
IN THE NAME OF LOVE: Queering Relationships in *Princess Pocahontas and The Blue Spots*¹

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Princess Pocahontas and the Blue Spots (1991), written by the Kuna-Rappahannock author Monique Mojica,² constitutes a palimpsestic performance wherein the playwright recuperates the voices of well-known figures like Pocahontas or La Malinche, questioning their portrayals in the European imaginations and decolonizing their stories. The transnational polyphonic space created by Mojica not only exposes the long-lasting and broad repercussions that these European narratives have on Indigenous women, but it also enables the configuration of a genealogical anthology of Indigenous and Chicana Feminist, Queer, and Two-Spirit knowledge. By sewing the works of other Indigenous – mainly Queer – authors (women warriors), like Chrystos (Menominee) and Beth Brant (Mohawk), and Chicana creators like Gloria Anzaldúa, whom Mojica quotes both at the beginning of the play and then reinvokes at the end in a bibliographical recommendation that provides both “good and bad” sources to read further and comprehensibly understand the Pocahontas’ paradigm, Mojica resituates Indigenous women in North America and reevaluates the sexual dimension of colonization.

Framed as a beauty pageant,³ the performance disrupts chronological time and space by gathering the different asynchronous characters to tell their stories in a humoristic yet bitter tapestry of 13 transformations (instead of “acts”). The subversion of Western/European frameworks is not only structural but also thematic, for Mojica wittingly merges “historical” (both in the European and Indigenous sense), literary, and actual representations of Indigenous women's experiences to address how European representations and stereotypes have

certainly impacted the everyday life of Indigenous women throughout history and up to the present day.

Beth Brant, one of the authors Mojica includes in the reading recommendations list, was also engaged in the deconstruction of these stereotypes and the retrieval and amplification of the voices of (queer) Indigenous women. This reciprocal commitment is also acknowledged in her work, for instance, in her celebrated collection of essays, *Writing as Witness* (1994), wherein Brant notes that:

Even in our grief, we find laughter. Laughter at our human failings, laughter with our Tricksters, laughter at the stereotypes presented about us. In her play, *Princess Pocahontas and the Blue Spots*, Monique Mojica, Kuna/Rappahannock, lays bare the lies perpetrated against Native women. And she does so with Laughter and anger – a potent combination in the hands of a Native woman. (14-5, emphasis original)

Ever since Monique Mojica’s outstanding work *Princess Pocahontas and the Blue Spots* was first played and published in 1991,⁴ it has sparked attention among Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars about the radical reflections embedded in the spectacle, from the transnational associations among the different characters that are summoned onstage, to the politics of memory, embodiment, and healing of the ceremony.⁵ For instance, Maria Lyytinen has reckoned that the deconstruction of the figure of Pocahontas along with that of the “other stereotyped representations of Native women” that Mojica enacts onstage to make sense of the “collective memories of Native women” ultimately serve as a way to “come home” to who she is: “a contemporary Native woman in North America” (79).⁶ This movement “inwards,” through the questioning of what these representations stand for, agrees with Alex Wilson’s notion of “Coming In,” understood as “an act of returning, fully present in our selves, to resume our place as a valued part of our families, cultures, communities, and lands, in connection with all our relations” (3).

There have been several approaches to the performance and their characters, from the roles they have been said to play during colonization and how they are questioned

throughout the play (e.g., Knowles, Kuwabong, Huhndorf) to the elements of the Guna and the mola found in the contemporary artistic stance taken by Mojica (e.g., Carter, Wayne Hopkins).⁷ This intervention adheres to these previous inquiries and offers a different reading of Mojica's performance by acknowledging and delving into Brant's influence in the text, especially when considering questions about the performance of relationships and kinship onstage.

