

# *Transmotion*

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## CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

*Transmotion* will publish new scholarship focused on theoretical, experimental, postmodernist, and avant-garde writing produced by Native American and First Nations authors, as well as book reviews on relevant work in Vizenor Studies and Indigenous Studies.

The broad use of Vizenor-created theoretical terms in many different academic fields (e.g. law, literature, anthropology, sociology, museum studies, etc.) highlights the fact that Vizenor Studies represents a significant interdisciplinary conversation within the broader field of Indigenous Studies. As such, the editors of *Transmotion* will look for submissions that do any of the following:

- Look at Vizenor's work directly, as well as the work of related authors and theorists in the field
- Employ Vizenor's theory to look at other writers
- Continue Vizenor's project of bringing together traditional indigenous knowledges and Asian or European continental philosophy
- Explore the inter-relation of image and text, art and literature, in Vizenor's work
- Contribute to recent developing conversations in contemporary Native American art and literature, in relation to questions of visual sovereignty, visuality, and ethics.
- Offer innovative, surprising, unexpected and creative critique of American Indian literatures or other creative arts
- Emphasize experimental, theoretical, and avant-garde Native North American work

The journal will also accept creative or hybrid work, provided that such work aligns aesthetically with the aforementioned editorial emphasis. The editors particularly welcome submissions of innovative and creative works that exploit digital media.

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Enquiries regarding submission are welcome and may be sent to the editors at [transmotionjournal@gmail.com](mailto:transmotionjournal@gmail.com). Scholarly articles should be 20-25 pages in length, prepared according to the MLA Style Manual. Creative work can be of any length. We are also very keen for scholars to put themselves forward as potential book reviewers and to volunteer to be anonymous peer reviewers.

Information regarding on-line submissions of full drafts can be found at:  
<http://journals.kent.ac.uk/index.php/transmotion/about/submissions#onlineSubmissions>

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**Special Issue: American Indian Genocide,  
edited by Melissa Michal Slocum**

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**Editorial**

It's quiet outside. My pyjamas are running to holes. The dog has run off with my favourite slippers, and I'm completely out of Orlik Golden Sliced pipe tobacco. But my family say they never know what to get me for Christmas. The year is ending well, however, because I'm sitting here putting the finishing touches to our 8<sup>th</sup> issue (well, 7<sup>th</sup> if you count the Vol 2 double issue as a single) and reflecting on the 4<sup>th</sup> year of *Transmotion's* endeavours. It is an incredible privilege editing this journal, spending so much time reading the insightful work of Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars, catching glimpses of the incredible new Indigenous writing happening out there, and feeling awestruck—if also a little overwhelmed—at the sheer quantity of new books that are sliding off the humming presses at a rate of knots. So. Much. Talent. It is hard to keep up, as the delayed release date of this issue testifies. To complicate matters, in the past year, two of the editors have become department chairs, while one has moved institutions, leaving the fourth with a whole lot of work to do! As a result, we have decided it is time to take on more editorial assistants. Alla Holovina has continued to do excellent work with our book reviews (how many, you ask? Why, only 27 this issue), and we will be joined next issue by Bryn Skibo-Birney (University of Geneva), CMarie Fuhrman (University of Idaho), and Ying-Wen Yu (University of Arizona). This input is invaluable and allows us to continue taking in articles, reflective essays, fiction, and as many book reviews on new fiction and scholarship as possible. In addition, the wonderful Miriam Brown-Spiers (Kennesaw State University) has agreed to join us as a fifth editor. We are both delighted and 100% confident that all of this new input will keep the journal fresh, lively, and... on time.

This just happens to be the fourth guest-curated/-edited issue we have produced, as well, and we are deeply grateful to those who have sought to work with us. As you know, open access is crucial to our mission, and it is gratifying to see just how many others are drawn to the platform for the easy dissemination of high quality scholarship and writing that will remain permanently free to the end user. When we wrote the editorial to that double issue in 2016, we celebrated the fact that we were able to make more of the online platform, including various media. We continue that here with pieces that make strong use of images and visualizations, and one that incorporates sound files. If you're reading this in pdf... sorry. We can still do more, so if you're out there making film, animation, doing audio work of any kind, seeking to do something interactive, or simply want to use lots of great pictures, we have the capacity and the will to make all of that work. We're not blowing our own trumpets—we're just pinching ourselves that we have this opportunity.

So to this issue. Our huge appreciation goes to Melissa Michal Slocum for both suggesting and editing this special issue. She has worked with us very carefully—and patiently—on a topic that will always be difficult, and she has done so with commitment and passion, and openness to the Americas more broadly. Her article opens the issue and also acts as a strong introduction to the three articles that follow it by María Regina Firmino-Castillo, Molly McGlennen, and Stephen Andrews. We're delighted to be able to include in this issue a stand-alone article by AnnMarie De Mars and Erich Longie from 7<sup>th</sup> Generation Games, a timely piece on perseverance and the potential implicit in an apparently unusual combination: Dakota Culture, video games, and mathematics. An insightful and deeply engrossing explanation of their work on educational games among fourth and fifth grade students in two reservation schools, their study supports the

proposition that “teaching traditional values, particularly perseverance, can impact Native American student achievement through increased effort.”

The reflective piece in this issue, Gary F. Dorr’s “Mind, Memory and the Five-Year-Old,” is a moving contemplation on the experience of adoption, the comfort of family, and the ambivalence of shame. Two fiction pieces complement this: “the seed runner” by Jenny Davis and “Pretend Indian Exegesis” by Trevino Brings Plenty. Davis’s story places us in a dystopian future that echoes a familiar past—of detention and State control—in which the protagonist’s running ability holds hope for the future. “Pretend Indian Exegesis,” meanwhile, showcases Brings Plenty’s dry humour in this excoriating critique of the Pretend Indian, “a formula. A phantom entity in the community.” The 27 (yes, 27!) reviews that follow tie up this issue with a real sense of the astonishing depth and variety of contemporary Indigenous writing.

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David Stirrup  
Theodore Van Alst  
James Mackay  
David Carlson

December 2018

## **There Is No Question of American Indian Genocide**

MELISSA MICHAL SLOCUM

“Among the justifications for this opposition [to the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide] were that the physical destruction of groups was more serious than the destruction of their culture, that cultural genocide could result in ‘spurious claims’ being brought, and that the inclusion of cultural genocide could inhibit the assimilation of cultural or linguistic groups. Ironically, delegates from some countries, including the United States and Canada, were also apparently concerned that the inclusion of cultural genocide could lead to claims by indigenous groups.”

Tove Skutnabb-Kangas and Robert Dunbar

The images and stories from my 2010 trip to the Pacific Northwest still guide me. I sit across the table from a man, slightly older than me. The water outside lapping the edges of Alert Bay near Vancouver, Canada, remains in my mind even now, just as the colder wind stays within my skin, chilling my bones. It’s warmer there by the food, and I pick at my BBQ salmon. The salt mingles with the tangy, smoked sauce.

“You worked with those at the museum?” I asked.

“Yeah, we did. They called us in to collaborate on an exhibit about our people.”

The pride fills my breaths. We matter, I think. They might be listening. I am there as part of a group studying Pacific Northwest Alaska Native and First Nations cultures. But it seems I end up studying more the problems with being spoken about as Indigenous peoples by outsiders.

“That’s cool. Then they took your advice?”

“No. Not usually. We went in and told them what things were for or meant. And then they turned around and wrote it differently.”

My eyebrows rise. I’m starting to not be surprised. I’m starting to get used to a regular turn about us that includes, but doesn’t actively listen, and so refuses to actively understand. You know, gaining meaning from the real stories. Recognizing the truth in them and changing their own mindsets, their own misinterpretations.

“That’s the way it usually goes,” he says. Then he continues eating and our conversation moves to the cultural center.

The Indigenous peoples I meet over those four weeks in July change my understanding and my purpose for being. Their stories gave me many voices that build one important case: we,



American Indian peoples, are not really here. Not in the minds of those who are non-Native. Our realities have, in fact, been erased from every space touched by US control. This is the ongoing genocide of our peoples. And yet, we are here, speaking up, theorizing with our stories.

I am Seneca, part of the Haudenosaunee community which includes six nations: Seneca, Mohawk, Tuscarora, Oneida, Onondaga, and Cayuga. When the Peacemaker brought us together for peace and brotherhood, he did so by bringing us to one community mind through attitudes of gratefulness and brotherhood. We were then open to one another’s ideas and to working together. My intent here is not to retell the story of the Peacemaker. There are many important sources that already do so.<sup>1</sup> This inclusion of how the Peacemaker opened our minds stresses the need for a reader’s open mind and for the reader’s call to be interactive with this introduction and with the issue as a whole. In my community, we open each activity with the Thanksgiving Address, or Ganönyök, to remember this. We do this for two reasons: to show that we are thankful for all things on this earth, from the people to the plants and so on, and to bring all of us to the same mindset—one of balance, kindness, and love. At the end of each section of thanks, we say that now our minds are one. We are then in a mindset where we help one another. Knowledges add to our own knowledges. We are riding in ships and canoes in the same river, but we don’t disturb each other’s journeys. Before anyone continues through the essays in this issue, it is important that we are all on the same pathway of positive change and helping one another. So I ask, first, please listen to the following Thanksgiving Address video created by Amber Lane, an Allegany Seneca community member, given in Seneca, before you read on:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8qBMbLzGJco>. There are some difficult topics ahead, and a balanced and open mind for all will move our minds forward. It’s imperative that the audience is actively involved in the process of understanding and redefining genocide.

As the bridge between reader, knowledge of Indigenous genocides, and the articles, I set forth an argument denying the question of American Indian genocide that emerges out of Haudenosaunee ways of knowing. I specifically focus on the United States in my argument because this is my scholarly background. However, these steps can be applied in different ways to other genocides throughout the Americas. Each section calls the reader’s attention to acts of witnessing that should be considered some of the defining factors of genocide. From the very title of this article, “There Is No Question of American Indian Genocide,” I mean to spark a dialogue amongst those who agree, those who haven’t thought about genocide in this way, and

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those who deny American Indian genocide, both inside academic spaces and within our communities and sites of work. My introduction will move through three assertions: 1) the current definition of genocide is derived from a legal model that relies heavily on a particular non-Indigenous model of intent, which allows some scholars and non-scholars to take a position denying genocide; 2) by redefining genocide from an Indigenous perspective, a Good-Minded positionality means this article adds to the currently narrow, legalistic definitions of genocide in order to account for both the experiences of and witnessings to the effects of policies and the processes of extermination of those who suffer from the policies; and 3) repositioning an understanding of the effects of this suffering from such an Indigenous perspective will enable future revisions of legal discourse to allow all of us to better address the full scale of Indigenous experiences.

The history of the term “genocide” illuminates how American involvement, as well as that of other countries with Indigenous populations, reframes the definition so that American Indians could *not* make claims of genocide. American Indian genocide has thus far been defined by outsiders who have not experienced genocide themselves. The definition of genocidal actions carried out against Indigenous minds and bodies, as outlined here, shows that the United States carried out an erasure of these stories and was then, and has always been, involved in not simply the extermination process. American Indian genocide viewed as a process rather than one moment better allows the definition of genocide to include and use our Indigenous stories, both past and present, to prove genocide has been enacted as an ongoing process since colonization. During the erasures process, not only has American Indian genocide been denied by the United States, but so too have genocides been carried out in other North and South American countries. I then define erasure as a part of the extermination process which, for American Indian genocide, is an erasure of stories from daily conversations.

Gerald Vizenor’s chapter, “Genocide Tribunals,” acknowledges a need for dialogues about genocide in controlled public spaces so that mindset changes can begin. He argues for the experiences of those who have died to be central in engaging in any argument about genocide because our ancestors’ perspectives show genocide occurring over hundreds of years. The final section calls the reader to become a part of the witnessing process, as listening/reading unsilences and denies erasure from further occurring. I build a case that shows there is no question of genocides in the Americas. No section seeks to blame. Each one follows the other to

offer reasons to use Indigenous perspectives about genocide. What the essay does seek is to encourage us to have dialogues about the *stories* of genocide rather than exclude their importance in critical and educational spaces. Using the term “genocide” here occurs outside of state and national considerations because many Indigenous groups do not organize in this way. But we still must push back and tell our stories, as we seek to reframe minds and knowledge. At its very simple, but imperative, core, my argument is that we have a sovereign intellectual right to define genocide through experiential means.

Abenaki scholar Lisa Brooks argues that our sovereign intellectualism has been ongoing since before contact, but often is presumed to be “new” scholarship. Indigenous scholars offer a unique approach to texts and ideas that must also be incorporated into academic pursuits (235). Haudenosaunee values and ways of knowing offer a framework for realigning the question of American Indian genocide from an Indigenous positionality, but they are not the only ways. The discussion in this article will center on the question of genocide and genocide’s definitional history.<sup>2</sup>

When I was invited to create this introduction, I saw a need to discuss an Indigenous consideration of genocide and why only seeing genocide from the United Nations’ definition can be problematic. It may be easy to presume, as an intellectual, that American Indian genocide is not a questioned genocide. However, few critical books discuss genocide on American soil,<sup>3</sup> and most of those do not include direct interaction with people from those affected communities, allowing them to define genocide themselves. They instead focus on statistics and historical documents by colonizers and on only certain moments as genocide. Rarely is the conversation about the impact of genocide on today’s generations or the overall steps that lead to genocide. As well, most curricula in the education system, from kindergarten up through to college, does not discuss in detail American Indian genocide beyond possibly a quick one-day mention of the Cherokee Trail of Tears.<sup>4</sup> This exclusion leaves out not only the hundreds of other forced removals but also the histories before and after that Indigenous peoples define as genocides and hundreds of years of events. Therefore, the full scope of American Indian genocide has not been critiqued within scholarship, nor is it a dialogue amongst citizens. When both spaces have this dialogue fruitfully, then we can engage in better relations.

