

INDIVIDUALITY INCORPORATED

Indians and the Multicultural Modern

Joel Pfister



INDIVIDUALITY INCORPORATED

NEW AMERICANISTS

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Indians and the Multicultural Modern

Joel Pfister

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For my dear friend and mother, Elizabeth Pfister. . . .
It's okay to wake up laughing.

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Back in 1981 I consulted George Miles, curator of the Western Americana Collection at Yale's Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, and he told me much more than I thought I needed to know about the Richard Henry Pratt archives and related resources. George also steered me to the John Collier papers in Yale's Manuscripts and Archives, where Judith Schiff has been so helpful. I re-appeared in his office in 1995, and, sometimes in two hour meetings, George shared his knowledge, advice, and enthusiasm. George himself is a rich archive. The skilled and imaginative librarians of Wesleyan and Yale have been indispensable in making this book possible.

My appendix ruptured on Labor Day, 1997, after a summer of hard labor, just as I was about to write the afterword to an advanced version of the book. That fall, on medical leave, I struggled in slow motion to finish that draft and Richard Slotkin, one of the most sagacious and decent American studies colleagues anyone could ever hope to work with, read and improved the entire manuscript. My internal combustion, however, was jarring enough to make me put aside writing this particular book for a spell and turn to another project not associated with the episode. I did not return to it wholeheartedly till the summer of 1999. Rich's interest in my work helped me resume my labors on it with renewed vigor and ideas.

Near the end of that challenging autumn in 1997, two days before a final surgery, I gave my first talk on the book at the Yale Americanist Colloquium. I thank the wonderful graduate students, especially Scott Saul, Joseph Entin, Leigh Raiford, and Robert Perkinson, for inviting me. Two years earlier Alan Trachtenberg had given me good bibliographic counsel when I recommenced my work on this project. His warm introduction to my talk at the Yale colloquium contributed much to my resolve. I owe much of my ability as an editor—and scholar—to Alan. Over the past few years we have swapped ideas about and references to Native-White history over long lunches in New Haven.

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For three semesters, from 1996 to 1998, I benefited from teaching an advanced American studies and English seminar, "Constructing 'Individuals': Toward a Cultural History of the 'Individual.'" In these classes my students and I explored much material I cover in the book, more so than I had been able to do in other seminars. My stellar Wesleyan students relentlessly broadened my horizons, sharpened my formulations, gave me new ideas, and animated my spirits. We've learned and unlearned much together.

Several years ago Barbara Landis, Indian School Research Specialist at the Cumberland County Historical Society, sent me an email asking if I would like to receive her weekly transcriptions of all the Carlisle publications. I had read the Carlisle newspapers in Richard Henry Pratt's collection at Beinecke at that point, but I agreed and have profited from re-reading selections. Barbara's occasional notes about them also have been useful. Her transcriptions, perused by people in many walks of life, including many Indian school graduates and survivors, are invaluable.

Since then I have visited her and Genevieve Bell's outstanding website on Carlisle. Barbara and her colleague Richard L. Tritt helped identify some Pratt papers photographs I am reproducing. Not long ago I had the gumption to ask Barbara to read chapters 1 and 2. She did so and strengthened my work on Carlisle. Martha Viehmann also read these two chapters very carefully and responded with good questions, ideas, and emendations.

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INDIVIDUALITY INCORPORATED

Introduction

Lessons Indians Can Teach American Studies about

the Rule of Individuality

The chief preoccupation of the state-builders in America was to establish institutions in their new country which would allow each citizen enough elbow room to grow into individuality. . . . Protection of the individual's happiness—the assurance of the elbow room he needed to reach his full stature—was the reason for the state's existence. . . . [The Founding Fathers'] passion for individuality instead of conformity was unique in all the world. What the generation of 1776 did was to organize those traditions into a new system.

—John Dos Passos, “A Question of Elbow Room,” 1958

Individualist. It will open your eyes.

—Estée Lauder, Individualist mascara advertisement, 1990s

Don't let it get easy.

—Wendy Rose (Hopi and Miwok), “What My Father Said,” 1985¹

I confess that it gives me wicked delight to fantasize how John Dos Passos, in his conservative postwar phase, might have responded to Monty Python's film *Life of Brian* (1979). In the British comedy troupe's spoof on the messiah business, Brian, an unwilling ersatz-Christ figure, entreats the yea-saying multitudes, who follow him everywhere, not to follow anyone anywhere. Brian beseeches them: “You're all *individuals*.” The masses intone in unison: “Yes, we're all individuals.” He insists, frustrated: “You're all *different*.” They chant, mesmerized: “Yes, we're all different.” In the ensuing pause, deep in the shoulder-to-shoulder horde, a sole dissenter mutters: “I'm not.”² Perhaps Dos Passos would have grumbled dismissively: “how un-American.” Yet, as much

that follows suggests, American Indians who survived schools that tried to train them to parrot “We’re all individuals” might have retorted, “how American.”

These Indians, many of whom were taken from their tribes and families and forced to attend government boarding schools, might have asked Dos Passos to pause to reflect on what was at stake in drilling thousands of Indian children to drown something named the *Indian* in them so they could be reborn and redeemed as “individuals” and “Americans.” Savoring the Monty Python satire about the gospel of individuality as a spellbinding form of mass management, they might have dared Dos Passos to consider the irony that the rule of “individuality” had been imposed on them. The continent’s indigenous tribal cultures had their own ways of imagining, enhancing, and motivating the self. I will begin to elaborate the details and lessons of this enlightening Native-White history of what was termed *individualizing* after surveying some of the premises that Dos Passos hoped all Americans and everyone everywhere would accept without question, for the implications of this history are legion.