The artificiality of the discourses about Indigenous women in Western imaginations is confronted in several ways in the performance. For instance, Mojica represents Pocahontas – and the other characters connected to her – in an anti-essentialist manner by distinguishing between diverse constructions and interpretations of the character that have been deployed with concrete goals behind them: either as legitimizing the Western settler colonial structures of gender, race, and sexuality; or as ways to position the bodies of Indigenous women as “exotic,” “desirable” consumable goods. This is observed, for example, when Mojica embodies the personality of “Storybook Pocahontas,” whose story acknowledged the “white savior” role of colonizers; that of “Lady Rebecca,” which popularized the reproduction of Christianity in Native communities; or that of the figure of “The Squaw,” which was defined after the “hypersexuality” of Indigenous women whose “lust” was interpreted through Euro-American's gaze. The latter is manifested in “Cigar Store Squaw” in the play, pointing at the discourses of desire intrinsically associated with the consumption of tobacco, equating her body and her sexuality to the plantations ready to be harvested and exploited at the hands of white entrepreneurs and consumers. All these characters are indeed similar in the sense of their creation for and by the Western male gaze, which has – constantly – tied them to Western heteronormative accounts of “love,” disengaging them not only from their own community but also from the land.⁸

Mojica includes other female characters who have indeed been shaped by European imaginations while concealing the Indigenous realities behind them, as it occurs with the role of the “Goddess of the Puna,” whose sexuality has been overwritten with chaste and “virginal”

aspects. She points to the fact that "La Virgen del Carmen (La Tirana), and La Virgen de Guadalupe are only two of the Catholic virgins to whom devotion was built upon already existing reverence to female deities and leaders" (Mojica 15). Moreover, Mojica writes the role of "Princess Buttered on Both Sides" as standing for the figure of the Trickster, who is "stuck" in the talent section of the beauty pageant, which illustrates the importance of Indigenous feminist storytelling throughout the performance to "unstuck" both the Trickster and imaginary self-determination from the "ahistorical" loop wherein these representations are entangled.

On the other hand, the story of Anna Mae Aquash, an activist and "freedom fighter" who was murdered and to whom Beth Brant dedicates the first edition of *A Gathering of Spirit*, is included in conversation with the story of a Chilean girl who was sexually tortured at the border, transculturally portraying the violence Indigenous women have suffered as well in contemporary times. Thus, these two characters interpolate the many stories of MMIWG2S (Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two-Spirits) across the continent.⁹ That Mojica incorporates their voices to narrate the horrors suffered by Indigenous women (of all ages, tribes, geographies, and circumstances) coincides with Sara Deer's statement about self-determination in the introduction to *The Beginning and End of Rape*: "Self-determination for individual survivors and self-determination for tribal nations are closely connected. It is impossible to have a truly self-determining nation when its members have been denied self-determination over their own bodies" (xvi). Thus, the performance creates a Third Space where all these stories commingle, raise awareness, and give voice to all those silenced since colonization began, impacted by its consequences, to reclaim self-determination over their bodies and stories.

In *Writing as Witness*, Beth Brant examines how representations of heteroromantic love have wounded Indigenous communities, particularly undermining the inclusivity professed in matrilineal systems before colonization:

The love that was natural in our world, has become unnatural as we become more consumed by the white world and the values therein. Our sexuality has been colonized, sterilized, whitewashed. Our sense of spirit has been sterilized, colonized, made over to pander to a growing consumer need for quick and easy redemption. What the dominant culture has never been able to comprehend is that spirit/sex/prayer/flesh/religion/natural is who I am as a Two-Spirit. 'Now we no longer love each other.' (59-60).

This statement does not only refer to sexual relationships, but it also encompasses "self-love," the love for one's culture and identity. Hence, Brant calls for the denaturalization of the Western discourses that have fragmented the significance of love in their communities which transcend heteronormative understandings of sexuality. Similarly, Daniel Heath Justice argues that "[the] Invasion depended on the subjugation of Indigenous women and their frequent positions of authority as much as it depended on the erosion of affirming sexual pleasure and diversity of gender roles and identities" (364). Therefore, this erasure becomes inherent to colonizing processes, and as the thorough works by Indigenous feminists and LGBTQ/Two-Spirit theorists (like Brant and Justice) demonstrate:

Heteropatriarchal colonialism has sexualized indigenous lands and people as violable, subjugated indigenous kin ties as perverse, attacked familial ties and traditional gender roles, and all to transform indigenous peoples for assimilation within or excision from the political and economic structures of white settler societies. (Morgensen 4)

As a result of these processes, Brant addresses how the mission to restore and recover the accounts that preceded colonization is indeed a complex one, for "[o]ur world was splintered, and we are left the excruciating task of finding the pieces of our world and making it right again, making it balanced again" (50). In the performance, Mojica herself exposes how European representations have left Indigenous women without a map to reconnect with their past and truthful ancestors: "No mark, no trail, no footprint, no way home" (31).

