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**Author**

Carocci, Max

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# Visualizing Gender Variability in Plains Indian Pictographic Art

MAX CAROCCI

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## INTRODUCTION

During the last few years anthropological research conducted among North American Indians has shown a high level of variability in its perceptions of gender, sex, and sexuality.<sup>1</sup> Most of this research concentrated on the ideologies and norms underpinning social and ritual obligations as a means to determine the levels of institutionalization of roles assigned to individuals whose gender crossed or mixed men and women's traits.<sup>2</sup> To this day, not much attention has been given to indigenous representations of gender variability in North America, with the notable exception of minor interpretations of ambiguous figures in the rich iconography of Southwestern and Eastern peoples from prehistoric to historic times.<sup>3</sup>

Although a considerable amount of work has been done on Plains Indian pictorial conventions, specific research on representations of gender has been published only recently.<sup>4</sup> In particular, the only articles about the iconography of gender variability in this region briefly concentrated on the female body.<sup>5</sup> Despite a long history of academic interest in male gender variability among Plains Indians, there are few references to its visual representations; yet no proper analysis of the several known portraits of male gender variant individuals exists for the Plains area.<sup>6</sup> This is in contrast to a modest body of research whose focus is the artistic production and material culture of some Plains Indian males who either donned women's clothes or, because they crossed occupational boundaries, were considered to belong to a gender that was alternative to that of man or woman.<sup>7</sup>

This article will analyze the few published references to gender variation among Plains Indians in order to contribute to a growing corpus of literature concerned with building a more complete picture of the social and cultural lives of individuals accustomed to these practices. In recent years these

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Max Carocci currently teaches Native American arts for the World Arts and Artefacts program at Birkbeck College, University of London, and teaches anthropology at the Institute of Lifelong Learning City Lit in London.

people have been known among Native Americans under the collective term *two-spirit*.<sup>8</sup> Although *two-spirit* is a recent introduction that may not entirely match indigenous perceptions of the individual characters described here, it is nonetheless an umbrella term that, for a lack of better terms, captures a variety of permutations of sex and gender beyond man and woman. As such, it is particularly suitable to talk about the ambiguous gender and sex of some figures that are part of Plains Indians' pictorial tradition. Such a broad definition can be used analytically in so much as it allows us to avoid assigning to any of these ambiguous figures a definite identity that may prioritize either sex or gender.

The following analysis of the few existing images made by Dakota Indians of two-spirit individuals in a pictographic style aims not only to present a more nuanced understanding of the ideologies behind these representations but also to contextualize them, and the people they depict, in their proper cultural milieu of production and fruition. An examination of the pictographic styles and conventions used by the artists to describe nonnormative forms of gender, and perhaps sex, has implications not only for the iconographic and stylistic considerations necessary to the study of Native American pictorial traditions but also for an examination of the ideas that these images conveyed to local audiences. As such, these images are as important to an understanding of the ways in which nineteenth-century Plains Indians conceptualized gender and sex as they are relevant for an aesthetic and iconographic evaluation of this form of expressive culture.

This article will specifically talk about gender and sex following the generally accepted notion that sex refers to the biological differences between bodies, and that gender refers to the series of culturally determined ideas assigned to sex differences. The argument championed by this article is that the human figures produced by Plains Indians are visually articulated on culturally specific notions of sex and gender that make full use of the connotative aspects of a broadly shared pictographic lexicon.<sup>9</sup> Although references to sexuality are explicit in the English texts that accompany some of the images, the article will refrain from suggesting any sexual inclination of the individuals depicted for two reasons: with the information at hand it is impossible to establish the subjects' sexuality, and any preoccupation with their sexual proclivities is largely marginal to the evaluation of the pictorial grammar. As a consequence, the analysis will only concentrate on the images and references that mention males in women's clothing, individuals with both primary sex characteristics, and figures whose gender is indefinite because visual elements associated with sex or gender that mark or, equally, are absent from the body can be more easily identifiable than individuals' erotic desires.

References to ethnographic data will inform an interpretation of images that appear on objects as different as shirts, carvings, and the historical calendars called winter counts. Collectively, this iconographic corpus will offer a visual complement to the current, largely incomplete picture of male gender variability among nineteenth-century Plains Indians.

CONTEXTUALIZING THE IMAGES IN PLAINS INDIAN  
PAINTING TRADITIONS

The different nineteenth-century Plains Indians' styles that depict males in women's clothing analyzed here fall under the generally accepted heading of "pictographic art." This expression describes any graphic form or symbol that depicts through highly stylized pictures the real-life events experienced by either individuals or groups or, alternatively, describes concepts and metaphors. In other words, a pictogram condenses a set of words and related ideas in a single icon.

Although older forms of pictographic art found on rocks have been interpreted as being abstractions of reality, visions, or depictions of other-than-human beings aimed at ceremonial purposes, pictographic images carved on wood or painted on hide or muslin, which have been documented since the eighteenth century, were specifically produced by talented artists with the intent of recording specific facts that needed to be remembered.<sup>10</sup> Whether the objective was to advertise one's war exploits or recall the unique facts that happened during a given year, pictographic art was an *aide memoire* that facilitated the retelling of special happenings.

Plains Indian pictographic tradition has generally been divided into three major strands based on the purpose of their production and use: ceremonial or visionary art used in ceremonies and ritual, biographic art that recorded significant events in a person's life, and historical records aimed at remembering collective memories. The images discussed here belong to the last two typologies as they appear in pictorial renderings of individuals' life experiences and among the outstanding events treated as the historical repertoire of a given tribe. Biographic art is generally concerned with war deeds that feature, for example, depictions of horse stealing, battle, scalp taking, counting coup, and hand-to-hand combat.<sup>11</sup> Originally, such deeds were carved or etched on rock surfaces, but between the protohistoric (AD 1625–1775) and the ledger art period (AD c. 1860–20th century) warriors used to paint them on war shirts and hide robes that were worn to show their remarkable careers as braves.

Historical records cover a much larger array of events, from the introduction of new trade items, to epidemics and treaties or any other memorable fact that was deemed socially relevant for a group's historical memory. Among the Plains tribes the documents that kept track of such events are known as winter counts.<sup>12</sup> This form of historical record has been documented among Plains groups such as the Mandan, Blackfoot, and Kiowa since the mid-eighteenth century, but it seems to have died out by the early twentieth century after reaching a peak of productivity, possibly under the impulse of collectors and tourists.<sup>13</sup> Among these tribal traditions Dakota winter counts are the only ones referring to males in women's clothing in three episodes. One episode is a killing, a second is a suicide, and a third involves the staging of a dance that is specific to the Lower Yanktonai. Due to the multiple copies that exist of Dakota winter counts, the figures associated with a particular year do not always coincide with one another as concerns with different bands' histories frequently resulted in the replacement of some of the original templates' pictograms with images that referred to locally relevant events.<sup>14</sup>

Plains Indian pictographic tradition, in all its permutations, has undergone changes during the centuries. From rock art's stark geometric forms, through the gradual adoption of a more naturalistic mode, this art form nevertheless retained unaltered the absence of illusionistic perspective at the core of its fundamental stylistic principles despite early and prolonged contacts with Europeans.<sup>15</sup> Some scholars have hypothesized that a tendency toward realism may have appeared in Plains Indian pictographic art under the influence of Western conventions, although it has been pointed out that this did not happen consistently throughout the whole area.<sup>16</sup>

