

THREE. THE DURATION OF THE LAND

In 1906 Congress passed the Osage Allotment Act, extending to the Osage Nation the principles at play in the allotment program generally.¹ These include efforts to break up Native land tenure into privatized property holding, organized primarily around nuclear family units; dismantle Indigenous structures of governance, asserting greater U.S. jurisdictional authority over Native peoples and places; insert Native peoples into the cash economy and Euramerican agricultural production; and transform everyday patterns of life so that they would conform to Euramerican conventions of dress, language, religion, literacy, gender roles, and so on.² This policy imaginary draws on temporal figurations in order to remap and reorder spatial relations. Presented by officials and supporters as a means by which Indians could progress from a stunted and backward savagery toward civilization, allotment offered a vision of necessary development over time that enabled the struggle between Indigenous and settler geopolitical formations to be conceptually bracketed.³ Emplotting Native governance and sovereignty as merely a moment within an evolutionary process of becoming casts Indians as moving toward the achievement of liberal modernity rather than as struggling to retain control over their extant territories and to maintain their self-determination as peoples. This turn in the discourses of Indian policy can be understood as complementing the ways of perceiving national time discussed in the previous chapter, in that allotment offers a means for Indians to cease to be temporally anomalous and to be included within the increasingly democratic potentials of American national life.⁴ Allotment policy projects a futurity oriented around settler modes of being, and doing so incites and legitimizes various processes (legal, administrative, and quotidian) that work to transform Native sociospatial dynamics at all levels so as to make Indigenous lands more available for non-native expropriation, occupation, and investment.

We can understand allotment as a field of force working to reshape Native experiences of space and time, but one that does not operate in a vacuum. Rather than treating it as instituting a fundamentally new and different kind of temporality (dividing Native time between tradition and modernity), we might conceptualize allotment, in the idiom of general relativity, as exerting something like gravitational influence on extant Indigenous trajectories.⁵ The question of simultaneity was a central concern in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, due to the need to produce a global sense of it because of European and U.S. military, political, and commercial aims, and that process of universalization generated considerable scientific and philosophical debate over the nature or possibility of an absolute, shared “now,” a process of intellectual ferment that provided the context for the emergence of theories of relativity and the notion of spacetime.⁶ The concept of spacetime merges space (and its three dimensions) and time (its own dimension) into a single manifold whose shape depends on the operation of gravity. Space, then, does not function as a neutral container, and ways of ordering space—like the presumption and realization of U.S. jurisdiction over its “domestic” territory (discussed in the previous chapter)—affect the contours and texture of temporal experience. For example, allotment policy’s division of Native lands into privatized units works to position nuclear family homemaking as the implicit frame for personal timescales of living, in terms of patterns and periodicities of maturation, rhythms and relations of labor, shifting and atomized attachments to place, and generationally compact connections across time. In this way the force of U.S. policy (exerted through statutes but realized through the discretion given to Indian agents, government licensing and leasing of lands, forms of taxation, mandatory schooling, etc.) can exert what might be thought of as something like gravitational pressure on existing Indigenous spatiotemporal formations, potentially shifting them in ways that give rise to collective orientations and trajectories of becoming at odds with those that previously had shaped Native perception.

However, in the absence of a clean, clear break (a “leap” into “modernity”), one formation or frame of reference does not simply replace the other.⁷ How can we think about the complexities and tensions involved in living within two disparate spatiotemporal formations, in being subject to the varied and uneven forms of force that they exert on everyday self-understanding and ways of being? Put another way, becoming subject to the allotment program entailed less the immediate supplanting of one’s existing sense of time (rhythms, periodicities, forms of periodization, ways of understanding and experiencing causality) than the imposition of an alien set of orientations that have effects on everyday expe-

riences and regularities.⁸ Existing forms of Native perception in their historical density continue to shape engagements with the surrounding environment, and the patterns already at play in those environments do not simply dissipate when confronted with new non-native political, economic, and residential dynamics. Borrowing from Henri Bergson, we might characterize the persistence and momentum of those forms of collective memory, experience, and engagement as *duration*. As discussed in chapter 1, Bergson characterizes duration in terms of the sense of time's movement as immanent flow, rather than it being able to be broken up into a series of disconnected simultaneities. Moreover, he indicates that movement itself provides the basis for perception as well as the connection between recollection and action.⁹ In *Matter and Memory*, he suggests, "There is no perception which is not full of memories. With the immediate and present data of our sense we mingle a thousand details out of our past experience," enacting a dialectic in which "past experience" gives coherence and meaning to what we sense while being guided by encounters and possibilities in the present: "Our representation of matter is the measure of our possible action upon bodies: it results from the discarding of what has no interest for our needs, or more generally for our functions."¹⁰ As opposed to thinking about Native temporality as being ruptured into a new, modern simultaneity with non-natives as a function of U.S. administrative interventions, then, we can conceptualize Native perception—in this case, specifically Osage perception—as guided by shared forms of memory that affect engagement with allotment-era conditions and changes. Such collective orientation gives momentum to Osage experiences and ways of negotiating the shifting social landscape as well as influencing what is sensed as a possible action within the present. Thought of in this way, the temporalities that allotment (and U.S. policy more broadly) seeks to realize run up against the counterforce of extant Osage modes of becoming.

John Joseph Mathews's *Sundown* highlights this disjunction. The novel illustrates the imposition of U.S. legal geography, which is animated by a developmental momentum and which exerts warping effects on everyday Osage experience, and it shows the relation between such settler mappings and alternative Osage forms of sociospatiality that have their own complex temporal dynamics and that provide the basis for an experience of continuity within Osage peoplehood. Critics often have characterized the novel's portrayal of the ongoing legacy of allotment in terms of a struggle between tradition and assimilation, mediated by the figure of the mixed-blood.¹¹ However, not only does this approach overlook the ways Mathews links Osage placemaking to a pervasive sensation of time that occurs alongside that of allotment, but this interpretive frame in many ways reiterates the internal logic of allotment, in

which the movement of history itself immanently reaffirms the coherence and inevitability of the transition to settler social norms and the realization of the state's jurisdictional imaginary. Instead, the novel explores the complex interactions of two spatiotemporal formations, addressing how they interpenetrate and affect each other without becoming identical. Rather than merely indicating that settler institutions employed particular discourses of temporality as part of the effort to manage Native affairs and to legitimize the seizure of Indigenous lands (as discussed in chapter 2), the novel highlights how the influence of federal Indian law and administration actually materially alters the phenomenological experience of the present (and its felt relation to the past and future) as well as the framework within which change occurs. Reciprocally, in engaging with the ongoing force of allotment, *Sundown* suggests that amid these pressures to conform to a futurity defined by the state's extension of jurisdiction over Native peoples, another way of sensing time and space is also operative; the novel continually gestures toward an Osage sense of time irreducible to U.S. history and policy.¹²

The novel traces what it feels like to be made to experience yourself and your people as a temporal anomaly as part of the imposition of an alien geopolitical order, and in doing so, it refuses to take U.S. time as the frame through which to approach the enduring complexity of Osage peoplehood. In "From Difference to Density," Chris Andersen argues that a scholarly insistence on Indigenous "difference" from non-natives creates a situation in which "Indigenous complexity [is] reductively fixed in time and space through apparently objective, logical markers used to bear the discursive weight of our authenticity and legitimacy," and he proposes, instead, "beginning with the assumption that Indigenous communities are epistemologically *dense* (rather than just *different*)."¹³ In this vein *Sundown* refuses a static (anachronizing) assessment of relative Osage *difference* (from a settler standard taken as the norm) by instead highlighting the *density* of Osage experience. The novel does so by juxtaposing three modes of time: the implementation of allotment-era Indian law and policy, the felt sensations of an Osage man (Chal Windzer) coming of age during this period, and the duration of Osage occupancy in their homeland, attending to the emergence and persistence of modes of perception, experience, and memory that link Osage people to that place. In moving among these discrepant temporal frames, the novel illustrates how settler legal and administrative interventions generate everyday feelings of backwardness on the part of Native people. At the same time, Mathews offers a means of envisioning Osage modes of continuity and change without making them subject to settler legal geography and national history as their condition of intelligibility.

The text often marks the switch point between Euramerican-dominated and Osage temporalities and the conflicts generated by their lived incommensurability by indicating the presence of a feeling of *queerness*. The term signals a sense of being out of sync with Euramerican narratives of development while also referencing the ideological and institutional nexus of reproductive lineality, presumptively diminishing Indian bloodedness, and land loss constructed through the legalities of Osage allotment. In addition to marking the impressment of Osage people into federal Indian policy's heteronormative conceptions of nuclear family property holding and racial inheritance, Mathews's repeated invocation of queerness alludes to the extant linkage within sexological and popular discourses of people of color with perversity. *Sundown* plays on this set of associations to suggest how Chal's inability to fit in, including his supposed failure to be properly heterofamilially directed, might open onto a larger set of questions about how the imposition of U.S. jurisdiction becomes (chronobiopolitically) naturalized through the presentation of its reordering of ordinary life as merely expressive of the normal temporality of procreation. Conversely, the novel suggests how Indigenous modes of history and placemaking are dismissed by coding them as an enduring, racially transmitted incapacity for civilization.¹⁴ In narrating Chal's sensation of disorientation with respect to the events unfolding around him, the novel suggests that his feeling of queerness within the social formations created by allotment indicates less an Indian inability to adapt (one attributable to degrees of Indian bloodedness) than continuing Osage connections to the land they inhabit. The novel explores how the duration of that history of occupancy provides not only a perspective from which to challenge the self-evidence of the developmental trajectory envisioned by U.S. policy but also a resource on which Osage people draw, both explicitly and implicitly, in quotidian negotiations with the accreting material effects of allotment.