For most Americans it has been easy to convert to *individuality*, the word Dos Passos extolled in 1958 with sacred significance as the defining American trait—what one critic terms America’s “civil religion.”³ Certainly some American studies scholars in the early Cold War period, through their publications, teaching, and lecturing abroad, served as apostles of an American “individuality.” They presented this ideal of individualism as evidence of American political, economic, cultural, spiritual, and psychological freedom. In the early decades of the Cold War, American literature, psychology, television, and film helped make dominant concepts of individuality seem like the human essence that naturally called forth America’s democratic capitalist system.

Of course, this ideological reverence flourished long before the Cold War. In 1922, for example, in the wake of the Red Scare, Herbert Hoover glorified giant American corporations as institutional expressions of “rugged individualism” and demonized Russia as a destroyer of “self-interest.” American individualism, he affirmed, prevents “frozen strata of classes,” guarantees “equality of opportunity” for individuals of unequal “intelligence, character, ability, and ambition,” preserves “pioneer” initiative, and guards against socialism by advocating service.⁴ In Hoover’s rendition of America, individuals—not classes—are rich. Hoover and Dos Passos hail America’s *homo nationalis* as *homo individualis*. For them American exceptionalism relies on America’s cultural,

economic, and psychological nurturance of individual exceptionalism. Hence America had to win the Cold War because “human nature”—socially suppressed “individuality”—would eventually surface even in the enemy.⁵

Dos Passos commenced “A Question of Elbow Room,” his Sputnik–space race paean to free world individuality, by assuring his reader that “individuality is freedom lived.” He presented this as literary, not only political and economic, wisdom. The greatest authors, he rhapsodized, were driven by their “appetite . . . for elbow room” and rejection of conformity. He tried to give literary distinction to the stock claim that modern America—not any form of socialism, communism, cooperative-planned economy, or welfare state—has “come nearest to producing a classless society.”⁶

This evangelical essay is intriguing for numerous reasons. The piece seems uncannily familiar the first time one reads it, even in the new millennium, because it is so adept at voicing ideologies many Americans take for granted. Students of American culture will know it before they have read it. It conveys how effectively the word *individuality* evokes not just nationality but humanity—human agency, human potential, making up one’s own mind, the emotional need for don’t-fence-me-in elbow room. In America the state derives a good measure of its ideological power by representing itself as a service enterprise. It supposedly exists by and for the people—the “individuals”—not for itself.

While Dos Passos occasionally represents individuality as a natural condition (“No two men are alike any more than two snowflakes are alike”), he also depicts it as a socially developmental process (one “grows into individuality”).⁷ Thus one might ask, how do these two readings work, or fail to work, in concert with one another?

The snowflake assertion has immense argumentative appeal. After all, no one is wholly like anyone else, even when two or more persons have been raised in similar conditions. Humans are not like the eugenic Epsilon clones in Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World* (1931). Some *singularity*—in taste, preference, psychological specificity, defining characteristics, idiosyncracies of expression—seems to persist in small or large ways even when ideological unanimity or social conditioning appears to hold sway. Early- and mid-nineteenth-century German romantics celebrated *Individualität* to signify the snowflake subjectivity that modern psychology industries purport to analyze.⁸ “All the societal generalizations in the world tell us nothing about this one concrete individual,” avers Joel Kovel, an American marxist psychoanalyst. “In the individual, tendencies and probabilities that belong to history are crystallized into a

single imaginative resolution.” History is never “exactly reproduced in any given person.”⁹ Singularity is often associated with spontaneity. “Individuality is at first spontaneous and unshaped”; John Dewey believed, shortly before the Great Crash of 1929, “it is a potentiality, a capacity of development.” If individuality has become synonymous with singularity and spontaneity, it is also synonymous with choice. In Dos Passos’s mythic America, systematized by nonconformist Founding Fathers, you choose to be yourself. Americanism is *be-yourselfism*.

Dos Passos saw America as the guarantor not only of snowflake singularity but of *difference*. In 1917 the German social theorist Georg Simmel wrote of modernity’s “individualism of difference, with the deepening of individuality to the point of the individual’s incomparability.”¹⁰ If social power often tries to reproduce itself by homogenizing peoples’ ideas, feelings, and expectations, then how could one be suspicious of an American democratic social power whose reason for being is seemingly to allow difference, singularity, nonconformity, spontaneity, and choice?

To call into question the idea of snowflake singularity, of underlying uniqueness, of individual difference, is to invite censure or ridicule—for repudiating what seems so incontestable, for implicitly advocating social standardization, for sounding anti-American. In part, individuality’s political appeal is its promise of relative autonomy. American citizenship is linked ideologically to the assertion of individual rights, a publicly recognized defense one can invoke to challenge what one takes to be abuses of the state or other forms of social and economic power. One may claim that one’s individuality and its inherent rights predate laws that violate those rights. Therefore, though often not without risk, one may refuse to play, or play at refusing to play, citizen—as did the civilly disobedient Henry David Thoreau.¹¹ Many political philosophers since John Locke and Jean-Baptiste Rousseau have assumed that individual rights exist no matter what form of society reigns (nineteenth-century American anarchists dubbed this the “sovereignty of the individual”).¹²

