
Robert Alexander Innes and Kim Alexander, eds. *Indigenous Men and Masculinities: Legacies, Identities, Regeneration*. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2015.
<http://msupress.org/books/book/?id=50-1D0-33ED#.VxrMvj-wdeI>

Sam McKegney. *Masculindians: Conversations about Indigenous Manhood*. East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2014.
<https://uofmpress.ca/books/detail/masculindians>

“It’s a relatively new thing in Indian country, patriarchy. We forget because it’s such a dominant system in the world. We forget that it really isn’t everything and everywhere. Our people weren’t living this way, even in recent history.” Kim Anderson, *Masculindians* (93).

When we hear people discussing masculinity studies, we might be tempted to dismiss the topic as some outgrowth of the “men’s rights” movement, a misguided and wrongheaded conglomeration that believes men are an increasingly oppressed population in a sissifying world. Or maybe that was just my concern when I first heard about *Masculindians: Conversations about Indigenous Manhood* and *Indigenous Men and Masculinities: Legacies, Identities, Regeneration*. Once one sees the scholars involved in these projects, one’s fears will likely and rightly abate. Each of these collections recognizes that academic discussions of specifically Indigenous masculinities require intersectional attention that much scholarship has yet to pay. McKegney notes that we have had many discussions of Indigenous womanhood and Two-Spirit practices, positions, and identities, but hardly any of Indigenous masculinity, especially those that are celebratory of Indigenous masculinity (7-8). We might first point out that we haven’t had many of these discussions in print because Indigenous masculinity is often the assumption for discussions of Indigenous issues. That said, and it is a point largely absent in these collections, such assumptions, even when they are tacit, invoke the need for an attentive and self-conscious study of these intersectional positions.

Innes and Anderson note in their introductory essay, “there is little activism or political will to address Indigenous men’s issues, and as a result there are very few policies or social programs designed for Indigenous men, including those who are trans-identified, as well as women who identify with Indigenous masculinities” (3). They continue with a discussion of statistics regarding the incarceration, murder, and suicide rates for Indigenous men, noting that all of these are higher than their equivalents not only for Indigenous women in Canada, but also those of white women—a population whose imagined lack of safety drives so much of the “law and order” discourse with which we are all familiar. They are also quick to point out that there may be a number of factors that lead to not only the underreporting, but also the miscategorization of violence against Indigenous women. That is, while this text engages with masculinity primarily, it never turns its back on the ways masculinity cannot be understood outside of or apart from gendered issues for Indigenous people broadly and collectively. In other words, toxic masculinity damages all people, including men, on a number of fronts. Innes and Anderson continue, “A significant outcome of these biases is that Indigenous men are more often viewed as victimizers, not as victims; as protectors rather than those who need protection; or as supporters, but not ones who need support (9). This is not to say that this collection discounts the asymmetrical damage

of toxic masculinity. Rather, they overtly assert that “Indigenous men do benefit from male privilege,” *and* (not but) “the oppression suffered by both [Indigenous men and women] is tied to the colonization and acquisition of Indigenous lands” (11).

Innes and Anderson divide their collection of sixteen pieces into four sections, detailing “Theoretical Considerations,” “Representations in Art and Literature,” “Living Indigenous Masculinities and Indigenous Manhood,” and “Conversations,” this last comprised of interviews, discussions, and roundtables covering a variety of matters relating to the collection’s topic. The sections work well as a framework for the essays, as the reader first encounters pieces that offer the theoretical underpinnings that will inform each of the essays that follow. Moreover, because the essays in this collection were circulated among the contributors, they frequently refer to one another, increasing the centrality of these preliminary essays. I focus on these four essays from this first section that offer theoretical lenses through which to read the rest of the collection.

The first of these, Bob Antone’s essay, offers a specifically Haudenosaunee perspective grounded within their “Creation stories” (21). He begins by demonstrating a key difference between Western and Indigenous traditions, the former devoted to dominance and the latter to peace and community. He continues, “The other significant cultural difference is the all-encompassing matrifocal or women-centered foundation of Haudenosaunee culture rooted in the constructs of Mother Earth, Grandmother Moon, Three Sisters’ foods, and clan mothers who select the leadership and identity based on who your mother is” (23). This matrifocal organizing principle establishes that masculinity is always understood as complimentary to the whole. As such, Antone emphasizes that the “masculine energy of our communities has a greater responsibility to self-examine and rebuild a sense of manhood that works with women to create a world free of violence. The journey to understanding decolonization in the context of masculinity requires letting go of power and control behaviors” (36). Such a decolonizing of masculinity requires an active opposition to hegemonic patriarchy and its concomitant toxic masculinity.

