthering a dehumanising and primitivist perception. However, calling for the rejection of objects that are represented in these stereotypes, if done without sufficient attention to Indigenous historical lifeways and contemporary wishes, could lead to the removal of objects of cultural significance. We also see the complexity of Jo's professional task, as she sought to accurately represent Wampanoag historical culture to British visitors, who might interpret the exhibition through misrepresentative categorisations of Native people. Jo's tone emphasised her confusion at navigating such contradictory ideas of appropriate representation, which she explained appeared commonly during her curation of the exhibition. Her interpretive practice therefore

[227] "The Listening Project," Loosemore.

appeared to be a complex, individualised navigation of multiple historical narratives. She revealed that the very structure of the exhibition reflected her interpretive journey:

> I am choosing a very different starting point for the story and then I am really consistently relaying, be it chronologically, my surprises in encountering this story. In the hope that other people will be surprised by similar things.

Through such anecdotes about her work, I understood that Jo negotiated such incidents by being empathetic, open to criticism and by actively listening. These values appeared central to what Jo considered as appropriate interpretive practice. These were not specifically required by her professional role, but were personal qualities that Jo was credited for by even the most vocal critics of the Mayflower commemorations.

Mayflower 400 Volunteer Manager, Neil, revealed his evaluation of what constitutes appropriate interpretive practice at an induction session for volunteers in Plymouth UK. Neil had a commanding but informal style and was excited and animated, moving to talk to individuals and then stepping back to confidently share historical and practical information with the group. He was visibly energised by the room. He reflected a passion he would remark on in our following interviews, for building a diverse, local community of Plymothians who would give their time back to the local area. As volunteers settled into their seats, Neil emphatically announced to the room at large that this was to be a "commemoration not a celebration". Neil stressed that acknowledgement of Indigenous experience would be central to the 400th anniversary, explaining to volunteers that "for some, this is a negative story," and implying that commemoration was the only appropriate tone. Neil's professional and personal interest structured the volunteers' training:

> We do deliver training around diversity and equality. But it is about trying to understand someone else's perspective. Respecting other peoples' views. Can't get away from the fact that this is a negative experience for some people and *we have shied away* from that for years. This is the one opportunity to acknowledge that.

Similarly to Jo, Neil's interpretive practice was self-reflective, empathetic, and I believe driven by personal values rather than an explicit professional requirement. Neil voiced a feeling of discomfort and shame at having not previously recognised the harms of colonisation. '*Shied away*', implied that the brutal reality of colonialism was known but considered too uncomfortable to be publicly acknowledge, a practice

Nayanika Mookherjee describes as a 'nonnarration'.[228] While Mookherjee's ethnography considers the conscious non-articulation of the violence of the Bangladesh war of 1971, within living memory in Pakistan, Neil referred to a 400-year-old historical story. However, through the use of "*we*" and his efforts to address this nonnarration, he appears to present colonial violence as part of our shared experience as British people. The act of nonnarration appears to fundamentally challenge his liberal sense of self. To Neil, an appropriate commemoration was presented as one that acknowledged and acted to rectify a legacy of shying away from the harm done to Native peoples.

In the US, the Mayflower events were organised by Plymouth 400, which had similarly shifted to a commemorative tone. In a Zoom call in mid-March, I spoke with a member of the organisation. This interview took place during a time of confusion and fear, with the US bracing itself for the impacts of the pandemic. I have chosen to use the pseudonym Sam for my informant, as this interview touched on sensitive topics and was coloured by shock at the unfolding crisis. Sam appeared stressed and distracted and kept her camera turned off. She had only just left a Plymouth 400 crisis meeting and exclaimed at the start of the call, 'the world is upside down'. I asked about the structure and mission of Plymouth 400. Sam explained that it was a nonprofit, 'tasked with creating a fitting commemoration for the voyage and the Native people'. Sam quoted this as though it were the mission statement of Plymouth 400. She thereby framed Indigenous inclusion as a professional responsibility. Sam emphasised a clear shift from the celebratory tone of previous anniversaries, placing a particular emphasis on her close working relationship with the Wampanoag Advisory Board. However, this rhetorical shift to a commemorative tone was quickly unsettled, as I asked Sam which communities of people were volunteering with Plymouth 400. She answered, "those who like a commemoration or a celebration." I was surprised by the use of celebration here, something Sam had suggested Plymouth 400 was meaningfully moving away from. I clarified, "do you refer to the 2020 Mayflower events as a commemoration or a celebration?" Sam quickly responded:

> Commemoration is how *we* refer to it. Celebration more in these times, [during the pandemic] that is becoming more useful. In general, it [the Mayflower voyage] is not celebratory, *even* the Pilgrim families lost half of their people. Though we can see the Native Americans came through it and are still surviving.

[228] Mookherjee, "Knowing What Not to Narrate."

Sam suggested that commemoration was Plymouth 400's preferred term, delivering the statement with the speed and certainty of a well-practised, professional position. The multivalent nature of the Mayflower narrative was even managed within this short statement. Sam directly challenged the dominant narrative, suggesting that '*even*' with a limited focus on the colonists, a historically accurate interpretation includes hardship and loss. The use of '*even*' referenced a growing recognition of the loss experienced by Native American communities which, though not explicitly stated by Sam, was heavily implied. Sam appeared to be navigating a complexity experienced by many Mayflower interpreters, of emphasising the loss to Indigenous life without supporting the established narrative of the vanishing race. Sam's statement demonstrated that there were coexisting commemorative and celebratory Mayflower narratives in 2020. This was also observed by my informant Darius, who explained that, "You have got the two words being used a lot and I always tell people, you know, let's not get it twisted, as I say, it is a celebration for a lot of people." Reflecting on the 2019 and 2020 Cook anniversaries, Thomas similarly argues that despite a popular shift to a commemorative tenor, celebratory narratives coexist and compete across 'public commemorations, exhibitions, books and television programmes'.[229] This was recognised by some of those who were asked to take part in the Cook commemorations, such as Māori activist Tina Ngata. Ngata refused to participate, stating that the commemorations were 'a thin veneer' over a celebratory narrative.[230] With the coexistence of commemorative and celebratory narratives, the shift in tone appears less absolute. Sam's statement notably revealed the transformative impact of the pandemic, not only on the programme of events, but the organisation's Mayflower interpretation. She explained that during this time of fear and isolation, Plymouth 400 was no longer only being looked at to provide information, but also "hope". That the climate of uncertainty led to reactive changes was not surprising, though it does emphasise that answers to the question of how to appropriately commemorate were continually renegotiated.

Studying the acknowledgement of Nazi sites in Nuremberg, Macdonald recognises the marking of 'difficult heritage' as a growing phenomenon.[231] She defines difficult heritage as historical events that are uncomfortable for a 'positive, self-affirming contemporary identity', focusing particularly on national identity.[232] At first, I believed the Mayflower narrative, with its commemorative tenor, appeared well suited to this definition. However, the multivalent nature of the Mayflower narrative makes its very labelling as difficult an interpretive act. Macdonald explains that difficult heritage is a changing category; however, I

[229] Thomas, *Discoveries The Voyages of Captain Cook*, xv.
[230] Ngata, *KIA MAU Resisting Colonial Fictions*, 33.
[231] Macdonald, *Difficult Heritage*.
[232] Macdonald, 1.

assert that difficult heritage is a contested category.[233] Commemorative interpretations explicitly challenge a legacy of Mayflower celebrations and a dominant narrative that depicts a journey of religious freedom and an amicable relationship between the English colonists and the Wampanoag. Defining a particular narrative as difficult heritage further overlooks the multiplicity of historical experiences and the diversity of contemporary communities engaging with heritage. My informant, Neil, considered a question which Macdonald does not: to whom is this heritage difficult? Speaking privately with me after the volunteer induction session, Neil stressed the importance of training volunteers, who would become cultural ambassadors and guides, for sensitive and possibly challenging conversations with Native visitors. Neil's training revealed that to assert that representative history is difficult, such as that which deals with the violence of colonialism or the need for reconciliation, is to assume a specific receiving community, likely non-Indigenous. Turtle Island presents a dramatically different fieldsite to Germany, where Macdonald conducted her study. Turtle Island is made up of diverse Nations to whose national identity the Mayflower voyage has dramatically different meaning and value.

Responding to criticism

Mayflower organisers had to negotiate external criticism. Meeting with Charles, I was eager to learn how he negotiated appropriate representation, and how this had guided the management of Mayflower 400's historical interpretation. I had met with several informants who had spoken critically of Mayflower 400. As the spokesperson of the organisation, Charles was himself accused of preserving a celebratory narrative and failing to be fully inclusive of Indigenous voices. It was clear during our interview in December 2020, that he spoke with such criticisms in mind:

> There is a small minority that think we shouldn't commemorate. That the programme is inherently wrong. But if it didn't exist the Wampanoag would not have this moment. Their main desire is to show that they are here. They exist. They are not a dead culture. Some people don't see the paradox – if there is not the economic benefit then there is no moment. But it's really broad – we are even giving out small funds for diverse projects, from Morris dancing to feminist performances. All of the programme is free or accessible. There was a letter in the *Guardian* about renaming Sir John Hawkins Square, did you see it? But it's a question of '*to edit or acknowledge*'. I do think one has got to be careful to judge by the basis of today and by how we would have acted. That is not to say I am condoning them but that it's not like in a comic book, it is not just good or bad.

[233] Macdonald, *Difficult Heritage* 2.

In line with his professional role, Charles emphasised the need for a diverse programme that engaged local people and for the programme to be economically viable so as to attract investment. Charles suggested that the Wampanoag have a limited number of platforms to assert their presence. By explicitly positioning Mayflower 400 as a crucial platform for the Wampanoag, concerns over engagement were presented as essential practical considerations and morally charged. He contested several public criticisms of Mayflower 400 which appear to have contributed to an interpretive practice in which questions of how and what to commemorate were central considerations. Charles referenced a local renaming debate which, despite his question, he seemed sure I would be well acquainted with. Although Mayflower 400 was involved in complex national and international relations, its headquartering in Plymouth resulted in the influence of local issues. That Charles would position himself against a letter in the *Guardian* calling for the renaming of Sir John Hawkins Square was not surprising, given that this letter was predominantly a critique of Mayflower 400, entitled 'Mayflower 400 is ignoring slavery'.[234] Charles' positionality appeared affected by his professional responsibility to contradict such criticism, and his differing opinion at the time of interview. Charles spoke of a comedian, who in reference to Churchill, argued that we should not overwrite the ambiguity of historical figures by labelling them hero or villain. I believe Charles' position on appropriate representation was developed through his negotiation of such local and national debates, his professional task and his personal opinions.

The *Guardian* letter argues that Mayflower 400 was not producing an appropriate commemoration and complicated Charles' suggested binary of commemoration as a decision to either "*edit or acknowledge*." The letter writer, Angela Sherlock, suggests that acknowledgment can itself be an act of editing if historical events are sanitised. She wrote:

> Here in Plymouth we have the distinction of having been in the forefront of the slave trade, in the person of Admiral Sir John Hawkins. We even have a square named after him. And there is a lot of sweeping under the carpet. Mayflower 400 is commemorating the Mayflower voyage of 1620 without reference to the context and aftermath of that colonising venture. The myth that Britons want to remember is of a brave search for freedom. But what needs to be remembered is that this was an invasion, seeking profit, and part of that process was the construction of a racial categorisation. [235]

[234] Sherlock, "Mayflower 400 is Ignoring Slavery."
[235] Sherlock.