Several attempts have been made to classify regional pictographic styles systematically through the careful study of iconographic conventions used by different groups, such as the depiction of distinct tribal hairstyles, preferences for particular positions of arms and legs, or difference in body shape.<sup>17</sup> Scholars such as Castle McLaughlin nevertheless argue that although common symbols and forms may have been shared by a number of tribes we cannot establish with certainty the "relationships between regional, tribal, and individual components of the visual vocabulary."<sup>18</sup>

Scholar Karen Daniels Petersen, who, in her study of ledger art, isolated themes and devised a "lexicon" that serves as a guideline for interpretation of Plains Indian pictographic art, explicitly proposed the notion of a visual vocabulary.<sup>19</sup> Archaeologist James D. Keyser further elaborated this lexicon in his studies on Plains Indian rock art by applying it in order to read prehistoric and protohistoric images in both archaeological and ethnographic records.<sup>20</sup>

The study of Plains Indian pictographic art's compositional structure has received considerable attention. Specialists have comparatively examined the position of figures over the painted surface and their relationship to one another in space in an attempt to understand the temporal relationship between subsequent actions. Still, the characteristic absence of landscape and perspective in Plains Indian pictographic art renders challenging the detection of spatiotemporal relationships between figures and groups for the European trained eye without a proper interpretation by anyone sufficiently familiar with intertribal, tribal, and individual lexicons who can unravel the complex relationship between facts and images.

Most crucial for a deeper understanding of Plains Indians' pictorial tradition, however, is the study of biographic art's semiotics, that is, the analysis of the connotative and denotative characters of particular visual markers that collectively constitute the pictographic lexicon. The connotative aspect of this visual vocabulary was acknowledged in early studies of Plains Indian pictographic art.<sup>21</sup> Meanings attributed to any one object, to paraphrase Keyser, can change according to their relation with one another, as well as in relation to the whole.<sup>22</sup> For example, clearly recognizable iconographic elements such as a coat drawn over a figure may mean winter, but it could also mean warpath.<sup>23</sup> Such concern with the implicit and/or multiple meanings that underpin biographic art's visual vocabulary can inform the study of pictographic representations of males in women's clothing because we will see that the sole stylistic analysis of these figures cannot reveal what only a contextual, interpretative reading of the images can.

Determining with certainty that a given character represented in Plains pictographic art is a male in women's clothes, or someone who is considered to belong to a class of people different from men and women, can be difficult because, with respect to the gender or sex of human figures, Plains Indian pictographic conventions are rather inconsistent. In cases of pictographic representations not accompanied by texts or explanation, a contextualization of the images in their proper cultural milieu promises to achieve a fair degree of convincing evidence. In other cases, a cross-comparison of data, especially between winter counts with captions and accompanying explanatory texts, can determine with certainty what the images refer to. Winter counts, however, contain ambiguous information that calls for a careful, simultaneous examination of figures and descriptions in order to enable a fairly straightforward evaluation of the figures' gender or sex.

Current studies on women in Plains Indian pictorial traditions from rock art to ledger art reveal that females are frequently represented either with reference to their occupations and dress or their reproductive capacity, for example, when pregnant or copulating.<sup>24</sup> In some cases, however, the event in which they are protagonists takes precedence over a visual rendering of gendered details. An image of a war raid reproduced in an article on Northwestern Plains rock art has been interpreted as depicting women prisoners despite the fact that no gender or sex connotation is immediately detectable from the figures. A contextualization of the images, however, reveals that these figures are most likely women, because raids to villages often included the taking of female captives.<sup>25</sup> Similar ambiguity can be found in several winter counts that display totally ungendered figures as in the example of a woman killed by a tree in Battiste Good's winter count, or the women murdered in a raid published by Mallery that are represented in highly stylized or geometric forms that avoid any reference to their sex or gender.<sup>26</sup>

Women's breasts and genitalia are clearly visible in early phases of Plains pictographic tradition. Breasts can appear as simple dots on the torso or as symmetrical appendages projecting from both sides of the body.<sup>27</sup> Alternatively, breasts can be indicated by two symmetrical triangles.<sup>28</sup> Vulvas are identifiable as a simple dot between the legs, a groove, or a V shape.<sup>29</sup> More problematic, as recently pointed out by Keyser, Linea Sundstrom, and George Poetschat, are the ungendered figures, or those that only appear with one of the two attributes, be it a groove between the legs or simply two dots on the torso, as can be clearly seen in an early pictographic robe from the Northern Plains.<sup>30</sup>

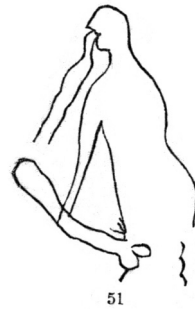
Inconsistencies found in the pictorial representation of female bodies are similarly evident in visual renderings of male bodies, at least until the late phases of biographic art around AD 1830 to 1840.<sup>31</sup> Specimens such as the Grand Robe from the Northern Plains, now housed in Paris as part of the former Musée de l'Homme's collections, are exemplary of this apparent inconsistency. Of the sixty figures engaged in war exploits, fourteen are represented with unmistakably erect phalluses.<sup>32</sup> Ewer's early analysis of pictographic art among the Mandan mentions men's practice of going to war entirely naked, yet his remark went virtually unnoticed in later studies about robe art and has never been integrated in the analytical lexicon devised to interpret pictography's visual grammar.<sup>33</sup> Erect or flaccid penises appear in a

number of early Plains rock art, as well as on robes and decorated objects that feature fighting scenes stored in various museum collections, but no explanation was ever given as to why in Plains Indian pictographic art some naked figures appear with genitalia and others do not.<sup>34</sup> Although it is hard to challenge the evidence suggesting that the great majority of fighting figures that appear on pictographic records are males simply on the basis of the absence of visible penises, it is nevertheless true that in a fair number of reported cases women and males dressed in women's clothes did engage in fighting.<sup>35</sup>

Plains Indian rock and biographic arts, for the greater part, deal with war exploits and battles that generally are considered men's occupations. Although, by and large, scholars agree that men generally produced this form of art, we should not exclude the possibility that not all the human figures represented are inevitably males or socially accepted men. This assumption should not apply, even in the case of figures that appear to be women. Although there is a high statistical probability that overall the fighting figures depict men, inferring the sex or gender of human figures through their clear association with male pursuits at least ought to take into consideration the possibility that not all figures with no genitalia are by default males or, more specifically, socially accepted men.<sup>36</sup>

Archaeologist Tim Yates has warned scholars involved in this kind of exegesis of the dangers deriving from a biased perspective in interpreting ancient iconographies. In his opinion, the determination of sex and/or gender of ancient figures often requires "signs to complete the separation between the male from the female."<sup>37</sup> Iconographic markers aimed at separating men from women are often difficult to detect, and they seem to depend on an individualized lexicon that was not utilized consistently through the existing records, as suggested by McLaughlin. This may be due to the fact that much of Plains Indian biographic art was to a degree personalized and, what is more, was to be accompanied by an oral retelling that may not have required elaborate or naturalistic representations. It is quite common, therefore, to find, both in winter counts and biographic art, figures only minimally characterized by features diagnostic of sex or gender. When this happens, their presence could be interpreted as relevant only to the contingent case represented rather than being typical of whole classes of people. The example of Red Cloud's census is a case in point (see fig. 1).

Individual glyphs for each member of a band are represented in this pictographic list of people's names.<sup>38</sup> Two figures feature a prominent phallus; they are the glyph for the personal name "Only Man." The phallus in this image has an obvious purpose, and no one considers this visual marker the only diagnostic trait of the male sex lest they dismissed as not males the figures found in most of the pictographic art that consistently does not use this sign to convey masculinity. The presence or the absence of the penis thus seems to be highly contextual; that is, it is associated with different meanings in each case.