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### Good-Minded Dialogues

The Great Law of Peace helps me think through how we resist invisibility and stake serious claims for not simply the inclusion of our stories as they already exist, but necessary, active understanding that highlights settler-colonial denial of its actions. Brooks borrows a line from Joy Harjo that my use of The Great Law enacts: “I crave both literature and scholarship that shows us ‘thinking in our skin’” (242). As Onondaga Faithkeeper Oren Lyons outlines, Haudenosaunee lifeways come from The Great Law of Peace that creates the Good Mind:

We lived contentedly under the Gai Enesha Go’Nah, The Great Law of Peace. We were instructed to create societies based on the principles of Peace, Equity, Justice, and the Power of Good Minds.

Our societies are based upon great democratic principles of the authority of the people and equal responsibilities for the men and the women. [...] Our leaders were instructed to be men of vision and to make every decision on behalf of the seventh generation to come; to have compassion and love for those generations yet unborn. [...]

We were instructed to be generous and to share equally with our brothers and sisters so that all may be content. We were instructed to respect and love our Elders, [...] to love our children, indeed to love *ALL* children. (Lyons)

I am seeking to create a relationship that opens readers to what’s written in this issue and to a Good-Minded reconsideration of how we define genocide and truly *hear* survivors. Good Mind means a way of thinking and being that is both spiritual and relational and an intricate lifeway and a spiritual ideology where individuals and ancestors build a consciousness for a community. Lakota scholar Nicholle Dragone, in her Master’s thesis and forthcoming monograph, outlines the Good Mind through principles by way of Lyons.<sup>5</sup> The Good Mind theorizes through three principles: “peace in mind and community,” equity resulting in community justice, and “the power of the Good Minds, which embodies good health and reason” (Lyons qtd. in Dragone 47). The principles allow the Good Mind’s peace and connection to the world where no one wars or presumes they are worth more than another and that no knowledge or way of being is considered better than another. Good health and reason presumes that, to heal and to have better relations as nations, we must tell our stories and that those outside of our experiences should listen to and utilize our definitions rather than their own. Peace in mind and community sets up a calm

dialogue to hear these stories and to believe them. We therefore would have a conversation about genocide, about the term’s history, and how it impacts visibility of violence committed against us. It is inherently Good-Minded not to strictly eliminate a term or to fully take it over, but to *add on* to the definition. It is also inherently Good Minded to look carefully at our histories and learn from them. We do think about what’s gone on in the past as well as what dialogues exist now before moving forward. Critically examining the definition itself is part of our witnessing.

Thinking with the Good Mind as a framework for being a good reader while reading the issue means acknowledging that there are many ways to define genocide and to explore in scholarship how to talk about these issues. The stories and histories included throughout this issue act as the defining factors of genocide in the Americas. Importantly, as oral traditions do, the sentences here must evoke such orality in order to help the reader/listener become involved in the stories. At the moment of reading, changes in the reader’s mind can move that reader momentarily outside of their positionality and their previous conceptions of genocide, whether legal or presumed. Orality simultaneously decolonizes both the writing *and* the reader through the experiences we reveal. By using stories and orality, we evoke what LeAnne Howe insists: that tribalographies theorize our ways of knowing and being,<sup>6</sup> including our genocides. The truth has to come from story spaces, from those who’ve experienced genocide and those who have arisen resilient. Here, we expand those ways to critique and include narrative, for example, in tone and sentence style, including “me” so that orality is not only throughout the story but inside each sentence and each word. Oral elements are intentional for two reasons: sound imparts voice and a storytelling engagement with readers evokes witnessing between scholar and reader. Orality gets inscribed in multiple ways which may also look different from typical academic writing and sentence structure. It is conversational, which then may contain more casual language, repetition, direct address of readers, “that” and “which” used interchangeably for sound, a repeated phrase, intense details, dialogue, thoughts, and contractions. Orality in writing calls for an active response from a reader—in turn becoming like a tribunal: the motivation to understand one’s own positionality, understanding that that positionality lacks knowledge about other people groups, seeking out more information from American Indians themselves, having compassion for those atrocities that have occurred and still occur, not questioning *if* genocide happened, and desiring positive changes.

### Tribunals as Witnessing Spaces

“Charles Aubid declared by stories his *anishinaabe* human rights and sovereignty. He created a vital ‘fourth person,’ sense of presence and survivance, and defied the cultural hearsay of ethnologies, absence and victimry.”

“...but the *anishinaabe* always understood their rights in stories.”

Gerald Vizenor

Gerald Vizenor gives a 2006 speech arguing that lived experiences act as evidence of violent, intentional wrongdoings. Vizenor seeks stories, particularly those *passed down* orally through Indigenous communities and families, to stand as important, accepted evidence of genocide, acting as another type of witnessing. The presence of these stories, including the fourth-person accounts of those who have died, are the stories we should hear as testimony in discussions of genocide. Charles Aubid, a central person in Vizenor’s speech, who argued in court to keep control over their manoomin or wild rice harvest, brings in fourth-person accounts from stories passed down to him during his courtroom testimony. He proves that our oral stories are vital witnessings to genocide, violence, and erasure (135). Because of Aubid’s lived experiences in the court system, Vizenor calls for genocide tribunals—spaces for testimony of these witnessings—to create dialogues which will then stop generations of wrongdoings.

Vizenor argues that when we invoke a sense of presence, we stir fears because our stories outline attrition processes and lay the groundwork for defining American Indian genocide. He seeks for future generations of Natives and non-Natives an empowering understanding of sovereignty and the forced absences of American Indians from legal processes. Vizenor’s goal is positive changes to laws, so he suggests that genocide be brought up in university settings, particularly law schools (138). The tribunals would “justly expose,” through “venues of reason” the “continental ethnic cleansing, mass murder, torture, and religious persecution, past and present” (139). Vizenor finds problematic that, without these tribunals, there lacks reason and acknowledgement of these crimes which means that the “perpetrators of serious crimes against Native American Indians have seldom been punished, and the insidious deniers of genocide protect the impunity of the perpetrators” (140). There are generations of students moving into legal systems, then, who don’t have a full understanding of violence on US soil.

Tribunals act as a go-between within Western and non-Western senses of justice. Vizenor specifically desires conversations in universities, particularly with law students in moot courts, much like mock trials, because “[t]he point of these proposed genocide tribunals is to consider native equity, moral accountability, the reasonable competition of evidence, and to create narratives of survivance” (139-40, 144). He’s seeking for the law to make space for Indigenous iterations which includes narrative in spaces. We can then teach different approaches to understanding how the law could work. Too, university spaces allow for thinking beyond the United Nations genocide definition. And the hope would be to change how the legal system traditionally thinks when new lawyers gain a stronger understanding of the issues and positively evolve the law. Vizenor seeks, therefore, a mindset and community change, resulting in changing treatment of one another—much like the Haudenosaunee—now our minds are one. When we recognize that genocide is more than a specific event where mass killings are employed, and that it’s a planned process, then Vizenor’s tribunals have teeth—the kind of proof that cannot be made invisible.

### **The Questions of Genocide: History Unsilenced**

When I first read the phrase, “The Question of Genocide,”<sup>7</sup> I assumed scholars might explore genocidal actions. However, when I learned that this phrase began by denying the Holocaust and, from there, many other genocides, I became angry that even today, in 2018, we still cannot have open dialogues about genocide. Scholars have too often employed the phrase to rhetorically deny that genocide occurred within a nation’s boundaries. In the process of denying genocide, countries have therefore also negated the experiences of victims. Genocide is challenged when groups of people actively pursue the recognition of their genocide. Then, their stories and experiences are denounced. The phrase originated in Alain Finkielkraut’s 1998 work, *The Future of a Negation: Reflections on the Question of Genocide*, where he studies French critics, particularly Robert Faurisson, who tried to deny Adolf Hitler’s attempt to exterminate Jewish peoples. Other scholars have since used this phrase to investigate genocide, some coming to the conclusion that the violence against a people group is genocide.<sup>8</sup> Other texts suggest certain histories do not meet the legal definition of genocide, and the term is overused and misused in regards to these experiences.<sup>9</sup>

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Genocide was not an official term until defined by Raphael Lemkin for the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. He framed the definition after the Holocaust to correspond with what had occurred so that responsible Nazi leaders could be prosecuted—moving genocide into a legal argument. However, Lemkin’s deep interest in histories of violence influenced his outline of genocide (Lemkin 2013, 134). It’s important to note that Lemkin himself was a Polish Jew who escaped Europe to America after German forces invaded Poland (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum). He understood the depths of genocide.<sup>10</sup> The historical examples of genocide that Lemkin brought with him to the Convention ranged in multitudes of variations, none exactly the same extermination process (Lemkin 2013, 138). Phyllis Bardeau, a Seneca elder and language expert, recommends defining the term from the moment itself. Bardeau argues that the stories that surround any event act as necessary evidence for how we should define that event. Although Lemkin called upon multiple genocides as examples for the Convention, he understood how fluid the definition would need to be to fittingly protect *every* nation.

In order to revise and rethink genocide and absence, American Indian stories are imperative to drastically altering the narrative, just as testimony was to the Holocaust. I borrow from Holocaust studies not as a comparison between genocides which devalues one or the other. We must be careful not to become “rival narratives of genocide,” as Chickasaw scholar Jodi Byrd warns (311). I work against “disavowing” those experiences and toward having all experiences work together to help tell a fuller, more complete story of American Indian genocide. The Convention I discuss completed work important and imperative to the prosecution of genocidal actions resulting in the Holocaust. However, importantly, therein the history also lay moments of denial by other countries of their genocides.

Crucial moments and decisions at the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide denied certain key factors for prosecuting genocide that actually help other countries avoid responsibility for their own genocidal actions. The Convention was held on December 9, 1948 and used Lemkin’s definition as a foundation for the United Nation’s adoption of Resolution 260, officially enacted in 1951. An ad hoc committee put forth three subparts to the definition of genocide for Article II and III of the resolution: physical, biological, and cultural (Skutnabb-Kangas and Dunbar 79-80). Each was inspired by Lemkin’s outline, but



*edited* his original definitions. Physical and biological definitions were passed and included with the following language:

In the present Convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

- (a) Killing members of the group;
- (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
- (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group. (United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility Project)

However, an addition of cultural genocide was barred from the United Nations’ definition because countries were afraid of “spurious claims” (Skutnabb-Kangas and Dunbar 80). They were concerned such claims would stop certain peoples from positively assimilating to the dominant country’s social and legal customs. Yet from those expectations of assimilation, the expected loss fits cultural genocide. Most notably, Canada and the United States were afraid Indigenous populations would then make claims of cultural genocide (Skutnabb-Kangas and Dunbar 80-81). The very dominant cultural ideals that enforced genocide and harmed the lives of millions were left to decide how to define genocide. The Convention also decided that claiming genocide would not be retroactive for legal recourse. Any country having experienced genocide previous to the 1948 Convention could not claim genocide.

The problem with the United Nations’ definition specifically for Indigenous peoples is that it is created by non-Indigenous peoples who have more often focused on nation states as the subject of genocide within boundaries created by those who marked national territories *over* Indigenous lands. However, the past is integral to defining American Indian genocide since it’s been witnessed from the beginning of colonization. Consider Laguna Pueblo author Leslie Marmon Silko’s description of Pueblo time:

The Pueblo people and the indigenous people of the Americas see time as round, not as a long linear string. If time is round, if time is an ocean, then something that happened 500 years ago may be quite immediate and real, whereas something

inconsequential that happened an hour ago could be far away. Think of time as an ocean always moving. (Silko)

The past affects the present, which affects the future, which passes directly down through a community across time. The genocides that happened so many years ago are just as detrimental today. That's why they continue to be known through oral traditions; stories, which Silko also emphasizes, distinctively mark those passages of time. Application of Indigenous considerations of time and its influence on genocide must be how we theorize through American Indian genocide. To that end, cultural genocide becomes an imperative part of this adding on to. Silko's consideration of time could mean that there is no statute of limitations on American Indian genocide because of how genocidal actions deeply impact our lives today.