Sherlock, like Charles, presents history as a tool to drive change; however, she warns that attention to a historical moment and even the employment of commemorative rhetoric does not mean that the town's difficult heritage has been truly recognised. Through the satirical use of 'distinction', Sherlock emphasises the complexity of feeling a sense of belonging to a city with such a history.[236] Her own motivation to speak appears rooted in discomfort at furthering an amnesia that perpetuates marginalisation and so undermines her liberal sense of self. This motivation resonates with the shame experienced by volunteer manager Neil. From the *Guardian* letter, I suggest that Sherlock defines appropriate commemoration as that which contextualises the Mayflower voyage within the history of the transatlantic slave trade. A call to acknowledge the Mayflower voyage's connection to the slave trade was voiced by Mayflower Mavericks, a pressure group established to change how the Mayflower quadricentennial would be commemorated.[237] The group was led by Danny, Angela Sherlock's husband, an anti-racist campaigner who for some time worked as an information officer at the Institute of Race Relations. When we met, Danny was concerned that he was not the right person for me to speak to and said, multiple times, that he had only taken the call because we had a shared contact. I was struck by the care he took to position himself, he emphasised that it was "crucial I understood where he was coming from" and stressed that he was a "trained campaigner, my motivation is trying to influence people, I want to influence you". Due to his professional role as a campaigner, Danny recognised himself as advocating for a particular Mayflower interpretation. Strikingly, my Mayflower 400 and Plymouth 400 informants did not present themselves in the same manner, though their work also prioritised a particular historical interpretation. Danny argued that Mayflower 400 organisers were not making the colonial context clear:

> You have to use this as an opportunity to tell the truth, not a colonial narrative. We are still living with the consequences of this. None of this is over, look at Black Lives Matter.

Danny spoke with concern and a sense of urgency, presenting the commemorations as a risky platform, with significant potential to challenge but also preserve racial inequality. He emphasised that it was important that the commemorations took place and therefore his central disagreement with Mayflower 400 was over what constituted appropriate commemoration. Beyond a commemorative tone, Danny and Angela Sherlock emphasised the need for focused attention on how the Mayflower voyage fitted within the start of the transatlantic slave trade, their particular historical focus.[238] Although, this conversation took

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[236] Sherlock, "Mayflower 400 is Ignoring Slavery."

[237] See Reilly and Cushion, *Telling the Mayflower Story*; Reilly and Cushion, "Mayflower Myths."

[238] See Reilly and Cushion, *Telling the Mayflower Story*; Silverstein, "1619 Project."

place before the 2020 BLM protests, Danny made clear that the movement, founded in 2013, had already begun to shape ideas of how we commemorate.

Acknowledgement of certain historical contexts as essential to appropriate commemoration, replaced appropriate with another contested category. For Neil, Jo and Charles, acknowledgement was focused on the violence the Native Americans experienced at the hands of European colonists, and their continued presence on Turtle Island. This acknowledgement was, in the most part, produced through collaboration with the Wampanoag Advisory Board, and therefore focused specifically on the Wampanoag Nation's history and lifeways. The Advisory Board's expectations for Indigenous acknowledgement and representation challenged my informants and became part of their interpretive practice. Clearly, interpretation was shaped by the limits of the known. Danny and Angela, have extensive professional experience and a personal passion for developing public understanding of historical and contemporary racial inequalities. They interpreted the Mayflower narrative within this context of race-relations and within the 1619 founding of the transatlantic slave trade. The lack of acknowledgement of these events and of racial inequality in Mayflower 400's historical interpretation, therefore appeared as a conspicuous and unacceptable silence. Personal and professional subject positions affected historical interpretation, which in turn drove expectations for acknowledgement and guided definitions of appropriate commemoration.

No one will come if they don't use Pilgrim

It might be expected that engaging the public would be conceived of as a common sense step for the public historian or historical interpreter. However, shaping the historical narrative to engage the public is morally charged and can even be regarded as antithetical to the historical interpreter's professional responsibility. Within this section, I will reveal the challenging work of the interpreter who seeks to engage a wide audience while contesting the dominant Mayflower narrative. Speaking with my informant Charles, I was given insight into a point of amicable contention between himself and Mayflower 400 Curator, Jo, over the terminology used on the Mayflower 400 website. Charles reflected on the exchange to demonstrate the difficulties inherent in his interpretation work. It is important to note that this interview took place before the 2020 BLM protests led to a public redefining of Mayflower 400's central role. Charles spoke fondly of Jo and described the disagreement as though it reflected the difference in their professional roles. He positioned himself as having to contend foremostly with practical requirements, such as obtaining funding and a large, actively engaged public audience. Jo, while working to create engaging content was also

focused, quite rightly in Charles' opinion, on producing content fitting for her exhibition which challenged myths about the Mayflower. Charles explained:

> The website has to be right and broadly accessible or we can scare everyone off. For example Jo and I are in disagreement about calling them Pilgrims. I have no problem if the exhibition uses Separatist. No one will come from marketing if they don't use *Pilgrim*. If we debunk the whole initially then no one comes.

Charles believed the term "*Pilgrim*" would resonate with the broadest audience, despite being a term little used by the Separatist community themselves.[239] Earlier in the conversation, he had welcomed my focus on the "paradox", of engaging investors and the public, while producing a narrative that reflected historical records. Charles considered this complex balancing act integral to his work. He acknowledged contention around this activity, explaining that he had received and expected criticism. I had asked Jo a similar question, "do you feel there is a tension between meeting your audience's interests and the historical truth?" Truth was perhaps, too morally charged a term to use, for she responded with unexpected discomfort:

> There was a shaping really. Do I feel *guilty*, I don't know? Perhaps I do. Did I kind of lose things? No, but it confirmed to me that people have particular interests.

Jo's mention of guilt and self-reflective questions revealed an unexpected interpretation of my question. She paused and exhaled as she considered if she felt "*guilty*". Presented as a tension between engagement and truth she considered this a criticism and seemed to evaluate whether she had missed out vital information. Her tone suggested this would have constituted a failure in a moral duty, not merely a professional one. I saw this reaction as exemplifying that interpretive practice is navigated through personal values. It was clear that Jo was interpreting the Mayflower narrative with audience interest in mind, she had stated earlier in the conversation that, "I, of course, have to use the history and work the history in a very public history setting". Jo argued that public history demanded a particular, audience-focused method of interpretation. The audience's interest was to some extent predicted by Charles and Jo, however, they both worked actively with local people to test which content would be most engaging and reflected on public criticism.

Charles' presentation of historical interpretation as practical work was echoed in a later interview with Russ, an informant who held a senior management role in Nottingham.

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[239] Plimoth Plantation, "Who Were the Pilgrims."

As the hometown of many of the Separatist Mayflower passengers, Nottingham was actively involved in the commemorations. Russ is Secretary for the Nottingham Roosevelt Memorial Travelling Scholarship, an organisation that fosters cultural exchange between Nottingham and the US.[240] His work came to my attention as they launched a 2020 Mayflower scholarship. They sought an ambitious Nottingham resident to investigate how the Mayflower narrative is interpreted on Turtle Island, and to bring knowledge back to the UK. As we began the call, it was clear Russ was distracted by the impending lockdown and unclear why I had contacted him. I explained my research and began to ask questions about his views on the importance of transatlantic cultural exchange. He soon seemed to warm to me and was excited to discuss his work, which was a passion of his. He explained that the scholarship was spearheaded by a contact who wanted to build local pride in the Mayflower story, but felt that a new angle was essential. Russ paused and considered his own position, then stated, "it's about finding the right angle that people want to hear about. It's such a complex story, you've got to hold onto them for a long time to get it across." An advisor to a UK local council, who wished to remain anonymous, had similarly described this as the need to "find the sexy parts!" Both informants suggested that this was a complex task. Russ argued, though with a humorous tone, that if William Bradford were a "swash buckling hero" the Mayflower narrative would easily capture public attention. Russ was referencing an established Nottingham hero, Robin Hood. Robin of Loxley, is a quasi-mythical character who has engaged British audiences since the Middle Ages and has inspired and excited communities across the world. William Bradford was a pious religious Separatist who travelled on the Mayflower and served as Plimoth Plantation's Governor for 30 years.[241] Having carefully documented the colonist's experiences, Bradford's accounts are perhaps the most relied upon sources for Mayflower historical interpreters. Historically significant no doubt, but a far cry from the heart-pounding, roguish figure of Robin Hood.

While Russ was distanced from the inner workings of Mayflower 400, he similarly to Charles, presented the interpretation of a broadly accessible and engaging Mayflower narrative as a practical necessity. He acknowledged that such an engagement strategy might receive criticism but he stressed that, "*you have to* get into the press and it *might* not necessarily be right but *that's the way of life*, you need an angle. From that you can form a coalition of interest." Russ built a strong argument for pursuing the angle, with the unequivocal, "*you have to*" followed by the less certain "*might*". This statement could be interpreted as responding to my positionality in the interview. I established myself as a researcher, interested in silences around certain elements of the Mayflower history. Russ, perhaps believing that I was making a value judgement of finding the angle, reassured me

[240] Nottingham Roosevelt Memorial Travelling Scholarship, "Explore America."
[241] Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation 1620-1647*.

that, "*that's the way of life*". Even so, his considered reassurance illustrated the morally charged nature of engagement strategies that can be seen to compromise historical accuracy for audience engagement. Interpreters might seek to educate a wide audience with a representative Mayflower narrative, however, the distance between public knowledge and the historical records places enormous pressure on the interpreter to shape their Mayflower narrative to meet the well-known pilgrim story.

In favour of a less controversial topic

I met the winner of the Nottingham Roosevelt Memorial Mayflower Scholarship by chance. I was standing on the dusty road in the colonial village site at Plimoth Plantation museum. The site is an impressive recreation of the seventeenth-century English village, with squat wooden houses, costumed interpreters and small farms with live animals. I had been catching up with old colleagues when I heard Tom's English accent and went over to say hello. We were soon discussing our plans to get home before lockdown, and he reflected on what he had yet to learn about the Mayflower. Tom explained that he was in the early research stage for a Mayflower interpretation for Nottingham Council. Tom was also preparing to interpret the Mayflower narrative, dressed as a colonist, to school children in the UK for his educational company, Blue Kazoo.[242] I asked about his knowledge of the narrative before arriving in America, he laughed and with slight awkwardness explained:

> Honestly, I knew very little. In America they always start with – what you know about the Pilgrims isn't true, but I didn't know anything about them! Here the kids are taught about the story from an early age. I am staying with a family through Couchsurfing and they know it, but it's a '*rose tinted*' version – which isn't a strong enough word.

Tom's observation of the difference between knowledge of the Mayflower in the UK and US, was emotionally experienced. He at first felt discomfort at being more unfamiliar with the Mayflower story than his American friends, however, soon his discomfort came from hearing the dominant narrative which he viewed as inaccurate and inappropriate. Tom's interpretive journey was revealed, even in this short statement, to be emotional and complex. Tom's use of "*rose tinted*" was far more restrained than later remarks he would make in an article on LinkedIn, when he criticised the Americans for doing a thorough job of leaving out 'slavery, disease and ultimately colonisation…in favour of turkey and stories of

[242] Cable, "Blue Kazoo."

cooperation'.[243] This change in tone perhaps reflected our location as we were surrounded by American public historians.