Scott L. Morgensen’s essay likewise takes a historical tack, focusing on the roots and rise of this colonial masculinity. He begins by denaturalizing the gender binaries and constructs that have come to dominate the Americas, noting, “Colonial masculinities arose to violently control and replace distinctive gender systems among Indigenous peoples” (38). Morgensen’s approach understands that “*colonial* subjectivities exist to dominate another” (39), and, moreover, “for colonial masculinity to achieve dominance, it had to be *invented*” (39). Thus, colonial masculinity is not some a priori identity, but one formed in relation to that which it was attempting to colonize—it is a process of self formation requiring an outsider to set itself not only against, but above (the reader might be reminded of Said’s work, which Morgensen indeed draws upon later in the piece). Moreover, because the formation of colonial masculinity has always been in process, it is not, even to this day, fixed. That said, Morgensen’s hope is not that colonial masculinity should be changed, as “criticism of it may only cause it to take new forms and persist,” but rather that it might be brought to its end (39–40). His examination strives to analyze the modes by which European masculinities (especially Spanish, Portuguese, French, British, and Dutch) transform during the Early Modern period in their relationships to Indigenous peoples and their own colonial motivations. Certainly, such a survey is by necessity abbreviated; whole books could devote their attentions to such a topic without being exhaustive. Nonetheless, this essay offers an excellent primer, and as such, serves as an extremely valuable hub for this

collection. It traces a specific strain of settler colonial heteropatriarchy as it works to define itself in relation (and to imagine itself in contradistinction) to Indigenous matrifocal structures, gender fluidities, gender definitions, and conceptions of sexualities, among others.

Morgensen's essay then goes on to examine colonial masculinity in the modern era. He traces educational practices (boarding schools), geographic isolations (reservations) that "taught white settlers that other Indigenous territories were emptied and theirs to inhabit," and legal structures (Canada's Indian Act—as a tactic of weakening Indigenous communities geographically as well as culturally, particularly with the imposition of patrilineality) as modes by which settler masculinity applied itself to Indigenous communities. All of these continue trends begun in the Early Modern period but with an emphasis on their own changing nature—the adaptability of colonizers—which stands in contrast to Indigenous people's imagined inability to adapt and change, rendering them further excluded from the modern man—the primitive obverse of settler civilization. Finally, as the result of these hegemonic efforts, Indigenous communities inherit the very notions of combative masculinities with which colonialism targeted them, "turning them into policing agents for a patriarchal and *heteronormative* settler society" (53). "Put differently," Morgensen concludes, "colonial masculinity sustains both colonial and heteropatriarchal power by presenting its victims as the cause and proper recipients of its own violations" (55).

Leah Sneider, like Antone, demonstrates that "Central to...an understanding of social balance [common to Indigenous epistemologies] lies an ethic of complementarity between individuals and the community to which they belong, an ethic that is shared amongst many community-centred Indigenous cultures" (62). This focus on the complementary nature of masculinity recurs throughout both collections reviewed here. Sneider continues, "Indigenous feminism and Indigenous masculinity studies must maintain a complementary relationship to fully understand colonial impacts on Indigenous communities and work together to decolonize" (70). That is, the study of masculinity must never be divorced from the complementary (rather than hierarchical, for example) relationships that have always informed it—indeed, upon which it relies as a structure. Furthermore, Sneider, demonstrating a need to recognize these understandings of complementarity across other categorizations as well, notes, "race and gender ideologies are intimately and equally connected to national identity."

Like Morgensen, Brendan Hokowhitu draws heavily on Foucault's work to frame his examination of settler impositions of masculinity. Whereas Morgensen seeks to establish a history of those constructions, Hokowhitu focuses instead on their wielding within Indigenous constructions. He "starts from the premise that what we call 'traditional Indigenous masculinity' is in actuality a particular masculinity that has developed since colonization; in part, at least, mimicked on dominant forms of invader masculinity" (87). This is not to say the roots of this adoption are benign; Hokowhitu notes this adoption has historically come in the form of "mimicry at gunpoint" (87). He goes on to clarify some of the philosophical underpinnings of these masculinities, explaining, "The liberal humanist appeal to the individual is, more succinctly, an appeal to an idealized universal European masculinity, where European bourgeois heterosexual masculinity came to represent humanity" (84). Because of its hegemonic functions, this universalizing element of liberal humanist philosophy and the settler states so heavily influenced by them has imposed a one-size-fits-all masculinity to everyone. In New Zealand, Hokowhitu contends, this "has led to ritual displays of physical manliness and hypermasculinity,