Some of the language in the UN definition evokes a way of broadening that could fit Indigenous genocides. Scholars such as Tove Skutnabb-Kangas and Robert Dunbar and Mvskoke/Creek scholar K. Tsianina Lomawaima have contended that forcible removal of Indigenous youth to boarding schools and stripping of language and culture fits the United Nation's genocide point of physical removal of one group to another. Others, such as Benjamin Madley and Brendan C. Lindsay, argue that American Indians have experienced genocide and outline past state genocidal actions, although not national ones. Neither Madley nor Lindsay seek legal recourse, but instead use historical written documents and accounts to provide evidence of genocide. Dakota scholar Chris Mato Nunpa outlines how each section of the UN definition can be seen through both historical moments and the lived experiences of his nation. We do not teach these genocidal histories within most educational institutions. Using the UN definition, whether with legal or scholarly intention, doesn't thus far seem to work to change a national mindset. What's now necessary within this dialogue is a closer reading of cultural genocide through Silko's wave-like time which crosses over itself. When we view genocide as a longer process that moves from one generation to another, more impactful in the present moment than what's occurring in the present moment, we can better understand why that part of the definition is so vital. Too, cultural genocide points to why the United States would have agreed to remove cultural genocide and not acknowledged US influence on how the legal definition could work. The UN genocide definition might work for some nations, but by not incorporating Indigenous epistemologies and perspectives, even the idea of having a definition that implicates perpetrators does not live up to the full potential the convention was created to prevent.

The layperson does not think about genocide as a legal term, but instead as an experiential one. Violent actions against people groups, such as the Holocaust, South African apartheid, and slavery, are often taught without discussion of the legalities of the time, but instead as what occurred to whom. The fact of the matter is, the outcomes of settler colonial decisions have been the destruction of Indigenous peoples. If we focus more on extermination than on intent, we gain ways to stop the process.

As Haudenosaunee people, we would not simply come up with a new term. We would first investigate and unpack what’s being used now and how our experiences could bring about changes to perceptions of how genocide works in other situations. By using Haudenosaunee terms of *adding on* to, if we add back *in* the section on cultural genocide, the past absence of it illuminates an erasure of histories. Since other scholars have done work reading through the current UN definition, this essay discusses why cultural genocide is a valid adding on to which offers more stakes in American Indian genocide claims of a longer duration of genocide. Therefore, the failure to incorporate cultural genocide as a tenet of genocide is of significant historical importance in investigating relations between the US and tribal nations.

When first presented to the Convention, cultural genocide was defined as destroying the specific characteristics of a group: “any deliberate act committed with the intent to destroy the language, religion, or culture of a national, racial, or religious group” (Skutnabb-Kangas and Dunbar 80). This could be exemplified in the following:

1. Prohibiting the use of the language of the group in daily intercourse or in schools, or the printing and circulation of publications in the language of the group;
2. Destroying or preventing the use of libraries, museums, schools, historical monuments, places of worship or other cultural institutions and objects of the group. (*ibid*)

Tribal nations each have their own national systems, languages, and religious practices. All of these were outlawed by the US government in some way. Indigenous language was, and still is, removed from many education systems. We were forced to move off of both historical and sacred spaces, and many of those spaces have been either bulldozed over for development or contaminated by environmental toxins. During each of these steps, a personhood is stripped from the body and the soul. Cultural genocide is the ongoing genocide that, in the case of the United States, continues after initial contact and removal. Upon initial settler colonialism, genocide took place as immediate murder of American Indians, raping, and burning and pillaging of villages

and crops. Once we take the historical turn to removal from land to reservations and removal of children from tribal nations to boarding schools, the process slows down and seeks removal of the American Indian soul from his or her ways, versus an extermination of body. The breakdown of the kinship structure here is the legacy and how extermination transforms into acts of cultural genocide over time. Cultural genocide outlines that there can be a drawn-out duration that impacts groups over time and years to deconstruct a people's culture.

### **The Extermination Process**

Particular to the case of American Indian genocide, we can learn that genocide is fluid, and we should re-define it every time. There are critical genocide studies lenses in place which can offer some ways to investigate genocide's fluidity. Clinical professor of law Sheri P. Rosenberg has argued for viewing genocide as a process, rather than an event. Rosenberg states that process is important because it inherently breaks down the logic for the processes which ensue to exterminate immediately, *as well as* to exterminate over time. As she notes, because the term genocide has become so narrow due to "the emphasis on legalism," scholars and the public miss "that genocide is a fluid and complex social phenomenon, not a static term" (17). Examining process rather than event theorizes how there is no *one* genocide or one way to exterminate, an argument the definitional actions of both Lemkin and Bardeau outline. Presuming genocide is simply the act of extermination is a disturbing privileging of a certain trauma. As the editors argue in the introduction to *Hidden Genocides: Power, Knowledge, Memory*, the question isn't whether genocide occurred or not, but instead why has that genocide become so hidden by a political force that it isn't discussed (Irvin-Erikson, et al. 1-17)? As history shows, there can be the creation of an important and largely influential legal document which carries out the prosecutions intended, but still has histories of negative power moves buried within the creation process. When a small group is allowed to police definition, it becomes convenient for the people doing the harm to continue executing genocidal steps. Critiquing genocide through stages unique to a situation places the power back with those impacted in Good-Minded ways. The problematic presumption is the fear that redefining genocide seeks criminal investigations. Issues which bring about fear-based thinking cloud the Good Mind. My hope is that understanding this history will allow us, in time, to refine the legal discourse, by first unclouding what occurred before.

First coined by Helen Fein, then used by Mark Bradbury, Donald Bloxham, and Rosenberg, the concept of attrition marks a pathway to the perpetrators and makes hidden genocides visible. Each of these scholars, as well as other critical genocide studies scholars, noticed that genocide is more often a long-term process rather than immediate violence (Rosenberg, et al. 109). Attrition does not replace genocide; rather, it interrupts the narrow definition utilized previously by the UN and expands how genocide unfolds within perpetrator systems and actions. As Rosenberg and Everita Silina explain,

genocide by attrition refers to a slow process of annihilation that reflects the unfolding phenomenon of the mass killing of a protected group, rather than the immediate unleashing of violence and death. The methods of genocide by attrition describe state and non-state policies and practices that deprive individuals of a specific set of human rights that do not cause immediate death, but rather lead to the slow and steady destruction of the group. (Rosenberg, et al. 107)

The action of analyzing using attrition defines intent and genocide through the genocide itself, adding on to how we might read the United Nations’ broader definition. Neither Rosenberg nor Silina desire a new definition of genocide or adding to its terms, but rather a more refined way of viewing the definition already in place. I would disagree here. Attrition offers an opening for new positionalities and additions previously denied by the removal of cultural genocide.

Attrition shows current genocides *still* in place, as well as traces of past genocides. There is then fluidity to genocide and therefore should also be fluidity to how we might define it *and* its intent. Process is important to understanding how coloniality uniquely carries out extermination, because, as María Regina Firmino Castillo argues in this special issue and as Lemkin pointed out, coloniality will always have a relationship with genocidal ways. Coloniality destroys those who are in the way of colonial control (Firmino Castillo 33-4). Without intense investigation of the process, and without proven extermination attempts, it’s easier to deny genocide and claim to save the savage Indian from him or herself. As Alain Finkielkraut argues about Holocaust denial, if rhetoric is spread wide enough by someone in power and their actions are perceived as humanitarian—for example, monetary government support of tribal nations, such as health care or resources specifically for enrolled members, or even the “setting aside” of land to create reservations—it *will* be believed. The negation takes on a life of its own so that logic presumes those in power helped rather than harmed (xvii).

Each genocide is distinct, and those distinct traits define for that group their genocide. The extermination processes being distinct and different is *not* what makes it impossible to define genocide. It is what shows us that genocide comes in many packages, processes, and politics. We need many stories for the public to understand invisible genocides.

### **Erasure: A Step in the Genocide Process**

Why don't we take action with this term "genocide" when so many stories from many countries clearly show genocide in their own distinct ways? When thousands of voices are speaking out, the question really is not if an event was genocide, but what *fear* forces people to deny genocide or to make it invisible? Erasure is the set of rhetorical devices used by a perpetrator to rid history of their involvement in genocide acts, as well as to remove all traces of their victim's existence from body to traditions to kinship ties. The erasure process, when viewed as part of extermination processes, allows genocide to be determined from more than moments of mass extermination: genocide then becomes more clearly a planned, drawn-out, living part of colonization. Erasure connects mass immediate extermination to the policies and practices which then keep the extermination ongoing within cultural genocide—one continuous genocide. When genocide stories are excluded from the national dialogue and mindset and not taught within national educational institutions, there is an erasure of stories detailing the long extermination: a removal from land, a removal from family, a removal of ways of knowing replaced with colonized ways, and finally a removal of histories and stories from national systems. Cultural genocide carried out using erasure rhetorics is a literal destruction in capacity of an individual's ability to live as Tohono O'odham, as Navajo, as Puyallup. What remains is a silent social national acceptance that American Indian genocide is neither talked about nor recognized.

Erasure is also the ridding of American Indians from a system simply expecting assimilation, rather than honoring differences. Assimilation becomes a systematic erasure of a people because it requires that American Indians make American ways their main ways of being. *Hidden Genocides* also argues that using the concept of "hidden" allows for "critically examining cases of genocide that have been 'hidden' politically, socially, culturally, or historically in accordance with broader systems of political and social power" (Irvin-Erikson, et al. 2). The editors recognize that "certain cases of genocide [have been] denied, diminished, or ignored" (*ibid*). When history is erased, that is part of the attrition process. The editors point out

troubling US history showing that genocide was hidden in America after the late 1800s. An 1881 report from the US Commissioner of Indian Affairs outlines both the Indian question and the *policy* of extermination: “one of two things must eventually take place [...] either civilization or extermination of the Indian. Savage and civilized life cannot live and prosper on the same ground. One of the two must die” (qtd. in Irvin-Erikson, et. al 3). At one moment in time, extermination was an accepted end to American Indian ways through both bodily death *and* assimilation. Today it’s hidden. Erasure is a process of rhetorics changed over to meet mass social expectations but still engaged in slowly etching away personhood.

If you take away our right to tell those stories, you take away our ways of witnessing past atrocities and how those become today’s trauma. What’s problematic is that the system that denies us our right to seek justice is a Western system put in place by those who carry out genocide. When perpetrators are protected, the stories hold no true meaning to non-Natives and therefore have a more difficult time creating change in relationships. The stories are then made to seem as if they are one event or one person’s story rather than the multiple killing ways.

Extermination steps have occurred in the United States from contact to today’s erasure, and we can see those actions more clearly if we critically examine them as a process of stages meant to see out the finality of the erasure process. There is an inherent desire by those in power for the deletion of identity, personhood, and rights in body and/or mind; those less than have no either/or in assimilative situations. They must relinquish to the powerful their own ways of knowing and being in order to survive (as we see above from the US Commissioner) because the only other option is a daily fight to practice their traditions. Take for example the reasoning in Richard Henry Pratt’s 1892 speech on his conception of running American Indian boarding schools. He argues for assimilative practices to “[k]ill the Indian, and save the man.”<sup>11</sup> Within those words, there is an understanding and acceptance that the “Indian” part of those students is going to die and is meant to die. Pratt carries out the Commissioner’s policy with governmental funding of his boarding schools. Boarding schools only began closing after the passing of the 1978 Indian Child Welfare Act, when American Indian parents regained their legal rights to send their children to schools they chose. Processing American Indians into the American system through assimilative education went on for over 86 years via boarding schools.

Today, such public rhetoric exists differently, but seeks similar ends. Erasure occurs through a rendered narrative rhetorically altered so that realities about American Indians no

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longer exist in national mindsets. Because erasure becomes so deeply embedded in the nation's systems, the system creates hidden genocides. The question of American Indian genocide therefore becomes a national question to investigate: not the genocide itself, but how the policies then and now still carry on those assumptions of extermination. Nunpa states that "the United States is conspicuous by its silence, and it suppresses the truth of what really happened in its development as a nation" (97). He, too, argues for lifting the veil of invisibility placed around American genocidares: "As a consequence of this historical amnesia, the U.S. public does not see that its government and society was established through genocide" (98). He outlines how and where US actions have fit five of the United Nations' criteria for genocide, "and yet this genocide has still remained hidden" (*ibid*). He believes the dialogue requires participation by non-Native scholars because policy makers and other academics often will not take our concerns seriously. At stake for him is that the dialogue must be had by more than American Indian Studies scholars. Without such involvement, his outline showing how our genocide fits each category will go unnoticed by the public. I add that American Indian genocides remain hidden because we trigger questions that illuminate the US intent to *kill*.

The rhetorics in place that hold the UN definition of intent as the deciding marker of genocide, too, allows for other scholars to circle around the problem of intent. So, when non-Native scholars do make such arguments without our Indigenous perspectives involved, it becomes too easy to continue genocide denial. Alex Alvarez, a political science scholar, does such circling and warns there was no intent to harm American Indians; therefore, it would be difficult to label the actions in the United States as genocide (159-67). However, our stories are stories of destruction enforced by a larger system. How the United States forcibly removed American Indians from their homes and land and forced American Indian youth into Western education systems is not saving American Indians, as Alvarez argues, but causing long-lasting and detrimental violence against Indigenous knowledges. You don't have to destroy a body to destroy a people. Over time, mental destruction is less obviously provable and depends on personal narratives for the effect to be demonstrated. Then a country cannot see its own implications in extermination. Tying attrition to intent helps make this connection between intent and the Good-Minded adding on and illuminates genocide as a drawn-out process distinct in each situation—which is also how Bardeau would consider intent. Therefore, intent should be



redefined with each situation of genocide as much as genocide should be redefined within each situation of genocide.