Tom's observation of contemporary British and American audiences' understanding of the Mayflower narrative reminded me of an article in the *New York Times*. It states that, 'The [Mayflower commemorative] events are more politically charged on one side of the Atlantic than the other'.[244] Writer, Farah Nayeri establishes a common sense argument, that the dominance of the Pilgrim Mayflower narrative in the US results in the politicising of interpretations that broaden or challenge it. In contrast, in the UK, where the Mayflower voyage is less well known, these events are less politicised. Nayeri quotes Paula Peters, member of the Wampanoag Advisory Board and Mashpee Wampanoag Nation, who describes the UK as 'kind of like a fresh, clean slate'.[245] In a call in late March, once we had both returned to the UK, I asked Tom what he thought of the article's opening assertion and he agreed that it resonated with his US experience. First, he voiced shock at how young children are when they are taught this story, which he argued allowed schools to share an "incredibly censored and rose tinted" narrative "of why America is so great." Tom suggested that the silencing of colonial violence was a calculated method to produce a nation-building narrative, an observation which resonates with Mookherjee's identification of subjects of 'nonnarration' as those that complicate 'the nationalist narrative'.[246] Secondly, Tom focused on the affective relationship of Americans with the Mayflower story. He argued that Americans, "have a real sense of pride of being connected or being a descendant, and they don't want to acknowledge they may have done something wrong." This is a striking categorisation and one that did not resonate with my interviews, which had revealed significant diversity in the affective relationships that American, British and Native American informants built with the Mayflower narrative. However, Tom's comment was strikingly similar to my early research assumption, that Americans would be less critical of their national heritage and that Mayflower descendants would be the most attached to the dominant Pilgrim narrative. I had formed these assumptions based on the reputation of these communities in England, and perhaps Tom had done the same. Tom and I would, through our research, uncover greater diversity. Finally Tom suggested that,

> I think the UK is more politically woke – If I can describe it like that, about other cultures and aspects of history… we recognise there are big problems with our history.

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[243] Cable, "White-Washing History."

[244] Nayeri, "Native Americans Get a Stronger Voice."

[245] Nayeri.

[246] Mookherjee, "Knowing What Not to Narrate."

Tom looked optimistically towards the delivery of his Mayflower interpretation, expecting that British audiences would be open to discussing colonial history. Tom's thoughts again mirrored mine in the early portion of my research, and those of Mayflower 400 event organisers in their initial planning stages. Both Charles and Jo had reflected on their earliest assumptions that the Mayflower would be an engaging and simple narrative with the scope to build community spirit and attract tourists.

As Tom began to construct and share his Mayflower historical interpretations in the UK, he was faced with an unexpectedly complex negotiation. It became apparent to him, as it had to me, that the lack of a well-known Mayflower narrative in the UK, far from indicating a blank slate, resulted from a nonnarration of colonial and Indigenous narratives. I had been on my way out of the house when my phone buzzed with a call from Tom. I balanced it precariously against my shoulder as I sorted my bag. He seemed stressed and wanted my thoughts on a Mayflower lesson he had planned, in particular my opinion on whether the script he had produced was appropriate. Tom was designing a five minute table-top video as part of a series looking at key events in UK history. His narrative was shaped by timing and audience, targeted at school children currently being home-schooled due to the pandemic. Tom's call differentiated those pressures from the challenge of talking about the topic of colonisation, something he felt I was in a position to advise on. Despite producing this video for a UK audience, it was clear Tom was navigating complex pressures to remain silent on the violent activities of colonial history. He would later reflect in a Linkedin article that he,

> was tempted to end the story as the Mayflower approached Cape Cod to avoid the topic of colonisation. I even considered scrapping the topic entirely in favour of a less controversial topic.[247]

This fraught negotiation was clear on our call. This echoed greater concerns of an informant who asked to remain anonymous. They voiced a genuine fear that they might lose their job if they were to push for greater Indigenous inclusion and make any errors in this representation. They explained that if they were to receive any criticism from an Indigenous person they'd be "hung out to dry" by their managers. Though they recognised that to exclude Indigenous history was itself a misrepresentation, they felt their understanding of that history was too limited to produce an accurate, appropriate account. They spoke sadly, that given the insecurity of their position it was "not worth the risk." Tom similarly felt discouraged, despite a strong sense of personal responsibility to tell this story and its brutal

[247] Cable, "White-Washing History."

reality. He also struggled with the limits of his own school education, which had erased colonial history to such an extent that he felt he needed to "re-educate" himself. In the context of a persistent and established nonnarration of colonial history, Tom voiced concern that he would misrepresent the historical story. That the interpretive process is a personal and emotive journey of re-education is clear from how Tom's views changed between our interviews. Jo and Charles also stated, in similarly stressed tones, that they were challenged beyond their expectations and undertook significant research as they worked to produce a narrative that was accurate, engaging and appropriate for a UK audience.

The context of commemoration today is not what it was

The murder of George Floyd in the US on May 25th 2020 led to the widescale growth of the BLM movement.[248] Protests occurred in almost every continent, with people flooding to the streets in local towns and major cities, including; London, Seoul, Sydney and Rio de Janeiro.[249] A mural to George Floyd was even painted in the war-torn town of Idlib, Syria. [250] These crowds risked their health amidst the Covid-19 pandemic in an act of global solidarity, calling for meaningful change. As I write this thesis, in September 2020, the long term impact of this movement cannot be predicted. The 2020 BLM protests have presented such a dramatic intervention in the commemorative landscape that it is easy to imagine that questions of how to challenge colonial silence and to commemorate appropriately are new. This chapter has instead revealed that these negotiations characterised earlier interpretive practice. However, amidst an explosion of public activism, organisations now face significant pressure to publicly position themselves as anti-racist. In this section, I will investigate how the BLM protests resulted in a public repositioning of the UK Mayflower commemorations, from a local rejuvenation project, to a platform for challenging racial inequality and supporting Native American cultural survivance.

The global BLM protests called out racial violence in the US and local acts of systemic racism, historical power abuses and state brutality. In the UK and across Europe, criticism was focused on the countries' colonial legacy and the established silencing of colonial violence. On the 17th June 2020, in Plymouth UK, Sir Francis Drake emerged, shackled in the sunlight. After over 100 years cast in bronze as a pioneering naval captain, Drake now overlooked Plymouth Hoe dressed as though he was advocating for the BLM movement.

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[248] See Black Lives Matter, "6 Years Strong."

[249] Kirby, "'Black Lives Matter'."

[250] Jones and Stone, "Ghost, Angel, Martyr."

Figure 4. Image of the statue of Sir Francis Drake, Plymouth, 17th June 2020. Source: Green, "Chains Wrapped around Sir Francis."

Drake appears as though accepting condemnation for his crimes and supporting the movement to 'Decolonise History'. The changes to the statue were announced in an email from 'Sir Francis Drake' sent to *PlymouthLive*.[251] The email stated:

> Good morning, I thought you might like to know that Drake has been put in chains and joined the campaign to decolonise history.[252]

The shackling of Drake transformed a celebratory statue into a site of condemnation and poetically employed the tools of enslavement to refocus the subject of memorialisation from Drake's military career to his actions as a slave trader. This interruption to the landscape of Plymouth emphasised a central tension, a general amnesia of colonial history within a city marked by commemorative monuments to colonisation. Through this act, historical interpretation or commemoration was revealed to be a powerful tool for the preservation of racial discrimination and its renegotiation. From the comments sections of newspapers to public demonstrations, there was a marked growth in the popularity of calls to interpret history differently. On the 7th June, 1,000 local Plymothians came together in a BLM solidarity protest. Two of the crowd interviewed protesters for a documentary and spoke with one young man who called for a change to the school curriculum. The respondent stressed each word emphatically, arguing that children should be taught history in a way that makes them "culturally informed…no one is born racist but people need to know why they need to be anti-racist."[253] The use of anti-racist by the respondent as well as the word decolonise on Drake's sign, reveal the mainstreaming of terms that define racism as an embedded, structural problem that requires active dismantling. These changes placed

[251] Green, "Chains Wrapped around Sir Francis."

[252] Green.

[253] Summer and Waller, "Inside Plymouth's Black Lives Matter."

significant pressure on Mayflower commemorative event organisers. They were tasked with interpreting a colonial historical story to an audience increasingly critical of nostalgic or sanitised discourses and vocal about the continued negative impact of colonisation.

Two weeks before the shackling of Drake, Plymouth Council had made a statement of solidarity with the BLM movement and George Floyd's family and friends. They stated that these protests were a 'reminder of the need to keep up the fight against racism and discrimination everywhere.'[254] They reflected on the calls for racial justice:

> As an international city we have a proud history in Plymouth of welcoming people from all over the world. It is as important as ever that during the year of the Mayflower 400 commemorations that Plymouth, England, makes a clear statement against any form of discrimination or oppression and that we stand in solidarity with those who are being discriminated against in the US.[255]

It is striking that Plymouth Council spotlighted the Mayflower commemorative activities within this statement. This could be understood merely as a recognition that the Mayflower commemorations would bring a diverse, international community to the City. However, I also interpret this statement as an answer to calls by BLM protestors for organisations to publicly state how they will tackle racial inequality. Within this statement, Plymouth Council announced that they would be making changes to Plymouth's commemorative landscape, including the renaming of Sir John Hawkins Square to Jack Leslie Square, who was the only black professional football player in England when he played for Plymouth Argyle. The Council also announced the building of a memorial to victims of the slave trade.[256] In the context of this re-evaluation of their commemorative practice, the statement can be understood as repositioning the Mayflower commemoration as a platform to challenge racial discrimination. It is clear that a significant transformation had taken place from its initial intent as a local rejuvenation project.

Questions of how to commemorate had been privately grappled with by my informants, as they navigated local and national debates, conflicting advice, professional expectations and personal values. After the BLM protests commemorative event organisers felt significant pressure to publicly articulate their negotiations of how to commemorate. Charles, reflected on this pressure in our email exchange in August 2020. He suggested that the Mayflower commemorations were reinterpreted, to answer an increased focus on 'what

[254] Plymouth Council, "Plymouth Stands in Solidarity with Black Lives Matter."
[255] Plymouth Council.
[256] Plymouth Council.

we commemorate'. I had reached out to Charles for sign off on a quotation I included in Chapter One. He responded promptly that he was happy with the content but emphasised that, while these statements reflected how he had felt during our conversations in December, the BLM movement had since changed the 'context of commemoration'. Charles and Plymouth Council's statement emphasised that the 2020 Mayflower narrative was reinterpreted in light of national and local debates. Echoing Plymouth Council, Charles wrote a document to be shared with Mayflower 400's internal stakeholders. This document sought to establish the tone for all future public statements and press releases:

> The vision has always been to tell accurate and inclusive histories, not to hide or shy away from the colonial nature of this history. Focus of the working partnership has been with the history and members of the Wampanoag, who have so much previously been left out and whose omission or active side-lining led to the establishment of the Day of National Mourning.[257]
>
> In recent months, the context has changed: a movement towards inclusive, broad and honest commemoration has been accelerated and highly charged by the Black Lives Matter's protests and the involvement of statues and monuments in those protests and debates. M400 [Mayflower 400] set out to be progressive in its commemoration programme, but expectations have been further raised higher by recent events and a collective debate, with activism, on the portrayal of history and commemoration. The context of colonialism must be visible, clearly to the fore and not just 'included'.

Charles' statement engaged in a complex balancing of promising progressive change while positioning the Mayflower 400 programme as having employed this from the start. He presented the collaboration of Mayflower 400 with the Wampanoag Advisory Board as essential to the production of 'accurate and inclusive histories', echoing statements he and other members of the organisation made in earlier interviews. This statement was articulated to a public increasingly critical of colonial amnesia. Criticism of Mayflower 400 had echoed this, with claims that the organisers were sanitising the narrative. Within his statement, Charles emphasised a self-conscious shift from this colonial amnesia by revealing that the organisation would be forefronting the colonial context. He employed a linear development paradigm, an assumption that through time narratives will become more progressive and that Mayflower 400 made a change which the protests accelerated further. I believe this reflected a change in the pressures Charles himself experienced as an interpreter. As discussed, interpreters faced significant resistance to their challenges to the Mayflower dominant

[257] See, UAINE, "National Day of Mourning."

narrative, however, as public expectations changed, the ability to reinterpret this narrative was 'accelerated.'