In the Time of Allotment

When narrated in terms of U.S. history, including that of Indian policy, Osage experience will appear as a blockage, as a drag on or diversion from a trajectory shaped by the orientations and momentum of settler colonial imperatives. Yet Mathews draws on aspects of modernist style to explore how allotment's discourse of civilizational advancement forcefully comes to inhabit everyday perception as a phenomenological frame.¹⁵ The text manipulates the reader's sense of pace by juxtaposing different representations of time in order to register the disjunction between the alterations in everyday Osage experience resulting from policy developments in the allotment era and the feeling of suspension

or stasis (not yet *doing something*) expressed by (some) Osage people. The text gestures toward the significant material changes made possible by extant federal policy, including the multiplication of derricks, the vast expansion in the non-native population, the increase in direct federal regulation, the exertion of control over Osage governance, and the imposition of Oklahoma statehood. It also foregrounds Chal's and others' related sense of stasis, of an apparent inability to gather momentum toward any productive endeavor or goal. The text juxtaposes that feeling of incipency and/or immobility with what it terms "the Great Frenzy" (266), referring to the profound effects on early twentieth-century Osage people of their wealth.¹⁶

Osage ways of relating to place and attendant expressions of peoplehood continue to provide the frame of reference for ordinary sensation, even as the impositions of the allotment era seek to reorder quotidian Native affects and practices by replacing the durable networks that shape them. In fact, the law passed in 1906 allotting the Osage reservation uniquely registers that friction. Unlike the Dawes Act (1887) or Curtis Act (1898), which instituted allotment for Native peoples generally outside Indian Territory and then for those in Indian Territory, this 1906 act institutionalizes continuing Osage communal claims to land, even if they are placed on the same timetable for elimination as other forms of legal recognition for a distinct legal status for Indians separate from regular U.S. property holding, policy, and jurisdiction.¹⁷ Beyond placing allotments in trust for twenty-five years, a common procedure that was supposed to protect Native people from the effects of a market economy they supposedly did not understand, the law specifies that "oil, gas, coal, or other minerals" are "reserved to the use of the tribe for a period of twenty-five years," with "the royalty" from those resources "to be paid to said tribe" on a per capita, quarterly basis, creating what has since come to be known as "the mineral estate."¹⁸ In addition, Osages had collective claims to the interest from the funds generated by the sale of their prior reservation in Kansas as well as "all moneys received from grazing lands." These provisions require an entity that will handle the affairs of the collectivity maintained by them, and the act creates a "tribal council," consisting of a principal chief, an assistant principal chief, and eight other members.¹⁹ Moreover, the law allocates 160 acres each to three reservation communities (at the towns of Pawhuska, Hominy, and Gray Horse) that are "set aside for the use and benefit of the Osage Indians, exclusively for dwelling purposes," also for "a period of twenty-five years."²⁰ Together, these provisions—a communal claim to subsurface rights, the creation of a governing body, and the acknowledgment of communities whose land remains unallotable—indicate the impress of extant forms of Osage people-

hood on the law, even as they are translated into forms more amenable to settler governance.²¹ The act's recognition of the persistence of collective Osage modes of occupancy and decision making points toward the presence of forms of emplacement that do not fit the trajectories of allotment.

From the outset, though, Mathews roots Chal's life in the history of U.S. intervention into Osage affairs. The text begins with Chal's birth in his parents' home near the agency buildings in the emerging town of Kihkah.²² Standing over the bed Chal's father, John, asserts of his newborn son, "He shall be a challenge to the disinheritors of his people. We'll call him Challenge" (4), situating Chal in an agonistic relation with those who would seek to disinherit Osage people from their lands. However, neither John nor the narrator makes clear the terms or history of that process of expropriation, and not until later in the book does the question of allotment emerge, with John actually endorsing it. The narrator observes, "He talked about allotment more and more and said that in a few years there would be thousands of people in the new town of Kihkah which had grown out of the old Agency," and John often contrasts his enthusiasm with the resistance of other Osages: "If it hadn't been for the progressives on the council, they never would have been any allotment, if it was left up to the fullblood party" (44-45). Presenting himself as oriented toward the future, John casts the full-bloods as holding onto the past from sheer "stubbornness" (46).²³ As against John's sense "that something momentous was about to happen" that "would change the whole existence of people who lived at the Agency," the narrator notes that "something" "never quite happened," further indicating that despite the impressions of "the Progressives" that allotment resulted from their agitations, "In reality the allotment was forced upon the tribe by people outside the reservation who had no particular interest in the welfare of the tribe" (49). Here the text locates non-native desire for access to the reservation as the principal drive behind allotment, providing a more concrete sense of the character of the disinheritance to which John initially alludes while suggesting John's own misapprehension of the stakes and motivations behind the policy for which he advocates. This confusion echoes John's earlier uncertainty about the meaning of "challenge." Before naming his son, he declares, "I live as a challenge," but the narrator remarks, "He didn't know what he challenged"; "it had never been definite" (3). Like his father, Chal occupies a collective relation of disinheritance but lacks the ability adequately to name that process, to fully articulate the nature of the challenge that faces "his people."²⁴

Mathews periodically reminds readers that the political economy in which the characters are enmeshed, which helps give rise to their particular structures of feeling, depends on U.S. governmental action to catalyze and sustain it.²⁵

After John and other members of the Osage council created by the 1906 act have been removed by the Secretary of the Interior because of their role in seeking to negotiate oil leases, the text notes, “Chal had never thought much about the Government except that it seemed always present, like an atmosphere. But its presence had been beneficent and protective he felt. However, if it could dismiss the Council . . . , it must be very sinister and more powerful than they thought,” adding, “He had visualized it as a great force which had overcome everything; but a force that was just and kindly. . . . A great bearded patriarch somewhere among the clouds, with outspread arms” (60).²⁶ More than simply affecting the lives of Osage people, U.S. legal and administrative interventions create “an atmosphere,” a presence that may appear “beneficent” but whose very ubiquity seems to crowd out alternatives. In addition, while Chal narrates the role of U.S. policy in Osage affairs as “just and kindly,” the government also exerts what he experiences as a potentially omnipresent “force,” godlike in both its scope and its dictation on high from elsewhere. Later, while on break from attending a fictionalized version of the University of Oklahoma, Chal observes of his continuing habit of using the term “gub’mint,” “in the old way of the reservation,” “He guessed it was because that word had always been associated with authority outside of the reservation; that potent thing which controlled the destinies of Indian agents, of school children, and controlled the payments. He knew he ought to say ‘our government’ or ‘the United States’” (165). These moments highlight the pervasiveness of Indian policy in shaping ordinary routine on Osage lands (including before allotment, although not as extensively), even as Chal also registers the alienness of that regime and the ways it seeks to solicit consent through positing a future that encompasses Native people as U.S. national subjects.²⁷

The suffusion of Osage space with settler administrative mappings and directives—including the allotments themselves, leases for grazing, leases for oil production, regulation of town sites, and regulation of inheritance—creates an environment in which merging into a U.S. “our” as part of a national process of becoming comes to seem the self-evident basis for understanding movement forward in time. In addition to mentioning in passing the absorption of the territory of the Osage Nation into the state of Oklahoma in 1907 (“the reservation had become a county in the new state—‘the biggest county,’ John had said proudly” [63]), the novel notes that while still in the air force after the war Chal “received letters from his father; short letters telling him about what the gub’mint had done or was gonna do” and that the town “had been recognized as a city of the first class, and the oil sales were larger and larger and would soon run into millions of dollars” (233).²⁸ Ongoing forms of fed-

eral involvement—“what the gov'mint had done or was gonna do”—provide the impetus for impressions of progress in Kihekah. In this vein, during the process of choosing either town sites or land plots just before the formal passage of allotment, John says to Chal “something about his ‘seein’ history being made’” (47–48), suggesting that for John, and implicitly for Chal, history itself becomes associated with the privatization of land as part of the broader implementation of U.S.-sanctioned progress—a maneuver that resonates with the operation of the treaty system as discussed in the previous chapter. Rather than indicating a particular Osage or mixed-blood conflict with respect to modern life, something like a conflict of “values” or “cultures,” Chal’s emotional orientations register the impact of settler temporal narratives given the proliferation and materialization of such narratives in the government-initiated remapping of Osage space.²⁹

The novel suggests how dominant discourses of time translate Indianness as a form of nondevelopment, gesturing toward the legal dynamics of “competency” and the key role it plays in the administrative architecture of allotment. Throughout the novel Chal compares himself to other Osages his age, particularly his childhood playmates Sun-on-His-Wings and Running Elk, who initially attend college with him but who leave soon thereafter (refusing to take part in a fraternity ritual that involved paddling the pledges). Chal thinks that they “lacked the spirit of the times—lacked ‘get-up,’ as John expressed it. They seemed contented just to sit in the village and talk, like many of the other young men” (68). To choose not to engage in pursuits associated with business and to continue to dwell in places explicitly marked as belonging to the Osage collectively (“the village”) means having a somewhat recumbent relation to time—lacking “spirit” or “get-up”—such that one’s activities do not in fact count as activity but as immobility, inertia, sloth.³⁰ Further, when Chal returns to the reservation from college, he “was disappointed in his friends [including Sun-on-His-Wings] because it seemed that they didn’t have any ambition”: “He was the only person not doing something except the mixedbloods and the fullbloods, but he believed that there wasn’t much interest in them—he certainly didn’t want to be like them. He knew that he ought to be doing something. Of course he had never in all his life done anything” (162). Turning away from Indianness provides the precondition for advancing in a version of time defined by settler interests and imperatives, explaining the otherwise logically incoherent description of twenty-plus years of life as devoid of activity (“never . . . done anything”). To have any degree of Indian blood seems, by definition, to indicate a pervasive and intractable inactivity due to a lack of “ambition,” but this supposed turning away from opportunity and possibility appears

as such only within the context of Chal's experience of "ought," the impulsion toward progress—toward citizenship—animated by the force of settler policy.