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**FIGURE 1.** *Glyph for Only Man, Red Cloud Census. From Garrick Mallery, "On the Pictographs of the North American Indians," 1886.*

The visual vocabulary employed in the description of individual figures that do not seem to conform to Plains Indians' normative depictions of either men or women challenges the prospect of positively determining whether we can confidently talk about the same class of people or if individual cases are as different from each other as the terms used to describe them in the existing literature suggest. This is particularly true for images that appear in winter counts of which written interpretations exist. Although we are fortunate enough to have the English version and the original interpretation for some winter count pictographs, where no explanation is available we can only hypothesize about what exactly the images depict.

In addition to representational inconsistencies, any exegesis of ambiguous figures is further complicated by the variety of identities assigned to them in the textual descriptions that accompany the records; this is despite the fact that such images should represent the same event. Texts aimed at explaining the images employ terms that clearly describe completely different realities such as transvestism, homosexuality, and hermaphroditism. For example, in three of the winter counts studied by Mallery at the end of the nineteenth century (Good, American Horse, and Cloud Shield) appear images that he calls hermaphrodites.<sup>39</sup> In a note to Good's image for the years 1848 and 1849 he adds, however, that these figures may portray "one of those men . . . who adopt the dress and occupation of women."<sup>40</sup> The fact that the Native informant he quotes in another publication, White Cow Killer, calls this year the "Half-man-and-half-woman-killed-winter" further renders the reading of these images confusing.<sup>41</sup> Mallery may have interpreted White Cow Killer's description literally: that the figure portrayed is a real person endowed with both primary sexual characteristics. However, the explanation may have expanded on the denotative quality of the images that quite simply referred to the common Lakota term *winkte*, normally applied to males, which translates as "wants to be a woman."<sup>42</sup> Mallery used the term *hermaphrodite* in both of his subsequent studies of Plains pictographic art in spite of the additional reference to one of those men who adopt the dress of women (see figs. 2, 3, and 4).



**FIGURE 2.** Wounded bote, Battiste Good Winter Count. From Garrick Mallery, "On the Pictographs of the North American Indians," 1886.



**FIGURE 3.** Wounded bote, American Horse Winter Count. From Garrick Mallery, "Picture Writing of the American Indians," 1893.



**FIGURE 4.** Wounded bote, Cloud Shield Winter Count. From Garrick Mallery, "Picture Writing of the American Indians," 1893.



More recent scholars who examined additional winter counts specifically refer to such inconsistencies and use the word *transvestite* to eliminate the problem of interpretation. This term appears in Howard's study of Swift Dog's winter count and in DeMallie's edition of the No Ears Winter Count.<sup>43</sup> Other contemporary studies describe these figures as homosexual. The word *homosexual* appears in Howard's comments on John K. Bear's winter count and also in his interpretation of a figure from the British Museum winter count.<sup>44</sup> Similar to Mallery's simultaneous use of the terms *hermaphrodite* and *man*, these more recent analyses also juxtapose terms that are clearly not synonymous, for example, *transvestite* and *homosexual* (see fig. 5).



**FIGURE 5.** *Winkte suicide, British Museum Winter Count. Courtesy the Trustees of the British Museum.*

The variety of English terms used to describe Dakota terms such as *winkte* may result in confusing interpretations of the iconographic lexicon employed in pictographic and biographic art, in particular, to portray a homogeneous class of people. Although some elements of this "picture book dictionary" are repeated in examples from rock art, robes, shirts, and other objects, in Plains Indian pictographic art a codified grammar to represent ideas of gender or sex consistently does not seem to exist.<sup>45</sup>

### EXEGESIS

Images that have been positively identified as depicting individuals who are neither men nor women can be put in two categories that pertain to broadly defined contexts of war and peace. In these two contexts they can be further divided thematically. In the context of war the existing images refer to a killing that happened around the years 1848 and 1849 and a counting coup action that almost certainly happened before 1830. In the context of peace, pictograms represent scenes of leisure, such as dancing, and a suicide that took place around 1838.

The war casualty episode is consistently reported in several Dakota versions of winter counts. Of the more than sixty recorded copies of existing Dakota specimens I will, however, concentrate only on those winter counts that contain images relevant to the discussion.<sup>46</sup> Pictograms corresponding to the killing of a *winkte* during the years 1848 to 1849 are contained in nine winter counts; an additional one in the form of a ledger that includes a comparatively similar image is in private hands. They are in chronological order of commentary: American Horse and Cloud Shield (figs. 3, 4), Good (fig. 2), Deloria, Hardin, No Ears, Short Bull, Wounded Bear, an anonymous Rosebud winter count, and the privately owned winter count.<sup>47</sup> Some additional winter counts mention the same killing but only in textual form, whereas others mark that year with images related to other episodes.

In all these winter counts the male in women's clothes (variably called hermaphrodite, transvestite, or *berdache*) is consistently represented clad in a

dress.<sup>48</sup> Out of these ten images four display a prominent phallus visible either through or outside the dress such as the one displayed in Hardin, on the side of the dress as in the examples found in American Horse and Cloud Shield, or realistically revealed by the lifted garment, like the private collection's version. The figures are standing in all the versions except the privately owned copy where the body is reclined. The No Ears, Rosebud, and Deloria versions portray the torso with no legs; the Wounded Bear, Hardin, and Cloud Shield versions show the figure scalped; and the American Horse, Good, Rosebud, and Wounded Bear protagonists show blood gushing from a side in obvious reference to wounding. Wounded Bear contains the only image in which blood comes out of the mouth and is also the only figure that holds a bow and arrows (fig. 6). Two of the ten copies of the same event have a name glyph above the head. The No Ears *winkte* has an animal above the head that may be interpreted as a wolf, dog, or coyote. The Rosebud figure corresponding to the same year, however, has a different glyph that looks like a split hoof linked directly to the mouth. This figure is similar to the one referred to by Ella Deloria in her commentary, except that this pictogram has what appears to be a stick with a feather (a lance?) sticking out of its back.<sup>49</sup> Deloria's and Rosebud's glyphs display the typical hairstyle associated with the Crow. Perhaps the authors used this feature to convey the ethnicity of the protagonist despite the fact that only men wore such a hairstyle. Of all the figures, the one in the Short Bull winter count is rather damaged; it is therefore not possible to see if it originally had any of the above-mentioned traits, for example, blood and arrows. It shows uniquely, however, a small triangularly shaped mark below the figure's right arm.<sup>50</sup>

In spite of their individual differences, each of these winter counts gives selective details of the story that cumulatively reflect the actual fact reported in the texts that accompany some accounts. A comparison between the winter counts reveals that the event they each represent is the same. It is a war raid in which the Dakota killed a Crow individual. Although the Dakota texts refer to the victim as a *winkte*, in reality it is more correct to talk about the killing of a *bote*, the term used by the Crow for this class of people.<sup>51</sup> The fact that Dakotas interpreting the icon for the winter of 1849 to 1849 refer to *winkte* means that there was some correspondence between the way Crow and Dakota made sense of males in women's clothes in concurrence with a widespread practice that cut across regional and linguistic boundaries. That biological features such as genitalia were drawn in juxtaposition to the dress not only reveals one of the ways in which meaning was conveyed through visual markers in nineteenth-century Plains pictorial tradition but also sheds light on local articulations of an ideal correspondence between sex and gender.