In our August email exchange, Charles highlighted significant changes to the Mayflower 400 website following the BLM protests. As early as December, Charles had referred to the website as a flexible resource, which was updated regularly to reflect changing ideas of appropriate interpretation. After the BLM protests, the colonial context was more explicitly described and colonial ideological constructs such as the New World were mostly removed. In the first draft of this chapter, I had assumed that these changes occurred in reaction to the protests and perhaps with downward pressure from Plymouth Council. It was, however, made clear to me by an Indigenous informant that local Indigenous residents and Plymouth based art groups, had come together to drive these changes. I nearly missed this Indigenous advocacy, a mistake which taught me to more carefully investigate who was driving change and the nature of this work. As with the renaming of John Hawkins Square and the iconic toppling of Bristol's Edward Colston statue, communities had been campaigning for changes for years, yet the BLM movement appeared to provide the essential context.[258] This raises a significant question which I will explore in Part Two of this chapter - whose calls for change are listened to?

[258] Wall, "Bristol dumped its hated slave trader."

Chapter 3 Part II

"The Wampanoag's moment."
The complexity of Mayflower 2020 as a platform

Claims that the Mayflower anniversary offered a historical interpretation appropriate for 2020, emphasised its commemorative tone and asserted that this was a platform for the cultural survivance of Wampanoag and Native peoples more broadly. In this second part of Chapter Three, I will draw on the diverse views of my Indigenous informants to consider the limitations of Mayflower commemorations as a platform for cultural survivance, and the emotional toll of participation. Firstly, I will investigate how Indigenous advocates are marginalised and overlooked, drawing on a campaign for the removal of a Native American mascot. Secondly, I will consider how the dominant Pilgrim Mayflower narrative is preserved through the politicising of Indigenous historical narratives and the naturalisation of colonial representations. Thirdly, I will examine the Mashpee Wampanoag's use of the dominant Pilgrim Mayflower narrative, to explore the complex balance between rapidly mobilising support and risking the preservation of colonial misrepresentations. Finally, I will consider the limitations of this colonial historical story, even with its nationalistic discourse removed, as a platform for Native American Nations.

A lot of Indigenous activism has been neglected or overlooked

Felicia sat on her bed and waved her phone around to get a clearer signal. 3,000 miles away I was also in my bedroom, in my pyjamas, having just haphazardly pulled on a hoodie. We have been friends for ten years and I stayed with her family in Massachusetts during my fieldwork and my Plimoth Plantation internships. We were discussing her work with the A Better Braintree campaign, a community organisation made up of alumni from Braintree High School. Felicia explained that they had launched the campaign with the desire to use the knowledge they had gained from the BLM movement to drive change at the local level. They focused on encouraging the local community to demand the removal of the Braintree High School's sports team mascot, a Native American man's disembodied head with feathered headdress, nicknamed the Wamp. Felicia emphasised that being a "Wamp" or a member of "the Wamp Nation" is viewed with pride by many students and alumni, who put on war paint and feathered headdresses for school events. The affective relationship some students have with this mascot is illustrated by the school's sign, a gift from alumni.

Figure 5. Braintree High School Sign with Native American Mascot. Source: Bentley and Staff, "Thousands Sign Petition."

Felicia's university dissertation focused on the 'Wamp' mascot, challenging her school's assertion that this title honours local Chief Wompatuck.[259] She recounted that Wompatuck was Sachem of the Mattakeesett tribe of Massachusett Native Americans in 1660 and is colloquially credited by Braintree town as having given over land to the colonists. She argued that this narrative overlooked land transactions between the English colonists and Wompatuck forebearers, and erroneously suggested a just and consensual sale.[260] She emphasised the difficulty of finding this information, with local historical societies failing to research Indigenous history and sharing unsubstantiated claims. Felicia concluded that claims that the mascot honoured Wompatuck relied on a silencing of contemporary Indigenous communities as well as a series of historical inaccuracies. She employed historical interpretation to challenge misrepresentations, emphasising that Wompatuck faced the violence of large scale European colonisation, the impact of virgin soil epidemics and forced Christianisation.[261] On our call, Felicia drew on her research and asserted that the choice of Native Americans as sports team mascots reflects an offensive categorisation of Native people as warlike. Sagamore of the Massachusett Nation, Faries Gray stated in July 2020:

> We don't feel like we are being honoured by any mascots. We feel like a trophy. We conquered you and this is our trophy. It's insane we have to deal with it.[262]

[259] McDevitt, "Home of the Wamps."
[260] McDevitt, 6.
[261] McDevitt, 3.
[262] Bentley and Staff, "Thousands Sign Petition."

Felicia spoke with exasperation about how such statements by the Massachusett Nation have been silenced "again and again." She and I had spoken during the early planning stages for the A Better Braintree campaign and she had predicted it would take years to achieve a change to the mascot. She perhaps reflected on the difficulties the Massachusett Nation had experienced in even being heard. However, within three months of starting the campaign, the School Committee had convened a vote and decided to remove all Native American imagery from Braintree Public Schools. Why did the school pay greater heed to the alumni community over Indigenous activists? Within this section, I will consider three contributing factors; the context of the 2020 BLM protests, the pervasive belief that Native Americans no longer exist, and finally, how Indigenous activists are excluded by racist abuse and the emotional toll of challenging their misrepresentation.

The 2020 BLM protests inspired Felicia and her friends to become activists and initiated a shift across Turtle Island to recognise that racial justice is intersectional. A Better Braintree's Instagram page used the term BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and People of Colour) and described the BLM moment as one that encompassed all those who have been impacted and erased by imperialism.[263] I suggest the growing popularity of this acronym demonstrates an increasing awareness of the erasure of Indigenous communities even within movements for racial equality. Felicia suggested that the BLM protests had provoked greater public recognition of anti-Indigenous racism:

> People didn't equate anti-Indigenous rhetoric as racist but now they do. That is a *huge shift*, I do see that now but I think at high school I would have seen it as a white / black narrative. Anti-Indigenous rhetoric is now seen as inherently racist.

Felicia was empathetic to those currently learning about Indigenous experiences of racism, emphasising that her own lack of education about Native American history at school led her to overlook racism towards these communities. A wave of Native mascot removals and name changes across Turtle Island reflected this change in understanding, with July 2020 marked by the long campaigned for name change of the 'Washington Redskins'.[264] A Better Braintree joined a number of local groups in challenging their school's mascot, including nearby Tewksbury High School which is referred to as home of 'The Redmen'.[265] Felicia recounted that the Governor of the nearby state of Maine banned the use of Native mascots by all public educational establishments in 2019, and she hoped Massachusetts would do the

[263] A Better Braintree, "Why Now."

[264] Rathborn, "Washington Redskins Confirm New Name."

[265] Russom, "Tewksbury High School Alum."

same.[266] While the ripple of Mascot changes mark a "*huge shift*", I believe it would be overly optimistic to assert that anti-Indigenous rhetoric is now conceived of as racist. Felicia emphasised that while Braintree High School agreed to remove the mascot, they refused to even arrange a time to discuss changing the name. Another Massachusetts High School, North Quincy, campaigned for the removal of their Native mascot, named Yakoo with a Mohawk haircut and, in some editions, bright red skin.[267] In response to the campaign, the school has merely re-dressed their mascot as a revolutionary war soldier and has kept their sports team's name as the 'Red Raiders'.[268] Felicia reflected sadly that the Braintree High School mascot change, "had not happened in the way they had hoped." The decision was made within the school rather than with the inclusion of local people, a collaboration which she believed would have challenged anti-Indigenous racism more broadly. Felicia was concerned that certain community members felt cheated, having not been given the information to fully understand why this change needed to be made.

That Indigenous activists are overlooked in favour of white campaigners such as Felicia, also reflects a broader context of Indigenous erasure. Felicia suggested that many assume that the Indigenous communities these mascots might harm no longer exist. As discussed in Chapter Two, there is a damaging interplay of the violent vanishing of Native people, including their forced movement onto reservations, with a contemporary erasure of Indigenous people from the school curriculum and colloquial history. Mascots and even names such as 'Redskins' are removed from the context of colonial violence and repackaged in well-known symbols which hold strong, affective meaning for local people. Felicia explained:

> The tribe has spoken out year after year and is always silenced. In this wave of the BLM movement, there was a call to action for allies, to think about how they can help and use their voice and to see that silence is violence. They are going to listen more to us than the tribe and it shouldn't be that way. Should be as simple as the tribe said no and they don't want that. A very frustrating point, but the [High School] committee are predominately white and middle aged and *they are going to listen to a white resident more*. The organising committee of A Better Braintree are nearly all women and half are white and half people of colour. They are still more open to this group of predominantly white residents than they are to the tribe. A lot of Indigenous activism has been neglected or overlooked. There is more of a grasp on black history. There aren't a lot of Native students, you are

[266] Maine House of Representatives, *An Act To Ban Native Mascots*.

[267] Lu, "Change the Yakoo Mascot at NQHS."

[268] The Boston Globe, "Mayor Unveils Revised Mascot."

> not learning about them and not seeing them and students don't grasp that they are here and they exist. They've been overlooked.

Felicia spoke with conflicted excitement, energised by the rapid progress A Better Braintree was making but distressed that this was possible due to her privilege within a racially stratified society. Felicia explained that from the BLM movement she had learnt that silence is a form of violence. She presented two forms of silence, the silence of non-Native people who had not stood up as allies when Indigenous advocates spoke out, and the active silencing of Indigenous advocates. Felicia emphasised that even within movements for racial equality, Native Americans have been overlooked. That she was accustomed to seeing Native American exclusion within her community was perhaps most apparent in her exasperated prediction of, "*they are going to listen to a white resident more*". Felicia explained that 0.1% of the population of the Braintree area is Native American, alongside limited education about Native peoples in local schools, these communities are assumed to have vanished. I suggest that these mascots themselves render Indigenous people invisible, by presenting an image of the Native person far detached from reality, and by preserving racist categorisations that are actively used to marginalise them.

The threat of racist abuse and the emotional toll of negotiating misrepresentation can silence Indigenous activists. In the UK we are not distanced from this, the Exeter Rugby team is named the Chiefs and their mascot is a bloated faced Native man with a tomahawk and headdress. As discussed in Chapter Two, this stereotyping was challenged by informant Stephanie, in response to which she received numerous threatening messages. While the Exeter team's 'Big Chief' mascot was announced to be retired in 2020, the Club's Board chose to keep the name and logo, taking the view that the 'Chief's logo was in fact highly respectful' despite the statements of Indigenous activists.[269] Felicia described how A Better Braintree had to be structured so that white students were visible and public facing:

> Our committee members of colour, in the most part, wished to take on less public facing roles. If the people of colour were front facing the backlash would be an attack on their own identity. White people became the barrier at the front, but that looks bad. I have a Native friend who was involved but didn't feel comfortable being super visible and so became a hidden member. Some of the backlash was ruthless. Things that adults said were horrifying and directed at young kids. We had separate people to deal with the comments, as for the alumni of colour it was very traumatising for them to see these comments from Braintree adults. That was a change to make it safer for BIPOC students to participate. How do you alleviate the burden? How do you help?

[269] Ostlere, "Exeter Chiefs Refuse to Change."

The decision of some Indigenous and Person of Colour members of A Better Braintree, emphasises the psychological toll of engaging in historical interpretation work when your own history and identity is being misrepresented. In this way, while A Better Braintree proved to be an effective platform in bringing about the removal of the mascot, it was a challenging platform for Indigenous students to actively engage with.