One of the central ways that "ought" is materialized in Osage life is through the legalities of competency. The allotment act of 1906 specifies that "at the request and upon the petition of any adult member of the tribe," the Secretary of the Interior "may issue to such member a certificate of competency, authorizing him to sell and convey any of the lands deeded him by reason of this act, except his homestead" (the first 160-acre plot allotted).³¹ To be *competent* one must offer evidence of the capacity to engage in extant commercial relations of sale, money management, credit, and debt, and successfully doing so illustrates that one has crossed a civilizational threshold, has reached a state of advancement such that one can participate fully in the present of the nation.³² Being competent, though, further means losing federal trust status for most of the land one holds (the nonhomestead part of one's allotment). Withdrawal of such recognition, cast as the wished-for achievement of fee simple ownership, makes that land fully fungible as well as taxable as private property by the state and federal governments. By the mid-1930s between a quarter and a third of the Osage reservation had passed into non-Osage hands as a result of the voluntary sale of land (often either to avoid taxes on it or to pay existing debts), inheritance by non-native spouses, and the auctioning of allotted plots to satisfy taxes.³³ Conversely, those Osages not deemed competent come under the authority of non-native "guardians" as determined and regulated under Oklahoma state law, and under an act of Congress in 1912, all of the moneys due to such "restricted" Osages would be paid to the guardians on their behalf, a policy reaffirmed in a law in 1921 that specified that those without certificates of competency or guardians could receive only \$1,000 quarterly (regardless of what they actually were due based on extant Osage Nation funds).³⁴ The often-stifling oversight by guardians, the extraordinary banality and extremity of guardians' fleecing of their clients, and the statutory curtailment of access to the wealth increasingly generated by oil production incentivized the pursuit of competency, further driving the loss of land in the ways already noted.³⁵

Sundown registers the multiple kinds of violence made possible by implementing this policy framework, ordered as it is around institutionalized narratives of Osage maturation into a capacity for private property holding. John's murder by bandits in an attempt to steal his new car occasions the novel's commentary on the emergence of the guardian system and the implications of dissolving Osage territory into a series of individual claims, as opposed to it being under the jurisdiction of Osage national governance. While the novel does not indicate directly whether John and Chal have certificates of competency,

it suggests that they would, given their ability to access their own wealth for various purposes and Chal's inheritance from his father absent any mention of its mediation by non-natives. However, when Chal's mother narrates how his father died, since all Chal knew was the fact of John's death via a telegram he received while still away in the air force, she intersperses the events of the homicide with discussion of the appointment of guardians for "restricted" Osages. After noting, "They found his pistol in his hand," she recounts, "The agent said that white people in town could be guardians for young Osages and they will not have their money long, I believe," and after a brief pause she continues, "Your father said that the gov'mint would not let these white people cheat Indians, but they have done it all the time" (235), although she later suggests, "I believe your father did not believe this. I believe his tongue said this so that his heart could hear it" (236). The superintendence of whites over those Osages not deemed competent is part of broader patterns of *cheating*, with the government enabling this individualized but cumulatively quite sizable project of resource extraction. In addition, the distinction Chal's mother makes between John's "tongue" and "heart" suggests a disconnection between the kinds of sentiments promoted by allotment policy, with its promise to inculcate "civilized" tendencies, and the experience of being subjected to alien rule by the U.S. "gov'mint." Chal's mother does not differentiate the program of resource theft enabled by the temporalities of competency from the murderous assault on John and the taking of his car. John's protest against his wife's warning about the prominence of white bandits is that "it is a civilized country now" (237).³⁶ The text ironically indicates that the putative *civilizedness* of Osage territory in the wake of allotment—with its subdivision of the land into privately held (and often salable) units and the dismantling of a collective Osage capacity to protect themselves through their own exertion of jurisdiction—is what unleashes the potential for attacks on Osage people.

Beyond noting the pervasiveness of allotment's effects and the implications of its temporal narratives for Osage well-being, the novel further explores how the significant alterations in the landscape and sociality of the reservation help generate forms of temporal affect. Without specifying quite who is the subject of the feeling addressed, the text reveals, "As the years went by, the fevered expectancy seemed to increase. Nothing was certain and calm any more, but the atmosphere was a-tingle with uncertainty; a thrilling uncertainty which would some day evolve into a glorious certainty. Each day brought more news of something about to happen" (61). This permeating sensation of expectancy constitutes an "atmosphere" that echoes the atmosphere of government presence. Or, rather, the latter makes possible and secures a range of non-native

investments in Osage wealth and territory that intensify exponentially owing to the vast expansion of oil leases and related income from the mid-1910s onward. As “the black derricks crept farther west” from the initial sites on the eastern part of the reservation, people had a “feeling in their hearts that the indefinite glory was not far off now”: “they talked about the future . . . which was sure to be glorious, though its particular glory was vague” (74). This sense of the future emerges out of the potential for various kinds of commercial development enabled by Osage oil, whose bounty can be directed into private accumulation of various sorts because of the United States’ dismantling of Osage sovereignty and constitutional governance both before and through allotment.³⁷

The novel suggests, then, that this shared structure of “feeling in their hearts” can be traced to the shifted frame of reference incited by allotment policy. The sense of “fevered expectancy” among Osage people, though, signals less an accomplished transformation than the inculcation of particular ways of turning toward the future, ones that are themselves partial and vexed. While in college, Chal “decided he would be a business man and amount to something in Kihekah,” further observing when he goes back to the reservation, “Everybody seemed to be doing something,” and “Everyone talked about oil” (161). The felt need to do or be “something” gains meaning and momentum from the commercial networks propelled by oil production. That material reordering of life in and around the reservation generates an emotional trajectory toward a particular kind of sociality endorsed by U.S. policy. The narrator indicates that Chal “wanted to be identified with that vague something which everybody else seemed to have, and which he believed to be civilization” (281), earlier noting that “he was proud of the new paved streets and the tall buildings that had been built in his absence” while in the air force during World War I (237). Correlating this alteration of the built environment with civilization presents the changes in Osage space as progress in time, as advancement from a benighted past toward the potentials of an enlightened tomorrow. From this allotment-induced vantage point, the alterations in Osage life brought by oil production and its economies seem less a historical shift within Osage sociality to which individual Osages are more or less attracted, as with any form of change, than a break with Osage ways that appear as *uncivilized* and of the past—as a stasis against which to register the dynamism of civilized “doing.” However, rather than providing a clear path by which to transition from the one to the other, existing circumstances produce a kind of affective *vagueness*, an impression of being outside of time (on the cusp of “something” “about to happen”). The novel suggests how the allotment-era reconfiguration of the geopolitics of Osage sovereignty and the topography of everyday life provides momentum for particular feelings of

modernness, which are experienced as necessarily a renunciation of a sense of Osage identity even as the contours of the future toward which Chal ostensibly is moving remain elliptical at best. These feelings suggest the influence exerted on him by the “history” he was “‘sein’ . . . being made,” yet whose contours remain amorphous and ill fitting within his everyday perceptions—the “vague something” about which he hears so much “talk” and which he feels as an indistinct, if palpable, presence.

However, the novel does not engage with the differential gender effects of such temporal narratives or the gendered terms of competency, presenting the sense of the need to be doing “something” in “business” as if it applied equally to all Osages rather than operated through a postallotment gendered division of labor in which women would not normatively be imagined as wage workers or entrepreneurs. Moreover, Chal’s mother—who does not speak during much of the narrative, to whom Mathews never gives a name, and who stands as the only significant female Osage character in the novel—serves as a contrast to John, providing a kind of placeholder for the persistence of an alternative Osage sensibility in spaces other than the three reserved villages (which will be discussed in greater detail later). Through this character, the text extends the conventional tendency to cast women as the bearers of tradition even as Mathews raises questions about the temporality of that particular concept. Thus, the account the text provides of the sociopolitical effects of allotment and the affective dynamics that attend its implementation remains deeply masculinist by both making men’s experience paradigmatic of Osage response writ large and positioning Chal’s mother as a counterpoint to that story.³⁸

Emplaced Silence

Addressing contemporary Osage processes of constitution making, Jean Denison argues for a conception of “entanglement” that “calls attention to the inherent power dynamics within the ongoing colonial context” of Osage life “without erasing [Osage exertions of] agency,” “understanding settler colonial forces as having a varied, dynamic, and uneven impact across space and time” while also “negat[ing] the easy divide of colonized and colonizer.”³⁹ However, if “entanglement” points toward the ongoing effects of settlement and their unevenness (and thus the ability of the Osage people to take up tools of settler governance, like constitutions, and mobilize them in the service of Osage self-determination), might settler colonial fields of force be understood as not simply moving “across space and time” but altering them, seeking to reorder Indigenous spatiotemporal formations? As Russell West-Pavlov observes, “alternative

temporalities remain latent and active under the threshold of linear time and its all but ubiquitous stranglehold,” or in Dipesh Chakrabarty’s terms, challenging the Enlightenment vision of time as singular and linear involves recognizing “a plurality of times existing together” that indicate “a disjuncture of the present with itself,” such that we may acknowledge that there are varied “ways of being through which we make the present manifold” that cannot be resolved into a universal, singular time.⁴⁰ In this vein Mathews draws attention to ongoing Osage relations to place that provide the frame of reference for collective (if not explicitly articulated or necessarily homogeneous) processes of becoming, and the novel uses figures of silence to illustrate that shared background, suggesting the density of everyday Osage perception and duration—including the ways connections to the land exert their own spatiotemporal force.