Dakota linguistic categories that describe nonanimal beings such as man or woman are conceptually linked through the same term to biological attributes



**FIGURE 6.** *Wounded bote, Wounded Bear Winter Count. Image by author is based on the original drawing.*

of male and female. A conceptual overlapping of the two categories leads to a correspondence between ideas pertaining to biological differences such as maleness and femaleness, with cultural behaviors mirrored in the notions of manhood and womanhood. The lack of a theoretical distinction between the two, or the mapping of the biological and the cultural onto each other, results in the location of manhood and womanhood in the biological configuration that distinguishes the two bodies, as confirmed by the icon for the name Only Man. But the Only Man, *winkte*, and warriors' penises mentioned above are significantly different because they are biological markers that, once translated into an iconographic grammar, take on different connotations due to the context in which they appear. *Winktes'* masculine attributes differ from the manhood and/or masculinity of some warriors' visible penises precisely because they convey the negation of masculinity, as they are juxtaposed to dresses that, in turn, signify femininity. As originally suggested by John C. Ewers, marking human figures with genitalia may indicate the tribal custom of going to war naked.<sup>52</sup> As a logical corollary to this, conveying nudity by visually referencing the penis may have signified ethnic belonging.<sup>53</sup> If code can only derive meaning from context then penises will stand for different things on different occasions.<sup>54</sup> In the case of warriors, penises can, contra *winkte*, convey the notion of masculine aggression or prowess that seems to be so central to their biographical narratives or ethnic belonging, as previously stated.

Additional meanings given to the visual marker penis could be inferred by an analysis of a figure painted on the Schoch shirt from the Northern Plains dated to the early nineteenth century, which is now in the Bernisches Historisches Museum in Bern, Switzerland.<sup>55</sup> The scene in which this figure appears is said to depict a series of combat events in which the shirt owner took part. The figure is one of fifteen on this side of the shirt that display unique individualized features. Although three of them appear visibly dressed in capotes, jackets, or coats, an additional three display body markings, perhaps tattoos or paint; the remaining ones only hold weapons. Keyser, the first scholar to comment on this unusual figure publicly, said that it displays male and female sexual characteristics. The markings found on its body correspond to breasts and a penis. These are visually represented as two circles drawn on the upper torso and a short, straight line projecting from the figure's right hip. Apart from the rare juxtaposition of male and female organs on one body, the Schoch shirt's human figure has a fairly conventional knob-like featureless head and long hair flowing on its left. Its arms are represented in the W position characteristic of early Plains Indian pictorial tradition, and his minimally outlined legs end in feet turned right and left. Keyser interprets this figure as a *berdache*, which he describes as an individual whose "socially defined third sexual role" distinguished it from males and females.<sup>56</sup> He, however, suggests the possibility that the portrait of this human might be the representation of an actual hermaphrodite. If the two circles on the chest indicate the female sex, then the line projecting from its hip in this case may indicate the male genitalia. Keyser supports the suggestion that this figure is a *berdache* by comparing it to American Horse and Cloud Shield's *winktes*, which were published by Mallery in 1886. Given that these two images

only display a phallus on a dress and no breasts, we are inevitably confronted with a semiotic conundrum: is a penis to sex as dress is to gender? Unless the author of the doubly sexed figure on the Schoch shirt used both biological features to signify a socially defined role distinct from man and woman, we should come to the logical conclusion that the figure was a hermaphrodite. This interpretation makes sense in the context of this shirt, which obviously displays figures wearing clothes such as the above-mentioned jackets and coats. There is reason to believe that if the doubly sexed figure was only a male who took on women's roles, the author would have used a different visual marker to signify this class of people; perhaps with a dress much in the same way as this meaning is expressed in figures positively identified as *winkte* in winter counts.

A much earlier figure from the ceremonial-style period, which was identified by Keyser and Poetschat as a *winkte*, further complicates the picture with respect to the iconographic inconsistency in which sex and gender may be signified in Plains pictographic art.<sup>57</sup> They mention an upside-down anthropomorphic figure from the Northwestern Plains with a rectangular body and braids that seemingly displays both male and female genitalia. The penis is depicted as a straight line and two dots, whereas the dot right below it (or above given the figure's inverted position) has been interpreted as a vulva.<sup>58</sup> The interpretation of this figure is at odds with Keyser's previous analyses of Schoch shirt's *berdache* as neither the ceremonial-style figure has breasts nor does the Schoch human have female genitalia. These examples show that Plains Indian pictographic traditions made extensive use of visual markers in a metonymic sense, that is, by using a part to describe the whole. In other words, a single biological characteristic can signify either the notion female and male or woman and man in addition to a number of possible other meanings.

With the information available at present, it is difficult to guess what leads some artists to use a dress to signify social roles and a penis to convey biological morphology, in contrast to both Schoch and ceremonial-style authors who may have used both primary sexual characteristics to signify only a social role described by the term *winkte*. Considering the possibility that in Plains Indian pictographic lexicons either genitalia or cultural accoutrements could be used to signify biological differences and culturally defined roles beyond man and woman, however, may solve this conundrum. If this were the case, then it would be possible to interpret markers denoting biological difference as instruments of the articulation of social roles as human-made products. This would prove the linguistic and ideological continuity between the words *male* and *man* and *female* and *woman* explicit in Dakota language.

#### BEYOND WAR: IMAGES OF LEISURE AND PERSONAL DRAMA

Problematic figures found among representations of battles and fights are similarly found depicting scenes of daily activities. Two-spirit people such as *winktes*, for example, appear in portraits that reveal an active involvement in the life of their community. In this context, problems of interpretation arise

due to the ways in which their social role as neither men nor women, or both, is visually conveyed.

A clear example of this is given by three Dakota winter counts that refer to a suicide of a *winkte* that happened around the years 1839 and 1840. One is contained in the Jaw winter count, a second representation of the same event is visualized through the Swift Dog winter count's figure corresponding to the box number 42, and a third suicide appears in the British Museum winter count, but this latter one does not coincide with the other two, as it is associated with the year 1891, fifty years later than the first episode.<sup>59</sup> Of these three pictograms, two have been positively identified as referring to the suicide of a *winkte* called Grass who, according to White Bull, "had troubles with his folks and hanged himself" (see figs. 7 and 8).<sup>60</sup>

Of the images depicting this episode, only Swift Dog's version shows a penis on the side of the hanged figure's dress. This seems to be in keeping with the Crow *bote* killed by the Dakota in American Horse, Cloud Shield, and two other winter counts. The other two suicides' biological sex is unclear. In spite of a lack of visible biological attributes, a comparative examination of the three figures confirms that the image is a *winkte*, although the year for the suicide in the British Museum winter count does not coincide with either White Bull's or Swift Dog's versions. Howard interpreted this figure as a *winkte* according to Vestal's comments about hanging oneself as being the appropriate form of suicide for homosexuals and/or transvestites.<sup>61</sup>

From these images it is quite clear that Dakota deemed the suicide of a *winkte* relevant enough to be recorded in tribal annals, although, in comparison to men and women, episodes concerning this class of people only appear rarely in Dakota winter counts. The limited reference to two-spirits people in Native-made records, however, should not be taken as evidence of their absence in Plains societies, although Native sources are contradictory as to how many there were in each village at any given time.<sup>62</sup> The many images and glyphs waiting to be examined may reveal more such individuals than previously identified because more ambiguous figures appear as decorations on shirts, pictograms, rock art, and various objects.