Genocide occurs on US soil and has done so transcending historical boundaries of simply first settlement in the form of murder, rape, trauma, kidnapping, scalping, forced assimilation, forced removal, laws, loss of whole tribal nations and languages, killing of land, and devastation from misrepresentation in media, education, and politics (Nunpa 98-105). Some of these parts of the American genocide process involve physical death, and some involve a mental death—a removal of ways of knowing, thinking, and theorizing. When such erasure occurs so deeply within a system that so many non-Natives don’t recognize the violence against American Indians as ongoing genocide, it is in fact a distinct removal of a people group from the national mindset. Although Rosenberg and Silina and those above do not discuss mental death and historical trauma, these are important markers of attritional genocide for Indigenous peoples as well.

Unlike well-known genocides such as the Holocaust in Europe and genocide in Darfur, where institutional policies of truth and reconciliation publicly attempted both to apologize and to educate their nations about genocide, the United States has avoided the start of a healing process and a readjustment of knowledge and national mindset.<sup>12</sup> In 2010, President Barak Obama included in a defense bill a three-line apology “on behalf of the people of the United States” for maltreatment of American Indians (Capriccioso). He received some rebuke for such a quick and almost hidden action which supposedly reconciles hundreds of years of violence against Indigenous peoples. However, publicly, this small acknowledgement and the criticism that followed did not result in impactful changes. Apologies should come in the form of a change in action, national mindset, and understanding in order for reconciliation to take place. Obama’s apology appears as though the government is sorry for its actions, but a true apology institutes a change in action. Hiding the apology follows past rhetorical erasures.

### **Listening Becomes the Second Witnessing**

“It’s not that we have lost the old ways and intelligences, but that we are lost from them.”

Linda Hogan

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Returning to my opening story, Indigenous peoples are not lost from our traditions. The museum director erased the stories given to him in order to follow the expected rhetoric about American Indians. Ignoring the stories keeps the erasure process going. But our stories will always retain our traditions, as well as the rights and sovereignties Charles Aubid showed, as our witnessing to genocide and our true presence. The stories situate the power within our nations, thereby denying the question of genocide and lifting the veils of silence which keep the questions hanging in the air. Through stories, we come back to our identities and our ways. Recognizing these histories and their outcomes, both as Native and non-Native peoples, we take our witnessing power back. Too, those hearing or reading the stories become important to the process of stopping genocide because that then stops the stages of extermination. Witnessing means naming the atrocities, recognizing the effects of those atrocities still taking place today, and telling the stories. These are steps towards healing, which I define further in a forthcoming monograph, but they begin by many sides telling and listening—a witnessing process only able to continue if those listening are open. For Haudenosaunee peoples, being cleansed is how we clear our clouded minds—the things that keep us from our Good Minds. There must be a release that is then replaced with positive people, places, and ideas.<sup>13</sup> When we grieve loved ones who have passed away, we must go through ceremony to heal. The facts and stories below, and in particular the articles which follow, are this issue's witnessing and cycle of clearing the air because Indigenous histories are being made visible.

Indigenous genocide draws from the attrition process and is a slow genocide which compiles and compiles death and trauma. The slow pace results in intentionally declining numbers of Indigenous people and their land that we can see occurring across over 518 years in both body and mind. David Stannard estimates that Indigenous populations in North America (north of Mexico) during pre-Columbian periods were upwards of 8-12 million with the Americas totaling 75-100 million, which still may be a low estimate (268). He argues that habitation of the Americas began around 70,000 BC, and that populations were larger than previously thought, thus proving that massive societies existed before contact with multilayered, intelligent communities. The population of American Indians in 1900 from US Census statistics were at 237,196. Nunpa estimates these numbers show a 98.5 percent rate in decline of Native populations in the United States, numbers which indicate an extermination magnitude (97).

There have been many ways between then and now that have been and continue to be an extermination pathway. Extermination now exists as an inherited, intergenerational trauma which passes on into our bodies so long as genocide continues. One way has been assimilation practices such as forced Americanized education. There is a wealth of scholarship on these histories doing exemplary work discussing boarding schools and their violent outcomes.<sup>14</sup> When we scholars spend so much time, however, writing the theories, numbers, and criticisms, it can become easy to forget that there are people connected to those horrors—people whose experiences prove the intent to exterminate without needing any further words—the beginnings of the witnessing process. I embed the following video excerpt here because merely reading about the events could not fully impart the experiences as being told orally. The clip I include is from *Our Spirits Don't Speak English*, a documentary on Indigenous boarding schools that contains interviews with boarding school survivors, scholarly commentary, photos, and historical information. In this clip, an interview with Chippewa Cree community member, Andrew Windyboy, expresses his experiences at two boarding schools: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=qDshQTBh5d4&t=106s](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qDshQTBh5d4&t=106s). When you hear the words, there is no question that assimilation does unjustifiable damage.

Too, the shame imparted by a system that believes you should kill your Indian self, or that you should only be a mascot running around a football field, or that you should exist in the past with teepees, has resulted in the highest suicide rates amongst a people in the country. American Indians are committing suicide at 21.5 percent per 100,000 of American Indians, a number 3.5 times higher than other group rates. As Rachel A. Leavitt and her fellow authors contend at the Center for Disease Control, the suicide rates are correlative with factors such as where they live, if they knew others who committed suicide or passed on, and substance abuse. Residential status in particular could result in someone not receiving culturally competent care, which has been known to be preventative to such suicide occurrences with American Indians (Leavitt, et al.).<sup>15</sup>

As well, today, thousands of missing American Indian men and women have been kidnapped and murdered. American Indian women are murdered at a rate ten times higher than other women nationally (Pember 2016).<sup>16</sup> Without a comprehensive data collection system, there is no true number of just how many women, let alone men, are murdered. As Whisperkish argues in her TEDx Talks, violence against Indigenous peoples has been normalized, particularly against women, and control of the Indigenous body became accepted at the moment of

colonization. Importantly, she incorporates dimensions of oral traditions through her vocal intonations which becomes another way to witness in storytelling ([www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mg2Jjam0p-U](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mg2Jjam0p-U)). She raises and lowers her voice, changes her tone from soft to angry, and emphasizes certain words and stories. Her talk involves the audience present at the TEDx, as well as those watching online, where emotional tones emphasize important silences and gaps in audience knowledges. Listening seeks an emotional reaction from the audience, to also raise anger in their bodies or for them to listen more closely when the tone goes soft. By requiring involvement in the talk, the audience pays more careful attention—at least this is what Whisperkish appears to seek—she can't let her audience walk away without hearing her because the US has done little to ameliorate documenting the epidemic against American Indian women. Whisperkish becomes that documentation in that moment. Her audience will remember those facts and histories better because of the performance and the emphasis in tones and will hopefully pass the stories on, creating a cycle of witnessing.

### **The Collection: Working Against Erasure and Genocide in the Americas**

Lisa Brooks points out that she has “come to most value scholarship that recognizes intellectual work as an activity that has effects on and participates in the ‘real’ world that we inhabit. Perhaps the concern to which we should turn is the need for thought that acknowledges its embeddedness in experience, which cultivates and expresses an intimate relationship with the world in which it thinks” (242). This introduction and the articles that follow are argued and organized through both experiences and tribal and community perspectives. Linda Tuhiwai Smith, Ngāti Awa and Ngāti Porou, Māori scholar, has argued that the researched must become the researchers. She urges Indigenous scholars to use their own tools in order to decolonize projects and frame our experiences our own ways. After the release of her seminal text, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, one might think that academia would change entirely how we expect research to look and be about and by Indigenous peoples. But we still have evolutions to make in research—so here, we too evolve Indigenous methodologies and theorizing practices. Because we will be discussing genocide and absence in this issue, I have included arguments, my own and those of the other scholars, that honored those real-world intimate and intellectual activities born out of our resilience and experiences with genocide. This issue by no means desires seeking, at this

juncture, any legal case against any country. Our arguments re-see genocide so that we can move through a healing process.

In the call seeking articles for this special issue, the editors and I sought a space to discuss genocide in the Americas. The call was fairly open because tribal nations experience genocide differently. What we received were many angles voicing how we, as Indigenous peoples, survived colonization by both Spanish and American settlers and how North and South American choices have affected the way the United States treats Indigenous histories and knowledges. Resilience and resistance despite forced and intentional erasure became a theme that, more than ever, witnesses how we are *not* conquered people and how we are worthy of speaking and evoking our sovereign intellect.

The three articles included in this issue all argue for clearer understandings of North and South American histories—histories colliding with settler colonial narrative control that Indigenous peoples have resisted through daily living and their own ways of knowing and being. Each article and my introduction weave together personal experience with the experiences of others to theorize genocide. Those writing from and about South American genocide are also affected by US settler-colonial discourse as it impacts dialogues about Indigenous peoples in their own countries. As well, those from South America living in the United States constantly encounter misrepresented narratives about colonial control of their homes. The core topic of genocide and Indigenous peoples seems either silenced or misrepresented altogether by American dialogues, seemingly to avoid conversations leading to questions of their own genocidal actions. Storytelling in Indigenous communities, which my introduction and the articles enact in different ways, becomes a witnessing for Indigenous peoples acting against political and legal choices made to erase us. Witnessing through words allows others to understand those realities and makes bodies, either dead or traumatized, *visible*. When the invisible becomes visible, stories can heal through that witnessing and recognition of pain. But if the dominant culture still does not recognize genocide stories, those deaths go unresolved.

I and the authors who follow argue that Indigenous genocides and the national absences of our resulting realities are important markers of history *and* the present day. The stories told throughout the critical works here show extermination and its many sides, processes, and perpetrators. We each argue that genocide is not in the past and is still suffered in different ways by American Indians and other Indigenous populations. Understanding and knowledge are the

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path to healing. Recognizing that we are resilient, and some of us intentionally resistant because we have fought back with our survival and within our own knowledges and ways of being, will help us all heal. The 2013 US Census estimates today's American Indian populations at 5.2 million which shows our numbers increasing (United States Census Bureau). Much of that comes from unsilencing and recognizing our souls require healing as much as our bodies and minds.

This collection shows some of these stories. The more we engage in these conversations, the more we arrive at a space not just of inclusion, not just of having people hear us, but of those listening and understanding and becoming active learners who care about how they ask questions, seek out information, and interpret said information in peaceful ways. Consider these articles as a foundation to Vizenor's Genocide Tribunals—the dialogues that openly and actively deconstruct genocide and build resilience. Because if we do not raise our voices, we cannot move forward. If we do not tell our stories, we cannot see the trauma and the resilience. If we do not understand, we cannot all heal.

The first article in our special issue investigates how story imbeds in the land, surviving through the people to whom the land is intimately tied. With a journalistic and scholarly style, historian Steve Andrews, in "Creation Stories: Survivance, Sovereignty, and Oil in MHA Country," describes how the Mandan, Hadatsa, and Arikara Nations retain land control, even though the colonizer forced absences of those nations by controlling treaty language. Andrews argues that a crease implies a fold unfolded, a mind made up and then unmade, and an opening that refuses the very closure that created it. Through two interviews, he traces the implications for Tribal sovereignty as it pertains to the interviewees, Lisa and Cory. Interwoven and creating the true narrative through the essay, are four different types of creation stories: the tale told by oil; the stories told by Cory and Lisa and the examples they embody that take sustenance from that deep past *in order to* progress toward a workable and sustainable future; and finally, the critique of the dominant culture's political creation story.

Molly McGlennen in "Chasms and Collisions: Native American Women's Decolonial Labor" similarly argues that the artwork we create enacts survivance, while also illuminating long histories of genocide. Indigenous artwork creates Indigenous visualities that trouble settler-colonial designs of signifying the *Indian*—engaging audience awareness that settler-colonial images act in troubling ways as the markers of authenticity rather than Indigenous experiences. Chitimacha/Choctaw artist Sarah Sense and Cherokee artist Shan Goshorn create complex, three-

dimensional narratives of Native women that resist metonymic settler-colonial constructions, which not only perpetuate fetishized stereotypes but also normalize and justify ongoing violence against Native women. Both artists’ visual narratives are the types of stories that prove genocide at the same time as they intensify a critical discourse of survivance.

In “Performing Kab’Awil: Relational Materiality Against Genocidal Derealizations” María Regina Firmino Castillo argues that performance was used to implement violent ontological impositions during Guatemala’s genocidal war against the Ixil Maya (1979-1985) while highlighting performance’s role in ontological regeneration in postwar Guatemala and other places undergoing similar struggles. Castillo uses Chela Sandoval’s semilogical deconstruction to reveal that the acts of violence committed against the Ixil was not only staged to commit genocide but also to impose upon survivors specific ontological dispositions aligned with state interests. In turn, survivors also engaged in performative activities to regenerate Ixil ways of being and relating to territory. The argument deepens understandings of how genocide and ecocide are braided together with ontological destruction.

The question is not whether this is American Indian genocide. There are instead questions we must continue to examine even beyond our special issue. The question is: How do the perpetrators keep getting away with it? The question is: Why has America worked so hard to rid from all structures the presence of American Indians, except if controlled rhetoric, forced laws, or revised histories? The question is: How does genocide only get defined by the perpetrators? The question is: Why do those who stole the land, forced removal of millions from their land, raped women, gave smallpox-laced blankets to tribal nations, burned entire crops, massacred entire or nearly entire nations, educated to assimilate to kill the Indian, and has and still is killing the very land they stole still control the narrative? How has this logic not been broken down, torn apart, and flung to the far reaches of the vast oceans to disappear? How does genocide keep happening over and over— different peoples, different patterns, same logic, same deniers— across the world?