The extraordinary subjective appeal of snowflake singularity in part is its validation of psychological or spiritual relative autonomy.¹³ Dos Passos’s essay addresses a long-standing historically and socially produced American need to think of oneself as one’s own property (“self-possessed”).¹⁴ Hoover, Dos Passos, and countless Americans—and American businesses—have been indebted to Ralph Waldo Emerson, who devised some of the most enduring advertisements for snowflake individuality and imperial nonconformity.¹⁵ In 1841 he pleaded, “Insist on yourself; never imitate,” well before postmodern sneaker, jeans, beer,

cologne, and mascara advertisements slavishly and profitably mimicked his exhortation. Motown soul stars famously counseled Americans to “do your thing,” though it was Emerson who first popularized the saying. His jingle-like hooks have done much to elevate individual realization and the idea of the inner self into sacrosanct preoccupations: “We but half express ourselves.” In an era when class lines were hardening and industrialization’s impact on power, people, space, time, and desire was difficult to ignore, Emerson’s individualism recharged Americans’ spiritual and psychological sense of agency and meaningfulness and bolstered their beliefs in the existence of an unmediated, untainted inner self: “It is only as a man puts off from himself all external support, and stands alone, that I see him to be strong and to prevail.” Emerson’s soul-stirring sentiments, however, could add up to a Scrooge-like individual declaration of independence from social responsibility and involvement: “Do not tell me, as a good man did to-day, of my obligation to put all poor men in good situations,” he commanded. “Are they my poor?”¹⁶

The tactical value of the snowflake assertion—for Dos Passos, Hoover, and others who argue within this ideological space—resides in the way in which the invocations of singularity and of difference help make the cultural category of individuality appear fundamentally human even when other ideological (sometimes represented as psychological) characteristics—such as assumptions about “human” competitiveness, possessiveness, repressiveness, or evil—are assigned to individuality. Dos Passos’s snowflake might be revisualized as a sticky web to which an assortment of ideological values or characteristics (rights, instincts, needs, desires) are adhered, and made to seem like givens, so that anyone questioning these values and characteristics may well get stuck in the web. The assertion of snowflake singularity can function to shield individuality from the charge that it is an ideological contrivance implicated in social structures of power, domination, and stratification. Those who wish to criticize an individualism that smuggles in assumptions about economic relations and political structure may find themselves up against more than they expected. For such a social critique may be dismissed as tantamount to an assault on individuality, singularity, psychological specificity, variety within human nature (Hoover’s unequal “intelligence, character, ability, and ambition”).

Distinctions can be made between constructions of the category of “individualism” and that of “individuality,” but it is the interaction of the two, as what Arthur O. Lovejoy termed *compounds*, that gives each category much of its ideological scope and potency.¹⁷ Dos Passos employs “individuality” more than “individualism” in his praise of elbow

room. When it works effectively, the assertion of inborn singularity can even guard constructions of individuality from those who might want to investigate whether historically specific ideas about individuality have operated not as weapons against conformity but rather as ideological systems of conformity—training, forcing, persuading, or bribing persons to act as “individuals” in certain social molds beneficial to some and perhaps detrimental to others. The critical challenge is to sort out what—say, ideas about economic systems, politics, class, race, gender, sexuality—is being made to seem self-evidently “individual” by being linked with attestations of snowflake singularity.

Dos Passos shrewdly has it both ways: he makes individuality the distinctive snowflake truth of the idiosyncratic self, but he also sees it as having some social content. He suggests that one achieves individuality: it is a socially responsible maturity, a phase of civic as well as psychological and spiritual growth. This social perspective admits history, institutions, and cultural machineries of influence into the definitional picture but still views individuality as an inner development—one grows from snowflake infant “individual” to a more socially elaborated snowflake adult “individual.” Dos Passos’s somewhat historical approach becomes more complex, however, if one begins to examine when, how, and why Americans have “grown into” particular social types of “individuality.”

What happens, for instance, when Dos Passos’s common sense about elbow-room individuality is reconsidered within the context of America’s long history of elbowing? Dos Passos’s reverence for elbow room takes no notice of those who were elbowed out to provide elbow room for others. One might inquire: what did having been elbowed out do to their individuality? Did dominant groups perceive those who were elbowed out as having individuality—or as subindividual, subsingular? Did those who got elbowed want to view themselves as having what was defined as individuality in the first place? Has America achieved a classless society, where we can all rub elbows together as equal individuals; or has it produced a class- and race-stratified society in which some Americans’ wealth and social position permit them to experience themselves as—and to be treated as—more individual than others?

During Joseph McCarthy’s reign of terror C. L. R. James, the great Jamaican social critic, disturbed by these kinds of questions, studied the American history of individuality. James’s research, influenced by critiques of corporate individualism outlined years before by the likes of Charles Beard and Theodore Dreiser, probed the history of systemic elbowing. He argued that although the conditions of the Revolutionary period were propitious for the making of “bourgeois individualism”

(partly underwritten by slavery) and although this contributed to the tendency of Americans to picture themselves as restless, striving, sometimes rebellious individuals rather than members of sedimented classes (as in Europe), certainly by the late nineteenth century the very corporations that claimed their individual rights to do as they pleased with workers and resources had done much to elbow smash American individuality's more emancipatory social possibilities.¹⁸