The vicious reactions of some local community members emphasises that historical interpretation work can challenge individuals' strong, affective relationships with heritage. Felicia explained that this has been a fraught personal journey for her, "I've worn this mascot, I've worn a headdress for sports games, it had a psychological toll, it screws your understanding of other people." Numerous studies have demonstrated that Native mascots have a significant negative impact on the confidence and performance of both Native and, as Felicia reveals, non-Native youth.[270] I have myself, worn with pride a t-shirt with the Braintree High School mascot and yelled in support of the Wamps at their Thanksgiving American Football game. Despite working with Native people from the local area, in 2016, I barely questioned the headdresses I saw around me, a normalised part of the local school and national sports landscape. Felicia, echoing the words of Mayflower 400 manager Neil and Roosevelt scholar Tom, emphasised the importance of being self-aware of your own complicitly in the silencing of Indigenous narratives and celebrating of colonial stories. These experiences of my informants highlighted that interpretive work involved a deeply personal and potentially fraught journey. Felicia argued that we should be wary that:

> Some persons of colour feel unsafe watching this. They see people who were passive, now speaking out about it. A close friend said to me that, 'we had to go through the first wave of BLM with nobody understanding the conflict and racial justice.' She said 'you may have learned more, great. Be mindful and be in check.' It was hard to hear this criticism from a close friend. It's about remembering this all but not letting it be paralysing.

Felicia shared pain and shame at recognising that she had not always been an ally in the way she is now. This exchange spoke to the closeness of our relationship and to her fervent belief that these changes should involve frank, insightful conversations that consider the emotions of both those you are seeking to support, and challenge. She emphasised that this fight to educate the community on appropriate representation involved employing empathy and being self-reflective. This method of historical interpretation bore strikingly similarities to Neil and Jo's calls for open minded and self-critical practice.

[270] See Harjo, "Just Good Sports."

They want us to sing, dance and be happy

In the Wampanoag Homesite, public historians and descendants of the Shinnecock Nation, Dylan and Andrew continued to bounce statements between themselves, with an ease you would expect from siblings. Dylan explained that they have been asked repeatedly to take part in the Mayflower commemorations. Andrew, as though rephrasing his brother's statement said, "they want us to sing, dance and be happy". Dylan continued the thought, "they don't want us to talk about infectious diseases," he paused for greater impact, "it doesn't play well." Andrew laughed frustratedly and poked the fire, sending a wave of smoke through the nushwetu. Dylan and Andrew challenged the sincerity of claims for Indigenous inclusion in the Mayflower commemorations, arguing that organisers just wanted a happy Indigenous person to support a sanitised Mayflower narrative. This reveals a further dynamic to the exclusion of Indigenous advocates, one which was considered in the introduction of this thesis, in the attempted censuring of Wamsutta's speech.[271] Indigenous inclusion does not ensure a platform to speak freely, as Angela Sherlock argued in her letter to the *Guardian*, acknowledgment can involve a process of editing.[272] I did not discover who had attempted to recruit Dylan and Andrew to the Mayflower commemorations, it was clear this was an offer neither of them wanted to take. Māori activist, Ngata similarly interpreted offers to include Māori in the Cook commemorations. She described it as a desire to have a 'brown endorsement' which allowed the coloniser to centre their own story and preserve a softened version of the history.[273] It is important that we consider that the Mayflower commemorations as a platform might not be chosen or even accessible due to the expectations placed on the Indigenous interpreter.

Manager of Plimoth Plantation Wampanoag Homesite, Darius, is experienced at negotiating offers to take up such platforms. We spoke over Zoom, during lockdown, he kept his camera off and I could hear him moving around his house. Darius has fought hard to ensure that Native interpreters can speak freely on the Homesite, and he seemed to consider this essential to the success of any platform. Discussing the Mayflower 2020 commemorations, he asserted, "it's a platform no matter how you look at it, as long as it is put out for education." An educational narrative was defined by Darius as one that included the freely shared history of Native people. Darius explained that I would hear a range of views on the validity of the commemorations as a platform. He spoke with a tone that suggested he considered these to be valid and equally important. He also reflected on a

[271] See Introduction, 8-9.

[272] Sherlock, "Mayflower 400 Is Ignoring Slavery."

[273] Ngata, *KIA MAU Resisting Colonial Fictions*, 44.

recent request that he act as an interpreter in Boston for events marking the return of the restored replica Mayflower II. He stressed to Plimoth Plantation museum management that if they wanted Indigenous interpreters to work in Boston they must be given the freedom to speak openly:

> They wanted our perspective up there too you know. Lots of people want to go up there and a lot of people didn't. I always, I told the people at the Museum if we go up there if anybody goes up there, then you give them the option if they want to do it or not. If we do go up there, we are there for a purpose, without cuts, we are not there *dancing and singing,* you know that's not what we are all about. We're going to go up there to have a platform through which we're going to talk about the history. The history that happened.

Echoing Andrew, Darius rejected an expectation that Native American interpreters should sing and dance, an image which recalls a long European history of exhibiting Indigenous people.[274] It is clear that this historical legacy has created expectations that Indigenous informants continue to navigate and challenge. Dehumanised as the savage warrior or as part of the natural landscape, Indigenous peoples were displayed as curiosities for the white colonial gaze.[275] Dylan and Andrew related with irritation and distress their experiences of being touched and having visitors try to pull up their breechcloths, as though they were "animals in a zoo." This legacy is compounded with a persistant colonial narative of Native Americans as having welcomed colonisation. My informant, Stephanie reflected that Indigenous people are expected to behave as the passive, "helpful Indian", which can result in the marginalisation and erasure of Native people who advocate for change or speak out about the brutal violence of colonialism.

Despite Darius' active involvement in the commemorative events, he argued that it was crucial that interpreters were given the choice to not participate. Within our exchange he empathetically highlighted two further reasons why Indigenous informants might refuse to take up such platforms. Firstly, he reflected on visitors' expectations that the Indigenous interpreter represents all Native people. Secondly, he discussed the challenging "responsibility" of interpreting traumatic historical events with lasting impact on Indigenous

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[274] One example of the displaying of Native people occurred in 1577, Martin Frobisher captured an Inuit man, woman and child on Baffin Island and brought them to England where they would die within a month. By the nineteenth century this practice was explicitly focused on demonstrating the racial other as inferior and Native people were displayed in world exhibitions and human zoos. See, Mackay and Stirupp, *Tribal Fantasies Native Americans*, 13; Purtschert, "The Human Zoo"; Putnam, "'Please Don't Feed the Natives'."

[275] See Purtschert, "The Human Zoo."

communities. These expectations even governed Darius' hiring practices, as he recruited Native people with "*heavy shoulders*". He explained:

> We are one of the oldest programmes in the United States. How guests gonna come into the Homesite and how they gonna leave is up to us, and how they gonna feel about Native people in general. They are not going to say just the Wampanoag people are jerks, they are going to say that all Native Americans are cold and awful. I don't tell interpreters to shy away from stuff, I mean if I told the interpreters they couldn't talk about this or talk about that – if that was the case I probably wouldn't be working there cause I know the history, I know the truth, the good and bad, and it's our responsibility to put that out there in a way that the guests can understand it and respect it. That's important. That's *heavy shoulders* because not everybody can do that, not everybody can handle those issues and verbally talk about those issues without getting upset, cause it's real for us today. It's a real thing that's happened to our people, it's still going, still going on today in the politics and such.

Darius revealed that as a historical interpreter he is perceived, in the eyes of the visitor, as an ambassador for Native people. He revealed that such expectations place enormous pressure on Indigenous interpreters to not only take on the difficult task of interpreting traumatic historical events but to do so in a cheery and welcoming manner. Darius argued that the psychological toll of challenging misrepresentations and reclaiming Indigenous history from erasure, makes this role accessible only to those with "*heavy shoulders*". I find this image striking as it makes visible the weight of this work, as we imagine this psychological resilience as a form of physical strength. Darius has delivered speeches at a range of conferences describing the importance of this quality.

That 'heavy shoulders' speaks to the experience of other Indigenous interpreters was reflected by Linda, member of the Aquinnah Wampanoag Nation and the Wampanoag Advisory Board. I spoke to Linda over Zoom and we both sat comfortably in our front rooms. Linda lives on the Mashpee Wampanoag reservation, which only a week before our call had been threatened by US government attempts to remove the land from trust. This will be discussed later in this chapter, though it is significant to note that the ruling formed part of the context of racism and marginalisation within which our conversation took place. Linda drew on her extensive experience as a public historian, reflecting on the complex challenge of engaging with the audience and accurately and appropriately interpreting the Mayflower narrative:

> You can just line the facts up very neatly but unless you have the backstory, and you have the emotion in there you are only getting part of the story. It's not a

> complete story. I don't know, but I just think after 400 years people should just have to buckle up and realise that there is more to this story, more than was written on the page. You know we've had to live it for 400 years – how about that!

Although Linda spoke with more overt frustration than Darius, I interpret her statement as resonating with his. Both argued that the Mayflower narrative is a powerfully emotive story and that this reality should be shared. Linda, however, appeared to expand Darius' notion of "*heavy shoulders*", to suggest that non-Native people should also take on the weight of this work. All my Indigenous informants have emphasised that the trauma of this history affects their contemporary experience, and in addition, Linda argues that they feel alone in carrying the heavy burden of this historical narrative. Ingrid Huygens, in her study of Treaty education in Aotearoa, argues that to exclude emotion is to be complicit in a colonial social order which supports a limited emotional repertoire of indifference in order to defend colonial privilege.[276] She reflects on how empathy and emotion have been considered 'dangerous in achieving a balanced understanding of past in the present.'[277] Huygens argues, that emotion opens a 'new learning', supporting Linda's statement that to exclude emotion is to limit the historical narrative.[278] Ethnohistorians, Harkin and Restall, both affirmed this claim, and positioned the inclusion of emotions as essential to the ethics of historical interpretation.[279] A policing of certain emotional expressions is described as limiting Mayflower historical interpretations. Not expressed, these emotions are held as a weight on the "*heavy shoulders*" of Indigenous interpreters.

"*Heavy shoulders*" is in fact just one of many requirements for Indigenous interpreters who wish to take up a platform such as the Mayflower commemorations. The Plimoth Plantation museum expects Indigenous informants to have an extensive understanding of Wampanoag and colonial history and demonstrate skills in traditional crafts, such as the making of mishoons, cooking pots and wampum belts. Similar expectations were applied as Mayflower 400 and Plymouth 400 looked for Indigenous advisors. Therefore, it is not surprising that the Wampanoag Advisory Board was made up of women who had work at Plimoth Plantation museum. I believe it is essential to recognise that the expectations placed on the interpreter and the emotional challenge of this interpretation work, can render platforms such as the Mayflower commemorations inaccessible.

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[276]Laurajane Smith, Wetherell and Campbell, *Emotion, Affective Practices*, 265-281.

[277]Laurajane Smith, Wetherell and Campbell, 265.

[278]Laurajane Smith, Wetherell and Campbell, 279.

[279] Harkin, "Toward an Ethnohistory of Emotions"; Restall, "Presidential Address.'"