A long history of intergenerational genocide exists from contact through today, and not simply intergenerational trauma because the genocide has been passed down, evolved within political systems, and ingrained in all tribal communities—so hidden that it doesn’t seem like genocide. Each nation and each individual of that nation is affected. The act of erasing implies intent to tamper with historical record, education systems, and public knowledge. That would mean it was a choice that this history and these stories were simply left to float out into the wind,

intentionally away from public knowledge. Forcibly removed. Thought to be in places from which they would not return. Hoped would not return.

A slow genocide is still an intentional genocide.

When you want to be more dead than alive because of these systems—isn't that genocide?

When the borders you live within treat you as if you *are* already dead—isn't that genocide?

This audience remembering the above points becomes a better experiencing audience now open to redefining genocide through those who have experienced the cycles of extermination—cycles that are a process which can be broken by unclouded Good Minds.

There is no question of American Indian genocide.

And our theories are still here to combat any question.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> For further discussions of the Peace Confederacy and its impact on Haudenosaunee communities, please see the following sources: A.W. Paul Wallace, *White Roots of Peace*; TreeTV, “The Peacemaker and Tadadaho”; Penelope Kelsey, *Reading the Wampum: Essays on Hodinöhsö:ni’: Visual Code and Epistemological Recovery* (65-80); Jeanette Rodriguez, *A Clan Mother’s Call: Reconstructing Haudenosaunee Cultural Memory*.

<sup>2</sup> In a monograph I am developing, I discuss how these dialogues can be healing and how the Good Mind and Haudenosaunee values can act as theoretical approaches to trauma, genocide, and reconciliation.

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, David E. Stannard; Benjamin Madley; Brendan C. Lindsay; Edward B. Westermann; and Gary Clayton Anderson. Other books, such as those by Samantha Power and John Toland, also have dialogues about genocide and US reactions to genocide. Power does not discuss American Indian genocide, but specifically details America’s lack of involvement and silence in genocide within other countries. Toland deconstructs how Hitler’s logic was inspired by America’s use of the removal and reservation system.

<sup>4</sup> After a formal study I completed with 25 voluntary students, informal discussions with 8 years of students in my classrooms, colleagues, friends, and family, this appears the rule, rather than the exception of what is learned.

<sup>5</sup> Please see Nicolle Dragone’s “Haudenosaunee Literature: A View from Outside the Culture.” MA thesis, University of Oklahoma, 2002. Dragone’s work argues for applying a tribal nation’s theories to its own literature for a deeper, more respectful critique and understanding of the text. She builds a case for reading Haudenosaunee literature using a Haudenosaunee-based theoretical model developed by Wisconsin Oneida, Carol Cornelius.

<sup>6</sup> See LeAnne Howe, *Choctalking on Other Realities*.

<sup>7</sup> See *Native America and the Question of Genocide*.



<sup>8</sup> Please see Ronald Grigor Suny et al., *The Question of Genocide: Armenians and Turks at the End of the Ottoman Empire*.

<sup>9</sup> See Michael M. Gunter, *Armenian History and the Question of Genocide* and Alex Alvarez, *Native America and the Question of Genocide*.

<sup>10</sup> For more information on how Lemkin developed the term “genocide,” see *Totally Unofficial: The Autobiography of Raphael Lemkin* by Raphael Lemkin (edited by Donna-Lee Frieze) and *Raphaël Lemkin and the Concept of Genocide* by Douglas Irvin-Erickson.

<sup>11</sup> “‘Kill the Indian, and Save the Man’: Captain Richard H. Pratt on the Education of the Native Americans.” *History Matters*. [historymatters.gmu.edu/d/4929/](http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/4929/)

<sup>12</sup> There have been other spaces, too, which have formed Truth and Reconciliation Commissions, such as Canada, Columbia, Australia, and the list could on. Some are ongoing commissions. Some have been commissions which existed for specific times. Some commissions sought justice specifically for genocide or crimes against humanity. Other commissions sought investigations of single events. It’s important to note that many commissions have had problematic systems or ways of carrying out reconciliation. For more information, see “Measuring the Impacts of Truth and Reconciliation Commissions” by Michal Ben-Josef Hirsch, et al.

<sup>13</sup> This is part of our Condolence Ceremony, which is a grieving process when someone passes away. For further discussions of this ceremony, see Taiaiake Alfred’s *Peace, Power, Righteousness: An Indigenous Manifesto*.

<sup>14</sup> See David Wallace Adams's *Education for Extinction*; Colin Calloway’s *Indian History of an American Institution: American Indians and Dartmouth*; K. Tsianina Lomawaima’s “Domesticity in the Federal Indian Schools: The Power of Authority Over Mind and Body”; Joseph Johnson’s *To Do Good to My Indian Brethren: The Writings of Joseph Johnson 1751-1776*; Jon Reyhner, et al. *A History of Indian Education*; Margaret Connell Szasz’s *Indian Education in the American Colonies 1607-1783*; and Clifford E. Trafzer, et al edited collection, *Boarding School Blues*.

<sup>15</sup> See also Laura Santhanam, et al, “Suicide Among American Indians Nearly Double National Rate.”

<sup>16</sup> See this article for more information on the Tribal Access Program for National Crime Information which was launched in 2015: [newsmaven.io/indiancountrytoday/archive/missing-and-murdered-no-one-knows-how-many-native-women-have-disappeared-lGvN2Pw97E6Dg\\_guqcpMQ/](http://newsmaven.io/indiancountrytoday/archive/missing-and-murdered-no-one-knows-how-many-native-women-have-disappeared-lGvN2Pw97E6Dg_guqcpMQ/)

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## WHAT MA LACH'S BONES TELL US: Performances of Relational Materiality in Response to Genocide

MARÍA REGINA FIRMINO-CASTILLO

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Dedicated to Ma Lach (María Santiago Cedillo) and Nan Xhiv Tzunun (Juana Brito Bernal).

### Introduction

I was invited to a funeral in 2014, but the bodily remains inside the casket had been stripped of its *itiixhil tiichajil*—in Ixil Maya, its animating force—almost thirty years before, at the height of the Guatemalan army's genocide against the Ixil Maya.<sup>1</sup> In the casket was a skull with perforations where bullets had entered it; there was also a femur and smaller bones I do not know the names of. But I do know the name of the person these bones once belonged to: Ma Lach (María Santiago Cedillo); she was the mother of Mariano, my husband's cousin. At the funeral, Ma Lach's bones were carefully arranged in the casket by a forensic anthropologist, who, with great sensitivity, told the story of what had happened to this body—the body that is/was/and had been Ma Lach. He indicated where bullets had entered and exited and described how remnants of cloth attached to bone helped identify the person the bones belonged to. These bones held traces, genetic and other, that allowed for Ma Lach's return home to her relations. Ma Lach was a set of bones that returned, first to her son, and at the end, back to the earth. This body, the osseous remains of a disinterred corpse, had once been a person; that day, she was remembered, prayed for with song, and cried over. She was still Mariano's mother, and, as in life, she was still part of this earth.

In 2013, about a year before Ma Lach's final rites, I was invited to another funeral. This time it was Pap Lu, the father of our friend, Pap Xhasinib' (Jacinto Santiago Brito). He had recently been found, and brought home, by the same forensic team. Like Ma Lach, Pap Xhasinib's father had also been a victim of this genocide. His casket was larger than Ma Lach's, and sealed. It was painted turquoise blue and draped with a red hand-woven textile. At the foot of the casket

were bottles of distilled cane liquor that guests brought to share during the wake. Throughout the night, Pap Xhasinib’ took a bottle around the room, serving each guest and drinking with them. Late into the night, he reached my husband and me; passing the bottle, and pouring the clear liquid on the ground, he explained: “We are the Earth. Our bones are the minerals. Our flesh is the dirt, the rivers, our blood. Who am I to know!? But that’s how it is. This is why we offer our liquor to the earth before drinking.”



Fig. 1 Pap Xhasinib' and author in Paxil Cave. Photo by Herbert Reyes, 2011.

Ma Lach and Pap Lu’s transitions from persons animated by *itiixhil tiichajil*, to bodies, to cadavers, and then to hidden bones that become forensic evidence, and finally to ‘things’ such as minerals, rivers, and earth lead me to ask: What is a body? What is a thing? What is a person? What degree of *itiixhil tiichajil* survives through these changes? And what ontological categories are troubled by Ma Lach and Pap Lu’s bones in these performances of life, death, and survival?

In what follows, I draw from Freya Mathews and Mario Blaser’s critiques of genocide, modernity, and coloniality, in addition to the unpublished writings of Raphaël Lemkin on colonialism (in Docker), to interrogate three ontological tenets associated with genocidal coloniality: that some persons are things, that matter is inert, and that some humans are independent from an ecological matrix. I examine these tenets through the lens of Guatemala’s recent counter-insurgency war (1960—1996), focusing on the genocide against Ixil Maya communities during the height of the war (approximately 1979-1985). Since 2010, my husband, Ixil artist Tohil Fidel Valey Brito, and I have worked with community members and leaders on a variety of multidisciplinary projects in response to the after-effects of this genocide.<sup>2</sup> I will share stories from our work in which performance posed insistent challenges to genocidal coloniality’s three tenets

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through embodied enactments of the inextricable relational ties between human and other-than-human persons and entities in an agentive and person-filled material world. Three moments of performance, ranging from the quotidian to the ceremonial to the experimental, will be highlighted: performing name exchange with a wild edible plant important to survival during wartime famine; performing *chaj* (ceremony) to address collective trauma from the 1982 mass killing at Xoloché; and, finally, performing experimental theater in collaboration with Mexican artist, Violeta Luna, and Ixil performance ensemble, Teatro Tichiil. I reflect on two terms prevalent in Mayan languages—*kamawil*, or living object, and *kab'awil*, “double gaze” (Adrián Inés Chávez in Chacón)—to explore the potential of Mayan ontologies of materiality and personhood to counter the colonial project’s construal of (some) persons as bodies *only*, to be used and disposed of as objects, in a world of inert matter. I conclude by noting that this centering of persons (human and other) as relational beings underscores the ontological workings of what Gerald Vizenor termed “survivance,” understanding it to be an active resistance to the three tenets of coloniality through the embodied and storied insistence on complex relational personhood and the continued enactment of “transmotion” as inextricable relationality within a living and agentive material world.

I am a Guatemalan-born and U.S.-based transdisciplinary artist and writer. My ancestors are southern European and, most probably, Pipil/Nahua; and I have kin, through marriage, who are Ixil. It is from this circle of family and collaborators (who are artists, farmers, ritual officiants as well as intellectuals), that I first learned about the ways that performance—whether gathering edible plants, conducting ceremony, creating theater, pouring libation, or living in community—creates relationships that weave together life worlds, or ontologies, in resistance to genocidal coloniality’s three ontological tenets, which I will discuss in the next section.

### **Ontological Tenets of Genocidal Coloniality**

Genocide, which is always and already embroiled in coloniality and empire, is not only the destruction of people’s bodies. It is an ontological violence that perpetuates three tenets which coloniality is built upon: some persons are only bodies; all matter is inert; and some humans are independent of an ecological matrix. As jurist Raphaël Lemkin (in Docker) argued in his late unpublished writings, coloniality has an “inherent and constitutive relationship” with genocide (97). To Lemkin, genocide was not an isolated occurrence of mass killings; it was part of a



drawn out process spanning centuries, involving mass killings as well as various forms of destruction aimed at a people’s “attachment to and imbrication in a nurturing cosmos” (in Docker 97). Furthermore, this genocidal destruction of cosmos, Lemkin (in Docker) observed, is accompanied by the violent imposition upon genocide survivors of “the national pattern of the oppressor” (83). Writing about modernity/coloniality, anthropologist Mario Blaser argued that its violence is simultaneously ontological and ecocidal, with “nonhuman others” forming “part of how colonial difference gets established” (12). The colonial domination of people through genocidal violence is also enmeshed with the imposition—partial or whole—of specific ontological frameworks that deny agency and subjectivity to some humans, to most animals, and, as environmental philosopher Freya Mathews (*Reinhabiting Reality*) noted, all matter. This attempt to render human persons and non-human persons into objects and to treat all matter as inert describes the complex ontological violence that has marked the history of Guatemala for the last five centuries. As I will discuss below, this type of ontological violence has continued in the Ixil region during the height of the so-called counter-insurgency war of the late 1970s and early 1980s.

*The Massacre at Xoloche’*. The attempted construal through violence of persons as things and world as object was at play in the massacres committed between 1981 and 1983 at Xoloche’, an Ixil hamlet outside of Nab’aa’. Nab’aa’ (or Nebaj in its hispanicized version) is located in Guatemala’s Cuchumatanes mountain range at an elevation of over one-thousand nine-hundred meters. The town is part of what the Guatemalan army termed the “Ixil Triangle” (Manz 96), and is comprised of Nab’aa’, along with the neighboring towns of Chajul, Cotzal, and numerous hamlets, including Xoloche’, all dispersed throughout the highlands and valleys. The so-called Triangle’s population is of some 148,670 inhabitants: ninety-one percent identify as Ixil, with the remaining nine percent identifying as either K’iche’, Kanjobal, Mam, or non-Indigenous (Fundación Ixil).