This journey of self-discovery, of "coming in," is primarily conveyed through the only characters shaped by Mojica herself, "Contemporary Woman #1" and "Contemporary Woman #2," the first being from North America and the second from South America. Although their voices are prominent throughout the whole journey, the fact that they are unnamed is directly related to Mojica's intention of portraying the complicated task of Indigenous Women finding their identity through the accounts that have silenced the voices of their ancestors. Moreover, as explained above, these depictions have also radiating effects, impacting their relationships with their community, with the land, with other than human beings, and with themselves. In this sense, Kim Tallbear and Angela Willey explain that:

The valuation of friendship as a site of intimacy, meaning-making, resource-sharing, and transformation has the potential to unravel stories about the specialness of sex and to fuel our imaginations to rethink forms and structures that exceed the ideal of settler family, which may sustain and remake us. (8)

In the same line, Daniel Heath Justice defines kinship as "what we do, what we create, as much as what we are," shaping Indigenous communities (and their sovereignty) "[as] a delicate web of rights and responsibilities," which interconnects Indigenous peoples to animate and inanimate beings, integrating other human beings, animals, spirits, and natural elements in harmonious and inclusive coexistence (353, 357). Since this form of relationality goes beyond the Christian heteronormativity of the settler family unit imposed by Western settler structures, Indigenous kinship can be considered, to a certain extent, queer in itself. As Chris Finley argues, this heteronormativity has impacted Native communities since "[a]ll sexualization of Native peoples constructs them as incapable of self-governance without heteropatriarchal influence that Native peoples do not 'naturally' possess" (35). Nevertheless, as a result of this sexualization that led to their loss of sovereignty (Finley 34), Indigenous hegemonic masculinity/heteropatriarchy has imposed itself as "traditional," naturalizing and institutionalizing heteronormativity in the communities at the expense of Indigenous women and

Two-Spirit peoples, excluding them “from community, from ritual, and from existence” (Hokowhitu 91-92).

Thus, as I contend in these pages, Mojica does not only decolonize the identities of Indigenous women by embodying and re-mapping a genealogy of Indigenous women across the continent and over time, but also by imagining at the end of the performance a network of queer kinship patterns that recuperate intergenerational bonds, heal the relationship with the land and the Spirit, and restore and enhance (queer) Indigenous sorority and sexuality. Furthermore, this paper aims to explore the queer potential of Mojica’s play by reading it in conversation with Beth Brant’s work, whose discourse provides new and unexplored insights into the performance.

On the one hand, such a frame uncovers the mechanisms on display of the European romances, which have instrumentalized the name/idea of love as a colonial apparatus to articulate and impose Western heteronormative models upon Indigenous communities, thereby justifying European sexual relations with Indigenous women, especially through sexual violence, by creating the stereotype of them as willing receptacles for their colonial desire.¹⁰ On the other hand, by applying Brant’s *A Gathering of Spirit*, Mojica’s text reveals a turning towards queer kinship as an alternative to heteronormative relationships by retrieving the erotic potential of appointed female elements, such as the moon, the water, or even oranges. Ultimately, this gathering of multiplicity of female voices creates a Third Space for the healing of Indigenous women “in the name of love.”¹¹