Throughout my research, my informants reflected the significant challenge of including Indigenous historical experience in the Mayflower 2020 narrative. Moving away from the dominant Mayflower narrative was considered high risk, even by non-Indigenous interpreters, as they faced accusations of advocating or revising history. Their experiences of resistance, however, had a visibly different impact to those of my Indigenous informants. As Curator and Content Producer for Mayflower 400, Jo described her efforts to challenge the dominant Mayflower narrative as a series of '*battles*'. She shared her surprise at the difficulty of her interpretive task:

> It is no secret that I have had my *battles* in the last three years in being viewed as a real *radical*, which makes me laugh quite a lot… I feel that the Wampanoag Advisory Board have given me a degree of trust that I want to honour personally and professionally. I feel that 2020 gives the opportunity to reassess this story and what I didn't want to do, and what I didn't feel was right to do was to perpetuate a traditional narrative that is flawed. It is flawed in a number of sources and it's flawed in its retelling and reinterpretation over the years. I felt that that would do a disservice to everybody really. But because that Separatist story is so powerful, it has 400 years of *weight*! At times I felt [pauses] oh! It's not true to say I have been alone in this because clearly that is not true but at times I have thought, wow the *weight* of this story is massive.

By refusing to conform to the social rules of nonnarration, Jo is viewed as a "*radical*". Jo articulated a complex matrix of responsibilities, including those to the public and to her Indigenous colleagues. She showed her interpretive work to be morally charged, framed as a personal responsibility. She seemed about to say that she had felt alone in this challenge, though she stopped, perhaps to avoid implying that her team were not supportive. I believe that her experience speaks to the personal nature of interpretive practice. It is striking that Jo described the dominant story as the 'Separatist story'. I have used, 'dominant Pilgrim narrative' in this thesis to point to a central misrepresentation in the dominant narrative, a reframing of the English colonists as on a religious mission to a God-given land. Jo's choice of Separatist suggests another central flaw of the dominant telling, the almost complete focus on the colonists over the lifeways and experiences of the North Eastern Woodlands Native Nations. Described in this manner, a central challenge of Jo's work appears to be the inclusion of Native history. Depicted as though it were a physical barrier, Jo's description of the "*weight*" of this dominant Mayflower narrative resonated with Darius' "*heavy shoulders*". Jo appeared fatigued by the demands of the job, yet her animated exchange and laughter at accusations of being a "*radical*" spoke to a very different experience of resistance than that faced by my Indigenous informants. Dylan and Andrew shared criticism of their efforts to challenge the dominant narrative with laughter, however, this humour was marked with exhaustion and anger. I believe it is clear that Indigenous interpreters hold a heavier

burden in this historical interpretation work, as they challenge misrepresentations and dehumanising stereotypes of their own culture and identity.

Too much of history today is advocacy

Accusations of revising history or of advocating, politicised Native American narratives and supported their exclusion. I experienced this during a conversations with a non-Native museum practitioner with whom I shared my excitement for an upcoming trip to the Mashantucket Pequot Museum and Research Centre.[280] My informant was quiet for a moment and then exclaimed with frustration, "too much of history today is advocacy." "Advocacy" was used to suggest that the historical narrative was being altered or exaggerated to achieve a particular end. I was struck by the statement and what it revealed about the complex mechanisms by which Native and even colonial history is silenced. In my early March 2020 interview with Sam, a member of US Plymouth 400, I asked if she felt talking about Native Americans had become more politicised? She reflected,

> everything is very politicised right now. It is not taken from the perspective that this happened historically and that there have been struggles all along. The comments tend to be more political. Why aren't you telling the *Pilgrim* story? We are - there is a perception that we are only talking about *the Native story* which is not even close to true. But that's how they perceive it because they haven't seen the two stories told side by side before.

Though Sam argued that it is not only Native American narratives that have been politicised, she reflected that the inclusion of Native history was the most frequent topic of criticism that Plymouth 400 had received over social media. Sam suggested that the politicising of historical interpretation comes from an incorrect assumption that struggles to include Native voices are a contemporary phenomenon, suggesting a historical silencing of Indigenous activism. Sam asserted that resistance to a non-dominant Mayflower narrative is not concerned with debates over historical truth, but over what narrative should receive focus. I suggest that the concerns that sharing "*the Native story*" necessitates a silencing of the colonist's narrative is not surprising, given that historically a single narrative has aggressively dominated. Even within this short statement, Sam seemed to demonstrate a managing of this criticism, again we see the pervasive term "*Pilgrim*" and are reassured that

[280] Owned and operated by the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation, the Museum and Research Centre works to accurately portray tribal culture, history and challenge dehumanising and vanishing narratives. See, Erikson, "The Mashantucket Pequot Museum"; Anthes, "Visualizing the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation"; Kasper and Handsman, "Survivance Stories, Co-Creation." Unfortunately, due to Covid-19, I was not able to visit.

the dominant narrative will not be rewritten, merely diversified. By referring to the criticism Plymouth 400 received over social media, Sam demonstrated that the organisation experienced pressure to exclude Native American historical experience from their Mayflower interpretation.

As a key member of the Wampanoag Advisory Board, Linda had been collaborating with Plymouth 400 and Mayflower 400 to produce a representative Mayflower narrative that accurately conveyed Indigenous historical experience. In our interview, Linda spoke of the difficulties of educating people on Native American history:

> So there is a lot of misunderstanding and I think when you try to *go against that narrative*, or to *correct* it, to widen it, or *expand* it to include Native history – you know we have been accused of revising history and to me it's not revising – you're not revising something if you're adding in what's left out.

Linda's statement echoes the experiences of Plymouth 400. She managed the criticism and revealed its character, moving from '*go against the narrative'* to the academic intent, '*correct*' and finally the gentler idea of '*expand*.' These criticisms suggest that Indigenous narratives are considered outside of the rigour of academia, indeed Linda explained,

> I have even been told that when a scholar, meaning a white person who studied history, speaks, they are speaking from this scholarly point of view, from having done all this research and having read all these resources and come to some conclusion. However, when I speak because I am Wampanoag then that is only oral tradition. Of course the first thing that sprang to my mind was what if I read all the same sources that the white scholar did. So there is just some ridiculous thinking out there.

This anecdote reveals that the politicising and marginalisation of Indigenous historical narratives can also involve an exclusion of Native people themselves. Despite her renowned expertise, Linda is considered incapable of being a scholar and oral tradition is presented as lacking academic credibility. Māori researcher Penehira, defines the privileging of academic literature and empirical evidence over oral accounts as a characteristic quality of 'colonising research'.[281] Leonie Pihama describes the extensive work to develop an Indigenous research framework of Kaupapa Māori as primarily focused on resisting 'dominant constructs of what counts as knowledge'.[282] Pihama, argues that Western research methodologies and academics have been wrongly considered 'neutral', impartial and objective, resulting in the

[281] See Hutchings and Lee-Morgan, *Decolonisation in Aotearoa,* ch 9.

[282] See Hutchings and Lee-Morgan, ch 8.

voyeuristic theorising of Indigenous communities through frameworks that bear no resemblance to them.[283] Within the same compiled work, Jenny Lee-Morgan describes how efforts to produce Indigenous frameworks, or in her case, a space for Māori students, are rejected as political and inappropriate for the academic space.[284] This politicising of Indigenous historical narrative and the active exclusion of Indigenous researchers, presents a significant challenge even for non-Native informants looking to interpret a representative Mayflower narrative.

That the commemorations might affirm the dominant Pilgrim Mayflower narrative, was considered by Linda. That 2020 Mayflower interpretations might, in fact, re-colonise Indigenous people was confirmed by her as "absolutely a worry". She argued that even the narrative being shared by Plymouth 400, with whom she worked most closely, overly focused on the colonists. Linda spoke passionately, with frustration that attention was being given to those that died on the Mayflower and not to the fact that two thirds of the Wampanoag were killed by the European plagues of 1616-1618. Linda explained:

> The Wampanoag people lost 50-70,000 people and you are going to sit up here and talk about 52. I have a little bit of a problem with that. If so many Wampanoag people had not died in the plague of 1616-18, there would not have been the room for the English people to come in. This was a fully peopled place, and history would have been quite different had that not been the case. The English did all this stuff and then wrote it down like Miles Standish bragging about killing Indians. I mean seriously dude! It's not a good thing from where I am standing.

Linda laughed as she talked about Miles Standish, applying humour to disrupt some of the emotional toll of the historical story, to process her frustration, and to draw me in to the ridiculousness of the naturalisation of a sanitised Mayflower narrative. Linda has used historical interpretation as a tool to challenge marginalisation and is critical of those who misuse this methodology. She described going through published works on Native Americans and marking misrepresentations with a red pen. 'Re-colonize' was a term Linda had used in a scathing published review of Philbrick's *Mayflower*, which she accused of spreading 'misinformation without considering the false and degrading impression it perpetuates regarding Native people's characters, cultures, and feelings'.[285] Linda emphasised that historical interpretations carry a significant risk of harmfully impacting cultural survivance.

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[283] See Hutchings and Lee-Morgan, *Decolonisation in Aotearoa,* ch 5.

[284] Hutchings and Lee-Morgan.

[285] Coombs, "Mayflower: A Story of Courage."

The very tribe that welcomed the Pilgrims

On Friday, 27th March 2020, Cedric Cromwell, Chairman of the Mashpee Wampanoag Nation, received a phone call from the Secretary of the Interior. Cromwell expected the call to focus on the distribution of relief resources, with the US then predicted as the next 'epicentre of the global pandemic'.[286] Cromwell was instead informed that the Mashpee Wampanoag's 321 acre reservation was being taken out of trust. This attack on their sovereignty necessitated the rapid mobilisation of public support. Within hours, a petition was established by the Wôpanâak Language Reclamation project.[287] I was surprised by the petition's appeal to the imagery of the dominant Mayflower narrative:

> Our Land is Sacred #standwithmashpee. The Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe, the very tribe that welcomed the Pilgrims in the 1600s, is at risk of losing what is left of their homelands due to a determination made by the Bureau of Indian Affairs.[288]

The Mashpee Wampanoag drew on images that evoked pathos and resonated with a large community of Americans. They mobilised the dominant Mayflower narrative and stressed their Nation's role at the centre of it to rapidly gain public attention and support. There is a clear contrast in the Mayflower narrative mobilised in this petition and the interpretation fought for by my informants. These historical interpretations were, of course, mobilised with drastically different intent. Therefore, I do not wish to suggest that my informants were critiquing the Mashpee Wampanoag's use of the Mayflower narrative in this incident. However, my informants' explanations of the harm of misrepresentation highlight the complexity of the Mashpee Wampanoag's decision to appeal to this dominant narrative.

The Mashpee Wampanoag received Federal recognition in 2007 and in 2015, under President Obama, the Mashpee Wampanoag's 321 acre reservation was officially held in trust.[289] Reservations held in trust are afforded special legal status, enabling self-determination over tax, development and the management of land. This gave the community tribal sovereignty and enabled them to establish a natural resources agency, a police service, an affordable housing project and found the Wôpanâak Language Reclamation Project and Immersion School. This project is reviving the Nation's language after 150 years of dormancy. The project's founder Jessie 'lil' Baird describes this as,

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[286] Taylor, "Trump Administration Revokes Reservation"; Howard, "US Has Potential to Be next Epicenter."

[287] Baird, "Wôpanâak Language Reclamation Project."

[288] Wôpanâak Language Reclamation Project, "Stand With the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe."