The following is a description of the events of November 19, 1982 at Xoloche’ written by Pap Xhas Matom, a *principal* in the *B’oq’ol, Q’ezal Tenam Oxlaval No’j* Council of Principals Thirteen No’j:<sup>3</sup>

When the *milpas* [maize fields] were already in full harvest, the army executed its criminal implementation of a scorched earth plan and policy: the army forced sev-

eral hundred Ixiles who were forcibly conscripted into the Civil Patrol (PAC) to *tapiscar* [harvest] all the corn in Xoloché and its surroundings, with the promise and deceit that everything they gathered would be transported by helicopter and distributed among the population under army control. Once it was piled up in a true volcano of maize, the army set fire to it. Until now we do not have an estimate of the amount, but the fact is that the red heap of Xoloché's maize was visible from the area of Salquil Grande [approximately twenty-five kilometers away].<sup>4</sup>

According to Pap Xhas Matom, and as documented by *Colectivo Memoria Histórica* (208-213), once the maize was amassed into a large pile, Nan Elsi'm, a blind grandmother, protested aloud. The "volcano," consisting of maize, woven cloth, baskets, pottery and other things, was doused with gasoline and set afire. Nan Elsi'm continued to protest, while others cried silently. Soldiers silenced Nan Elsi'm with a blow, possibly killing her prior to throwing her into the flames; it is also possible that she died in the flames. Those who tried to pull her out were shot dead and thrown into the fire as well. The surviving population was forced to watch. This is how Pap Xhas Matom's account continues:

The army threw garments like *güipiles* [blouses] and the red *cortes* [skirts] of Nebaj into the burning maize, as well as people's cadavers, among them an elder from Nebaj named Elsi'm, who had lost her sight due to old age. Prior to this, the army left activated grenades between the ears of corn, targeting those who attempted to extinguish the fire. And so other Ixiles died when the grenades exploded upon attempts to remove them.

Though I focus here on events at Xoloché, it is important to note that this massacre was not an isolated occurrence. A United Nations commission documented the destruction of four-hundred and forty-four villages in the Mayan highlands during the war, resulting in the internal displacement of more than a million people and the death or disappearance of at least two-hundred thousand (*Comisión para el Esclarecimiento Histórico*). The effects of this collective trauma are difficult to quantify, or to describe, especially considering ways that trauma persists in our embodied memory across generations (Brave Heart).

*Trauma as Loss of Relationality.* What Eduardo Duran described as the "soul wound" resulting from centuries of genocidal coloniality in the Americas is not just a matter of unresolved histori-

cal trauma; it is also unresolved grief over the wounding of the earth upon which one depends (16). This starts to describe what happened at Xoloche’, except that the relationship is also one of ontological equivalence between people and maize. According to Tohil and Pap Xhas, destroying maize is tantamount to destroying people. A philosophy of regeneration based on an ontological intimacy with maize and its biotic cycles is recounted in the Ixil oral tradition and performed in rituals associated with the growing cycle. Maize is the substance from which we are created, and upon death, our bodies return to the earth to nourish new generations. Paxil, located on the outskirts of Nab’aa’, is a geologic formation mentioned in the *Popol Wuj*<sup>5</sup> as the place where maize and other important crops were first revealed to humans by their elder brothers: fox, coyote, macaw, and raven. In the spring, seeds to be planted are blessed among the stalactite formations that resemble cobs hanging from the cave’s ceiling. Such is the respectful intimacy with maize that it is a *txaa* (transgression) to leave a fallen kernel of maize on the ground, as it is *txaa* to build a chicken coop or latrine on a piece of land that had once been used to store harvested maize. It is, likewise, a transgression to burn maize fields. The destruction of maize is comparable to the destruction of people, for it is the *materia prima* of human life.

As Maxho’l explained to me, the Ixil phrase “*Kat oojisa un yooxhil*” (“My vital force has left me”) is uttered after an earthquake, or other comparable shock in which the ground—ontological, and that is to say, also material, telluric, relational, and social—upon which one stands is shaken. If one does not call one’s *yooxhil*<sup>6</sup> back into one’s body after a terrifying event, one is condemned to a limbo state of surviving, but not fully living. De-animated, the person becomes just a body, a relatively inert object, eventually a corpse. The body, without its *yooxhil*, ceases to sustain life, eventually causing the death of the person. Disembodied, the *yooxhil* wanders about, requiring ritual performance to bring it back to its corporeal home, re-incorporated into the body to re-constitute, reanimate, and regenerate the person.

We exist because we are embodied, and our bodies are inextricably enmeshed in a complex self/world with beings who are different, but constitutive of our subjectivities and identities. They are beings and entities with whom we engage—exerting a mutual and ineluctable influence. These relational ties are always and already present, but not always acknowledged. Therefore, one’s manners of recognizing and enacting them are varied and have material effects in the world. Not acknowledging these inextricable relational ties can cause disharmony in our relationships to others, human and non-human. The *yooxhil* wanders about outside the body, poten-

tially causing the death of the person; however, the return of the *yooxhil*—though it entails a re-embodiment—is never a matter of individual healing, nor does it involve a transaction solely between the *yooxhil*, the body, and the person. It is a process that requires embodied re-enactment and performative re-acknowledgment of what is always and already there: an inextricable relationality.

### **Performance and Genocidal Coloniality: Embodied Assertions of Inextricable Relationality**

In thinking about performance and resistance to colonial violence, the centrality of the body has been well-theorized, especially by performance studies scholar, Diana Taylor. Despite the seeming ephemerality of performance, the body constitutes a way of knowing that Taylor has described as an enduring “repertoire” able to survive written archives of knowledge and attacks upon it by colonizing forces. She offers an historical example of this observation. The codices of pre-invasion Mesoamerican societies stored a vast array of knowledges, but Spanish forces destroyed entire libraries, prohibited Indigenous systems of writing, and violently persecuted native intelligentsia who were not willing to become informants. Though embodied forms of knowledge transmission—such as ritual, dance, drama, etc. —were also criminalized, “[t]he space of written culture then, as now,” wrote Taylor, “seemed easier to control than embodied culture” (17). As Taylor’s analysis implies, embodied knowledge survives colonial violence as long as there are living, performing, bodies that remember their own agency (31). One of the cases through which Taylor developed her thesis is an analysis of the *Danza de la Conquista*, a theatrical dance ritual with roots in the Iberian peninsula’s performative representations of the 1492 expulsion of Muslims and Jews by Castilian Catholic forces. The dance is performed to this day in Mesoamerica and in the Andean region and is syncretized with various pre-invasion ritual performances. As Paul Scolieri documented, Castilian Spanish forces used this dance to compel new imperial subjects to portray their own subjugation. On the one hand, the scenario of conquest represented in the dance is a “reiterative humiliation of the native populations” (Taylor, 30). On the other hand, the *Danza* is characterized by veiled meanings and parodic reversals that mark it as a dance of resistance, despite its origins and the intentions of the dance’s originators. Taylor argued that the *Danza*’s agency does not derive from its satirical content or ““hidden transcripts”” (citing James Scott), but from the embodied agency available even in the most strictly scripted scenarios “to rearrange characters in parodic and subversive ways” (31). This does not imply,

however, that merely having a body constitutes agency. For Taylor, performance’s subversive power stems from the body’s capacity to change what is written down, that is, what is discursively established. This points to another way that embodiment is a source of resistance. It subverts the “colonialist discourse” which constructs the Indigenous body as an inert object lacking voice and agency (Taylor, 64). Through the performers’ insistence on agency—even if satirical—the *Danza* overturns the idea of Indigenous person as merely a body—or object—contesting colonial constructions of Indigenous passivity and otherness.

The indomitable capacity of embodied memory to counter erasures—whether they be colonial or Indigenous—of ontologically challenging identities is powerfully articulated by Zapotec *muxhe* (third gender) performance artist, Lukas Avendaño in this way: “What we can’t find in my peoples’ codices.... you will find here, in my body.”<sup>7</sup> Though surviving Zapotec codices do not feature the *muxhe* person (and we do not know if they once did, given the near total destruction by the Spanish of Zapotec texts), Avendaño’s performance puts forth in the world that which relentlessly exists. Merely inhabiting the *muxhe* body is an ontological defiance, but narrating and performing it into being is an act of insistence and affirmation of the ontological complexity that always and already exists. Avendaño’s work is an indefatigable re-embodiment, remembering, and reminding of what may have been twice erased: the ontological survivance (and not just survival) of non-binary genders in Indigenous and non-Indigenous ontologies. Avendaño’s performances onstage and offstage of being-*muxhe* expand the ontological possibilities of our world.

Avendaño’s statement, which I consider embodied theory, implies that there is an agency of another sort that is experienced even before accessing the body’s capacity to change a story. Prior to the embodied epistemic act Taylor writes about, an ontological agency is activated when the colonized subject—discursively constructed as body *only*, that is, as *object*—remembers themselves to be a *person*. By person, I invoke Sylvia Wynter’s insight that the human being is not a noun, but a verb—*praxis*—a nondual composite of both *bios* (biology) and *mythos* (story) (Wynter and McKittrick, 33-34). We are not inert objects, or bodies only, as colonial ontological constructions would have it. I will return to this nondual conception of personhoods below, but for now I want to underscore the following: for performance to be agentive in the face of ongoing genocidal coloniality, remembering and enacting personhoods as performative praxis in opposition to colonial objectification might be a first step toward overturning the three tenets of

the colonial project. Below, I will share a story of how this happens in the everyday performances of living and surviving; this story complicates and expands what it means to remember oneself as person in a way that powerfully challenges the second and third tenets of the colonial project: that the material world is inert and that (some) humans are independent of an ecological web.

*The Secret Names of Plants: Ontological Relationality.* In the spring of 2013, Tohil and I accompanied Nan Xhiv Tzunun (Juana Brito Bernal), my *chuch* (mother-in-law), on a walk in the countryside to visit *Comunidad en Resistancia Flores de Turanza*,<sup>8</sup> a settlement near Nab'aa' founded by “*retornados*” (returnees). They were people who, at the height of the war, were forced by the army’s scorched earth campaign to flee their homes, finding precarious refuge in the mountains, the Ixcán jungle, or in México. This military strategy of scorched earth, massacres, and forced displacement was described by the counterinsurgency state as “drying up



Fig. 2 Nan Xhiv Tzunun. Photo by Herbert Reyes, 2011.

the pond to get the fish,” the armed insurgents (Cultural Survival; Steinberg and Taylor). In the process, however, the genocidal campaign nearly destroyed the pond. Along with genocide, ecocide was committed as well, resulting in deep transformations in the agroecology of the region and the disruption of ritual practices associated with the agricultural cycle (Wilson; REMHI in Steinberg and Taylor, 48). This impact on Mayan spirituality was not only an after-effect of displacement; it was a strategic attempt, on the part of the army and the oligarchy in

whose interest it operated, to destroy the ontological relationship of highland Mayans with the land. But relational ontology and praxis continued to be performed in ceremony and in quotidian performances which accompany many daily activities that sustain life, especially in wartime, such as gathering wild edible plants.

Along the path to Turanza, Nan Xhiv showed us the plants she ate in order to survive during her own time in the mountains. As a young woman in the late 1970s, she fled Nab’aa’ after the army targeted her for assassination due to her political organizing, involvement in the Catholic church, and later, in the *Ejercito Guerrillero de los Pobres* (EGP, Guerrilla Army of the Poor). She and her family were exiled in México, Nicaragua, and finally, Cuba, returning only after the signing of the peace accords in 1996. While we walked the path to Turanza, we came upon a certain vine. She directed her voice toward the plant, pronouncing: “*In Tzuk; ax Xhiv*—*así se le dice a la planta, intercambias tu nombre con la planta!*” (I am Tzuk; you are Xhiv—this is what you say to the plant, you exchange names with the plant!). And then she carefully bent back a stem to pull away a set of tender leaves and shoots, telling us how delicious Tzuk can be and how it helped her survive famine. But she also warned us that when gathering from Tzuk, one must exchange names with her lest the leaf become bitter in one’s mouth.<sup>9</sup>

Through Tzuk, we have a point of entry for an Ixil ontology. As suggested by Nan Xhiv’s interlocution with Tzuk, here is a recognition of subjectivity and agency in the many plants one must address with a regard for their *itiixhil tiichajil*—also called *yooxhil* or *tichiil*—which is described as that which gives a being its vitality and strength. It is customary to thank a host at a communal meal for the increase in *tichiil* when the food is deemed to be nourishing. When someone asks about one’s well-being, one can reply with these words, indicating that “there is a future,” one can expect to survive, to thrive even, as Nan Xhiv explained. A maize plant, when it is healthy, strong, tall—when it promises a good harvest—can be said to have *tichiil* (Felipe Brito, personal communication).