As previously mentioned, the structure of the performance contests European theatrical norms by breaking with the notions of chronological time and space and by unfolding the rhizomatic plots throughout “13 Transformations,” “one for each moon in the lunar year.” Each Transformation builds up in Mojica and Nuñez’s bodies as “Contemporary Woman #1” and #2 as they summon the ghost-like/spirit voices of the diverse characters onstage, up to three per transformation, into the present moment. Thus, their bodies function as a compass when invoking the narratives of the women who had been inscribed in European discourses, as shown

in the stage directions leading “Transformation 3:” “As each woman, a group of women or Spirit is named, she is placed at each of the four directions in the following order: (counter-clockwise). East, North, West, South” (22). By placing the “East” as the first direction, Mojica is also subverting Western geographical knowledge that has always taken itself as the discursive center; hence, she is contesting the agency of the West in the representation of Indigenous womanhood from the very structure. Mojica herself acknowledges in the “notes on the structure”: “13 moons, 4 directions; it is not a linear structure, but it is the form and basis from which these stories must be told” (Mojica 16). She also applies this transformational basis to the set: “objects and set pieces appear to be one thing but become something else; they can be turned inside-out to reveal another reality... At the end of the show, the stage is littered with debris from the stories that are told” (Mojica 17).

This turning “inside-out” is undoubtedly associated with Brant’s definition of transformation as connected to healing: “We begin by changing the internalization of homophobia into a journey of healing. There is a coming-clean that takes place on this journey. We cleanse ourselves according to our spiritual beliefs and worldviews” (44). Mojica herself understands healing as a collective responsibility, and, according to Jill Carter,¹² Mojica recognizes that “the artist’s job is not to tell a story about healing but to devise an aesthetic experience that effects that healing” (4). Therefore, the “Transformations” located in the performance are connected to the healing of Indigenous sexuality and retrieval of eroticism and desire as defined in non-Western/European terms, disentangling the artificial European discourses surrounding each of the characters until unveiling the Indigenous version of the story, turning the stories inside-out.

This is the case of “Pocahontas,” who in “Transformation 6” appears represented in a complex, anti-essentialist manner: “I have many names. My first name was Matoaka. Some people call me Lady Rebecca, but everyone knows the little Indian Princess Pocahontas, who saved the life of John Smith” (27). Before this moment, she had been introduced to more humoristic depictions through the interactions of “Princess Buttered-on-Both-Sides” and

“Storybook Pocahontas,” giving exaggerated versions of their stories to question their veracity. For example, “Princess-Buttered-on-Both-Sides” sings in a Marilyn Monroe style: “Captain Whiteman, I would pledge my life to you ... Captain Whiteman, you’re the cheese in my fondue” (26). On the other hand, the mimic presentation of “Storybook Pocahontas” in “Transformation 5” ends with “Contemporary Woman#1” asking the audience: “Where was her mother?” to question the youth of the girl and the sexual depictions around her (28). Then, Mojica presents the diverse “names” and the stories behind Pocahontas, starting with the most famous one and ending with the most “unknown” – to Western audiences –hence “turning back time” until Matoaka’s voice is manifested. Matoaka’s account certainly provides a sense of balance with nature being retrieved, as she collects medicinal plants: “find[ing] the right roots, / Put them in your basket woman/child,” and connects with the other-than-human elements that surround her: “all around your world, everything is alive! / Everything is growing, (embraces tree), everything has spirit” (34). Thus, her character embraces Indigenous knowledges and, along with “Ceremony” (one of the characters), she performs her initiation ritual into womanhood: “Nubile child, ... strong, fast, free woman/child” (34).

Most of the conversations between the voices of “Pocahontas” or “La Malinche” concentrate on disclosing how their sexuality (and the sexuality inscribed in their ontologies) had been colonized. This is exemplified, for instance, by Mojica’s embodiment of “the Goddess of the Puna,” calling out colonizers who turned her into a sexless Virgin and erased her identity, disconnecting her from kinship relations to the land and to the natural forces of the world: “No longer allied with the darkness of moon tides/ but twisted and misaligned/ with the darkness of evil/ the invaders’ sinful apple in my hand!” (37). “The Goddess of the Puna” further claims that Europeans had inscribed her in a fixed, whitewashed figure, utterly detached from her “humanness,” her bodily pleasure, and her spirituality: “Sexless, without fire / without pleasure /without power /encased in plaster / painted white” (37). Mojica also addresses the figure of La Malinche, whose sexuality has become a reason for the loss of kinship relations in Indigenous communities and the establishment of heteronormativity among