Osage oil wealth testifies to a collective Osage territoriality preserved in the provision of the act passed in 1906 that “reserved to the use of the tribe” all “oil, gas, coal, or other minerals” found on the reservation.⁴¹ Chal’s father, John, dismisses this clause, indicating in passing, “We had to let Running Horse and his fullblood party have that provision about the minerals, so’s tu git the allotment bill through” (50). However, if Chal “has never in all his life done anything,” that fact can be traced to the wealth generated by Osage lands. The text notes, “The payments in royalties to the members of the tribe on the roll became larger and larger as the oil production increased” (62), adding, “There was nothing to do except talk. Their incomes were so large now that they didn’t think of working at anything; in fact, they had never worked except by spurts when some enthusiasm came over them” (75). As a result of their quarterly income, especially that generated by royalties from oil, holders of Osage headrights do not need to engage in wage labor in order to have revenue to meet their expenses and fulfill their desires. U.S. Indian policy provided the frame in which leases for production were negotiated, transposing Osage sovereignty and land tenure into a form amenable to large-scale resource extraction. Yet the Osage Nation successfully fought to retain collective rights to the mineral estate, and in the novel’s representation, the funds generated by the oil economy facilitate forms of everyday action (the “talk[ing]” and forms of “enthusiasm” that do not count as “anything”) that are not consistent with the kinds of interactions and modes of inhabitation envisioned and incited by allotment’s privatizing imaginary.⁴²

The existence of the mineral estate expresses a shared Osage relation to place that continues to provide a basis for common experiences of time, indicating the duration of peoplehood as well as the momentum of persistent affective connections that are irreducible to allotment-era initiatives. Chal “remem-

bered that his father had said that an Indian is not a wanderer—that people said they were nomads, but that no one loved his native soil more than Indians” (234), and during Chal’s time in the sweat lodge, Chief Watching Eagle, Sun-on-His-Wings’s father, amplifies this sensation of an enduring connection to the “soil”: “We must have time to keep our place on earth. . . . Our children must keep place on earth. If we think all time of these troublous things, we will not have time to think of other things. We will not have time to keep our place on earth” (275). Like the indefinite “something” for which Chal often longs, the project of “keep[ing] our place” also involves activity within time, not simply the absence of productive endeavor. The insistence on the time of “business” as the only activity that counts as “anything” displaces the work and ongoing engagement necessary to maintain *place*, (re)making and sustaining the spatial matrix of Osage peoplehood. While from the perspective of U.S. policy the mineral estate indexes a residual geography of peoplehood, one anachronistically retained so as to facilitate certain kinds of resource extraction, it instead appears here to condense a persistent process through which an Osage “we” is (re)constituted as a landed entity—as an entity whose regeneration in time depends on an active connection to the “earth” they inhabit.

Sundown presents that interdependence less as an idea or principle in which Osages believe than as the animating material context from which Osage peoplehood continues to emerge. Foregrounding the problem of “hav[ing] time” for the labor of preserving Osage continuity in their homelands suggests the difficulty of prioritizing it among contemporaneous demands, but this phrasing also gestures toward the notion that such activity entails a kind or sense of time incommensurate with the “troublous” imperatives of U.S. policy.⁴³ As discussed earlier, the novel plays on the disjunction between the significant, forced reorganization of Osage political economy in a fairly short period and the felt sense of (some) Osages of being unable to move toward the “something” of allotment-projected progress. The text further contrasts these temporal framings with a third temporality: the duration of Osage peoplehood experienced through inhabitation on the land. More than serving as a blankness onto which various persons and populations can project concepts and cartographies, the territory exerts pressures on those who live there, producing effects that influence the contours, character, textures, trajectories, and rhythms of human sociospatiality. The text notes of the spread of the oil derricks, “At the tip of the westward movement, half a dozen little towns grew up; not out of the earth like mushrooms, as they were not of this part of the earth; they had no harmony with the Osage. Later they were like driftwood carried in from strange lands on a high tide and left stranded when the tide went out” (303). The non-native infrastructure

that emerges out of petro-capitalism ill fits “this part of the earth,” appearing as something borne from somewhere else and left abandoned in an alien land. The narrator suggests that these towns do not belong because they arise suddenly and have no enduring connection to this territory, their *strangeness* bespeaking the absence of a history that would accommodate them to and integrate them within this place. Such discordance contrasts with the ongoing set of relationships generated by Osage inhabitation over (at least) hundreds of years.⁴⁴ In using the term “harmony,” though, Mathews is suggesting less a state of sustained equilibrium, or something like an ability to commune with the land, than an extended process by which the multiplicity of elements of the territory (themselves changing) collectively exert influence on Osage life-ways.⁴⁵ The passage in its syntax emphasizes that process of becoming in tune with the dynamics of “this part of the earth,” positioning “the Osage” as the object of *with* instead of the land. That substitution suggests less that Osage people are equivalent to or merely an extension of a generic nature than that the time frame of their habitation here has forged a connection in which they have been affected by the particular nonhuman dynamics of this region, such that Osages have a relationship to this place that settlers do not.

This storying of the connections between Osage territoriality and experiences of time, though, does not take the form of defending Native political authority per se. In *Tribal Secrets* Robert Warrior observes that the “real problem” the text addresses is “a community having severely limited ability to make choices regarding its own future and the effect of that on a typical individual within the community,” and he further notes, “Having lived during the period when the United States still recognized, however reluctantly, the fullness of Osage sovereignty, Chal internalized the maturing values that sovereignty allows.”⁴⁶ Read in this way, the novel suggests an only semiconscious awareness of “Osage sovereignty,” in which Chal has intimations of “values” that have been suppressed through allotment and the operation of the administrative apparatus of Indian policy more broadly. Yet the idea of “mak[ing] choices regarding . . . [the] future” exceeds the question of juridical sovereignty, pointing toward what I have characterized as temporal sovereignty: in this case, the ability of Osage people to have their own modes of becoming not constrained or regulated by settler interventions, interests, and imperatives.

More than “values,” which might be understood as precepts or philosophies, the novel suggests the presence of a nonconscious frame of reference that guides everyday forms of perception. In suggesting how the process of “keep[ing] our place on earth” and achieving “harmony” with “this part of the earth” becomes part of Chal’s ordinary experience of his body, the text suggests that he regis-

ters the legacy of collective Osage duration, which provides an orienting sensory background. With respect to Chal's life "on the prairie" as a child, the text notes, "Behind these impressions would be the silence, the tranquility of his home. Always he remembered the silence, and though he grew more loquacious as he learned to say meaningless things, he had a reverence for it as long as he lived; even when he had assumed that veneer which he believed to be civilization" (12–13). Here silence points to an unspeakable presence, or, rather, a set of connections, experiences, sensations that are too quotidian to be put into words, that provides the unarticulated background for Chal's conscious awareness. The "veneer" of "civilization" sits uneasily atop the phenomenology of "home," the former comprising activities and orientations that Chal has "learned" in the context of a postallotment Osage life and education but that do not provide the primary contextual frame for his sensation of the world. This image of layering suggests the density of Osage experience—the presence of multiple spatiotemporal formations whose coexistence and nonequivalence generate a process of negotiation between conflicting forces. However, that process, and the ways it indexes Osage experiences of time irreducible to U.S. policy, occurs at the level of sensation rather than discourse. Arguing in "Felt Theory" that "emotional knowledges" function as "community knowledges," Dian Million observes that such expressions do "not always 'translate' into any direct, political statement."⁴⁷ Mathews illustrates how particular forms of affect that do not present in "political" terms, and that are not necessarily the subject of consciousness, provide the background against which events figure as such. These modes of sensation testify to orientations that arise out of an enduring relation to Osage lands, what Glen Coulthard has called "grounded normativities."⁴⁸

Rather than offering such feelings as the basis for a juridical framework or as leading toward a particular system of political representation, the novel traces the difficulties of representing the frame of reference in which Osage becoming occurs. In *Sundown* Osage people remain unintelligible to U.S. officials unless they speak in terms of the desired "something" of progress (championed in and through allotment). Otherwise, they are portrayed as prepolitical subjects who need to be trained into proper modes of life and governance. Instead of exploring how to craft political discourses or institutions that could overcome these conditions of (or impediments to) registering Osage political voice and agency, though, the novel's emphasis on silence points to the existence of shifting Osage ways of being that are not dependent on the effort to be heard or understood by settlers. Silence in the text is neither the refusal nor the inability to say something. In *Manifest Manners* Gerald Vizenor argues that "shadows

are that silence and sense of motion in memories,” adding that “the shadows are the silence in heard stories, the silence that bears a referent of tribal memories and experience.”⁴⁹ Silence indexes collective, nonconscious dispositions, sensations, and trajectories that bear Osage memories and relations with each other and with the land, implicitly providing the conditions for Osage ways of reckoning with the possible. Mathews’s emphasis on silence as indicative of the felt presence of Osage histories and connections to place—of distinct forms of orientation and momentum—resonates with Bergson’s discussion of duration as “qualitative multiplicity,” in terms of both the character of time itself as movement (rather than being divisible into countable moments or points) and the attendant potential for disparate forms and flows of temporal experience that cannot be cross-cut by a universal sense of simultaneity. In *Time and Free Will* Bergson observes, “Sometimes we fix our mind on the absolute *regularity* of . . . phenomena, and from the idea of regularity we pass by imperceptible steps to that of mathematical necessity, which excludes duration,” and in this way the “regularity” of Osage inhabitation can appear as a static fact, potentially undone by allotment, rather than as a persistent process of “keep[ing] our place on earth”—an active and also changing relation to place that provides the background for conscious intention. Bergson notes in *Matter and Memory* that “the duration *wherein we act* is a duration wherein our states melt into each other;” a movement and *melting* of sensations that provides the unnamed context for action.⁵⁰ In this way Osage duration can be thought of as less a specific amount of time residing on this particular “soil” than a quality of inhabitation and relation that gives implicit historical density to contemporary perceptions.