I concede that there may be a difference in meaning between the words *itiixhil tiichajil* (*tichiil*), and *yooxhil*, but I have not been able to discern this through my consultations with friends and research collaborators. Maxho’l (Lalo Velasco Ceto) asserts that the three are synonymous (Firmino Castillo, Maxho’l, et al., 63-65). This is supported by the Ixil oral history transcribed and translated by Ayres, Colby, Colby, and Ko’v, in which *itiixhil* and *yooxhil* are both translated as “*espírito*”—as in the spirit of different animals, but also the spirit of money

(286-287 and 290-291), and by implication, other material and symbolic objects. *Itiixhil / tiichajil / yooxhil* may be a quality of organic or inorganic matter. It can also be the quality of a collection of organic and inorganic objects, such as those that constitute a place. A place can also have *yooxhil*, and it is the root of *yooxhib'al*, an Ixil word for ceremonial ground (Firmino Castillo, Maxho'l, et al., 31-32).

There are other plants in the Ixil world that also require specific gestures or terms of address to show respect, gratitude, or to elicit desired medicinal or culinary qualities. When we reached Turanza, we visited Pap Cax Chaas (Gaspar Cobo), one of Nan Xhiv's cousins, who told us many stories of how trees, tubers, wild greens, and other plants conspired to help the Ixil during the war. Pap Cax and Nan Xhiv conversed at length about giant trees that gave refuge from bombings, tubers that multiplied even after being unearthed and chopped to bits by soldiers, and the many wild edibles that provided nourishment during the war. On another occasion, Nan Xhiv Ko't (Maxho'l's mother) told us about Chaapa Tze', a tree with writing on its leaves and with fruits of all kinds growing from its branches. It was the source of strength and knowledge for the people. But since the war, Nan Xhiv Kho't told us, Chaapa Tze' has gone into hiding deep into the mountains. The tree would only return, she stressed, through the frequent performance of *chaj* (ceremony) (Nan Xhiv Ko't in Firmino Castillo, Maxho'l, et al. 59-60). Nonetheless, even from afar, the tree is still connected to the people:

The tree is like the energy of the day. We don't see the energy, but it's there. The tree is not in sight, but the plants are still here despite the absence of the tree.

We're also part of the tree, the serpents are part of the tree, all living beings are part of the tree. (Nan Xhiv Ko't in Firmino Castillo, Maxho'l, et al. 61)<sup>10</sup>

The relational ontology developed through performative gestures such as name exchange, *chaj*, storytelling, and other practices, create and sustain an agentive material world. In addition to name exchange with plants, there are inorganic beings such as topographical features, natural phenomena, and cycles of time which are ritually engaged and referred to as *Kub'al* (father) or *Chuch* (mother). These are beings with consciousness, agency, and who exist in relationship to humans; if they are not recognized properly in ritual or treated with respect in the small performances with which many quotidian activities are executed, they make their presence known through material effects ranging from changes in a plant's flavor or medicinal properties, to fruits rotting on a vine, to nuchal cord births, poverty, and other outcomes. These performances



are daily acknowledgements of an agentive material world, performances which contest genocidal coloniality’s second and third tenets: that all matter is inert and that humans exist independently of a material and ecological nexus. In the following, we will return to Xoloche’ to see examples of how genocidal coloniality’s ontological tenet of de-realized matter is challenged collectively, via ceremony as a performative enactment of human and other than human relational personhoods.

*Xoloche’: Performances of Relational Personhoods.* On November 18, 2012, survivors of Xoloche’ gathered to remember the massacres that occurred thirty years before. The emblematic moment in the many violent events that occurred there from 1981-1983 was what survivors called “*La Quema del Volcán de Mazorcas*” (The Burning of the Volcano of Maize). Pap Xhas Matom, one of the organizers of the commemoration, invited us to the gathering. One of the goals of this event was the revival of *memoria histórica* (collective historical memory) of the war through *chaj* (Ixil ritual) at the site. The creation of a ritual context for collective grieving and remembering is of crucial importance, given the public denial of the genocide by state discourse and the culture of silence that, to this day, keeps children of survivors from knowing their histories. In this sense, the *chaj* at Xoloche’ was an act of healing historical trauma and an effort to make visible what state forces deny. It was also an effort to heal peoples’ relation to the land that had also suffered the trauma of the war. In line with these goals, Pap Xhas and other organizers petitioned the mayor’s office to officially declare Xoloche’ a sacred site.

In total, about two hundred people gathered on that day in a clearing at the end of the



Fig. 3 The four colors of maize. Photo by the author, 2014.

road leading to Nab'aa'. Around the clearing there were a few simple homes built of cinder block with tin roofing; nearby there was a small gorge leading to a forested area. The earth on the cleared ground near the gorge was dark, almost black, and many small pieces of charred maize could be seen there. While we waited for the activities to start, Pap Xhas invited Tohil and me to gather some of the charred maize. Others did the same. The activities took place near a large tree that stood to the side of the clearing, about five hundred feet away from the homes. Pap Xhas spoke, as well as other dignitaries and survivors, but the focus of the gathering was the *chaj* which I will not specifically describe here, for I have not received permission to do so. I will, however, offer a general description of the sequence of events, emphasizing the presence of non-human persons in relationship with humans through the performative dialogue that constitutes this ceremony.

In general, *chaj* consist of a *b'aal vatz tiixh* laying out offerings on the ground in a circle. Candles are arranged by color and in correspondence with the cardinal directions: red in the east; black in the west; yellow in the south; white in the north; and green and blue in the center. In between the cardinal direction candles and around the green and blue ones are placed offerings of incense made from tree resin and tree bark, *ocote* (resinous kindling pine), *panela* (molasses sugar), cacao or chocolate, and sometimes sweet bread, tobacco, honey, and flowers. The candles are lit to start the ceremony. Often, but not always, the cardinal directions are greeted by kneeling and facing each direction in turn (and in a counterclockwise motion) while the ritual officiant opens the *chaj* and greets all the directions before starting the calendar round. The ritual officiant greets the creators, the mountain beings, and the protector of the day. Then the recitation of the calendar round commences, with the naming and greeting of the thirteen permutations of each of the twenty days in the *tachb'al amaq' tetz ixil* (Ixil ritual calendar). At the recitation of each of the twenty days, offerings are made of sesame seed, incense grains, candles made of wax and tallow, liquor, and other gifts for the day-beings, mountain-beings, and ancestors to partake in. At specific times, the ancestors, as well as important mountains and other topographical features, are named, greeted, and addressed.

All the beings invoked in a *chaj* are persons or person-like; they are invited to be present (or acknowledged to already be present) and invited into dialogue. The ritual officiants dialogue with the fire, which is at once its own being and a vehicle for the other beings to speak through. *B'aal vatz tiixh* often wave their hands at the fire, or snap their fingers over it in a circular

motion, imploring the fire to speak through its flames and its changes throughout the unfolding of the *chaj*: flames rising and spiraling; flames gradually extinguishing; fire emitting smoke—white, grey, or black; materials exploding into sparks and crackling; embers and flames changing colors and manifesting forms; fire melting wax and charring offerings in ways that are discernible to experienced *b’aal vatz tiixh*. They are attentive to the signs in the flames, the smoke, the burnt offerings, and changes in the surrounding environment (for example, an insect flying into the flame, a dog’s approach, changes in the clouds or the weather, etc.). A *chaj* ends when the fire extinguishes of its own accord. Often, a *b’aal vatz tiixh* stays with the fire, keeping vigil until all the embers die down.

In this particular *chaj*, many ritual officiants were present and supported each other. At the end of the ceremony, we were invited to pass the charred maize seeds we had gathered earlier over the dying embers. The aromatic smoke enveloped my open hand upon which were the five or six grains of maize; I moved my hand in a counterclockwise circular motion over the smoke, careful that the grains not fall on the ashes and embers left by the fire. Afterwards, with a few grains of charred maize enclosed in a fist, Pap Xhas explained to me that these seeds—burnt by the army, but consecrated in the *chaj*—represented the Ixil knowledge that survived the war and centuries of colonial violence. What once could not fit in the palm of one’s hand was now reduced to a few charred grains. But even if just one seed remained, Pap Xhas explained, it was enough to start, again.

Though I was moved by the *chaj* and all I was learning and honored to experience, I could not help but ask myself (I dared not express my doubts then): How does one regenerate the world from just a few seeds? What was before cannot return; even if it could, how would it stand up to new dangers? I do not have answers to these questions that still haunt me. But perhaps the point is not to regenerate what was once before, but to experiment, to respond, to retry, again and again, even if one seed is all that is left. After all, this is how the world was made in the first place.

### **Accessing Kab’awil, Embodying Kamawil**

*The First Experiments.* Through an experimental process of trial and error, a council of creator-beings—Tz’aqol, Bitol; Alom K’ajolom; and Tepew Q’ukumatz—made humans. The first were fashioned from mud, but were not firm enough and dissolved. The second were made of wood,

but these humans were ungrateful towards their creators and abusive to the other beings on earth. In other words, they not only ignored the creators, they also objectified the world. As a consequence, all the animals, trees, mountains, household objects, and even their homes and hearth stones hurled themselves at the wooden humans until they were destroyed.

The council of creators, undeterred, tried again, this time with maize. With help from the animals, the *materia prima* was sourced from a single seed of white maize ensconced under an immense rock in a mountain in the eastern quadrant of the world. A rain-being sent a lightning bolt to cleave the monolith, exposing the maize, but also charring it. It is from contact with fire that the other three colors of maize—yellow, black, and red—emerged. Ixmucané ground the corn nine times; she mixed it with water and kneaded it into the dough from which Tz'aqol Bitol; Alom, K'ajolom; and Tepew Q'ukumatz created the first four humans, our ancestors.<sup>11</sup>

In this narration of our human beginnings, there are pairings of things seemingly in opposition, but related to each other, and couplings of seemingly distinct entities which are, nonetheless, part of a complex unitary being. For example, the creation of humans is paired with the destruction of the eastern mountain where the primordial maize seed was hidden. The grandmother, whose name, Ixmukane, means tomb (Sam Colop, 22), grinds the primordial corn for human life to emerge; grandmother tomb grinds it nine times, suggesting nine months of gestation (Sam Colop, 129). Here there is an inextricable relationality between life and death that is not denied, but acknowledged, narrated, and performed. Similarly, in the *Popol Wuj*, the creator beings' names are presented in “couplets,” an example of “association parallelism” that is common in Mayan languages (Sparks and Romero, 13). Strategic juxtapositions of things that exist in associative and agentive relationship to each other (15) underscore the relational, rather than the essence of any one thing. So we have Tz'aqol Bitol (the creator of raw material as well as the one who builds from that material); Alom, K'ajolom (the one who impregnates and the one who conceives); and Tepew Q'ukumatz (Majestic Plumed Serpent, the relationality between terrestrial and celestial spheres) (Sam Colop, 20-22).

This juxtaposition of things that might seem opposed is represented by the Mayan terms *kamawil* (living object) and *kab'awil* (double gaze). These are at the core of an ontological relationality based on the enactment of a simultaneous recognition of two things: of the animacy and agency of matter in a living world and of the personhood of humans and non-human others who are part of this living material world. In many Mayan languages, including Ixil and K'iche'

(in addition to Guatemalan Spanish), *kamawil* refers to what are called, in English, pre-Columbian objects or archeological artifacts, and thought of, within a non-Mayan context, as inanimate things. But in Mayan contexts, when *kamawil* are found in the ground, often while planting, or on other occasions, they are kept by ritual specialists as objects of power and invoked as embodiments of the old gods (*dioses viejos*) (Pap Xhasinib’, personal communication).<sup>12</sup> Colonial era and some contemporary commentators report that *kamawil* simply means “*idolitos*,” little idols, (Mondloch). But as Mondloch indicates, *kamawil* is a derivation of the word “*k’ab’awil*” (177), which Sergio Romero describes this way: “*K’abawil* is a pre-Christian [K’iche’] noun referring to divine essences such as deities, ritual objects, caves, and so on” (629).

Kab’awil has a well-established contemporary usage as well. José Roberto Morales Sic, after Daniel Matul, explains that *kab’awil* is the basis of a theory of knowledge that allows us to “understand and value” the “simultaneously multiple and unitary context which we inhabit” (250).<sup>13</sup> It is, according to Morales Sic, the “double gaze, the long view, the near view, the gaze back, and the gaze forward” (250).<sup>14</sup> In her *Indigenous Cosmolectics: Kab’awil and the Making of Maya and Zapotec Literatures*, Gloria Chacón offers a thorough intellectual history of the term, from its precolonial origins to present day deployments by Maya intellectuals:

[K]ab’awil’s transformation from its glyphic etchings in stone and its painted replicas in codices to its present significance, suggests a relationship with the cosmos that goes back in time to the pre-classic era and a resistance to the experience of coloniality in Mesoamerica. In its late twentieth and twenty-first century deployment, kab’awil straddles spiritual practice, politics, gender, aesthetics, philosophy, and a social experience.

Chacón describes kab’awil<sup>15</sup> as “a vision that duplicates,” countering the binary logic and teleological dialectics of Western philosophy while extending a non-binary theory rooted in a Mesoamerican genealogy of knowledge/being that she and other Maya scholars are dedicated to articulating. Chacón notes that kab’awil presents a challenge to ontological/epistemological frameworks of modernity and coloniality that predate feminist, deconstructionist, and postcolonial critiques. After Chacón, Arturo Arias associates the concept with *k’ot*, the bicephalous bird in many Maya oral traditions (including the Ixil) that has ““one head looking at the sky and the other at the earth”” (117).