Indigenous peoples. La Malinche – as Pocahontas – has been continuously appointed as a “traitor” to her kin, being rejected due to her relationship with the Spanish and her resilience skills for survival. However, in the performance, “La Malinche” looks back at those who criticize her, who overlook how her body had been used as currency between the Spanish and her own kin:

That I opened my legs to the whole conquering of the army? They were already there. I was a gift. Passed on. Handed on... You say it was me betrayed my people, but it was they betrayed me!... Puta, Chingada, carbona, India de Mierda, hija de tu mala madre, Maldita Malinche.... Born from the earth, fed with my blood, anything alive here is alive because I stayed alive! (24-25)

Nevertheless, the process that Mojica undertakes to retrieve queer kinship does not only include the retrieval of these voices but also the healing of Indigenous communities, including Indigenous men. In “Transformation 8,” Mojica rebalances the relationship between Contemporary Woman #1 and her male ancestors: “my grandfathers,” remembering them and embracing their memory. “Contemporary Woman #1” follows “the sound of the drum” to tell the story of her life,¹³ or rather to celebrate the survivance embodied in the singing and dancing of her kin.¹⁴ She is especially moved by the “brotherhood of old, brown men mourning their lost home,” recognizing her grandfather’s work in the land and the perpetuation of Indigenous ceremonies: “I recognize my lifeline in your face when you bow your head in respect / to hold a single kernel of corn in your hand; / and Grandpa planted corn in the backyard” (39).¹⁵ Thus, once this multitemporal and ceremonial connection is established, she encourages “The Man” to stand up, fight for self-representation along with women, to acknowledge how detrimental heteronormative structures have been to their kinship relations – to themselves and the access to the land – therefore situating women back at “the centre of the hoop of the nation” (39). This encouragement overall vindicates equality in the relationships with men: “Stand up and walk next to me,” and further explains that men are required to complete the ceremony of regeneration and healing of kinship: “I don’t want to do

this without you” (40).

In addition, said “cleansing” ceremony appears on several occasions throughout the performance of Princess Pocahontas and the Blue Spots, as a process generally associated with spirituality and sexuality as a whole. For instance, at the end of the performance, “Contemporary Woman #1” and “Contemporary Woman #2,” after the embodied journey enacted onstage, “they wet each other's faces, hair, arms; purifying. With a cupped handful of water each, they sprinkle the stage in opposite circles” (59). This reciprocal care is repeated several times while they “invoke” contemporary Women Warriors and announce their words onstage:

Contemporary Woman #1: (in front of pyramid, upstage left) Gloria Anzaldúa!

Contemporary Woman #2: (singing softly, under throughout)

Una nación no será conquistada...

hasta que los corazones de las mujeres

caigan a la tierra.

Contemporary Woman #1:

“What I want is the freedom to carve and chisel my own face, to staunch bleeding with ashes, to fashion my own, gods out of my entrails.”

Dips hand in basin again, sprinkles water to stage right.

Diane Burns describes that to hold a brown-skinned lover

means: (face to face, they wash each other's chest over heart)

“we embrace and rub the wounds together” (59).

In this purifying ritual, the two women, embracing as the lovers described by Burns, softly touch each other, reclaiming self-determination over their bodies and their own representations, acknowledging that this healing is an embodied, erotic, and communal practice. In this line, Brant also suggests that a form of healing kinship is found in sexuality and “the magic abilities to produce orgasm,” identified as another way of ensuring balance in the world, further

arguing that Sexuality and Spirituality cannot be separated (55). Thus, by retrieving Indigenous sexuality and eroticism, queer kinship connections are re-established.¹⁶