A recent example of how a proper contextualization of ambiguous figures can reveal new iconographic references to two-spirit people's lives is given by a superb dancing fan of the Eastern Dakota, possibly Santee, which is part of the Masco Collection.<sup>63</sup> The wooden artifact is a round, flat, commercially made object that was finely carved by a Native artist with elegant designs. On one surface a central four-sided feather fan and thunderbird motif is circled by a

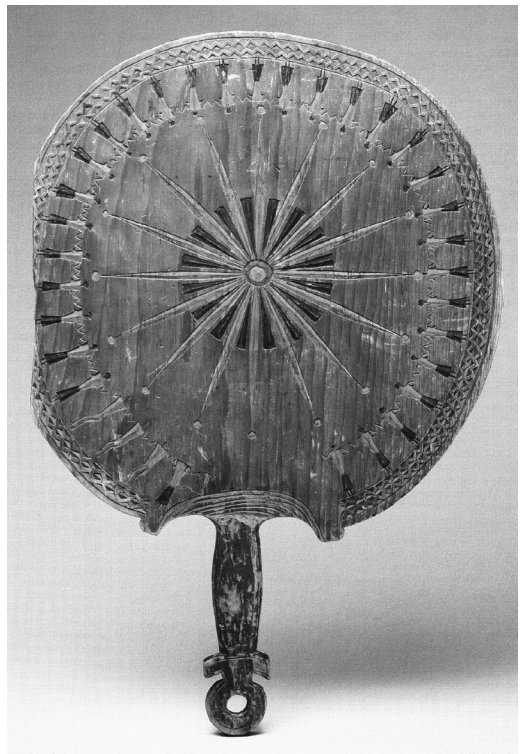


**FIGURE 7.** *Winkte suicide, Jaw Winter Count. Image by author is based on the original drawing.*



**FIGURE 8.** *Winkte suicide, Swift Dog Winter Count. Image by author is based on the original drawing.*

string of female elks carved below a line emanating from a male elk's mouth. This feature has been interpreted as the spell that befell the females under the seductive influence of the male animal's power. Native informants who gave this interpretation further described the figures carved on the opposite side as representing a dance in which a group of thirty-one women are accompanied by three *winktes* and a child. All the women are consistently represented as wearing black skirts. Their heads and legs are also black, but their bodies and arms positioned in the W shape are red. These three taller figures appear bare and are depicted in a classic pictographic style with a tapered torso, sketchy arms positioned in the W shape, and bent legs with feet pointing to the left. Their hands are joined, and one of them touches a woman, who in turn holds a child by the hand. These five figures are close to the handle, and they could be seen as either tailing behind or, most probably, leading the dance. *Winktes* always danced with the women and led the circle of dancers as reported by a Lakota informant.<sup>64</sup> This was also customary for the Cheyenne equivalent of *winktes*, the *he man hes*, or "half-men-half-women."<sup>65</sup> The string of humans on this side mirrors the position of the elks around the opposite side's rim, but, contrary to it, the decoration at the center is a feather circle. None of the figures has evident sexual features, yet the message is clear to the Native informants. Their interpretation squarely fits with recorded evidence and oral history that mention *winktes*' active involvement in the organization of public dances (see fig. 9).



**FIGURE 9.** *Dakota dancing fan, ca. 1875. Courtesy of the Marva Warnock Collection.*

In one of the winter counts of the Lower Yanktonai the year 1855 is remembered as the year in which “at a place called ‘Doubled up sinew’ a *winkte* staged a dance in an earthlodge.”<sup>66</sup> The presence of two-spirit people in dances or public ceremonies that acknowledged or honored them are reported in many colonial accounts of travelers and later ethnographies for several tribes of the Plains and beyond.<sup>67</sup> Their presence was highly requested, as they were associated with sexual attraction in addition to being considered good matchmakers. The fan’s reference to elks in this context makes sense as this animal in Dakota thought is strongly linked to ideas of seduction clearly epitomized by the irresistible power of mirrors, which, in dance contexts, were often replaced by fans.<sup>68</sup>

The iconographic repertoire gathered here supports ethnographic evidence that *winktes* among the Dakota, *botes* among the Crow, and *he man hes* among the Cheyennes had a place in their peoples’ social life before colonial efforts to eradicate their memory were put in place through strict, and often coercive, measures.<sup>69</sup> Among all these tribes, the customs, rituals, and lifestyles of these classes of people underwent radical changes during the early years of American administration. By the 1890s, after the Wounded Knee massacre, social and ritual roles associated with two-spirit people declined under the ferocious suppression of Native American religious practices. The images examined here refer to events that predate this period. The suppression of indigenous religions and the imposition of Euro-American values are responsible for the almost total invisibility of *winktes* in Dakota social life. As a result of these dramatic changes their public profile was greatly reduced, and it should come as no surprise that much of the information regarding these people after the end of the nineteenth century was discretely retained as private matter. Moreover, because particular winter counts were interpreted for Euro-Americans at a later date, it is likely that some details were either omitted or plainly disguised as other information altogether. In the introduction to the Corbusier winter counts, Garrick Mallery points out that “*in many instances [they] recall nothing except the name of the year, and others were loath to speak of the events.*”<sup>70</sup> This might be especially true in relation to matters related to *winktes*, quite obviously in response to the aversion that government officials displayed about these issues during the late nineteenth century.

### CONCLUSIONS

The images of Dakota *winktes* and Crow *botes* examined here ought to be understood in the variety of social contexts experienced by Plains Indians some years before the traumas of reservation life and religious oppression affected them. Their iconographic representations are as much snapshots of the personal lives of warriors, lovers, and fun-loving people as they are a window into the meanings and ideologies associated with them. Some of them appear to be wearing women’s clothes. This practice reflects a period in which they were highly visible and not yet forced to wear clothes that in Euro-American eyes were appropriate for their sex. Quite obviously images of males in women’s clothes or those that display more than one genital configuration

are indicative of a complex set of notions that were variously conveyed by a highly diversified pictorial grammar in which culturally specific perceptions of these people were individually expressed through iconography.

Concepts related to *winktes* have been generally described in terms of duality based on the assumption that a binary gender system naturally emerges from a match between biological configuration and particular gender roles. However direct the relationship between maleness and manhood may appear among the nineteenth-century Dakota, it does not seem to be axiomatic. As we can see from the presence of *winktes*, the existence of two recognized biological configurations does not necessarily produce a dual gender system. In the case of *winktes* and other two-spirit people included in this discussion of Plains Indian pictographic art, the symbolic markers displayed on a body by a recombination of gendered symbols altogether transcends the simple man-woman binary classifications traditionally used to describe them. Although Dakota *winktes* may appear to depend on a culturally determined male-female dyad, their identity reflects a more complex role that straddles across biology and culture. This social role is culturally constructed as much as man, or woman, yet it does not imply an essential nature that provides the base for a gender construction.<sup>71</sup>

The recombination of iconographic markers drawn from both biology (genitals, breasts) and culture (clothing, weapons, braids) is akin to the liminality generally displayed during specific ritual instances. It could be argued that the power generally attributed to *winktes* is derivative of the position of “in-betweenness” displayed by their inclination to cross and blur gender boundaries. *Winktes’* gender play turns their position in the community into a pivot around which the society as a whole reflects on itself.

