In 1621, colonists invited Massasoit, the chief of the Wampanoags, to a feast after a recent land deal. Massasoit came with ninety of his men. That meal is why we still eat a meal together in November. Celebrate it as a nation. But that one wasn’t a thanksgiving meal. It was a land-deal meal. Two years later there was another, similar meal meant to symbolize eternal friendship. Two hundred Indians dropped dead that night from an unknown poison. By the time Massasoit’s son Metacomet became chief, there were no Indian-Pilgrim meals being eaten together. Metacomet, also known as King Philip, was forced to sign a peace treaty to give up all Indian guns. Three of his men were hanged. His brother Wamsutta was, let’s say, very likely poisoned after being summoned and seized by the Plymouth court. All of which lead to the first official Indian war. The first war with Indians. King Philip’s War. Three years later the war was over and Metacomet was on the run. He was caught by Benjamin Church, the captain of the very first American Rangers, and an Indian by the name of John Alderman. Metacomet was beheaded and dismembered. Quartered. They tied his four body sections to nearby trees for the birds to pluck. **Alderman was given Metacomet’s hand, which he kept in a jar of rum and for years took around with him—charged people to see it. Metacomet’s head was sold to Plymouth Colony for thirty shillings—the going rate for an Indian head at the time. The head was put on a spike, carried through the streets of Plymouth, then displayed at Plymouth Fort for the next twenty-five years. —** *In 1637, anywhere from four to seven hundred Pequot gathered for their annual Green Corn Dance. Colonists surrounded their village, set it on fire, and shot any Pequot who tried to escape. The next day the Massachusetts Bay Colony had a feast in celebration, and the governor declared it a day of thanksgiving. Thanksgivings like these happened everywhere, whenever there were what we have to call “successful massacres.” At one such celebration in Manhattan, people were said to have celebrated by kicking the heads of Pequot people through the streets like soccer balls. —* The first novel by a Native person, and the first novel written in California, was written in 1854, by a Cherokee guy named John Rollin Ridge. The Life and Adventures of Joaquín Murieta was based on a supposed real-life Mexican bandit from California by the same name, who was killed by a group of Texas Rangers in 1853. To prove they’d killed Murieta and collect the $5,000 reward put on his head—they cut it off. Kept it in a jar of whiskey. They also took the hand of his fellow bandit Three-Fingered Jack. The rangers took Murieta’s head and Jack’s hand on a tour throughout California,

. At Sand Creek, we heard it said that they mowed us down with their howitzers. Volunteer militia under Colonel John Chivington came to kill us—we were mostly women, children, and elders. The men were away to hunt. They’d told us to fly the American flag. We flew that and a white flag too. Surrender, the white flag waved. We stood under both flags as they came at us. They did more than kill us. They tore us up. Mutilated us. Broke our fingers to take our rings, cut off our ears to take our silver, scalped us for our hair. We hid in the hollows of tree trunks, buried ourselves in sand by the riverbank. That same sand ran red with blood. They tore unborn babies out of bellies, took what we intended to be, our children before they were children, babies before they were babies, they ripped them out of our bellies. They broke soft baby heads against trees. Then they took our body parts as trophies and displayed them on a stage in downtown Denver. Colonel Chivington danced with dismembered parts of us in his hands, with women’s pubic hair, drunk, he danced, and the crowd gathered there before him was all the worse for cheering and laughing along with him. It was a celebration