One of the most exciting episodes of the performance takes place in “Transformation 12,” involving “Contemporary Woman #1” and “Spirit-Sister.” The Transformation/scene unravels in a dialogue that is constantly surrounded by singing and the recorded voice of Contemporary Woman#1 playing on a tape in the background: “When you tasted of salt and oranges, and the moon sang her happiest song to us, – heart offerings when we remembered her, when you tasted of salt and oranges, and the falling stars took our breath away...” (55). Although the scene does not explicitly show sexual intercourse per se, the dialogue transforms itself into a sensory and erotic journey that does not only involve the two female characters present but also the landscape: “I give myself to this land...My heart pierced, my back split open. Impaled. My blood stains this piece of earth – a landmark for my soul. I promise to return to love you always (...)” (56-57). The connection between the sexual encounter and the land “naturalizes” the queer, erotic relationship between “Contemporary Woman #1” and “Spirit-Sister,” who asks her to “call to [her] in a language / I don’t understand,” either referring to her using the English language to articulate the queer erotic encounter or as them starting to communicate said eroticism in a language unknown to English, calling therefore as well for linguistic (erotic) sovereignty.

The climax arrives in an orgasmic chant while the “Spirit-Sister” sings, “my spine arches from neck to tail ... when you tasted of salt and oranges / I howled at the pulling / in my womb, / - your own shaking / not quieted by whispers - / (of no, no, no)” (57). After this orgasmic connection between the “Spirit-Sister” and “Contemporary Woman #1,” this one confesses that she “put[s] down [her] sorrow in / an ancient / place, / ahh ahh ahh ahh” while the voice of Spirit Sister says “wordless, I walk into the sea... and the moon she will sing,” both voices gathering in a final chant: “ah ah ah ah ah ah / ah ah ah / AH AH AH!” (58). Indeed, this orgasm is not only enacting a queer erotic relationship between two women but between the embodied/material, the spirit, and the land, mending their kinship relations to

“Contemporary Woman #1.” In this sense, Mojica follows Brant’s assertion that an act of love between two women is regarded as a way of mending the broken circles of life, providing other women with new maps for their lives through the depiction of sensual encounters (17).

This re-mapping is also enacted onstage while the sexual/erotic encounter occurs, serving as a new map where sexuality and spirituality are jointly located onstage as “Contemporary Woman #1” takes a bucket of sand, “empties it centrestage, and makes footprints” (57); but also as providing Indigenous women with new footprints to follow to return to queer kinship and to their own identities, self-determination, and erotic-sovereignty overall. In “Stolen from Our Bodies,” Qwo-Li Driskill refers to this act “as a return to and/or continuance of the complex realities of gender and sexuality that are ever-present in both the human and more-than-human world, but erased and hidden by colonial cultures” (57); which resonates with Mojica’s text when in this singing-dialogue, both “Contemporary Woman#1” and “Spirit-Sister” repeat: “I promise to return to love you always” (57).

By the end of the ceremony, “Contemporary Woman #1” merges with the figure of the “Dyke,” identified by Paula Gunn Allen as a “medicine woman,” one that bonds with the Spirit and is intimately connected to other women (257). Mojica enhances the “medicinal powers” of “Contemporary Woman #1” and associates them with the importance of writing and storytelling, self-representation and Indigenous literatures. In “Transformation 8,” “Contemporary Woman #1” declares: “Sometimes when you are not with me, I pull long, long strands of black hair, that doesn't belong to me, from between my sheets, from between the pages of my notebooks” (38), a fascinating image that weaves together the importance of sexuality and desire in Indigenous women's writing, described by Brant as a gift given on behalf of love; as an act of sovereign erotic (53).

To conclude, Mojica ends the play by claiming the urgency and requirement of Indigenous feminisms to be an indispensable part of the feminist discourse (that, up to that moment – and even nowadays – has utterly forgotten about Indigenous women’s claims), cathartically concluding with “Contemporary Woman #1 and #2” “cleansing each other,”

vindicating for self-representation and sexual and gender fluidity. This transformational journey to “come home” to oneself and to one’s community that Mojica has been tracing in such a healing and hybrid performance (in form, content, development, etc.) is epitomized at the closing of “Transformation 8” “What I want is the freedom to carve and chisel my own face, to staunch the bleeding with ashes, to fashion my own gods out of my entrails” (Mojica 59). The performance closes by quoting the Cheyenne saying in a polyphonic and bilingual singing: “Una nación no será conquistada hasta que los corazones de sus mujeres caigan a la tierra...A nation is not conquered until the hearts of its women are on the ground ... Then, it is done, no matter how brave its warriors, nor how strong its weapons” (Mojica 60). Thus, the performance displays a turning towards queer Indigenous Kinship as an alternative to heteronormative relationships, retrieving the erotic potential of appointed female elements, such as the moon, the water, or even oranges (as Paula Gunn Allen argues), as well as by gathering the multiplicity of female voices that create this Third Space for the healing of Indigenous women in the name of love.