In historical records *winktes* appear to have had an extreme freedom in recombining gendered symbols at various times in their lives. They drifted in and out of highly idealized, prescriptive genders often performing seemingly contradictory roles. Making this fluidity persistent rendered *winktes* perennially in-between. This resulted in their association with supernatural powers that often caused contrasting reactions in the rest of the community.<sup>72</sup>

Whereas women and men, in theory, performed roles prescribed by the genital configurations somehow following an idea of a more or less stable identity, the gender of a *winkte*, in spite of its translation into “wants to be a woman,” could practically be perceived to be a nongender or a metaphorical rendering of the blending of all genders.<sup>73</sup> The specific relationship between *winkte’s* genitals and the social performance of gender transcendence seems to justify the iconographic rendering that matches male genital configurations to either a marker of womanness, such as dresses and braids, or manliness, such as arrows and bows, as shown by Wounded Bear’s pictogram.<sup>74</sup>

The analysis of the figures examined in this article highlights some important points for methodological and theoretical research on American Indian pictorial expressions and the study of gender from indigenously produced sources. Most importantly, it brings to the fore the question of whether the signs employed in this lexicon are merely the description of an objective reality (the fact, the event, the person) or can be read as more complex



clusters of meanings that mirror contextually based ideologies that mix categorical abstractions with the description of historical events (both concepts and facts) in a highly personal way. The iconography of the cases examined above seems to reflect a refined conceptual framework that makes abundant use of metaphor and metonymy in the construction of images aimed at an indigenous audience. In this interpretation, the production of these images was informed by a set of shared notions that could be translated into culturally meaningful icons that were nevertheless highly malleable, variable, and contextually interpreted given the metaphorical value attributed to them.

The formal and contextual evaluation of these figures shows the complexity of the relationship between sign and meaning, which suggests that an interpretation of images that depict two-spirit people is not necessarily a straightforward one. An appreciation of this complexity will hopefully encourage future scholars to approach the interpretation of similar historical records with more awareness of the ideological implications underpinning the images. Whether an accurate understanding of past gender ideologies is possible at all, the acknowledgment of these issues should at least prepare the scholar for methodological and theoretical obstacles that can potentially hinder further interpretations of Plains Indians' social systems derived from the study of their extremely rich and articulate pictographic repertoire.

### Acknowledgments

I am particularly indebted to William Wierzbowski at the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology for his dedication and help in retrieving archival material. Further thanks go to Clinton Nagy, the online curator of Splendidheritage.com, who has allowed me to use the Sioux fan, which is part of the John and Marva Warnock Collection mentioned in this article. Words fall short of acknowledging the encouragement offered by the late Bea Medicine and Louis Kemnitzer who alongside Raymond DeMallie added to the support of colleagues of the like of Tressa Berman and Wesley Thomas, and the invaluable comments made on an earlier version of this article by Linea Sundstrom and Claire Farrer. To all a big thank you.

### NOTES

1. Sue-Ellen Jacobs, Sabine Lang, and Wesley Thomas, eds., *Two-Spirit People: Native American Gender Identity, Sexuality and Spirituality* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1997); Sabine Lang, *Men as Women, Women as Men: Changing Gender in Native American Cultures* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998); Will Roscoe, *Changing Ones: Third and Fourth Genders in Native North America* (London: MacMillan, 1998); Walter Williams, *The Spirit and the Flesh: Sexual Diversity in American Indian Culture* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986).

2. Charles Callender and Lee Kochems, "The North American Berdache," *Current Anthropologist* 24, no. 2 (1983): 443–70; Harriet Whitehead, "The Bow and the Burden Strap: A New Look at Institutionalized Homosexuality in Native North America," in *Sexual Meanings: The Cultural Construction of Gender and Sexuality*, ed.

Sherry Ortner and Harriet Whitehead (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 80–115.

3. Traci Ardren, “Studies of Gender in the Prehispanic Americas,” *Journal of Archaeological Research* 16 (2008): 1–35; J. J. Brody, *Mimbres Painted Pottery*, rev. ed. (Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research Press, 2004); Thomas E. Emerson, “Materializing Cahokia Shamans,” *Southeastern Archaeology* 22, no. 2 (2003): 135–54; Marit K. Munson, “Sex, Gender, and Status: Human Images from the Classic Mimbres,” *American Antiquity* 65, no. 1 (2000): 127–43; Will Roscoe, “The Semiotics of Gender on Zuni Kachinas,” *Kiva* 55, no. 1 (1990): 49–70; Will Roscoe, *The Zuni Man-Woman* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1991).

4. Barbara Risch, “Wife, Mother, Provider, Defender, God: Women in Lakota Winter Counts,” *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 27, no. 3 (2003): 1–30.

5. John C. Ewers, *Plains Indians History and Culture: Essays on Continuity and Change* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997); James D. Keyser, Linea Sundstrom, and George Poetschat, “Women in War: Gender in Plains Biographic Rock Art,” *Plains Anthropologist* 51, no. 197 (2006): 51–70.

6. Williams, *The Spirit and the Flesh*; Lang, *Men as Women, Women as Men*; and Will Roscoe, “A Bibliography of Berdache and Alternative Gender Roles among North American Indians,” *Journal of Homosexuality* 14, nos. 3/4 (1987): 81–171, cover both female and male alternative genders across North America. Additional material is found in Edwin T. Denig, *Five Indian Tribes of the Upper Missouri* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1961). Detailed descriptions of Plains Indians’ male gender variability appear in George Bird Grinnell, *The Cheyenne Indians: Their History and Their Way of Life* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1972; repr., New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1923); Edward Adamson Hoebel, *The Cheyenne* (New York: Holt, Reinhart, and Winston, 1960). Regarding the Crow see Will Roscoe, “‘That Is My Road’: The Life and Time of a Crow Berdache,” *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* (Winter 1990): 46–55 and S. C. Simms, “Crow Indian Hermaphrodites,” *American Anthropologist* 71 (1903): 580–81. Alfred L. Kroeber looks at the Arapaho in “The Arapaho,” *The Bulletin of the American Museum of Natural History* 18 (1902): 19–20 and in “Psychosis and Social Sanction,” *Character and Personality* 8 (1940): 204–15. Robert Lowie’s work concerns the Assiniboine, see “The Assiniboine,” *Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History* 4, no. 1 (1909): 42. Material on the Dakota can be found in Clark Wissler, “Societies and Ceremonial Associations in the Oglala Division of the Teton-Dakota,” *Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History* 11, no. 1 (1912): 1–99; Ruth Landes, *The Mystic Lake Sioux* (Madison and Milwaukee: University of Wisconsin Press, 1968); and Royal B. Hassrick, *The Sioux: Life and Customs of a Warrior Society* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1964).