along with the traditionalization of heterosexuality, homophobia, and patriarchy” (88). Hokowhitu expresses an anxiety about discourses of authenticity, noting how frequently these are used as methods to delegitimize Indigenous people and peoples (by forces both within and without). He explains, “This dialectic between reverence for the past and discontent in the present . . . remains in the binary where the purity of the pre-colonial past is lamented in the polluted present” (91). In place of such proscriptive constructs of Indigenous masculinity, he offers, paraphrasing Homi Bhabha, it “is not what Indigenous sexuality *is*, but what Indigenous sexuality *does*, or what is done in its name, that is of political and cultural significance” (93). That is, he hopes to do away with the forces that “exclude and limit Indigenous men to heteropatriarchal, hypermasculine, stoical, staunch, and violent discursive formations” (94).

The collection then tacks toward artistic criticism, with essays touching on paintings of and by Mandan Chief Mató-Tópe, the performance art of Terrance Houle and Adrian Stimson, female masculinities in Native American literature, particularly Erdrich’s *The Beet Queen*, and a creative piece by Niigaanwewidam James Sinclair detailing relationships between generations of Anishinaabe men, but which begins, “This story is in the words of a grandmother’s gift to her grandsons” (145). The latter two of these essays seem especially strong to me, but that may have more to do with my primary focus on literature than the quality of the pieces themselves.

The text moves next to social science essays addressing sport in New Zealand, Indigenous gangs in Canada, imprisoned men in Canada, and Diné masculinities. These chapters, informed as they are by the subjects they investigate, occasionally offer less nuanced readings of masculinity than those that have come before. That certainly doesn’t make them any less valuable to understanding the subject; quite the opposite. They speak to the realities of a number Indigenous men themselves. This pattern carries over a bit to the following section, in the conversations regarding Hawaiian warriorhood and with the Crazy Indian Brotherhood. This latter piece is, nonetheless particularly interesting for its inclusion of six distinct points of view. The remaining two chapters—one a roundtable discussion between five Indigenous writers and scholars, the other, a co-authored piece from Alexander, Innes, and John Swift reporting findings from a series of focus groups—return to a more academic voice, though one never attempting to move away from material issues and lived experiences, even in their theorizations. Of these groups the authors find a “picture that shows how the vicious cycle of toxic Indigenous masculinity is externally imposed on Indigenous men and then internalized and passed on to other men, while at the same time being reinforced by society” (300).

The roundtable between McKegney, Van Camp, Cariou, Scofield, and Justice offers wonderful, brilliant, and heart-felt insights. Even in this conversation, notions of strength and warriorhood get bandied about somewhat loosely—without a clear idea of what such things would mean. That said, this conversation’s informality and candor makes that slippage work. I’m particularly drawn to Justice’s thoughts on the breadth of meanings that masculinity can carry, “the vulnerability, the gentleness, the confusion, the uncertainty. All of those are also sources of strength; all of those are also powerful ways of revealing our humanity” (249). McKegney’s role in this discussion offers a convenient transition into his text—these two inform and are informed by one another throughout.

McKegney divides his collection into three parts, each titled “Wisdom, Knowledge, Imagination,” with one of those three words highlighted in each version. These are bookended by his introductory essay and a final conversation with Niigaanwewidam James Sinclair. McKegney explains the genesis of his portmanteau: “the term draws attention to the settler North American appetite for depictions of Indigenous men that rehearse hypermasculine stereotypes of the noble savage and the bloodthirsty warrior (as well as their ideological progeny—the ecological medicine man, the corrupt band councilor, and the drunken absentee)” (1). He then draws on Taiaiake Alfred’s notion that, in terms of this settler construction of Indigenous masculinity, “there’s no living with it because it’s not meant to be lived with; it’s meant to be killed, every single time” (1). There is nothing sustainable about these stereotypes or their allotment by settler mandates and constructions. Thereafter, the introduction lays out the contingency, if not the impossibility, of determining what something like Indigenous masculinity might mean (especially in the singular). He explains that the “‘arbitrary process’ of masculinity is, of course, complicated in contemporary Indigenous contexts by the layering of racialized, patriarchal gender systems over preexisting, tribally specific cosmologies of gender—impositions conducted through colonial technologies like the residential and boarding school systems, legislative alterations to Indigenous structures of governance by the Indian Act in Canada and the Bureau of Indian Affairs in the U.S., and the forced removal of Indigenous communities from traditional hunting and fishing grounds to reserves and reservations” (2). Could a term like masculindian possibly hope to encompass, this breadth of communities, the detailed and nuanced histories, the geographic and economic disparities? Certainly not. Tribal specificity must always be kept in mind, as the interviews constantly remind the reader. That said, all of the Indigenous communities of what has become the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand share in common the experiences of settler colonialism, the violence and genocide of settler elimination. McKegney’s book hopes “to restore senses of rootedness and balance that might overturn the insidious normalization of settler heteropatriarchy on Turtle Island” (3). He conducts interviews (between 2010 and 2013) with women and men, elders, social workers and counselors, activists and organizers, educators, academics, artists of a variety of stripes (authors, musicians, storytellers, comedians, visual artists, and dancers to name a few), politicians, residential school survivors, trappers, and hunters, many of whom fit into a number of these positions.