Notes

¹ This paper was read at the “AIW 2021: The Sovereign Erotic,” and before that, it constituted a chapter of the homonymous BA thesis I defended in 2019 at La Laguna University (Tenerife, Spain). As a still-learning, white heterosexual scholar, this work started my academic journey. Hence, with hindsight, I am aware of its flaws, the readings and works I should have included, and the terminology that needs to be addressed carefully, given that it is entrenched with (symbolically) violent connotations. Plus, I run the risk of unintentionally reinscribing the gendered and colonial/imperialist meanings that feminist Indigenous theorists, writers, and activists have pointed out and questioned for so long, so I acknowledge this position, and I am open to criticism.

² Born and raised in a family known for its Indigenous feminist theatrical productions, the Spiderwoman Theatre, Mojica has been attached to performing arts in all the possible spheres: as an actress, as a founding member and artistic director of diverse companies, as an editor and contributor to several publications, like the *Canadian Theatre Review*; and as a playwright; being best known for her first full-length script *Princess Pocahontas and the Blue Spots* (1991).

³ This has always been an element shortly addressed in previous approaches to the play. Whereas it is not farfetched to assert that this setting is not arbitrary, given that it justifies the appearances of several characters onstage – judged by their gender and sexuality, their “beauty”– I do believe that Mojica deconstructs as well the overall ideal of white, heteronormative beauty by making the stories relevant once more, by retrieving the voice of the characters and their body sovereignty; all of which unquestionably acquires a new layer of significance if considered along the fact that, as studied by Kathleen Glenister Roberts, beauty contests in powwows revolve around who has the best talent, generally this display being “like a communal sharing of knowledge” (266). See: Glenister Roberts, Kathleen. “Speech, Gender,

and the Performance of Culture: Native American ‘Princesses.’” *Text and Performance Quarterly*, vol 22, no 4, 2002, pp. 261-279.

⁴ Although Mojica wrote and starred in the performance, it was directed by Muriel Miguel, and Alejandra Nuñez also played some of the roles onstage. This is all disclosed in the production notes preceding the play’s script.

⁵ See Scott, Shelley. “Embodiment as a Healing Process. Native American Women and Performance.” *Native Performance and Representation*, edited by S.E. Wilmer. University of Arizona Press, 2009, pp. 123-135.

⁶ Knowles’ approach to the performance is indeed compelling when considering memory as an “active, embodied” exercise to counter their “monumentalization,” which “buries the past rather than keeping it alive” (144). See as well, Beck, Günter. “‘If you remember me...’ Memory and Remembrance in Monique Mojica’s *Birdwoman and the Suffragettes*.” *Indigenous North American Drama: A Multivocal History*, edited by Brigit Däwes, State University of New York Press, 2012, pp. 177-189.