7. For alternative genders’ iconography see Jonathan Batkin, ed., *Splendid Heritage: Masterpieces of Native American Art from the Masco Collection* (Santa Fe, NM: Wheelright Museum of the American Indian, 1995), 10, 66–67; Winfield Coleman, “Feeding Scalps to Thunder: Shamanic Symbolism in the Art of the Cheyenne Berdache,” in *Military Art, Warfare and Change: Essays in Honor of John C. Ewers*, ed. Colin Taylor and Hugh A. Dempsey (Wyk auf Foehr, Germany: Verlag für Amerikanistik, 2003), 98–113; James D. Keyser, “Painted Bison Robes: The Missing Link in the Biographic Art Style Lexicon,” *Plains Anthropologist* 41, no. 155 (1996): 29–52; Garrick Mallery, “On the Pictographs of the North American Indians,” *Fourth Annual Report of*

*the Bureau of Ethnology* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1886), 1–256; Ron McCoy, “The Art of History: Lakota Winter Counts,” *American Indian Art Magazine* 30, no. 1 (2004): 78–89. For their material culture see Coleman, “Feeding Scalps to Thunder”; Michael H. Logan and Douglas A. Schmittou, “Identifying Berdache Material Culture: An Anthropometric and Statistical Approach,” *Tennessee Anthropologist* 21, no. 1 (1996): 67–78; Elizabeth Prine, “Searching for Third Genders: Towards a Prehistory of Domestic Space in Middle Missouri Villages,” in *The Archaeologies of Sexuality*, ed. Robert A. Schmidt and Barbara Voss (London: Routledge, 2000), 197–219; Colin Taylor, *Yupika: The Plains Indians Woman’s Dress* (Wyk auf Foehr, Germany: Verlag für Amerikanistik, 1997). Similar, albeit limited, work has been carried out for other regions. For California see Sandra E. Hollimon, “Archaeology of the ‘Aqi: Gender and Sexuality in Prehistoric Chumash Society,” in *The Archaeologies of Sexuality*, ed. Robert A. Schmidt and Barbara Voss (London: Routledge, 2000), 179–96; for Zuni and Navaho see Will Roscoe “Weh’Wah and Klah: The American Indian Berdache as Artist and Priest,” *American Indian Quarterly* 12, no. 2 (1988): 127–50; for Acoma Pueblo see Dwight P. Lanmon, “Pueblo Man-Woman Potters and the Pottery Made by the Laguna Man-Woman, Arroh-a-Och,” *American Indian Art Magazine* 31, no. 1 (2005): 72–85.

8. A meeting between indigenous scholars and anthropologists at the American Anthropological Association has established that “the preferred term of Native Americans who are involved in refining understanding about gender diversity and sexualities among Native American peoples is ‘two-spirit.’ Two-Spirit can be used as a generic term when referring to individuals who are lesbian, gay, transgender (cross-dressers, transvestites and transsexuals) or otherwise ‘marked’ within bands, tribes and nations where multiple gender concepts occur.” The citation appears in Sue-Ellen Jacobs and Wesley Thomas, “Two-Spirit People,” *Anthropology Newsletter* 8 (1994): 7.

9. Karen Daniels Petersen, *Plains Indian Art from Fort Marion* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1971).

10. James D. Keyser and Michael A. Klassen, *Plains Indian Rock Art* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001).

11. Counting coup is an expression that describes the practice of touching an enemy during battle either with the bare hand or by way of a special stick. This action granted honors to the valiant fighter; these honors were translated into a socially institutionalized prestige system that included retelling the facts orally.

12. Customarily, Plains peoples described a full seasonal cycle as a winter. The practice of counting years by winter does not reveal during what time of the year the event described took place.

13. Russell Thornton, “A Rosebud Reservation Winter Count, Circa 1751–1752 to 1886–1887,” *Ethnohistory* 49, no. 4 (2002): 723–41.

14. James S. Howard, “Yanktonai Ethnohistory and the John K. Bear Winter Count,” pt. 2, *Plains Anthropologist Memoir* 11 21, no. 73 (1976): 1–78.

15. Ron McCoy, “Of Forests and Trees: John C. Ewers’s ‘Early White Influence upon Plains Indian Painting’ Re-Examined,” *American Indian Art Magazine* 27, no. 1 (2001): 62–71.

16. J. J. Brody, *Indian Painters and White Patrons* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1971); John C. Ewers, *Early White Influence upon Plains Indian Painting* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Miscellaneous Collections, 1957); McCoy, “Of Forests and Trees,” 62–71.

17. Arni Brownstone, "Seven War-Exploit Paintings: A Search of Their Origins," in *Studies in American Indian Art: A Memorial Tribute to Norman Feder*, ed. Christian Feest (Washington and London: European Review of Native American Studies and University of Washington Press, 2001), 69–85; James D. Keyser, "Ledger Book Art: A Key to Understanding Northern Plains Biographic Rock Art," in *Rock Art of the Western Canyons*, Colorado Archaeological Society Memoir 3, ed. James S. Day, Paul D. Friedman, and Marcia J. Tate (Denver, CO: Denver Museum of Natural History, 1989), 86–111.
18. Castle McLaughlin, *Art of Diplomacy: Lewis and Clark's Indian Collection* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2003), 157.
19. Petersen, *Plains Indian Art from Fort Marion*, 269–70.
20. James D. Keyser, "A Lexicon for Historic Plains Indian Rock Art: Increasing Interpretive Potential," *Plains Anthropologist* 32, no. 115 (1987): 43–71.
21. Ron McCoy, "The Art of History: Lakota Winter Counts," *American Indian Art Magazine* 30, no. 1 (2004): 78–89.
22. Keyser, "A Lexicon for Historic Plains Indian Rock Art," 52.
23. James D. Keyser and Timothy J. Brady, "A War Shirt from the Schoch Collection: Documenting Individual Artistic Expression," *Plains Anthropologist* 38, no. 142 (1993): 5–20.
24. Risch, "Wife, Mother, Provider, Defender, God," 14–15; Keyser, Sundstrom, and Poetschat, "Women in War," 54, 58, 60.
25. Keyser, "A Lexicon for Historic Plains Indian Rock Art," 67, fig. 14.
26. Garrick Mallery, "Picture Writing of the American Indians," *Tenth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology 1889–89* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1893), 326, 284.
27. Keyser, Sundstrom, and Poetschat, "Women in War," 54, fig. 3.
28. George P. Horse Capture, Anne Vitart, Michael Waldberg, and W. Richard West Jr., *Robes of Splendor: Native North American Painted Buffalo Hides* (New York: The New Press, 1993), 103; Keyser, Sundstrom, and Poetschat, "Women in War," 60, fig. 5.
29. Keyser, Sundstrom, and Poetschat, "Women in War." In rock art, images of vulvas appear in the form of what appear to be buffalo tracks detached from the body. Linea Sundstrom convincingly argues that such symbols collapse a series of ideas associated with femininity, fertility, and industriousness in one pictographic sign (see Linea Sundstrom, *Storied in Stone: Indian Rock Art in the Black Hills Country* [Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2004]: 78–97).
30. Keyser, Sundstrom, and Poetschat, "Women in War," 55. Horse Capture et al., *Robes of Splendor*, 101.
31. Keyser, "Ledger Book Art."
32. Horse Capture et al., *Robes of Splendor*, 103.
33. Ewers, "Early White Influence," 3, plate 2.
34. Arni Brownstone, "The Musée de l'Homme Foureau Robe and Its Moment in the History of Blackfoot Painting," *Plains Anthropologist* 46, no. 177 (2001): 249–67; James D. Keyser, "Painted Bison Robes: The Missing Link in the Biographic Art Style Lexicon," *Plains Anthropologist* 41, no. 155 (1996): 29–52; McLaughlin, *Art of Diplomacy*; Colin Taylor, *Buckskin and Buffalo: The Artistry of the Plains Indians* (New York: Rizzoli, 1998).
35. Beatrice Medicine, "'Warrior Women'—Sex Role Alternatives for Plains Indian Women," in *The Hidden Half: Studies of Plains Indian Women*, ed. Patricia Albers

and Beatrice Medicine (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1983), 267–80; John C. Ewers, *Plains Indians History and Culture: Essays on Continuity and Change* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997); Roscoe, “That Is My Road.”

36. Munson, “Sex, Gender, and Status.” It is worth noting that recent gender theory has highlighted the crucial difference between biological males and socially accepted men. This tenet helps us explain and understand why not all accepted “men” were males and vice versa and why not all males inevitably became socially accepted men, as in the case of *winktes* and other cases of Native American gender variants clearly testify (see Roscoe, *Changing Ones*; Lang, *Men as Women, Women as Men*).

