
Furlan, Laura M. *Indigenous Cities: Urban Indian Fiction and the Histories of Relocation*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2017. 354 pp. ISBN: 978-0-8032-6933-0.

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In her first monograph, Laura M. Furlan challenges assumptions around Native Americans that often either render Indigenous people invisible in cities or depict their urban experience as one of alienation. Furlan instead questions what it means to be Indian in urban spaces and, more specifically, how the *city* experience has been represented in Native writing. Furlan establishes that Native authors have been creating works that demonstrate how Indigenous people can (and do) thrive in urban environments as well as exploring notions around identity, nationhood, the histories of people and place, and the false dichotomy between the reservation (i.e. Indian land) and the city (i.e. non-Indian land). She argues that such works “reveal that political agency and cultural preservation are possible in the city” and therefore “represent a new direction in American Indian writing” (Furlan 3). *Indigenous Cities: Urban Indian Fiction and the Histories of Relocation* (2017) subsequently makes a critical intervention in the study of Native American literature, history, and culture.

Indigenous Cities focuses on the writings of four authors publishing after the relocation period: Janet Campbell Hale (Coeur d’Alene), Sherman Alexie (Spokane/Coeur d’Alene), Louise Erdrich (Ojibwe), and Susan Power (Dakota). Furlan situates the work of each author within its geography (San Francisco, Seattle, Minneapolis, and Chicago, respectively) and place history which provides a useful level of specificity. Collectively, these writings demonstrate that cities do not only figure as dangerous spaces for Native writers; cities, as imagined by these authors, also offer connection, agency, and freedom. The monograph is largely comprised of literary analysis, but Furlan also explores how the urban Indian experience is represented in art, film, and photography. This is a key strength of the monograph as Furlan acknowledges how the ideas she traces in her key texts translate across different mediums. For example, *Indigenous Cities* is book-ended by analysis of the 1961 film *The Exiles* by non-Native filmmaker Kent Mackenzie. Furlan uses the film to explore the themes of urban Indian narratives and to problematise the powerlessness often attributed to Indigenous people residing in American cities. Furlan’s academic background in American Studies as well as American Indian literary and cultural studies make her well placed to write such an ambitious, interdisciplinary text.

Chapter One, which considers Hale’s *The Jailing of Cecelia Capture* (1985), exemplifies Furlan’s ability to weave together a variety of analytical lenses including, but not limited to, gender, race, post-colonialism, transnationalism, and the diaspora. Furlan excellently argues the importance of Hale’s novel and attributes its relative obscurity (despite a Pulitzer nomination) to “its redefinition of Indian identity in the spaces outside of the reservation” and to how, according to critics at the time of publication, the text does not conform to traditional notions of “Indianness” (39, 40). For example, Furlan identifies *Cecelia Capture* as a “new kind of Native subject” and argues that Hale’s ground-breaking novel poses “a tangible challenge to the methodologies and expectations of theorists of American Indian literatures” (40). *Cecelia Capture* was one of the first female protagonists in Native American literature, and gender figures heavily in Furlan’s analysis of this text. *Capture*’s conflicting feelings about the reservation reflect the psychological problems created by romanticising a space that also figures as a site of loss and captivity (Furlan 51). Furlan connects Hale’s novel with feminist writing more generally through its exploration of

home as prison but asserts that the text is uniquely Indigenous given how Capture's ideas are coloured by the legacies of settler colonialism. The healing potential of protest movements (the 1969-1971 occupation of Alcatraz in particular) saves Cecelia Capture at the novel's conclusion, and Furlan convincingly argues that residing and moving within cities facilitates the networks and activism that give Capture the agency she desires.

Chapter Two explores Alexie's *Indian Killer* (1995), "What You Pawn I Will Redeem" (2003), and *Flight* (2007), all of which explore class, displacement, and marginalisation in American cities. Furlan effectively conveys how Alexie's "engagement with homelessness serves to map his search for meaning in the urban experience" and how Alexie softens his rejection of the city as an Indigenous space over the course of his career (76, 85). Within his writing, Alexie makes homeless Indians visible and, in doing so, points to the histories of displacement that underpin the expansion and continued existence of the United States. Furlan's reading of "homeless Indians as ghosts," and cities as the site of a contemporary Ghost Dance (with the mysterious "Indian Killer" as the manifestation of Indigenous rage), is compelling (87). Analysing Alexie's writings alongside Chief Seattle's 1854 speech (in which he says, "[t]he White Man will never be alone. Let him be just and deal kindly with my people, for the dead are not altogether powerless.") enables Furlan to insist that Alexie's ghosts should be understood as having "something important to say" (Seattle, qtd. in Furlan 87, 88). Geography and history are key to understanding Alexie's ghosts, and Furlan argues that Alexie uses them to "ironize the notion of Vanishing Indians" and to "remap the city by demonstrating how it is riven with past displacements in the present" (89). Alexie's emphasis on mapping establishes the urban landscape as a site of resistance and Indigenous history, whether real (in the case of Chief Seattle) or magical (in the case of the disappearing/reappearing pawnshop).

In Chapter Three, Furlan uses Erdrich's *The Antelope Wife* (1998) to consider how Erdrich re-narrativises the urban Indian experience and provides an alternative to that presented by sociological studies and media reports of the 1970s, which over-emphasised desperation and alcoholism. Furlan situates the novel within diasporic writing traditions and explores how movement and borders figure within Erdrich's work. Erdrich's urban Indians are mobile and metropolitan, challenging the notion of "a fixed Indian identity rooted in the past, unable to adapt to modern living" (Furlan 165). Multiple levels of movement exist within *The Antelope Wife* and the distinction between forced and voluntary relocation is key: the Antelope Woman, or "Sweet Calico," is always moving but becomes lost and homeless through her captivity. Furlan most explicitly engages with transnationalism in this chapter and argues that Erdrich's novel "unhinges the notion of Indians as rooted peoples living on reservations, people with unchanging cultures, and suggests that these movements and circulations produce new versions of Indian identity" (139). Erdrich's characteristically rich writing style enables Furlan to demonstrate how hybridised cultural expressions (such as foodways) can reveal selectivity and agency rather than loss or disconnection.

The focus of the fourth and final chapter of *Indigenous Cities* is Power's *Roofwalker* (2002), a collection of short stories and essays that defies easy classification. Furlan's reading of *Roofwalker* smoothly follows the previous chapter in its discussion of the (re)writing and (re)telling of history. (Re)writing and (re)telling are common threads throughout *Indigenous Cities*, but *Roofwalker* best lends itself to explicit discussion of these ideas given how Power's mother figures as an "archivist" of family and community history (Furlan 191). In "Museum Indians," Power describes her mother's protest against the *Fort Dearborn Massacre* monument which portrays a white woman and child being saved from Black Hawk, a violent Potawatomi leader (Furlan 184). Furlan situates the monument and Power's

depiction of her mother's protest within the burgeoning scholarship on public commemoration (which is a highly contentious issue in the twentieth century) and effectively argues that Power uses her writing to challenge the dominant narrative surrounding Native American peoples and their histories.

Indigenous Cities makes an important contribution to discussions around what it means to be Indian in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The monograph challenges us to think more carefully about the importance awarded to the reservation and how stereotypes work to deny Indigenous modernity and mobility. *Indigenous Cities* will be an invaluable and accessible resource for students of American Indian literature, culture, and history. Furlan's theorisations of diaspora, transnationalism, gender, place, and history in urban Indian writing establish that she should be seen as an exciting voice in American Indian Studies.

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