⁷ Such images were mainly widespread by the work of literary authors who fantasized about these encounters and regarded these contact zones as the perfect spaces to establish not only the nature of the Other but also to position themselves as superior, legitimizing the imperial projects and the reconfigurations of identities and nations under their dominions. Thus, authors built around the figures of Native women a romantic discourse, positioning them as “princesses” who rejected their own cultures and religions for the love of the colonizers, submitting themselves to the dominance of the white settler. As doubly-colonized subjects, they are interpellated not only by the White, Euro-American gaze (and the oppression coming with it), but also by the Indigenous hegemonic masculinit(ies), which has either appointed them as “traitors” or subjugated them under the heteronormative and patriarchal patterns that were enforced by settler administrations (and reproduced by Indigenous men). For more on this, see, for instance, Green, Rayna. “The Pocahontas Perplex: The Image of Indian Women in American Culture.” *The Massachusetts Review*, vol. 16, no. 4, 1975, pp. 698–714; Valaskakis, Gail Guthrie. *Indian Country: Essays on Contemporary Native Culture*. Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2005; or Merskin, Debra. “The S-Word: Discourse, Stereotype, and the American Indian Woman.” *The Howard Journal of Communications*, vol 21, 2010, pp. 345-366; and Hokowhitu, Brendan. “Taxonomies of Indigeneity: Indigenous Heterosexual Patriarchal Masculinity.” In *Indigenous Men and Masculinities: Legacies, Identities, Regeneration*, ed. Kim Anderson et al., University of Manitoba Press, 2015, pp.80-95.

⁸ As not imagined in Western ontologies since these narratives “justified” the indigenization of the settlers to dispossess Indigenous communities of their territories.

⁹ Here, Mary Paniccia Carden’s approach to MMIWG2S seems in line with Mojica’s take. See Carden, Mary Paniccia. “Verbs That Will Story Our Bodies into Something More Than Missing’: Poetry, Presencing, and MMIWG2S.” *American Indian Quarterly*, vol 46, no 3, 2022, pp. 155-188.

¹⁰ See Smith, Andrea. *Conquest: Sexual Violence and the American Indian Genocide*. Duke University Press, 2015; Hargreaves, Allison. *Violence Against Indigenous Women: Literature, Activism, Resistance*. Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2017; Andreson, Kim. *A Recognition of Being: Reconstructing Native Womanhood*. Second Story Press, 2000; Driskill, Qwo-Li, Chris Finley, Brian Joseph Gilley, and Scott Lauria Morgensen, editors. *Queer Indigenous Studies: Critical Interventions in Theory, Politics, and Literature*. University of Arizona Press, 2011; Arvin, Maile, Eve Tuck, and Angie Morrill. “Decolonizing Feminism: Challenging Connections between Settler Colonialism and Heteropatriarchy.” *Feminist Formations*, vol. 25, no. 1, 2013, pp. 8-34; De Vos, Laura. “Settler Colonial praxis and gender in contemporary times.” *Settler Colonial Studies*, vol. 11, no. 2, 2021, pp. 103-117; and Rifkin, Mark. *When Did Indians Become Straight? Kinship, the History of Sexuality and Native Sovereignty*. Oxford University Press, 2011.

¹¹ The wording used here is intentional, trying to bring about all the popular cultural references including it, for instance, U2’s song “In the Name of Love,” but also to acknowledge Sara Ahmed’s influence in the development and writing of both the thesis and this paper, after her

magnificent chapter "In the Name of Love," in *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, Edinburgh University Press, 2014.

¹² Carter draws on Mojica, Monique, and Ric Knowles. "Creation Story Begins Again: Performing Transformation, Bridging Cosmologies." *Performing Worlds into Being: Native American Women's Theater*, edited by Ann Elizabeth Armstrong et al., Miami University Press, 2009, pp. 2–6.

¹³ This "sound of the drum" brings to mind Brant's essay "Keep the Drum Playing," where she talks about the importance of Indigenous storytelling and writing, indicating that this "is not a reaction to colonialism, it is an active and new way to tell the stories we have always told" (40).

¹⁴ Understood in Gerald Vizenor's sense as an "active presence," "the continuance of stories" (1).

¹⁵ The Ceremony of Corn is also hinted at several times throughout the performance and in the published edition of the script. This ceremony brings together "the four spheres of the Nahua universe: earth, sky, ocean deeps, and underworld" (See Sandstrom, Alan R. "The Tonantsi Cult of Eastern Nahuatl." *Mother Worship: Theme and Variations*, edited by James J. Preston, University of Carolina Press, 25-50.).

¹⁶ On this topic, the work of Mark Rifkin is foundational: Rifkin, Mark. *The Erotics of Sovereignty: Queer Native Writing in the Era of Self-Determination*. University of Minnesota Press, 2012.

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