37. Tim Yates, “Frameworks for an Archaeology of the Human Body,” in *Interpretative Archaeology*, ed. C. Tilley (Oxford: Berg, 1993), 66.

38. Mallery, “On the Pictographs of the North American Indians.”

39. Mallery, “On the Pictographs of the North American Indians,” 142; Mallery, “Picture Writing of the American Indians,” 323.

40. Mallery, “Picture Writing of the American Indians,” 323.

41. Mallery, “On the Pictographs of the North American Indians,” 142.

42. In the term *winkte* the stress is intentionality and agency. Gender ascription can then depend on personal choice, as expressed by the suffix *kte*. This particle, other than indicating fortuity, also means intention, or “to do something intended expressed by the future” (see Eugene S. J. Buechel, *Lakota-English Dictionary: A Dictionary of the Teton Dakota Sioux Language with Considerations Given to Yankton and Santee* [Vermillion: University of South Dakota, 1970], 319).

43. James H. Howard, “Dakota Winter Counts as a Source of Plains History,” *Anthropological Papers* 173, no. 61 (Washington, DC: Bureau of American Ethnology, 1960), 335–415; Raymond DeMallie “The No Ears, Short Man, and Iron Crow Winter Counts,” in *Lakota Society*, ed. R. DeMallie (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press 1982), 124–57.

44. Howard, “Yanktonai Ethnohistory and the John K. Bear Winter Count,” 53. James H. Howard, “The British Museum Winter Count,” *British Museum Occasional Papers* 4 (London: British Museum Press 1979), 85.

45. Keyser and Klassen, *Plains Indian Rock Art*, 79.

46. Howard, “The British Museum Winter Count.”

47. Mallery, “On the Pictographs of the North American Indians”; Mallery, “Picture Writing of the American Indians”; Ella Cara Deloria, “Old Dakota Legends,” manuscript MS30X8a.21, Boas Collection, American Philosophical Society Library, Philadelphia, ca. 1937; David Finster, “The Hardin Winter Count,” *Museum News* 29, nos. 3/4 (March/April 1968): 1–59; DeMallie, “The No Ears, Short Man, and Iron Crow Winter Counts”; Ron McCoy, “Short Bull: Lakota Visionary, Historian and Artist,” *American Indian Art Magazine* 17, no. 3 (1992): 54–65; Stephen Feraca, *The Wounded Bear Winter Count* (Kendall Park, NJ: Lakota Books, 1994); Thornton, “A Rosebud Reservation Winter Count”; Bill Wierzbowski, personal correspondence with the author, January 2003.

48. The obsolete term *berdache* is the French corruption of a Persian word meaning prostitute or catamite, which in old anthropological literature was used to describe a variety of practices recorded ethnographically. Contrary to the term *two-spirit*, however, the term *berdache* implicitly assumed a natural correspondence between the social practice of transvestism and homosexuality that not only does not reflect

the complex realities found ethnographically but also dismissed the multiplicity of articulations between sex, gender, and sexuality acknowledged today.

49. Deloria, "Old Dakota Legends," 15.

50. McCoy, "Short Bull," 56, fig. 3.

51. Roscoe, "That Is My Road."

52. Ewers, *Early White Influence*, 3.

53. Although many tribes went to war entirely naked, it is not entirely unrealistic to suppose that nakedness can be contextually interpreted as a multilayered sign that, much in the same way as vulvas did for women, collapsed in the marker penis a number of interrelated ideas associated with masculinity, for example, bravery, aggression, and power, all concepts that frequently underpin masculine notions of ethnic belonging.

54. David W. Penney, "Metonym and Metaphor: Public and Private Meanings in Sculpture, Engraving, and Painting," in *Art of the American Frontier: The Chandler-Pohrt Collection*, ed. D. W. Penney (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1992), 55–65.

55. Keyser and Brady, "A War Shirt from the Schoch Collection," 8; Keyser, "Painted Bison Robes," 38.

56. Keyser, "Painted Bison Robes," 38.

57. James D. Keyser and George P. Poetschat, *Warrior Art of Wyoming's Green River Basin: Biographic Petroglyphs along the Seedskadee*, vol. 15 (Portland: Oregon Archaeological Society Publication, 2005).

58. *Ibid.*, 22, fig. 10.

59. Howard, "Dakota Winter Counts as a Source of Plains History," plate 47; Ron McCoy, "Swift Dog: Hunkpapa Warrior, Artist and Historian," *American Indian Art Magazine* 19, no. 3 (1994): 68–75, fig. 4; Howard, "Dakota Winter Counts as a Source of Plains History," plate 4; Howard, "The British Museum Winter Count," 85.

60. Stanley Vestal, *Warpath: The True Story of the Fighting Sioux Told in a Biography of Chief White Bull* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1962; repr., Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1934), 265. See also Howard, "Dakota Winter Counts as a Source of Plains History," 3. In Ella Deloria's comments about a Hunkpapa winter count from 1821 to 1889 by Old Bull of the Standing Rock Reservation, this suicide is mentioned for the year 1847. She clearly refers to the protagonist by name while referring to additional winter counts in which the glyph appear with the title *Pezi icikte*, which translates as "Grass hangs himself" (see Deloria, "Old Dakota Legends," vol. 1, sec. 6c).

61. Howard, "Dakota Winter Counts as a Source of Plains History," 375.

62. In her comments to Bushotter's story about *winktes* in the Boas manuscript collection at the American Philosophical Society Library, Ella Deloria states that he exaggerated their number and that they were so rare as to be a curiosity (Deloria, "Old Dakota Legends," story 215, 4). Williams, however, reports cases such as the late-nineteenth-century Crows, among which there were five *botes* simultaneously living in the same village (see Williams, *The Spirit and the Flesh*, 178), and a similar number of half-men-half-women or *he man hes* was reported among the early-twentieth-century Cheyenne (see Grinnell, *The Cheyenne Indians*, 2:39).

63. Batkin, *Splendid Heritage*, 10, 66–67.

64. Williams, *The Spirit and the Flesh*, 70.

65. Grinnell, *The Cheyenne Indians*, 2:39, 41.

66. Howard, "Yanktonai Ethnohistory and the John K. Bear Winter Count," 53.

67. Massimiliano Carocci, "Reconfiguring Gender in Contemporary Urban Pow Wows," in *The Challenges of Native American Studies: Essays in Celebration of the Twenty-Fifth American Indian Workshop*, ed. Barbara Saunders and Lea Zuyderhoudt (Leuven, Belgium: Leuven University Press, 2004), 83–95.

68. Clark Wissler, "The Whirlwind and the Elk in the Mythology of the Dakota," *The Journal of American Folklore* 18, no. 71 (1905): 257–68.

69. Deloria, "Old Dakota Legends," story 215.

70. Mallery, "Picture Writing of the American Indians," 130.

71. Raymond D. DeMallie, "Male and Female in Traditional Lakota Culture," in *The Hidden Half: Studies of Plains Indian Women*, ed. Patricia Albers and Beatrice Medicine (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1993), 237–61.

72. David F. Greenberg, "Why Was the Berdache Ridiculed?" in *The Many Faces of Homosexuality: Anthropological Approaches to Homosexual Behavior*, ed. Evelyn Blackwood (New York: Harrington Park Press, 1986), 179–89.

73. DeMallie, "Male and Female in Traditional Lakota Culture."

74. Feraca, *The Wounded Bear Winter Count*.