[289] Taylor, "Trump Administration Revokes Reservation"

> one of the means of repairing the broken circle of cultural loss and pain. To be able to understand and speak our language means to see the world as our families did for centuries.[290]

The Mashpee Wampanoag had also begun to develop a $1 billion casino at Taunton. Casinos can offer Indigenous communities the opportunity for economic independence without state or federal oversight. The Mashantucket Pequot Nation's Rainmaker Casino, in nearby Connecticut, has made them one of the richest Native American Nations and paid for their Museum and Research Centre.[291] Having land in trust therefore supported the Mashpee Wampanoag to make significant steps towards their cultural survivance. However, a small local, non-Native community battled against the development of the casino. They challenged the Department of the Interior's decision to take the land into trust, by questioning the very authenticity of the Mashpee Wampanoag's status as 'Indians'.[292] The Department of Interior repealed their previous decision, now agreeing that the Mashpee Wampanoag did not qualify as Native American under the 1934 Indian Reorganization Act.[293] This Act states that to be Indian you must have resided within the boundaries of an Indian reservation in 1934.[294] The Mashpee Wampanoag took their case to the national courts in an attempt to overhaul the decision. Lawyers for the tribe emphatically stressed the ridiculousness of this ruling by engaging in an act of historical interpretation:

> Appellant [the Mashpee Wampanoag] is part of the Indian tribe that met with the Pilgrims at the first Thanksgiving and thereafter suffered hundreds of years of persecution and land theft. It has maintained its tribal identity, community, and culture…A conclusion that Appellant is not 'Indian' is too *absurd* and *darkly ironic* even for Franz Kafka and antithetical to the IRA's [Indian Reorganization Act's] ambitious mission. [295] Such a ruling would place yet another black mark in the long ledger of the United States' history of failing to treat this Indian Tribe fairly and honourably.'[296]

By appealing to the Mayflower narrative in its capacity as a well-known US foundation story, this statement powerfully reminded the court of the Mashpee Wampanoag's long

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[290] Baird, "Wôpanâak Language Reclamation Project."

[291] Anthes,"Visualizing the Mashantucket Pequot," 206.

[292] MashpeeTV, "Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe Land."

[293] Davis, "Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe Continues Fight."

[294] MashpeeTV, "Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe Land."

[295] The Act, signed June 18th 1934, aims to reverse the cultural assimilation of Indigenous North American Nations.

[296] Mashpee Wampnaoag Indian Tribe, *Reply Brief of Defendant-Appellant*, 2.

history and connection with the land. This statement does, however, explicitly challenge the relationship-building sentiment of the dominant Pilgrim Mayflower narrative. The lawyers held the federal government to account by stressing the dark irony of challenging the Indian status of a community persecuted, marginalised and killed in the US government's quest to remove Native Americans from Turtle Island.

'The Breakdown,' a programme on MashpeeTV, most explicitly evoked the image of the helpful Wampanoag to whom the US owes its foundation.[297] MashpeeTV offers community focused programming, and positions itself as a platform for important local issues. An episode in February 2020, focused on the removal of land from trust. The presenter included Jean Leon Gerome Ferris' famous painting of *The First Thanksgiving* and stated,

> there is not one Native American tribe that is a threat to the American people. Not one. Especially the very one that greeted the pilgrims in 1621 and gave them a treaty that gave this country 40 years of peace to start the foundations of the United States that we know today.[298]

Figure. 6. *The First Thanksgiving* at Plymouth, 1621 (circa 1912-1915), Jean Leon Gerome Ferris. Source: Jowit and Carey, "The Savagery and Civility of the Thanksgiving Feast."

I recognised this painting as one I had used in a presentation of my research to Durham University Postgraduates. I was shocked to see it used on *MashpeeTV*. I had interpreted this painting as archetypal of the romanticised Pilgrim Mayflower narrative, with a problematic

[297] MashpeeTV, "Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe Land."
[298] MashpeeTV.

and overt ideological message. Ferris was popularly known as a painter historian and this painting joined a movement in the early twentieth century to reimagine the Thanksgiving holiday, not as a popular New England harvest meal but as a celebration of a historical event. In England, in the eighteenth century, history painting began to focus on modern subjects and played a central role in depicting the growing Empire. [299] Though Ferris painted this image well after the peak of the history painting movement, it echoes the grand nation-building tradition and features the 'timeless fashion' that was characteristic of this style in the earlier seventeenth century.[300] He depicts the colonists in clothing from a mismatch of eras and the Wampanoag in the feathered headdresses of the Plains Indians. Restall explains that feathers were considered a shorthand for Native identity by the nineteenth century, having previously been applied to describe the Middle Eastern or the oriental other.[301] The painting centres on a female colonist stooping to offer the Wampanoag men food from her bountiful English harvest. This image feminises colonisation, while the weapons of the colonists assert the military superiority of the English. Historian, Bramen argues that Ferris' Thanksgiving painting inverts the historical power dynamics to produce a 'national version of American niceness'.[302] As discussed in Chapter Two, my informant Stephanie asserted that such inaccurate representations are "a violence towards the reality of the situation". By 1621, when this meal took place, half of the colonists had died of starvation or disease.[303] The colonists were entirely reliant on the knowledge, produce and protection of the Wampanoag.[304] Ferris' depiction of 'The First Thanksgiving' could therefore well suit the Mashpee Wampanoag lawyers' accusation of being '*absurd*' and '*darkly ironic'*.[305]

During the pandemic, I supported a teacher at a Portuguese international school in designing an online lesson on Indigenous Peoples. She was concerned that her students were being taught a positive and nostalgic history of colonists such as Columbus. She wished to encourage them to consider the impact of colonisation on Native people, and so I recommended they analyse Ferris' Thanksgiving painting. The image caused confusion among the class of 9-10 year olds who were most concerned by the Wampanoag's position on the floor. The children were asked what they felt the painting might be saying and several of them explained that the image showed the English being kind to the Indigenous people but that they felt this might be a trap. They suggested that the English 'want something from the

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[299] TATE, "Art Term History Painting."

[300] TATE.

[301] Restall, "Presidential Address,'" 7.

[302] Bramen, *American Niceness: A Cultural History*, 1.

[303] Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation 1620-1647*.

[304] Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, 75-97.

[305] Mashpee Wampnaoag Indian Tribe, *Reply Brief of Defendant-Appellant*, 2.

Natives' or 'want to take control of the Indigenous people'.[306] The students struggled to reconcile the colonist's depicted kindness with their own knowledge of Indigenous treatment. For an audience whose knowledge of North Eastern Woodlands Native Americans might be limited to the dominant Pilgrim Mayflower narrative, I suggest this painting reaffirms colonial misrepresentations.

By appealing to romantic images of Thanksgiving, should the Mashpee Wampanoag be considered as complicit in their misrepresentation? Anthes' ethnographic study suggests otherwise. Anthes examines the employment of pan-Indian stereotypes, such as kindly prehistoric or warrior figures, by the Mashantucket Pequot.[307] He argues that these images can be used to assert historical continuity and land based identity which is central to nation-building. The Mashpee Wampanoag's self-portrayal as the 'tribe that welcomed the Pilgrims' similarly grounds them in a well-established historical and geographically specific narrative.[308] This is by no means a uniquely Indigenous practice, Macdonald reflects that historical continuity is 'an integral part of 'having an identity,'' and is carefully constructed and shared.[309] The federal recognition of a tribal community, which is a recognition of their status as Native Americans and their government-to-government relationship with the United States, is contingent on a continuous provable Indigenous history and historical proof of treaty making. In this context, the romantic image of the Pilgrims sitting with the Wampanoag is so deeply embedded in American national history as to become a powerful political tool. The continued sovereignty of the Mashpee Wampanoag enables the preservation of their history and culture and allows the diversification of our understanding of the Mayflower narrative. This is strikingly apparent with the Wôpanâak Language Reclamation Project, which is enabling the translation of primary seventeenth-century sources written by Wampanoag people, including court records.[310] This will not only provide significant insight into the relationship of the Wampanoag and the English but, as my informant Stephanie explained, "the restoration of a language enables the reclamation of a whole cultural framework". I believe, therefore, that to consider Indigenous communities appealing to misrepresentative images as complicit in their own marginalisation, is to overlook the power dynamics that have made these narratives dominant, and that render a provable, unbroken history essential. The Mashpee Wampanoag have employed the dominant Mayflower narrative to rapidly build a broad American community of support. It is

[306] The children's comments were anonymised and sent to me by their teacher.

[307] Anthes, "Visualizing the Mashantucket Pequot."

[308] Wôpanâak Language Reclamation Project, "Stand With the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe."

[309] Macdonald, *Difficult Heritage*, 2.

[310] Baird, "Wôpanâak Language Reclamation Project."

"the angle" as described by my informant Russ, and an essential engagement strategy as described by Charles. I suggest, however, that it does hold significant risks.

It's like the Jews celebrating the Holocaust

At the Wampanoag Homesite, Andrew was laughing loudly. I had asked "do you think the Mayflower anniversary is an opportunity for telling your story?" and it took him a few moments to compose himself before saying in an exaggerated downplaying, "urm not really". With a strikingly different tone, his brother Dylan stated, 'not at all' with a seriousness I had not expected. It is important to acknowledge that there is debate among Indigenous people over whether the Mayflower commemorations are a viable platform for Indigenous cultural survivance. Kerri, joined Dylan, Andrew and I by the fire of the nushwetu. I had posed this question to her an hour before, in a lively discussion in her office, and she had approached it differently. Kerri now responded to Dylan and Andrew's statements, sharing her contrasting opinion, "I said it is helpful as a platform for us". Kerri presented her view as another point of consideration, though not as a counterargument to the men's stance, which she perhaps also agreed with. Dylan conceded, "yes, as a platform. But it's like the Jewish celebrating the start of the Holocaust – like if they celebrated the building of the ghettos." This was a striking parallel to draw. Dylan associated the genocides against Indigenous peoples, a horror with little public acknowledgement, with a globally recognised genocide. In doing so, Dylan emphasised the loss of life as well as its sanitising or silencing in educational resources and public discourse. The use of genocide to describe the atrocities committed to Indigenous peoples of Turtle Island still faces significant resistance. In an interview with the New Books Network, historian Jeffrey Ostler describes navigating pressure to avoid this term. He also voiced concern that categorising the history of relations between Native Americans and the English or Americans as genocidal, was to overwrite Native American diversity and resilience.[311] However, he ultimately concludes that the historical records reveal a 'genocidal attitude' lay at the core of English expansion into Turtle Island and US nation-building. This is something this thesis has also sought to spotlight amidst an established and misleading silence. Through the image of ghetto building, Dylan depicted the Mayflower voyage as the preparatory stage for the large scale colonial assault on Native Nations. His comparison emphasised the racialised nature of this violence and suggested, as with antisemitism, a continuation of this dehumanisation.

Kerri had emphasised the complexity of the Mayflower historical story as a platform when I had spoken with her privately. Similarly to Dylan, Kerri had described the

[311] Ostler, *"Surviving Genocide: Native Nations."*

Mayflower as "really symbolising the beginning of the end of life as we knew it here, to be honest with you." Kerri spoke as though carefully negotiating expectations to remain quiet on these topics, as though letting me in on a secret. She continued,

> I think it is important because the spotlight is on us – so it is a platform. I think that that is the only positive I can really think about for us, because it has nothing really to do with us. It really symbolised the beginning of the *end of life as we knew it here*, to be honest with you. But it is important because we have a platform to talk about things that are happening now, the struggles we are going through now and you know our history after the first Thanksgiving.

For Kerri, the historical story and its symbolic legacy renders the Mayflower narrative a problematic platform though still one with the potential to be effective. Chapter Two detailed some of the contemporary challenges faced by Indigenous peoples that could benefit from discussion on an international stage. Kerri's comments appear to resonate with those of Charles, who considered in our interview, that this was a "*moment*" for the Wampanoag to "show that they are still here. That they exist and are not a dead culture." However, Charles' comment appeared reductive of the complexity of this "*moment*". Within a climate of Indigenous marginalisation and erasure, the Mayflower commemorations appeared to Kerri as an opportunity, though a problematic one to be approached with caution.