The Osage notion of “moving to another country” recognizes and embraces the need for periodic alterations in established patterns of social life while still affirming the unbroken persistence of Osage peoplehood.⁵¹ The characterization of change as a shift in location suggests the significance of place as a frame of reference through which to understand the potential for action in the world, and the alteration of existing ways of being entails a kind of remapping that involves reacquiring an implicit, orienting sense of emplacement. Moreover, such transformations in Osage practice may appear abrupt but tend to operate through a subtler transition whereby old elements and dynamics merge into new ones even as they are modified in the process. For example, the most “traditional” elements in *Sundown*—the practices that seem to provide the most explicit alternatives to allotment-animated forms of sociality and affect—are themselves a product of changes in Osage life and belief occurring within the decade or so before Chal’s (and Mathews’s) birth. The central Osage religious

practice readers witness is the Peyote ceremony, which gained prominence in the early 1890s after being brought to the Osage by a Caddo medicine man named John Wilson and which became institutionalized as the Native American Church in 1918. Similarly, the I'n-Lon-Schka, the dance in which Sun-on-His-Wings participates and that Chal yearns to join (which I will discuss further in the next section), came to the Osage in the 1880s from the Poncas and Kaws, neighboring peoples closely related to the Osage.⁵² Although in adopting these practices (especially the Peyote religion) Osages called for the abandonment of the prior religious system, organized around patrilineal and clan-based priesthoods, that seeming revolution in Osage social structures can be understood as carrying forward in altered ways a range of existing Osage modes of social organization and meaning making.⁵³ Moreover, these developments in Osage history can be understood as related to the effects of U.S. policy, particularly the official removal from their lands in Kansas to Indian Territory and the mounting interference in Osage governance that led to the adoption of a constitution in 1881. Given the ways the I'n-Lon-Schka and the Peyote religion resonate with previous modes of Osage governance (including the fact that the I'n-Lon-Schka draws on clan associations and prominent leaders in both it and the Peyote religion came from the ranks of former chiefs), one might understand their emergence around the time of the constitution of 1881 as a process by which formal Osage governance comes to be somewhat divorced from modes of internal social order that maintain an adapted continuity with earlier formations.⁵⁴ The ability to respond to non-native displacements and impositions (the gravitational force exerted on everyday life by settler institutions), though, need not be understood as displacing a place-based experience of duration through which settler presence, discourses, and institutions are perceived—a *silent* background.

Thus, while allotment and its effects exerted pressure on ordinary Osage social formations, and that force had significant affective consequences for Osage people (as discussed in the previous section), the notion of a break in Osage time between tradition and the modernity of settler imposition cannot capture the character and continuity of the “silence” and its influence on Osage experiences of time. When attending the Peyote ceremony led by Watching Eagle, Chal “sat there for several hours, and it seemed odd to [him] that he could sit thus, silently and without moving. He was fascinated and calmed. There was a complete absence of urges” (269). The silence of the ceremony resonates with the “tranquility” generated by his earliest, and not consciously remembered, sensations of home. At this moment, the tensions produced by the disjunction between this affective complex and the allotment-animated

imperatives of civilization become stilled, such that Chal feels a sense of what the text describes as “harmony” rather than the need to express an undefined “something.” Mathews highlights the momentum of Osage peoplehood and the nonconscious effects of dwelling in that place, including its influence on quotidian modes of sense making—an experience of what can be characterized as temporal sovereignty. In trying to console White Deer, whose son Running Elk (Chal’s childhood friend) had been murdered by whites, Watching Eagle says to him:

Here are graves of your grandfathers. You came out of this earth here. The life of this earth here comes out of ground into your feet and flows all over your body. You are part of this earth here like trees, like rabbit, like birds. Our people built their lodges here. That which came out of the ground into their feet and over their bodies into their hands, they put into making of their lodges. They made songs of that which came out of ground into their bodies. Those lodges were good and beautiful. Those songs were good and beautiful. Thoughts which they had were good because they came out of ground here. That ground is their mother. (274)

The reference to the “graves of your grandfathers” gestures toward the temporal scope of inhabitation, suggesting continued activity over a multigenerational time span. Such invocations of the quality of duration indicate the land’s exertion of influence on Native practices: the “life of this earth” as it manifests in and around the people over time affects their “making of . . . lodges,” the kinds of songs they sing, and the thoughts they have.

That environment operates not as a passive stage for human sociality, or a container that holds various resources on which people might draw, but as itself a force that conditions the persistent (re)emergence of Osage peoplehood—the ongoing “flow” of the land into and through Osage people.⁵⁵ At times, though, the novel’s depiction of Osage dwelling may seem to partake in modernist strands of primitivism in which Native peoples function as figures of a lost ancient wisdom, and this passage runs the risk of offering a fairly essentializing portrait of Osage identity that depends on a strict sense of filiation to past practices.⁵⁶ *Sundown*’s discussion of the Osage people as being in “harmony” with “this part of the earth” and having bodies that bear “the life of this earth here” may seem to cast historical change as loss while also emphasizing an unbroken genealogical chain of transmission that in its biological overtones may seem fairly racialized and racializing. The text’s portrayal of an embodied relation to place, however, functions as less a claim about the persistence of a static tradi-

tion than the powerful effects of locational continuity—the shaping stimulation of place on human action.⁵⁷

Being “part of” this place involves less the retrieval of something from the past than a way of occupying the present that bears within it the momentum of a much longer time frame than that posited in and materialized through federal Indian policy. Although delivered in a somewhat elegiac tone, this moment speaks to the generativity of “this earth” and the patterns of inhabitation and relation that have arisen out of Osage living and storying in this place. The narrator observes, “Most of the older Indians, those who were influenced very slightly by that which they called the Great Frenzy, lived their daily lives as the fathers had lived. . . . The only change being that they now lived in houses with modern conveniences; radios, telephones, bathrooms and modern furniture” (266). The text here highlights a sensation of continuity that has to do less with the maintenance of a particular kind of lifestyle (as signaled by specific forms of housing or the absence of certain kinds of infrastructure or technology) than with occupying time in ways at odds with the developmental narrative animating “the Great Frenzy” of allotment and oil production. The novel envisions ways of moving toward the future—of moving to a new country—that are not coincident with the privatizing geography of Indian policy, the model of civilizational maturation (and competence) it instantiates, or the ambition for “business” it seeks to incite.⁵⁸

The novel suggests the effectivity of the intensifying settler pressure on quotidian Osage dispositions, affects, and interactions while still indicating the presence of forms of Osage emplacement and attendant modes of temporality that remain askew with respect to the kinds of sociospatiality materialized through U.S. policy.⁵⁹ The silence remains as a nonconscious, orienting frame of reference. During the Peyote ceremony that Chal attends close to the end of the novel, Watching Eagle recalls:

“Long time ago there was one road and People could follow that road. They said, ‘There is only one road. We can see this road. There are no other roads.’ Now it seems that road is gone, and white man has brought many roads. But that road is still there. That road is still there, but there are many other roads too. . . .

“The road of our People is dim now like buffalo trail across prairie. We cannot follow this road with our feet now, but we can see this road with our eyes, and our hearts will go along this road forever.” (271)

Drawing on the idiom of the road that was central to Peyotism, the passage suggests a specific connection to place that has become habituated over time

but that also indicates a relation to the future, a way of moving toward tomorrow that has its own momentum.⁶⁰ While that road “seems” as if it were “gone,” replaced by a disorienting settler geography that makes the landscape incoherent with respect to what it had been before, the previous road is “still there.” In this way it resembles the figure of the river in Deborah Miranda’s work, discussed in chapter 1: “It is a river where no gallon of water is the same gallon it was one second ago. Yet it is still the same river. . . . Even if the whole is in constant change. In fact, *because* of that constant change.”⁶¹ More than a memory, “the road” continues as a sensory presence, “dim” yet perceivable by the “eyes” and “hearts” of those attuned to recognize it. From the perspective of this account of Osage territoriality, Chal’s sensations (including his dreaming and his yearning to dance, which will be discussed in the next section) suggest the affective imprint of that collective road on him as a guide in moving toward the future. The road helps connect his personal experience of time to the collective duration of Osage peoplehood—the qualitative flow of becoming in the process of moving to another country. The text notes of this moment, “The silence that came over the lodge rang in Chal’s ears. He wasn’t aware of how long the silence lasted, but he was happy and contented, sitting there” (271). If silence indicates a shared set of place-based orientations, without necessarily becoming the foregrounded object of awareness, the road similarly suggests a shared process of placemaking that helps animate Osage self-understandings even as settler populations, institutions, and mappings exert forms of force that alter the material dynamics of space and time on the reservation.