Francis Otto Matthiessen, like Beard, Dreiser, and James, was concerned about the ways in which individuality had been assigned the ideological capacity to ratify elbowing as an expression of inner potential and inherent right. A builder of progressive American studies and casualty of McCarthyism, this Harvard socialist was no Cold War missionary of "individuality." Matthiessen was bitterly disappointed by Dos Passos's reactionary retreat.¹⁹ One of his favorite quotations is from Dreiser's play *The Hand of the Potter* (1918) and novel *An American Tragedy* (1925): "After all, you didn't make yourself, did you?"²⁰ He was unremittingly critical of how Emersonian individualism came to mean pitting oneself "against the mass" rather than "finding the fulfillment of [one's] nature with [one's] fellow man." Matthiessen assaulted irresponsible literary justifications of the individual as a "law unto himself"—an idea upheld by "money-grabbers" who "have performed travesties of freedom in the name of free enterprise." He gravitated toward "[Nathaniel] Hawthorne's dark sense of the individual's insufficiency" and Walt Whitman's ethos of "solidarity," which "moved steadily, if by no straight course, towards socialism." Reflecting on the history of cultural "allegories of the inner life," he asked: "Don't we have to undo the mistakes of our anarchic nineteenth century and . . . conceive again of inner freedom as something gained, not in isolation, but through an enriching sense of co-operation?"²¹ In America, he well knew, social cooperation, unlike individuality, has too rarely been endowed with romantic, glamorous, or literary value; more often it has been distorted as conformity. He may have lived just long enough to see how postwar America's well-funded anxieties about gray-flannel conformity helped sustain its Cold War image of the Soviet bloc as the nightmare of choiceless conformity.

Matthiessen would have appreciated Lawrence Levine's admonition not to "Flintstoniz[e] the past"—the American tendency to project widely held contemporary notions of human nature or social attitudes back on the past to justify the present.²² The 1960s attraction and humor of the cartoon Flintstone family was that the Flintstones lived in a Stone Age that resembled postwar America (jobs, cars, domesticity). A Flintstone reading of the concept of the individual would never suspect that

the earliest recorded uses of *individual* meant indivisible, unity, and connection—not separation, singularity, or being unique—and that the word had a long, varied journey through the often interrelated histories of industrialization, the family, politics, science, and aesthetic practices before it came to mean what Dos Passosque celebrations of American individualism assume it has naturally and self-evidently always meant.²³

Although the word *individualize* dates back to the seventeenth century, it was not until the nineteenth century—the era of the rise of industrial capitalism, of the White middle-class cult of sentimentalized domesticity, of romanticism, and of Manifest Destiny—that it came into wider use. By midcentury it referred both to the rendering of someone or something as distinctively “individual” and to the establishment of individually owned land.²⁴ “When we speak of ‘the individual’ and of ‘society,’” Raymond Williams wrote in 1961, three years after Dos Passos published his piece, “we are using descriptions which embody particular interpretations of the experience to which they refer: interpretations which gained currency at a particular point in history, yet which have now virtually established themselves in our minds as absolutes.”²⁵ The truism that the individual is inherently at odds with society, patent in Emerson’s writing, was elaborated by a nineteenth-century transatlantic middle class that wanted to set itself off, on the one hand, from an aristocracy that assigned social, cultural, and subjective merit according to blood and inheritance rather than according to individual ability, and, on the other hand, from a web of capitalist marketplace dependencies that it was striving to extend and profit from but which also made it anxious about its own ongoing capacity to assert its free will, agency, “individuality.”

Even beginning to imagine what cross-cultural, intellectual, economic, political, colonial, postcolonial, and national histories of forms of “individuality” might look like—all the while taking into account the intersecting class, ethnoracial, and gender dimensions of these “individuality” productions—is daunting. “It is not any easy task,” the systems theorist Niklas Luhmann confesses, “we must travel back at least two hundred years if we want to survey the full array of theories.”²⁶ Individualism, writes Steven Lukes, “is variously traced to the Reformation, the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, the [French] Revolution, to the decline of the aristocracy or the Church or traditional religion, to the Industrial Revolution, to the growth of capitalism and democracy.” National differences in notions of individualism and individuality abound. As Lukes generalizes, post-Revolution French intellectuals developed a strong tra-

dition of criticizing individualism as socially destructive (Claude Henri de Saint-Simon, Alexis de Tocqueville, Louis Blanc, Emile Durkheim); in Germany individuality has long been associated with subjective realization, at times national destiny, and in Karl Marx's work with a state of creative being that socialism would truly bring about; in England individualism has signified, among other things, middle-class self-reliance and liberalism, religious nonconformity, and (as in Germany) romantic interiority; and in the United States individualism, natural rights, capitalist free enterprise, laissez-faire, contractualism, free expression, and psychological singularity have been ideologically linked.²⁷

In 1905 Max Weber went back more than two centuries to study complex relationships between Protestant conceptualizations of an individual, personal relationship to God (enacted through prayer, piety, Bible reading) and Protestant beliefs in a divinely sanctioned work ethic. These entwined notions simultaneously cultivated capitalist producer individualism (working in order to hope, without certainty, that one would receive God's grace as one of the "elect") and intensely introspective "psychological" subjectivities (fretting about individual salvation). Puritan beliefs in collective obligation (John Winthrop's "Wee must be knitt together"), in divinely established social hierarchies of rich and poor, in innate depravity (necessitating vigilant social rule), in God-ordained inherent differences in talents, and in the importance of interminable spiritual self-monitoring coexisted.²⁸ Peter Stallybrass has focused attention on the English Puritan revolution as a moment when Puritans nominated themselves individuals rather than subjects of King Charles. The "individual," he clarifies, "is a laborious construction in the political defeat of absolutism, when political freedom is gained at the expense of the occlusion of economic dependence." He uses his historical observation that in the seventeenth century the idea of "the [royal] subject *precedes* [the idea of] the individual" to invert Louis Althusser's oft-quoted ahistorical formulation that "'ideology interpellates [hails] individuals as subjects.'" Althusser imagines "the individual" as unsubjected by ideology, as a "center of freed consciousness and independent judgment." Puritan history emends this: "Within a capitalist mode of production, ideology interpellated, not the individual as a subject, but the subject as an individual."²⁹ So being "individual" became the hallmark of a historically specific group identity.