This collection, in part because it is conducted entirely in conversation, can serve to reach a wider audience than the Alexander and Innes collection does. Its layout does so as well, to the point where it feels almost like a coffee table book, and the cover carries a vivid visual that pops in a way that feels less coldly academic. Its size differs from most academic texts and the margins contain information about the conversants, as well as selected quotes from the conversations, set off as in more popular journalism. The interviews cover a range of issues including religion, violence against women, homophobia, forgiveness, trauma and healing, sexual assaults of men and boys, boarding schools, sensuality, gangs, family, Two Spirit people; we even get a Yoda reference. They also return, again and again, to the construct of warriorhood, as do some of the essays and especially conversations in the Innes and Anderson collection.

Among the most interesting and insightful interviews for me is that with Alfred. There, he traces, in a manner somewhat akin to Morgensen in *Indian Men and Masculinities*, the history of the construct of the Indigenous male as warrior. This and other pieces query the term *warrior*, as

well as its various connotations and translations in different Indigenous contexts and languages. He notes, “For the violence of conquest you needed a violent opponent, so you created this image of the Native as a violent warrior... The way to confront that and to defeat it and to recover something meaningful for Natives is to put the image of the Native male back into its proper context, which is in the family” (79). He continues, averring that the “image of the Native male” should be “defined in the context of a family with responsibilities to the family—to the parents, to the spouse, to the children (or nephews, nieces, or whatever, or even just youth in general)” (79).

Alfred describes this warrior image, as do others, as a fiction created by settlers to justify their own violence (recall Morgensen’s observation that colonization *is* violence). Indigenous masculinity is defined by relationships across genders and generations—these relationships are family. We also note Alfred’s avoidance of heteronormativity in his gender-neutral “spouse.” Furthermore, McKegney reminds the reader (echoing Alfred’s other work) that the term warrior is not one that a person takes on for themselves, but rather one with which a person is bestowed (85). Along similar lines, Kim Anderson wonders, “What does courage and bravery mean? Does that mean facing your fears, going down into the deepest parts of yourself, in those dark places that we don’t want to work with? That’s courage. That is being a warrior” (95). Beyond those with Alfred and Anderson, the interviews with Hokowhitu, Danforth, Justice, and Arnott especially stand out.

The concluding interview with Sinclair takes place after the rest of the collection has been completed, and serves as an excellent capstone to the project. McKegney and Sinclair reflect on the process of the collection’s formation as well as the trends that now appear. Sinclair comments on the recurrent imagery of warriorhood, and pushes back a bit against this trope as potentially acquiescing to the very stereotypes imposed upon men by settler hegemony. He notes, “Many interviews identified protection as an element of warriorism, fatherhood, or some notion of virility, but I think the way men support, secure, and bring health to community is what most were really talking about” (225). He continues, “One of the legacies of colonization has been the separation of men from their roles within families, communities, and nations. What’s replaced these are the hegemonic forms of corporate, neo-liberal individualist identities that ossify cultures” (225). The image of man as warrior that recurs throughout these collections often replicates rather than opposes the structures that McKegney hopes his collection will tear down. Sinclair adroitly calls these out not only as problematically individualistic, but also as hegemonic, existing within the subconscious strata of our lives as common sense. Undoing hegemony is not as easy as pointing out that Indigenous men have been narrowly categorized. This critical step must be followed by a self-consciousness and commitment to rooting it out in ourselves. That difficult work is undertaken unevenly throughout these collections.

These texts, especially when read alongside one another, offer a strong beginning to the work of critical studies of Indigenous masculinities, particularly in Canada (their primary focus). Their implications ripple out far wider than that, though, and we note so many clear parallels to the United States, for example. Ultimately, all of these texts combine to emphasize the importance of opening up these conversations. These are not meant to be the last words on the subject.

John Gamber, Columbia University