In addition, the novel does not characterize the effects of place as due to a special, racialized *Indianness* that enables them to commune with the land. Instead, the text juxtaposes the intervals of Osage and settler inhabitation so as to highlight the newness of non-native presence, the formation of their life patterns in relation to another space, and their refusal to engage with the qualitative dynamics of *this* country. On his train ride from Kihekah to the university, Chal observes of the towns in between, “In the distance there was haze, and the red of the earth showing along the edges of the ravines was not out of harmony. Pleasing, until some farmhouse came into view surrounded by out-houses and wire fences; houses that looked like excrescences and tinted by the red dust; houses lonely in the midst of space” (89). The narrator adds, “Chal did not know the reason for this ugliness; this ugliness which white men seemed to produce. He did not know that these buildings were expressions of a race still influenced by an environment thousands of miles across the ocean, and that these foreign expressions were due to the fact that the race was not yet in adjustment with the new environment” (90). The “ugliness” of settler infra-

structure, and by extension the alienness of settler sociality, can be traced to the ways it bears within it the influence of an environment elsewhere. Whites' buildings and practices have not yet *adjusted* to the conditions of this place, and that absence of harmony produces the sense of them as adrift, as lacking any connection to the (Osage) space they inhabit. As Watching Eagle later suggests, "White man came out of ground across the sea. His thoughts are good across that sea. His houses are beautiful across that sea, I believe. . . . But he did not come out of earth here. His houses are ugly here because they did not come out of this earth" (274). More than implying an inherent (racializing) connection between certain populations and landmasses, these moments underline the relative absence of settler adaptation to Native homelands—non-natives do not have "harmony" with this place and, thus, cannot experience the "silence" and "tranquility" of it as "home."⁶² Here the novel gestures toward the influence exerted by the land over an extended period, which cannot be encompassed, acknowledged, or institutionalized within the foreshortened frame used by the settler state to narrate (its) history. From this perspective, non-natives might come to have a relationship with this place, but, to do so, they will need to engage with the specificities of this environment, including the presence of the Osage people—their prior inhabitation as well as their stories, memories, and experiences. This critique of settler occupation lies less in presenting a version of "authentic" Osageness carried forward unchanged from the past (or in seeking to make Osage modes of life intelligible within non-native social or political formations) than in suggesting that the territory itself provides a frame of reference for Osage being and becoming, for Indigenous duration, in ways that remain incommensurate with the imperatives realized through U.S. policy and legal geography.

Reciprocally, through its use of the color red, the novel indicates how the material life brought by non-natives remains marked by the effects of seeking to dwell in this land. In addition to observing that the "red dust" on the houses Chal passes on the train is "ubiquitous" (90), he muses about the people he sees in a town near the university that they wear "red-tinted clothes, as though the Red Beds had marked them and were claiming them as their own; coloring them so that they would not be noticeable against the things which surrounded them," adding that "they were part of the life of the country, and this fact seemed to give them assurance" (101–2). The red clay of the soil clings to settler-built infrastructure in ways that testify to the continuing force of the land, as well as highlighting the lack of harmony between this place and recently imported and imposed elements, but the land also exerts some pressure on the personal and collective expressions of non-natives (their red clothing) in their effort to

make themselves feel “part of the life of the country” and to *assure* themselves of their belonging.⁶³ Moreover, these aspects of the novel are given further depth for readers familiar with the significance of red in Osage customs, as a way of figuring both fire and the movement of the sun.⁶⁴ The repeated mention of this color, then, indicates a consonance between Osage patterns of meaning making and inhabitation as well as signaling the potential effects of long-standing Osage ways of being on non-natives, if they would surrender themselves to the country and not seek to master it and its inhabitants through ubiquitous state-backed impositions and rearrangements. After Chal expresses his sense of the ugliness of white buildings and their dissonance with the landscape, the text notes, “He would not have dared suggest his thoughts to anyone; it would have been like a sacrilege and certainly unpatriotic. One believed in his country and his state, and accepted the heroics of the race for land in the new territory, and all the virtues of the Anglo-Saxon; the romantics and righteousness of their winning of the West, as taught by his history” (90). As with the earlier reference to the distribution of lands for allotment as history being made (47–48), history here indexes Anglo-Saxon progress in the conquest of “the West,” a narrative and experience of time that contributes to a “patriotic” investment in the legitimacy of the nation and its jurisdiction—the kind of national time discussed in the previous chapter. To feel otherwise indicates an affective response due to sustained practices and processes of habitation that provide the background for everyday perception and feeling, sensations with which settlers might become familiar if they were to open themselves to the “flow” of “this earth” rather than forcibly grafting “foreign expressions” onto it and the people(s) there.

Feeling Queer

Mathews’s representation of the coexistence of incommensurate spatiotemporal formations casts them neither as sealed off from each other nor as internally unchanging, instead suggesting how attending to experiences of time other than government-implemented modes of liberal progress undoes the self-evidence of state mappings and jurisdiction. Discussing the ways that Native governance has tended to follow patterns imposed by the United States, Mishuana Goeman observes, “By replicating abstract space in Native nation-building, Native communities move away from imagining new possibilities beyond th[ose] mapped out for Native people in settler societies,” later asking, “How do we uproot settler-colonial social and material maps that inform our everyday experiences?”⁶⁵ *Sundown* offers the potential for upsetting the maps

materialized through allotment by sketching modes of relation to place that are not oriented by the administrative logics, procedures, or cartographies of U.S. law. Space appears in the novel not as a quantum carved out from a regularized, homogeneous jurisdictional grid but as a site of accreting experience in which possibilities for Osage being and becoming emerge out of a transgenerational process of dwelling that provides the frame of reference for quotidian feeling and perception. The duration of inhabitation generates rhythms and trajectories that differ from those instituted through federal Indian policy. In detailing the discrepant forces acting on Osage people (in varied ways but ones that are not reducible to a vaguely defined *mixedness* or *betweenness*), Mathews offers no mediating, neutral third term through which they could be reconciled and evaluated; he refuses to provide something like an objective or absolute sense of “now” through which either set of inclinations could be cast as merely ideas or beliefs, as contrasted with the actual facts of modernity. Rather, these formations have overlapping spheres of influence that create disjunctive effects for Native people who live their intersection. In contrast to Charles Eastman’s restaging of national history in ways that emphasize Native presence, dispossession, and struggle (as discussed in chapter 2), *Sundown* highlights the quotidian feeling of a disjunction between Osage and dominant U.S. temporal framings, including the absence of a ready way of naming and explaining that sensation. *Queerness* emerges in the text as a way of naming the difficulties—the *density*—of inhabiting these discordant spatial and temporal configurations within the context of escalating settler colonial pressure and imposition.

The term queer tends to be used in the text to indicate Chal’s feeling that he has failed to embody non-natives’ notions of normality. The earliest use appears after his father’s white cousin Ellen calls him a “little savage!” for cutting the soldiers out of a picture of Christ’s crucifixion that she had given Chal; the narrator indicates, “His heart was broken. A queer world” (20). Later, when Chal notes the “ugliness” of the white buildings on the landscape and the “unpatriotic” character of this sensation, the text observes, “He kept this feeling subdued; kept it from bubbling up into the placid waters of his consciousness, so that nothing would disturb those waters to keep them from reflecting the impressions that ought to be mirrored, if one were to remain in step. He certainly didn’t want anyone to know that he was queer” (90). In addition, when considering Chal’s connection to one of his fraternity brothers, the narrator remarks, “Chal had always been inscrutable to Nelson, and he was ever careful in his relation with him. He thought himself queer, just as everyone else thought” (92), and before Chal goes to meet the members of one of the sororities on campus, the text notes, “At the last impression of his face in the mirror that evening,

he had seen a bronze face in black-and-white. . . . He had often wished that he weren't so bronze. It set him off from other people, and he felt that he was queer anyway, without calling attention to the fact" (117). These moments all suggest that feelings of queerness emerge in relation to Chal's and others' sense of his Indianness, indicating that he cannot fit in with settler expectations due to attributes—actions, thoughts, physical appearance—taken as indexing his identity as a Native person. To be “queer” here means failing to “mirror” non-native assumptions and modes of engagement (with other non-natives and their surroundings), creating forms of “inscrutable” oddity that point back to an elliptical kind of Indian difference. In this way the term captures Chal's affective experience of being askew—out of step—with respect to the rhythms and orientations of settler sociality.