Colin Morris prefaces *The Discovery of the Individual, 1050–1200* (1972) with cross-cultural perspectives on individuality and inwardness and concludes: "Western individualism is . . . far from expressing the common experience of humanity. Taking a world view, one might almost

regard it as an eccentricity among cultures.” Morris traces early signs of an emerging culture of individuality in self-reflexive sermons, the rise of autobiography, and more personalized portraiture—trends that lost momentum just after 1200.³⁰ Medieval religious and political ideologies placed greater emphasis on law, order, and collective identity than on “individuality.” Generally, authors did not seem to think of themselves as expressing their individuality, originality, or inner life in their writing, but rather as representing their culture’s beliefs—plagiarism was not a hot issue.³¹ Lee Patterson argues that Geoffrey Chaucer has been valued by modern critics over John Gower and William Langland partly because of his unusual move toward individualizing: “Chaucer begins by posing his opposition to the dominant ideology in terms of class antagonism, but then retreats by setting up his privileged category of subjectivity per se, the free-floating individual whose needs and satisfactions stand outside any social structure—in short, the transhistorical being that criticism has traditionally taken Chaucer himself to be.”³² Stallybrass contends that even in the early seventeenth century, William Shakespeare “was not in the business of producing individuals,” nor was “life itself.” Whereas John Milton and the Puritan revolution he backed battled to make certain forms of individuality commonsensical.³³

Taking account of these much debated historical developments, and sundry others, one could not help but find what Weber discovered a century ago—*individualism* is a term that “includes the most heterogeneous things imaginable.”³⁴ Thus to study dimensions of the history of “the individual” in America—my aim in this book—it is judicious not to employ commonsensical notions of individuality to read history, however natural that may seem, but rather to contribute historical perspectives on the social making of that common sense. As Marx contended, “Man is *the human world*, the state, society.”³⁵

Individuality Incorporated scrutinizes “the individual” as a historically constituted *abstraction* often used to fabricate a sense of national identity (for example, the idea, reiterated by Dos Passos, that being American means being “individual”); a *category* sometimes invoked by groups of Americans to distinguish themselves from “others” (for instance, when members of the White middle class see themselves as more complexly “individual” than members of the working class or various racial groups); and a changing *definition* of self designed to serve historically generated emotional and ideological needs (as when the industrial era’s sentimental ideology helps one “feel” that “inner” “individuality” is most truly “expressed” at home). Individuality becomes a powerful social reality when humans are convinced or compelled—

through property laws, workplace controls, familial socialization, advice books, literature, films, and so on—to imagine themselves within certain notions of what “individuality” has been made to mean.³⁶ This is why Dos Passos entered the ideological contest to manage what it means. As Raymond Williams argued in the thick of the Cold War, individuality is a social form of subjectivity production that must itself be explained historically and politically. The cultural category of individuality does not exist, or exist in the same way, in all cultures—at least not yet. I am interested not only in how vocabularies, narratives, theories, and uniforms of individuality have changed over time, but in asking why they have existed at all. This approach rubs against the grain of my own cultural and affective socialization. I will often place the category in quotation marks to help myself as well as readers gain critical distance from this quotidian word as an invention that actively shapes social and “psychological” reality.

As I have been suggesting, the politics of making “individuals” is in no way monolithic. Notwithstanding his historical critique of the Puritan formation of “individuals,” Stallybrass concludes that there are many “areas where one can’t simply dump the [idea of the] individual.” For instance: “To be deprived of legal individuality is something that, in this society, is often devastating.” Despite his concurrence with socialist critiques of “the individual,” Lukes attests, “There is no doubt that historically the abstract conception of the individual represented a major moral advance. It was a decisive step in the direction of a universalist ethics when human beings first came to be regarded as the possessors of certain rights and claims, simply in virtue of being human.” The category of individuality has been deployed to support numerous progressive causes and positions: resistances to oppressive gender and sexual norms; greater tolerance of a range of cultural, social, and political actions and attitudes; the idea that everyone should have opportunities to develop her or his abilities; the premise that humans are the ends, not the means, of the social order; the questioning of social authority that shirks from questioning itself (judging the judges).

Yet the concerns I have sketched suggest that the complex history of the category of individuality is critical to recover not just to celebrate its more benign uses. The very idea of individuality has been invested with the ideological power to efface its multifaceted history, so that “individuality” is transmuted into “psychology” or “human nature.” Stallybrass, influenced by cultural theories of subjectivity formation, urges “individuals” to contemplate what it means “to be haunted, to be inhabited by other people.”³⁷ What and who haunts, inhabits, and speaks

through diverse twenty-first-century American “individuals”? What histories haunt the fabrication of “individuals”? It is crucial to reflect self-critically on what is at stake in being trained to identify oneself as an “individual,” one’s interests as “individual” interests, and one’s rights as “individual” rights—in part because the social uses of the idea of individuality have by no means always been unambiguously humanitarian. Indeed, as the chapters ahead demonstrate, the American history of the rule of individuality has been an important, albeit sometimes subtle, dimension of American imperial history.

As suggested above, the idea that American “individuals” are culturally made and not simply born would have been no news to the many Natives in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries who were the subjects of crusades mounted by White reformers and schools to “individualize” them. Indian schools stated plainly that their mission was to “civilize,” “Americanize,” “citizenize,” and “individualize” students. These nouns—*civilization*, *American*, *citizen*, and *individual*—were popularized as verbs in this period precisely because some Americans who held socioeconomic, political, and cultural power well understood that what these nouns represented were socializing processes: only by being individualized in accord with dominant definitions of individuality were humans made to fit certain molds of “individuals.” The transformative tactics of late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century individualizing processes were distinctive and focused on altering selfhood in ideological ways not as emphasized by related processes like civilizing, Americanizing, and citizenizing.³⁸ Those who sought to “individualize” Indians, we will see, developed strategies of subjectivity and emotion production that aimed to prescribe how an “individual” should properly pursue happiness, meaningfulness, and work—for example, by desiring an affectively intensified romantic bond, having a sentimentally privatized family, and being willing to work at just about any job to possess goods and own property.