A rejection of the Mayflower narrative as an appropriate platform for Native cultural survivance, in part appears as a criticism of the Mayflower dominant narrative. The voyage has, of course, been historically emboldened as the founding moment of the United States and within this narrative the Wampanoag are presented as welcoming colonisation.[312] Even after work to dismantle the later nationalistic additions to the Mayflower historical story, we are left with sources that support Kerri's characterisation of "*the end of life as we knew it*" and Dylan's description of genocide. Nanepashemet, member of the Assonet Massachussetts tribe of the Wampanoag Nation and long-time interpreter at Plimoth Plantation museum, emphasised that the dominant Mayflower narrative has misrepresented the historical record.[313] He contested that this "*myth*" supports a US national narrative that justifies colonial occupation and later western expansion:

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[312] European merchants had been trading in Turtle Island since the fifteenth century with English occupation starting in the early 1600s. That the US foundation narrative does not acknowledge these earlier colonists in Virginia, who died of starvation and disease and had violent altercations with local Native Nations, is worthy of note.

[313] Ancientlightsvideo, "Nanepashemet Interviewed."

> As a kid I used to wonder about Massasoit and one of the things I wondered was why would he welcome the English? Why would he be so kind to them? Cause everybody said he was such a humanitarian, that he felt sorry for the Pilgrims so they gave him corn and all this stuff. That's just a big self-serving American *myth*. It is just justifying their presence here, legitimising the taking over of territory by saying that the Natives welcomed them. [314]

Beyond the myth, Nanepashemet argued that the Mayflower voyage was part of a European colonial practice of Indigenous territory taking. The atrocities committed by the early colonists, their instrumental role in the mass migration of the English to Turtle Island, alongside the Mayflower voyage's symbolic role as the founding moment of the US, renders this narrative, for Dylan, Andrew and Kerri, a challenging or perhaps entirely inappropriate platform for Indigenous survivance. [315]

Concerns over the appropriateness of a colonial story as a platform for Indigenous sovereignty were voiced during the 2019-2020 Captain Cook commemorations. Ngata recounts how she laughed at the suggestion that the Māori should be thankful for the chance to share their version alongside narratives that made heroes of the colonists.[316] In particular, she tackled the popular representation of the Cook commemorations as an opportunity for reconciliation between Māori and Pakeha. The rhetoric of reconciliation did not appear in my research around the Mayflower commemorations. While informants considered silences on colonial violence by the UK or US to be strategies to avoid accepting blame, the Mayflower commemorations were considered an opportunity to build relationships at most and not explicitly framed as reconciliatory. Perhaps there is not sufficient acknowledgement of wrongdoing for reconciliation to even be considered necessary. Nagta argues, similarly to Dylan, Andrew and Kerri, that a colonial story is an awful starting point for celebrating Indigenous culture, 'why should we be basing any celebration of ourselves around the arrival of the forces that have sought to undo everything we are from that point forwards?'[317] Echoing Kerri, Dylan and Andrew's remarks we see the complexity of producing a platform for Indigenous survivance from a historical story that marked the 'beginning of the end'.

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[314] Ancientlightsvideo, "Nanepashemet Interviewed." Massasoit was the Sachem of the Wampanoag confederacy and signed the peace treaty with the Mayflower colonists.

[315] See Silverman, *This Land Is Their Land*; O'Brien, *Firsting and Lasting*; Brooks, *A New History of King Philip's War*; DeLucia, *Memory Lands King Philip's War*.

[316] Ngata, *KIA MAU Resisting Colonial Fictions*, 25.

[317] Ngata, 37.

Conclusion

I had expected that my research would uncover historical interpretation as a nation-building practice. Drawing on post-colonial heritage studies, such as those of Luke, Davison, Coote, Macdonald and Fyfe, which characterise museums as tools of nation-building, the curator can be inferred to be detached, magisterial and supportive of a nation-affirming narrative.[318] This thesis demonstrated how the dominant Pilgrim Mayflower narrative has been constructed and strategically mobilised to evoke national pride, using calculated 'aesthetic affinities' as described by Luke or 'feeling rules' as characterised by Zembylas.[319] That this dominant narrative resonates affectively with a broad community gave it the '*scope*' Plymouth UK required to construct their own city of culture moment. Its nation-building potential was considered transferable, and an ambitious multi-national partnership was formed for its commemoration. The Mashpee Wampanoag were even able to mobilise the dominant Pilgrim narrative to successfully overturn the federal government's attempt to remove their land from trust.[320] A study of the 2020 commemorations with limited attention to the historical interpreter could present them as magisterial, nation-builders; however, I have demonstrated that this representation has restricted our understanding of the historical interpreter and their work, neglecting their efforts to challenge nation-affirming narratives and the pressures that limit their interpretive practice.

This thesis, with its focus on emotions and affect, has uncovered a strikingly complex and diverse image of the historical interpreter. I observed feelings of shame, discomfort and loss which I suggest are subversive to the 'feeling rules' of the dominant Mayflower narrative.[321] These emotions and their meaning was identified, as suggested by Harkin and Carrithers, in my informants' tone, gestures and historical and contemporary contexts.[322] In the spoken and unspoken, historical interpretation was revealed to be a challenging, even traumatic negotiation of multivalent historical narratives. Cannell's study of genealogical work as a form of relationship building provided rich insight.[323] Affective relations to the Mayflower narrative could be articulated as a claim to National identity or identity within a cross-national community. The pride at being related to a Mayflower passenger could appear as a claim to British or American identity. A reaction of pain and

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[318] See Luke, "A Nation's Memories"; Davison, "Interpreting Rock Art"; Coote, "Writing on, around, and about things"; MacDonald and Fyfe, "Theorizing Museums."

[319] Luke, "A Nation's Memories"; Zembylas, "Emotional Regimes of Reconciliation."

[320] Kickingwoman, "Wampanoag ruling a 'win.'"

[321] Zembylas, "Emotional Regimes of Reconciliation."

[322] Harkin, "Toward an Ethnohistory of Emotions"; Carrithers, "Why Anthropologists Should Study Rhetoric."

[323] Cannell, "Possibilities of Popular Genealogy."

grief to the Thanksgiving story was similarly described as the result of an Indigenous identity, and as a related feeling that bound Native Nations. These interpretations were shaped by a complex and changing intersectionality of personal identities and values that rendered generalised predictions of how a community would relate to or mobilise the Mayflower narrative impossible. Kerri was described as struggling to reconcile her grief during Thanksgiving with a strong positive feeling towards the practice of giving thanks, rooted also in her Mashpee Wampanoag heritage. I suggested an extension to Cannell's study as my interviews with Mayflower descendants revealed relationship building with ancestors to also be a fraught and changing practice.[324] Informants struggled to reconcile their values with those of their ancestors, they were critical of their forbearers and might even reject the ancestor most celebrated in the national narrative. As such my informants, far from uncritically sharing a nation-affirming narrative, engaged with this heritage in complex and often subversive ways.

A challenge to the dominant Mayflower narrative has been shown by this thesis to involve a significant dismantling of colonial ideological constructs of the European and the Native American. The image of the 'savage' Native welcoming European kindness and progress and then vanishing, is so well established as to be felt as a physical weight. Emboldened as Pilgrims, these religious radicals and their ill equipped ship became the vessel through which to narrate America's values and justify its expansion. The work to dismantle such a deep-rooted representation of the Native person as the savage other, who welcomed civilisation, presented an exhausting challenge for my Native and non-Native informants. The 2020 commemorative partnership sought to capture the attention of a broad international audience whose knowledge of the Mayflower voyage and Indigenous people might be limited to the representations within this dominant story. Ellingson, Restall and Lattas's analysis of these representations, such as savage, noble savage, and the New World, inspired my efforts to depict their foundation; however, I identified their roots far earlier in the work of Classical authors.[325] That these categories continue to inscribe power dynamics has been articulated by a growing community of Indigenous decolonisation theorists.[326] This thesis, applying Mookherjee's theory of 'nonnarration', sought to describe the mechanisms by which the dominant Pilgrim narrative was preserved, often despite the efforts of my informants.[327] Fear reappeared as a silencing force, at losing a job, at having work rejected

[324] Cannell, "Possibilities of Popular Genealogy."

[325] Ellingson, *Myth Noble Savage*; Restall, "The Trouble with 'America'"; Lattas, "Savagery and Civilisation."

[326] See Linda Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*; Lee-Morgan and Hutchings, *Decolonisation in Aotearoa*; Weaver, "The Red Atlantic."

[327] Mookherjee, "Knowing What Not to Narrate."

and of being labelled as a radical or accused of revising history. Indigenous narratives were politicised and suggested to be outside of the rigours of academia, a marginalisation both decolonisation theorists and the post-colonial Subaltern Studies have investigated.[328] Despite these pressures, interpreters continued to challenge the dominant narrative, and in fact, a feeling of shame was held by some for their complicity in nonnarration. I suggest that the most significant pressure to not narrate, experienced by non-Native informants, was their belief in their own lack of knowledge. Having grown up within a non-narration of these topics, they felt they had neither the skills nor knowledge to speak out and in this way silence begot silence. I argue that moving away from the magisterial curator to a detailed insight into the pressures historical interpreters experience to preserve colonial narratives, provides valuable insight for decolonising interventions. I echo the calls of BLM protesters for decolonising educational interventions.

Indigenous historical interpreters were shown to interpret a history of Indigenous violent erasure and a contemporary reality that is strikingly similar. Visitor' expectations that the Indigenous interpreter represented all Native people, rendered their work that of an ambassador. A limited emotional regime was available to them, a friendly welcoming smile or a shared laugh. They were also shown to face a bombardment of anti-Indigenous racism, and misrepresentations that dehumanised and marginalised. This required "*heavy shoulders*", a quality underexamined in the ethnographic record and perhaps overlooked by non-Native 2020 Mayflower commemoration organisers. This thesis calls for further studies that sensitively contextualise Indigenous historical interpretation work within this context of erasure, marginalisation and assaults to the sovereignty of Indigenous people. These experiences are often overlooked by non-Native people, as was apparent in the exclusion of Wamsutta, the expectations of Dylan and Andrew that they would be expected to sing and dance, and the claims by US high schools and a UK rugby team that Native mascots honoured Native people, despite Nation representatives explicitly stating otherwise. Only within this context can the complexity of Mayflower commemorations as a platform, and the danger of continued misrepresentation, be understood. I have sought to follow the lead of decolonisation theorists and advocate that as researchers we are mindful of our complicity. For me this is two-fold. As an anthropologist I must be attentive to the legacy of our discipline which actively contributed to Indigenous misrepresentation. Secondly, I must recognise my own past deafness to anti-Indigenous behaviour. I am hopeful that the events of the BLM protest will continue to support a sharing of the burden of historical

[328] See Linda Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*; Lee-Morgan and Hutchings, *Decolonisation in Aotearoa;* Spivak, *The Postcolonial Critic.*

interpretation work, taking some of the weight from the "*heavy shoulders*" of Indigenous interpreters.

Through this thesis, I have sought to encourage further ethnographic attention to the work of historical interpreters, opening a breadth of directions for future research. The diversity of interpreters illustrates that such studies can occur both within and outside of commemorations. This thesis finally, and perhaps most significantly, demonstrated how representative research with Indigenous communities can be achieved. Collaboration with all of my informants involved a self-critical methodology, as I shared my assumptions and findings and was open to criticism and willing to actively dismantle my bias. Throughout my research, I held onto the words of my informant Linda:

> There is only one way to include Wampanoag perspective: talk to Wampanoag people. It can *only* come from us…It is mistaken to think that mere inclusion is the same as appropriate and respectful representation...The events of history are not fodder for manipulation, nor is history itself an object for random juggling to suit a given purpose. History is made up of human beings—our ancestors—who wait for us to regain the balance that only equal weight and room for all the voices involved can bring.[329]

We must recognise the legacy of our discipline and be careful not to criticise before we have first really listened.

[329] Coombs, "Mayflower: A Story of Courage."

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