Queerness in the novel marks the presence of a boundary, a threshold of translation between social fields, and its association with sexual deviance gestures toward a broader process whereby nonnuclear modes of family and household formation and non-reproductively directed forms of desire and pleasure are understood as expressive of ingrained, racialized tendencies toward backwardness. As Michael Snyder has argued, by the time *Sundown* was written the term queer already connoted sexual abnormality, and he further explores the various forms of homoeroticism that permeate the text, noting that “the absence of discourse on Chal's sexuality [in extant analyses of the novel] indicates a problematic silence.”⁶⁶ Yet, while bearing a sense of errant eroticism, the intimations of perversity surrounding Chal exceed the question of same-sex desire, drawing on extant associations of deviance with nonwhite populations as a sign of their lack of development toward civilization. Addressing the role of race in terminologies and genealogies of sexual abnormality, Marlon Ross argues, “While the perceived racial difference of an African or Asian male could be used to explain any putatively observed sexual deviance, racial sameness became ground zero for the observed split between heterosexual and homosexual Anglo-Saxon men,” “such that racial difference necessarily overdetermines the capacity for sexual deviance as a bodily affair.”⁶⁷ Similarly, Valerie Rohy suggests that the emergence of “straight time” as a “regular, linear, and unidirectional pattern” requires the production of “atavism”: “the fantasy of a straight time assailed by racial or sexual atavism actually produces the linear temporality that it takes as primary, the order that *has been disrupted* . . . by a perverse backwardness.”⁶⁸ Within late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century sexology and ethnology, the absence of nuclear family structures and lifelong, monogamous heteroconjugal desire marked people of color as less advanced. The chrononormativity of the nuclear family—its use as a means of naturalizing a particular ordering

time—was further materialized through a chronobiopolitics of race. Within emergent anthropological conceptual frames, which were increasingly mobilized within U.S. federal Indian administrative and policy discourses, resexual marital union was conjoined with the acceptance of private property and construction of non-kinship-related governance as (racialized) markers of progress toward the achievement of civilization.⁶⁹ From this perspective, Chal's queerness signals his supposed Indian atavism with respect to allotment-instituted norms while pointing to the transposition of long-standing aspects of Osage sociality into the language of perversity.⁷⁰

If the novel's refusal to marry Chal off by the end may indicate his homoerotic inclinations, it also may suggest a refusal to recapitulate the developmental trajectory of individual maturation, by which the spatial and temporal dynamics of federal Indian policy are normalized as simply the self-evident background for the unfolding of ordinary life. From within the logic of allotment, tribal property is to be divided up and transmitted along nuclear family lines, and centering conjugal couplehood as the atom of social life also provides the basis for defining the terms of racial genealogy (reproductive transmission from both parents of determinate quanta of Indian blood).⁷¹ These modes of inheritance served as cornerstones of the politics of Osage allotment, and in emphasizing the noncoincidence of Chal's experience with these ways of envisioning time, his out-of-step feelings of queerness, Mathews gestures toward both the continuing presence of an alternative spatiotemporal formation and the affective implications of inhabiting it amid the "atmosphere" created by ongoing (and intensifying) settler interventions. Over the course of the text, Chal has sexual feelings for and relationships with various women, but the plot does not single out one woman with whom he will find connubial bliss. The absence of such a romance plot contributes to the sensation of a lack of narrative development, operating as part of Mathews's use of modernist techniques to complicate the reader's understanding of time (as discussed earlier). More specifically, this apparent lack of personal maturation—such as his mother's viewing him at the end of the novel as "a little boy in breech clout and moccasins" (310)—suggests a suspension of the normative process of individual development, a dynamic highlighted by the novel's structure as a *bildungsroman*.⁷² From the perspective of the state-sponsored story of proper entry into adulthood, Chal's continued identification with the land and Osage peoplehood—often expressed in eroticized forms of dancing and dreaming (to which I will return shortly)—appears as a set of juvenile attachments to be abandoned. They are queer deviations from the trajectory of "straight time" toward privatizing (and conjugally directed) individuation. However, to the extent that

queerness in the text indexes not simply aberration but translation, a movement among varied social fields (albeit in ways that overwhelmingly privilege and make paradigmatic men's experience), it gestures toward the ways the time line of personal development posited in and materialized through allotment-era policy fails fully to reshape quotidian Osage experience.⁷³

More than pointing toward the survival of Osage "culture" as a residual formation that persists into a present otherwise defined in settler terms, Chal's queerness suggests a set of affective trajectories that offer the potential for other ways of reckoning the time of Osage peoplehood. In particular, his queer failure to "mirror" non-native norms (especially of progress toward marital union) suggests a different orientation to what Jean O'Brien has termed the "temporalities of race," in this case the ways Osage identity comes to be defined legally as the reproductive transmission of Indianness.⁷⁴ As discussed earlier, from 1906 onward the notion of *competency* was crucial in categorizing Osage persons and in making Osage land potentially available to non-natives through sale (even while the Osage retained a collective interest in the subsoil rights), and as of 1921, relative *bloodedness* became an additional, although not equivalent, way of determining the character of (the) Osage people. A law passed in that year removed all restrictions on allotted lands held by "adult Osage Indians of less than one-half Indian blood," and a congressional statute passed in 1929 mandated that the Secretary of the Interior give to all Osages "of less than one-half Osage Indian blood" a certificate of competency within the next decade, as well as "all of the balance appearing to his credit of accumulated funds."⁷⁵ These laws do not indicate a quantum of blood below which a person would no longer be considered Osage, restrict occupancy at the three communally held villages on the reservation based on blood, or gauge a person's ability to be a head-right holder in the mineral estate based on blood. They, however, do link the capacity for civilization (as represented by full participation in the market) to a calculation of biological Indianness and conceptualize an enduring relation to the land as an Osage person as being a function of relative bloodedness.⁷⁶ Thus, while not entirely pegging access to Osage lands and benefits to amounts of reproductively transmitted Indianness, federal Indian law and policy projects a generational process of de-Indianization whereby (the) Osage people will increasingly have fewer, and more atomized, claims to the land of the Osage reservation, with the exception of the existence of the mineral estate itself.

As noted earlier, though, many scholars have read *Sundown* as chronicling the particular plight of the mixed-blood struggling to negotiate the relation between tradition and modernity. This argument recirculates the logic of allotment-era policy with respect to the Osage by positing bloodedness as the

central criterion through which to assess relative change, itself plotted against a time line in which forward movement in time means leaving behind attachments to Osage collectivity. Moreover, such interpretations inaccurately characterize Chal's status. In light of the consolidation after 1921 of a significant legal distinction between Osages of one-half or more Indian blood and those of less than one-half, the terms "full-blood" and "mixed-blood" came to refer to those categories, respectively.⁷⁷ Given that the novel leads readers to believe that Chal's mother's blood is all Osage and informs us that his father is three-quarters Osage by blood (53), Chal's blood quanta would be seven-eighths, putting him within the full-blood category. Chal also likely would have a certificate of competency that would enable him to evade the restrictions on his control over property and funds to which he otherwise would be subject. Critical accounts of the novel, though, use his supposed identity as a mixed-blood as a way of naming his ostensibly intermediary position between an authentic Osage past and a settler-defined present, offering no discussion of the particular legal matrix in which these terms gain meaning and the exertion of (spatial and temporal) force through them.

If one refuses to treat such racial distinctions as self-evident, or as fully determinative of Osage perceptions, the fact that Chal's story does not tend toward procreative union suggests how his *queerness* opens onto other ways of registering the presence of Osage processes of becoming amid the intensities of settler interventions and remappings. Specifically, Chal's dancing and dreaming point to embodied experiences of a relation to place that do not fit the racially and reproductively inflected trajectory of personal development at play in allotment-era Indian policy. In this way, we might understand the novel's depiction of these actions and feelings as engaging in a form of what Elizabeth Freeman characterizes as erotohistoriography: "Erotohistoriography is distinct from the desire for a fully present past, a restoration of bygone times. Erotohistoriography does not write the lost object into the present so much as encounter it already in the present, by treating the present itself as hybrid. And it uses the body as a tool to effect, figure, or perform that encounter." She later adds that "enjoyable bodily sensations" can "produce forms of time consciousness—even historical consciousness—that can intervene into the material damage done in the name of development, civilization, and so on."⁷⁸ Chal's erotic sensations with respect to dancing and dreaming point toward his immersion in a feeling of duration that links his individual perception to implicit forms of historical experience (even when they do not explicitly rise to the level of consciousness *per se*), and the novel presents Chal's capacity for forms of pleasure as running counter to the modes of presentness generated within

allotment's fields of force. After Chal returns to the reservation in the wake of his military service, he begins to abuse alcohol, and during this time he brings a group of white women to one of the dances at "the village." "He knew how the dancers felt about people coming out to stare at them, yet they did nothing to stop or discourage it. They danced because they felt it impossible to give up that last expression of themselves" (252), and in bringing these non-natives, Chal "felt vaguely that he was betraying his people" (253). The dances, most likely the I'n-Lon-Schka, represent an "expression" of Osage peoplehood, a materialization of it for and by Osage people, rather than a cultural practice that illustrates Indian difference.⁷⁹ Chal experiences the dancing as tied to his felt need to connect to something that defies articulation: "as usual, he had a desire to join them. He had always felt that by joining them he could express that thing which came over him at times; that something which had to be expressed, but which he couldn't possibly put into words or actions" (257). To join them would entail him physically *expressing* a sense of Osage belonging, a "something" that is not equivalent to the future "something" for which various people in the novel are waiting. This "something" appears already present, but stifled or rendered mute.⁸⁰