Anyone interested in the institutional, industrial, and mass-cultural production of forms of American “individuality” would find the history of the campaigns to individualize Natives illuminating because they were so remarkably brazen in specifying the brand of “individuality” they wanted to impress on Native students. White reformers and educators of Natives were explicit about the social goals “individuality” was expected to help achieve. Assimilationist reformers used the category of individuality to reencode relations of dependence, such as routinized daily work, not just as desirable but as relations signifying indepen-

dence. They were interested in deploying the ostensible appeal of possessive and sentimental “individuality” as an incentive—to produce worker-individuals who would labor even if they did not like it or felt that they were being exploited. Moreover, they saw the ideological importance of making cultural, sentimental, and romantic individualism seem like the solution to, or at least the compensation for, the anxieties and alienation caused by competitive economic individualism (a closed circuit of options limited to forms of individualism). Their efforts to individualize Indian minds, emotions, and bodies were directed at making Indians not only worker-individuals but “individual” landowners. Appropriately, the government’s often coercive division of tribal property into individual plots in this era was termed *individualizing*. Tribal property left over after land was “individualized” was classified as “surplus land” and sold. The “Americanizing” and “civilizing” gift of “individuality” to Indians was intended to legitimate, among other things, the nonmilitary acquisition of Indian real estate.

I will explore these ideological constructions and uses of individualizing as well as many others in the chapters that follow. This study brings together genres of history (American cultural history and Native history) and genres of literary history (canonical and noncanonical American literature, Native literature and autobiography) in one broadly conceived historical critique that contributes to the formation of a field: the American cultural and literary history of “individuality.” One of my premises is that the history of Natives casts a great deal of light on the economic, political, cultural, and literary history of American individualizing.

I offer two case studies in two parts, each of which is divided into two chapters: Part 1 is on the Carlisle Industrial School for Indians and part 2 is on connections between the early-twentieth-century Taos White bohemians (focusing on D. H. Lawrence, Mabel Dodge Luhan, and John Collier) and Collier’s protomulticultural Indian New Deal. I have chosen the detailed case study rather than the survey approach for several reasons. My interest in this material is critical as well as historical: the voluminous Carlisle school publications and the literary, autobiographical, and political writings of the Taos and Indian New Deal groups are my main texts. These texts are expansive, yet I have given them the sort of nuanced textual analysis that engages and brings out their historical and ideological multidimensionality. When I first studied Carlisle’s publications more than two decades ago, I was taken aback by the school’s rhetoric of individuality. It was my close reading of the language and tone of the material in these archives which made me realize

that the making of “individuals” was not only a provocative but an extremely complex enterprise and that Natives played significant roles in it, as critical agents, by no means just as victims.

Both case studies feature important figures in the history of Native-Euramerican relations. They draw on many rich archival materials that have been underused, thereby making it possible for me to present much original historical research and fresh critical readings of literary works in new historical frameworks. I examine writings by many late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Natives—Charles Eastman [Ohiyesa], Gertrude Bonnin [Zitkala-Ša], Luther Standing Bear, Black Elk, Christine Quintasket [Mourning Dove], Ella Deloria, John Joseph Mathews, D’Arcy McNickle—and non-Natives—Helen Hunt Jackson, Marion Burgess, Frances Sparhawk, Hamlin Garland, Zane Grey, Edgar Rice Burroughs, D. H. Lawrence, Mabel Dodge Luhan, Mary Austin, Oliver La Farge, Langston Hughes. The insights of contemporary Native authors—including N. Scott Momaday, Leslie Marmon Silko, Simon Ortiz, James Welch, Gerald Vizenor, Wendy Rose, Jimmie Durham, Hanay Geiogamah, Joy Harjo, Louise Erdrich, Sherman Alexie, Linda Hogan—appear in my epigraphs, chapters, and notes. These writers often help illuminate the concerns and understandings of earlier Native authors I discuss and suggest the continued relevance of their history to the situation of contemporary Natives.

Broadly, the two case studies—moving from Carlisle to Taos and the Indian New Deal—chart the uneven and often contradictory ideological passage from the nineteenth century’s industrial-producer-sentimental culture and its styles of individuality (which value character, the work ethos, self-control, respectability) to the twentieth century’s corporate-consumer-therapeutic culture and its styles of individuality (which value personality, the psychological self, impression management, sex appeal). This is a crucial cultural shift—and subjectivity formations shift—that historians of Native-White relations and critics of Native autobiography seldom discuss.³⁹ The causes, dynamics, and ramifications of this momentous cultural transformation form a historical narrative that does much to clarify the changing ideological significance of Natives within the history of the category of “the individual.”