Earlier in the text, before he leaves for college, Chal experiences a similar sense of constrained desire given form through his connection to the landscape of the prairie. After noting that Sun-on-His-Wings and Running Elk rode their ponies back to the village after school and that "they danced at the Roundhouse in the village every June and September" (68), the text observes that Chal "felt that there was something in him which must come out, and unable to find any other expression, he took action as a means, and raced his pony wildly as before" (70). In addition, in order to try to address "this thing within which he couldn't satisfy," "sometimes he surprised himself by breaking into an old war song" or swimming "until he could feel his legs growing weaker and weaker," and "one day he stripped off his clothes and danced in a storm and sang a war song. Sang and danced until he was almost exhausted and his body was wet with rain and sweat" (70). In these moments, "A mild fire seemed to be coursing through his veins and he felt that he wanted to sing and dance. . . . He felt that some kind of glory had descended upon him. . . . He wanted to struggle with something. . . . There seemed to be intense urges which made him deliciously unhappy" (73); "this mysterious unhappiness came to him only at times, and never except when he was alone on the prairie" (72). The sociality of the village, and the dances that are part of it, become a vehicle through which Chal perceives "urges" that are unsatisfied in other areas of his life and that emerge, without a language through which he can express them, when he is

alone on the land—outside of both Kihekah and the village. When experiencing a similar feeling in college, a yearning to swim naked in a nearby river, he demurs because “if someone did see him, they’d think he was crazy” (103). Here his queerness manifests as a set of sensations that tie him to particular Osage practices (singing and dancing) that are understood as at odds with the orientations inculcated through allotment-era policy and education, as well as tying him to the place of Osage peoplehood—the silence of the land and its orientations. The urges to dance and to engage with the landscape in ways not scripted by economic development become intertwined in Chal’s affective life, part of a single sensory and sensual matrix. When he seeks to dance on the prairie again close to the end of the novel, he fails to achieve a sense of release from what he cannot express, and the “sense of completeness” for which he struggles is described as “an orgasm of the spirit” (297). The novel cross-references Chal’s erotic relation to his own body and his surroundings with his (unsuccessful) attempt to engage with the land and his people in a way that will resolve his sense of being out of sync—an impression of aberrance generated by the pressure of settler expectations, institutions, and mappings.

Moreover, silence marks the disjunction between Chal’s sense of himself and non-native behavioral norms. The text observes of him while he is in college, “He had a feeling that the others found little interest in the things which he had to say, and naturally he became silent,” adding, “He was completely at a loss to understand their attitudes and their philosophies” (139). Mathews here emphasizes a white fascination with sex as a point of distinction: “He had never been able to see anything strange or unusual about mating. He had seen it all of his life among the hills, and to him it was a part of nature” (139). In this way Chal’s queerness emerges as less a particular sexual orientation than an orientation toward Osage sensations of emplacement (the silence “behind [his] impressions”) drawn from accreting experiences on the reservation.

Queerness in the novel indexes the density of Osage life, particularly the ways postallotment political economy racializes and renders anomalous sensations emerging from the dynamics and duration of Osage inhabitation (being part of “the life of this earth”), and conversely, the figure of dreaming offers a way of suggesting the continued effectivity of such feelings amid the material transformations of the social landscape brought by allotment. During the process of distributing allotments, which John, as noted earlier, describes as “seein’ history being made,”

Chal moved with the crowd from place to place, but the tall white man who was making history was of no further interest to him. . . . Chal was

soon far away in a dream of his own. He was pretending that where the green of the prairie met the blue of the sky was the edge of the world. . . . He pretended that the road which he could see twisting over the green; parallel lines lying across the prairie, passing out of sight, then appearing again on the far hillsides; passing the tall posts which marked the gates through the barbed wire fences; would lose itself in the haze of distance as it passed through the gate in the blue wall of his fanciful edge of the world. (48–49)

As opposed to the progressive movement of a history defined by federally instituted modes of privatization, Chal slides into a “dream” in which the “prairie” constitutes the horizon of his world in ways that bypass the constricting “barbed wire fences” that demarcate ownership. While “fanciful” in the sense that it does not conform to the legal geographies in the process of being constructed through allotment, the ubiquitous atmosphere created by U.S. force, Chal’s dreaming can be understood less as signaling a passive retreat from the actuality of settler modernity than as expressing in a varied form the urges that lead him toward dancing.⁸¹ Through his dreaming, the novel suggests the persistence of feelings of relation to the landscape that do not fit within Chal’s conscious commitments to “business” as the basis for assessing forward movement in time. His later dreams, particularly during college, include envisioning himself as a coyote and imagining he’s among Osages chasing an enemy Pawnee such that “he wished that he were among his hills again” (111, 136–37), and while in the military “he dreamed of the blackjacks and the way they would soon be standing in the sun” (233). His dreams suggest the potential for tapping into the feelings associated with silence, the affective surround of Chal’s orientation toward the Osage homeland. This impression of a presence that both is and is not realized points toward a (set of) sensation(s) that appears as perversity, passivity, anomaly, and anachronism from the perspective of a futurity ordered around privatization. Conversely, such sensation(s) can be interpreted as indicating the influence of a kind of spatiotemporal formation at odds with that instituted by U.S. policy, pressured by the latter yet not replaced by it.

Aside from the question of sexual identity, queerness in the novel highlights the kinds of atavism attributed to Chal as an Indian, his nonperformance of racially inflected reproductive couplehood, and the variety of affective inclinations (silence, dancing, dreaming) that he shares with a number of other Osages in the novel—often self-interpreted as blocks to their “doing something.” Together, these dynamics point to an experience of time at odds with the rhythms, inclinations, and momentum of allotment-era policy. Chal’s queer feelings sug-

gest an ongoing negotiation shaped by the copresence of multiple modes of temporality that constitute what is putatively the “same” space, the Osage reservation, in discrepant ways. The novel juxtaposes the *force* of allotment-driven transformations—and the attendant fixation on production and commerce as gauges of meaningful movement toward the future—with the process of achieving “harmony” with the landscape. However, Mathews does not cast that tension as one between the emergent and the residual, with Chal caught in this particularly Indian time bind. Rather than posing the tension as between past and present, *Sundown* suggests that there are actually multiple spatiotemporal formations at play on the Osage reservation in ways that create complex, lived disjunctions that Osage people need to navigate. This institutionally overdetermined and ongoing process of translation is captured by Chal’s sensation of queerness, which he experiences as an incoherence between these formations rather than as part of the Osage legacy of “moving to another country.”

In this way the text displaces the notion of persistent Indian backwardness as well as the notion that Native people need to act in the supposedly shared “now” of modernity. Instead, Mathews points toward the difficulty of finding a rhetorical, political, or geographic position from which to negotiate among incommensurate frames of reference: one predicated on the progress of privatization defined by allotment, and the other shaped by the processes of becoming at play within Osage patterns of inhabitation and perception. As the novel suggests, oil production takes part in, and helps drive, both formations, encouraging increased non-native presence, federal intervention, and forms of settler expropriation while also enabling the Osage to defer wage work, spend more time in the three reserved villages, and maintain connections with other Osage people (such as the daily “talk” that Chal often views as an absence of action).⁸² In *Sundown* Mathews casts the latter as part of “keep[ing] our place on earth.” That process offers an active orientation toward the future situated within an Osage understanding and material experience of time. Thus, even as the novel illustrates increasing settler pressures on (the) Osage people, it suggests the affective and environmental influence of the land on Osage personal inclinations and social dynamics. Such Osage phenomenologies of time include the emergence of new movements, such as the Peyote religion and the I’n-Lon-Schka. Through the elaboration of Chal’s conflicted experience of time—his impressions, urges, and queer anomalousness with respect to non-native norms—the narrative explores the complexity of everyday Native life under settler colonialism, particularly in the allotment period, without using settler policy as the reference point for defining the meaning of time and space.

Thinking about the copresence of divergent spatiotemporal formations and modes of becoming emphasizes the nonequivalence among ways of conceiving, perceiving, and living in the “same” place and period, and doing so engages the density of Indigenous experience without either treating Indigenous formations as surviving remnants from the past or presenting the present as singular in ways that tend (explicitly or implicitly) to privilege settler frameworks, materialities, and imperatives as the reference point for assessing contemporaneity.⁸³ Further, as against a notion of being caught between two cultures, *Sundown* highlights the effectivity of state policies and intervention on the Osage reservation while also gesturing toward how what might be taken as “traditional” Osage sociality remains responsive to changing conditions, such as in the development of the Peyote religion and the I’n-Lon-Schka. While deferring consideration of the institutional exercise of political sovereignty, the novel does address U.S. interference in Osage governance, offering the influence of duration as an alternative conceptual and sensory frame through which to address the character of Osage peoplehood—to address the expression of Osage temporal sovereignty.⁸⁴ Doing so does not resolve the issue of what juridical form Osage nationhood could or should take, but it does suggest the importance of understanding the effects of settler colonialism as ubiquitous yet not total. The novel suggests how the allotment regime influences Native sensations of selfhood and experiences of time and history. However, it also explores the affective momentum arising out of an experience of space and time not predicated on the terms and instantiations of allotment-era policy. In this way Mathews sketches a kind of Osage phenomenology (itself responsive to change) that provides a frame for conceptualizing and living peoplehood while also refuting the idea that settler colonialism produces a decisive rupture in Indigenous lifeways such that its force necessarily determines the shape of the present and future. The text does not offer a privileged vision for Osage governance, nor does it provide a litmus test for evaluating Osage authenticity. Instead, it highlights the uneven and unchosen process of translation among disparate frames—the density of experience—that is the effect and legacy of settler policy. The sensation of queerness that attends such translation indexes possibilities for another kind of future than that projected for Native peoples within the temporality institutionalized in the allotment era.