It is this theme—the history of individualizing—that is the theoretical and historical core of the book’s study of Native schooling. I will explicate how intensively the education of Natives foregrounded the production of “individuality” as one of its major ideological goals. Nevertheless, *Individuality Incorporated* is not a study of Native education. The four chapters explore how ideological education in “individuality” can

also take place outside the school—in the family, in the community, in the process of reading literature, the Bible, or self-help books, in psychoanalytic therapy, in the Euramerican bohemian experience of dancing in deserts with Indians, and in many other circumstances. An emphasis on educational institutions alone would occlude one's larger vision of complex cultural changes taking place in the category of "the individual" and of the roles Natives played in those changes. My study of the Taos literati shows not Whites who wanted to "kill" Indians ideologically in order to resurrect them as American "individuals" (to quote Carlisle rhetoric), but Whites who hoped to resurrect their repressed "individuality" through their imagined therapeutic relationships with Indians. "Individuality" was defined and deployed in manifold ways and contexts around Indians.

Little historical or critical scholarship has staked out the relationship between Natives and dominant constructions of American individuality as a fertile field for investigation. One of the most theoretically sophisticated collections of essays on mass-cultural representations—often misrepresentations—of Natives is *Dressing in Feathers: The Construction of the Indian in American Popular Culture* (1996). In her introductory essay, S. Elizabeth Bird, thinking of films like *Dances With Wolves* (1990) and *Pocahontas* (1995), concludes: "The current wave of Indian images might seem benign—who would not want to be presented as perfect, beautiful, and all-knowing? But this benign image is deeply impersonal and distanced, once again ignoring Indian people as individuals and allowing real Indian people no subjectivity."⁴⁰ Bird's commonsense meaning is clear and merits readers' sympathetic responses. Similarly, one can appreciate the force of Devon Mihesuah's (Choctaw) assertion in her penetrating study of the Cherokee Female Seminary (1851–1909), "Cherokee women are especially complex individuals different from one another and from women of other tribes."⁴¹ Natives have long had to contend with racisms that have denied their multifaceted singularity (as persons, clans, bands, tribes, nations) as a justification for their exploitation and oppression. Bird and Mihesuah are responding to the literature, art, films, television shows, schools, and episodes in daily life that have cast Natives, to quote Laura Wexler, as "human [or not so human] scenery" for White individuals' enactments of their fears, fantasies, and therapeutic needs.⁴² All this might prompt one to assert that Natives too are "individuals."

Still, one must not forget that words like *individuals* and *subjectivity* have extensive ideological histories linked with exploitation and oppression—histories that have enmeshed Natives, altered their na-

tional image, and in many cases affected their self-image and self-regard. Just as Vine Deloria, Jr. (Dakota Sioux) and Clifford M. Lytle have helped readers establish a critical distance from New Deal constructions of (U.S. government-controlled) Native “self-government,” it is equally important to study how concepts of individuality have been deployed in Native-White power struggles. “Self-determination and self-government,” they explain, “are not equivalent terms” (more on this in chapter 4).⁴³ Neither are “self-determination” and “individuality” equivalent terms (more on this in the afterword). In describing how Southwestern Native artists were affected by buyers and markets who demanded that Native artwork exhibit ostensibly traditional Indianness rather than individuality, Leah Dilworth is especially careful not to universalize Euramerican ideas of individuality as that which Natives were compelled to suppress (in reference to the potter Nampeyo): “I am not suggesting that Western individualism was the only (or even a viable) alternative for Nampeyo and other Native American artisans.”⁴⁴ Nor was “individualism” or Euramerican aesthetic “individuality” necessarily even a desirable alternative for them.⁴⁵

The theoretical clarity one must bring to the study of Native-White relations, I suggest, must include a historical awareness that the word *individual* was invested with particular ideological meanings by dominant groups and was used by these groups both to dominate and to “give” certain kinds of opportunities to Natives and others. In some respects, to say that Natives have been ignored as “individuals” manifests a historical irony. Some of the Natives who were not only allowed to but schooled and coerced to act like “individuals” might object to this label with zeal. It is imperative to grasp not only the “construction of the Indian” (something I will address below) but also the construction of “the individual” in U.S. culture if one is to comprehend U.S. history.

Some scholarship on Indian schools points to individualizing as part of the pedagogical rhetoric and agenda, but the far-reaching implications of this process have not previously been worked out. In his seminal studies of Native autobiography, Arnold Krupat has emphasized that autobiography in the nineteenth century’s romantic era was based on concepts of individuality not extant in traditional Native cultures. His recent work that seeks to conceptualize “ethnocriticism” has developed some of the theoretical implications of these cultural differences and further complicates ahistorical, universalizing, commonsensical notions about the “self.”⁴⁶ He has criticized the “modern” premises and values that Marcel Mauss brought to his pathbreaking effort to theorize an anthropology of the person. In 1938 Mauss problematically depicted

selfhood within an “evolutionary narrative” in which “primitive” “persons” (*personnages*) with highly social “self-conceptions,” evident in Native cultures, had not yet attained a “modern” “egocentric/individualist” idea and expression of the introspective “*moi*” and its psychological interiority. The “modern” bourgeois “*moi*” tends to envision selfhood within the romantic era’s Emersonian individual-versus-society model rather than foregrounding the person’s social connectedness and the person’s natural connectedness to the nonhuman.⁴⁷ Globalization (the universalization of capitalism) may be globalizing forms of consumer individualism and interiority, but, as anthropologist Clifford Geertz notes, such constructions are by no means universal, inherently human, or decisively “modern”: “The Western conception of the person as a bounded, unique, more or less integrated motivational and cognitive universe, a dynamic center of awareness, emotion, judgment, and action organized into a distinctive whole and set contrastively both against other such wholes and against its social and natural background, is . . . a rather peculiar idea within the context of the world’s cultures.”⁴⁸

Jace Weaver (Cherokee) characterizes Native subjectivities as “I am We.” He contrasts dominant notions of bounded (I cannot help but think of barbed-wire) individualism with Native “communitism”—a concept that conjoins the words “‘community’ and ‘activism’ or ‘activist.’” In the next four chapters we will see that Native constructions of community and kinship values—embracing notions of family, clan, the communal distribution of affection, land use—threatened many nineteenth- and twentieth-century Euramerican “individuals” who demonized these values as manifestations of communism or socialism. What Weaver terms “communitism” permeates many traditional Native notions of what constitutes survival, art, love, achievement. “There is generally,” he observes, “no concept of ‘salvation’ beyond the continuance of the community.”⁴⁹ Along these lines Louis Owens (Choctaw and Cherokee) contributes to the historical understanding of much Euramerican literature as an imperialist machinery of “individuality”: “The privileging of the individual necessary for the conception of the modern novel . . . is a more radical departure for American Indian cultures than for the Western world as a whole, for Foucault’s ‘moment of individualization’ represents an experience forced harshly, and rather unsuccessfully, upon Native Americans.”⁵⁰

First Person, First Peoples (1997), a collection of thirteen autobiographical essays by Native graduates of Dartmouth College (1970s through 1990s), lends greater specificity to some of what Owens, Weaver, and Krupat have sketched. Several writers stressed that some of the tribal

social values and modes of relating they brought to the Ivy League—cooperative adaptation, humility, not striving to stand out, quiet attentiveness, privacy, strong feelings of connection to tribe, family, kin, and nonhuman creatures—conflicted dramatically with some of the values and habits of some of their Euramerican peers and some of their institution's expectations. At college they encountered competitive individualism, a widespread desire to perform in the spotlight, inquisitiveness, cultural relativism, and a comfortable professional-managerial class independence from home and region.⁵¹ Some Native students imported traditional nonegoistic concepts of their accomplishments: "I would be a fool to believe that I made it this far by myself," Marianne Chamberlain (Assiniboin and Sioux) acknowledged gratefully. And some held onto traditional concepts of success that focused more on helping Natives than on using college as a stepping stone for self-aggrandizement.⁵² In her foreword, Louise Erdrich (Chippewa), herself a Dartmouth graduate, underlines "how many [of the autobiographers] have returned to work in their communities. . . . Remarkable in a capitalist society, and yet not amazing given the sources, not a single narrative is about the wish to attain status, the ambition to make large amounts of money, or the desire to become famous."⁵³

Many Natives' traditional concepts of art, artists, and artistic meaningfulness differ from the extreme individualizing of artistic identity and aesthetic value that has predominated in Europe and the United States, especially since the romantic era. "There was always some kind of artistic endeavor that people set themselves to, although they did not necessarily articulate it as 'art' in the sense of western civilization," writes poet Simon Ortiz (Acoma). "One lived and expressed an artful life, whether it was in ceremonial singing and dancing, architecture, painting, speaking, or in the way one's social-cultural life was structured."⁵⁴ Similarly, Gary Witherspoon contrasts Navajo art—the creation of "beautiful conditions" and the practice of "a way of living"—with so-called Western aesthetics that are often predicated on self versus nature and mind versus body binary oppositions. Most Navajos are artists; they may stand out as marginal if they are not. If they sell their creations, many do so anonymously.⁵⁵

Yet recently I spoke with a Navajo poet who, though proud of these collective values, practices, and creations, also noted that dancing in line can be restricting. She felt that something, perhaps what some might term *individuality*, seemed to be submerged in this highly formal and collective dancing. Effort to bring knowledge of the history of "Western" "individuality" to the study of Natives' social production of

consciousness and, conversely, attempts to bring work on Native formations of subjectivities and epistemologies to scholarship on “Western” fabrications of “individuality” are still too unusual. This knowledge should be central in the economic, political, and cultural history of Native-White relations and should contribute much to the critical advancement of American studies.

My initial emphasis, which considered this book as a contribution to the history of the cultural making of humans induced to call themselves individuals, soon expanded to encompass another major historical concern: the cultural making of people impelled to categorize themselves as Indians. In the first centuries of the European–North American imperialist era, Natives kept discovering Europeans who assumed that they were discovering “Indians.”⁵⁶ Christopher Columbus, a lost and confused sailor, misidentified the indigenous people he sought to enslave in the Caribbean in 1492 as *los Indios*, and the homogenizing name stuck. (In 1900 Francis La Flesche [Omaha] recounted an amusing school scene in which Euramericans quizzed him and other Native students on who discovered America.) Since this momentous “discovery,” Eric Mottram observes, “‘Indians’ have been a bank of resources for mythical living for whites, and that bank a major control of white dominance of Amerindian life.”⁵⁷ Robert Berkhofer stresses that the pre-Columbus North American tribes were anything but monolithic and “spoke at least two hundred mutually unintelligible languages.”⁵⁸ Yet historians have noted that standard forms of the “white man’s Indian” were being mass-produced in print by several European nations long before the Pilgrims and Puritans set up shop. The indigenous inhabitants of what the British labelled New England voiced their bafflement when some of the early colonists confidently addressed them with alien names: “They have often asked me,” Roger Williams pondered, “why we call them *Indians Natives*, & c.”⁵⁹

The naming problem persists: historians and critics usually feel the need to explain why they chose to call their subjects of study either Indians (often because that imperialist word is the self-description commonly used and resignified by Indians nowadays) or Native Americans (this name, often employed in titles of academic programs, may evoke tribal plurality, but its combination of words remains ideologically inflected with troublesome primitivist and nationalist associations).⁶⁰ Historians and critics are often acutely aware that they run the risk of perpetuating colonizing practices when they use everyday words like *Indian*, *Native American*, *New World*, *discovery*, *wild*, *wilderness*, *civili-*