Though further research is required on the connection between the terms *kamawil* and *kab'awil*, I speculate that *kab'awil*, as double gaze, conflated with *kamawil*, as animate, agentive object, suggests an ontological status for matter (at least some matter) quite distinct from what Freya Mathews (*For Love of Matter*) described as the “derealization” of matter under “European epistemological colonialism” (175). In this ontological and epistemological condition, matter is “perceived merely as the inert backdrop to our meaning-making” (*Reinhabiting Reality*, 12), while “[o]ther-than-human subjects”—whether organic or inorganic—are silenced (*For Love of Matter*, 176). If one of the violences of coloniality is this derealization of all matter, then *kamawil*, as living object, and *kab'awil*, as double gaze, are both at the core of an ontological relationality based on the recognition of the animacy of the world and the personhood of humans and others. In generative juxtaposition, *kamawil/kab'awil*, especially when enacted in performance, overturn the three ontological tenets associated with genocidal coloniality: that some persons are things, that matter is inert, and that some humans are autonomous of an ecological matrix.

*Trans-Temporal Experiments.* With every performative gesture, no matter how small, in which the agency and animacy of the material world is recognized, the charred seeds of Xoloche’ are activated. Life is breathed into them, and this is a way to start again, over and over, keeping the world alive.

I witnessed one of these small gestures during my engagement in a performative theater workshop conducted by Mexican artist Violeta Luna in Nab’aa’ in May of 2011. Performative theater, in the manner presented that May, is a practice outside of the ‘traditional’ ones discussed above. Yet *kamawil* and *kab'awil* manifested—briefly and unexpectedly—to reveal the potential of experimentation to elicit of ways of being and knowing that persist despite attempts to overturn them.

*Performing Kamawil.* Mexican performative theater-maker, Violeta Luna, came to Nab’aa’ via my invitation and that of Pap Xhas Matom.<sup>16</sup> She presented *NK 603: Action for Performer & e-Corn* (which will be discussed below); Luna also offered a workshop on performative theater in a bee-keeping cooperative’s large tin-roofed meeting space. Over the course of three days (with

one rehearsal day), the workshop was attended by approximately fifty participants, most of whom were Ixil and K’iche’ youth. In the workshop, Luna structured situations for participants to develop their own movement vocabularies and narrative structures by way of experience, observation, improvisation, dialogue, and experimentation. On the second day, Luna organized participants into dyads of active and passive partners. The active participant in the dyad consensually manipulated the body of the passive one in order to make a human sculpture, using props—everyday object such as ears of corn, ceramic bowls, censors, grinding stones, etcetera—to set in the gesture. Luna invited participants to create a museum full of statues, or a “Mayan temple.” After the active members of the dyad finished creating the statues, they walked around the room to see what others had created; later, the roles were reversed.

Petrona Tzunux Chivalan, a young K’iche’ secondary school student, and her performance partner, an Ixil student named Vez,<sup>17</sup> chose to work with the following objects: dry corn husks fashioned into a skirt, peacock feathers, and a basket containing dry ears of corn in each of the four directional colors: black, white, yellow, and red. Vez dressed Petrona with the corn husk skirt and peacock feathers, and positioned her kneeling down on a *petate* (straw mat), with back straight, though inclined slightly forward at an angle. He placed the basket of maize in her hands and positioned her arms as if offering or presenting the basket of corn. Violeta asked participants to hold the gestures for a few minutes, long enough for all who were not embodying sculptures to visit the “temple” or “museum” of statues, which varied greatly in the use of



Fig. 4 Petrona Tzunux Chivalan. Photo by Violeta Luna, 2011.

objects and gestures. Suddenly, not completing the time allotted for this part of the exercise, Petrona giggled—collapsing out of her form. She apologized, and explained that she needed to “become a girl again,” adding that she “felt shame because she felt so much pride.”<sup>18</sup>

Petrona’s statement, which could easily be attributed to adolescent timidity, is, I contend, more than that. It is suggestive of two Mayan concepts related to the foregoing discussion: *kamawil* (living object) and *kab’awil* (double gaze), terms at the core of an ontological relationality based on the recognition of the animacy of the world and the personhood of humans and others. Apparently, Petrona was simply embodying a statue, but this was not a mere object, or inert matter. She was embodying a *kamawil*: an instance of living matter, and also a divine entity entered into relationally through our gestures toward them, through the stories we tell, and through our experimentations to embody them and know them through performance. In Petrona’s case, this *kamawil* was “*la diosa del maíz*” and became the basis for the performance her group developed and presented during the course of the workshop. As I suggested earlier, this exercise might seem experimental in terms of quotidian practice (not only in Nab’aa’, but almost anywhere outside of the life of a practicing performing artist); yet, it resonates with a long-standing practice in Mayan performance. As Bassie-Sweet noted about classic Maya ritual performance, humans “assumed the traits and power of the deity or were temporarily transformed into the deity” (2) by the wearing of objects associated with divinity and the use of embodied practices. Furthermore, Bassie-Sweet suggests that the category human/divine was fluid due to the performance practices by which ontological categories were transcended. And as the archaeological record and contemporary practices show, the categories animal/human, object/anthropos, and element/person are also fluid; through performance, a human being becomes any one of these, or at least steps out of their selves to consider the reality of another. This, in itself, is a pluriversal practice that pushes against the imposed universalities of the West and its rigid divides between seemingly antipodal things that are, in a relational ontology, inextricable connected.

In the *Popol Wuj*, the divine being associated with maize is Hun-Hunahpu (Taube, 175), father of the hero twins, and represented as male. In Petrona and her group’s reworking of the deity for the play she and her group developed in the workshop, maize—as deity, as human, and as plant—takes on a feminine form. But this is not an arbitrary reassignment; this fluidity across ontological categories has precedents in Mayan languages, oral, and written traditions, including



the *Popol Wuj*, and in the daily performances of living. Bassie-Sweet notes that what archeologists and epigraphers call “Mayan Corn God” (also “God E”), as depicted in codices and the archaeological record from the classic period, is male. He is represented, however, wearing a diamond-patterned skirt associated with female lunar deities. Bassie-Sweet also notes that in the *Popol Wuj*, the first human lineage heads are referred to as “mother-father” and that in many present-day Maya communities primordial ancestors and some ritual specialists are also referred to as “mother-father” (2). This is the case in Ixil, with the word *mamkuk’uy* meaning “primordial grandmother-grandfather” (Firmino Castillo, Maxho’l, et al., 19).

And it is this putting together of disparate things, making new things from them, taking these apart, and making yet other things, that is an experimentation in world-making based on the double vision of *kab’awil*. This simultaneous holding together of seeming disparate things, like a couplet of apparently distinct ontological states, was present in Violeta Luna’s workshop when Petrona embodied a *kamawil* of the maize goddess, sparking in her a simultaneous feeling of pride and shame, and I would venture, of being human and being divine, being maize and being *kamawil*. What brought this on was her engagement in embodied experimental practice that ruptures the colonial quotidian to open a space for accessing a relationality rooted in ways of being that are not precolonial, but decolonial and even *anticolonial*, and always and already present and available. Experimentation, as much as tradition, is a way to remember, create, and embody these relational states that can bring forth other possible worlds.

Within the ontology of the *kab’awil*, this simultaneity is not contradictory nor are these states—divine, maize, human, *kamawil*—necessarily distinct. Indeed, in Ixil, K’iche’ and other Mayan ontologies, these categories are not so separate. As discussed earlier, humans and maize share an ontological intimacy expressed in the *Popol Wuj*, in the oral tradition, and, most importantly, in ordinary and extraordinary (i.e., experimental) praxis. “*La Diosa del Maíz*” intuited the *kab’awil* nature of maize and the gamut of beings it is in paradoxical association and opposition with, according to Mayan narratives and, as will be discussed below, in its plant biology.

The very biotic cycle of maize shares in the gender fluidity performed by “*la Diosa del Maíz*,” it also depends on the enactment of interspecies relational intimacy. Corn is a self-pollinating plant, with both “male” (inseminating) and “female” (inseminatable) parts on the same plant which must come into contact for pollination. In Ixil planting practices, this happens

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most efficiently by human intervention. During maize's maturation, a system of red root-like appendages develop at the base of its stalk, reaching into the ground. As my husband's uncle, Pap Cul (personal communication) explained, this is maize's vaginal opening. We must help maize reproduce by sprinkling its own pollen, the semen, onto the sticky fluid found there. Humans, who are made of maize, are essential to the maize's reproductive cycle. In turn, maize is central to ours, for without sustenance, there is no life.

Finally, as much as maize embodies life, it also carries within both its biotic and myth cycles, death and regeneration. The *Popol Wuj* tells how Hun-Hunahpu is vanquished by the lords of the underworld, who hang his decapitated head on a gourd tree. The decapitated head spits into the palm of Xkik', one of the daughters of the underworld lords, thereby engendering the hero twins, Hun-Ajpu and Ix-B'alam Kiej. They, in turn, vanquish the lords of the underworld through a performance in which they kill each other, only to be reborn again and again. The lords demand that this be done to them, too. The twins acquiesce to the demands, but they fail to resuscitate the lords. Like the hero twins, maize must also pass through cycles of death to engender life. Part of its growing cycle entails an important human intervention: the turning down of the green ears of corn when it is at the ripest point, causing the corn to dry on the stalk prior to harvesting. This is a sort of decapitation of the plant to ensure human wellbeing (otherwise, the ears of corn open, remain tender, and are eaten by birds) (Tohil Fidel Valey Brito, personal communication). Along similar lines, after harvest, the remaining corn plant is sacrificed, destroyed and burned to fertilize the soil with its ashes prior to the planting of a new field of corn. So, in maize, too, there is an oscillation between death, life, and regeneration. In what follows, we will see how Violeta Luna's performance of *NK 603: Action for Performer &*



Fig. 5 Violeta Luna performing *NK603* in Nab'aa. Photo by Herbert Reyes.

*e-maíz* performs this *kab'awil* quality of maize while addressing new challenges faced by both humans and our plant relatives.

*NK 603: Performing Kab'awil.* On the 28th of May, 2011, in Nab'aa's municipal meeting hall, Violeta Luna performed her *NK 603: Action for Performer & e-maíz*. This performative theater work is named after NK-603, a genetically modified maize strain developed by the Monsanto corporation to be resistant to the glyphosate-based herbicide, Roundup. This herbicide has been found to be a carcinogen, while the introduction of genetically modified maize and other seeds has caused disastrous ecological and economic consequences, especially for subsistence farmers in Nab'aa', all over Mesoamerica, and the world. Luna performed this work before an audience of close to five-hundred townspeople, most of whom were maize farmers and their families.<sup>19</sup>

Her body painted dark purple is black maize. She is dressed in a husk skirt, and at the start of the performance, she is both maize and woman and the interdependence between them. On her bare back is painted a resplendent maize stalk, and over her breasts white maize seeds are affixed over her purple flesh. Some young men in the audience whistle at the semi-nude Luna. She silences them with a menacing glare. Despite some audience performances of toxic masculinity, with her hat, rebozo, and bowl of seeds, she inspires awe, and the audience is quiet, even reverent for the rest of the performance. She moves with the bowl of seeds in her hands; her



Fig. 6 Violeta Luna in *NK603* in Nab'aa'. Photo by Herbert Reyes, 2011.

gestures evoke prayer, planting, and *tichiil*, vitality. At this point in the performance, her presence and movements suggest maize's growing cycle and its relationality with humans.

As the performance progresses, a new kind of human-maize relationality erupts. This is foreshadowed by audiovisual projections which signal geopolitical interventions, such as the North American Free Trade Agreement, and petri dishes, microscopic views, and other imagery reminiscent of biotech engineering. The projections are on Luna's maize body and in the space around her, suggesting that the effects of these geopolitical and necro/biopolitical forces extend beyond the boundaries of her skin, reaching also beyond the edges of the stage, touching the members of the audience. Clearly, another, more dangerous relationality, is afoot.

A table is set up with metal instruments that are ambiguous, a cross between torture and medicine. Luna as maize/woman gags her own mouth with her long black braids. A man in a lab coat approaches. This is usually a member of the community where the performance takes place; in the Nab'aa' performance, it is Pedro Velasco of Teatro Tichiil. She puts on a metal-spiked



Fig. 7 Violeta Luna and Pedro Velasco in *NK603* in Naa’baa’. Photo by Herbert Reyes, 2011.



Fig. 8 Violeta Luna performing *NK603* in Nab’aa’. Photo by Herbert Reyes, 2011.

corset; he fastens and tightens it around her torso with heavy silver duct tape, contorting her waist into an impossibly small circumference. She adjusts a metal dental dam clamp onto her face, distorting her mouth into gruesome form. Then there is a syringe with red liquid, which she teases the audience with: will she inject it in her eye, her cheek, elsewhere? She jabs the hypodermic needle into her arm, releasing the unknown red liquid into her flesh, looking severely at the audience. One feels indicted. It is difficult to watch Luna as maize doing these things to herself, aided by the scientist whose face is familiar. This is not a facile us/them indictment. We are all complicit in this violence.

At this point in the performance I look around to see audience reactions. I think I see a grandmother weeping; maybe I am weeping. The children look frightened. I am worried that this

performance will provoke a scandal, with the nudity, the violence, and a theatricality not common in Nab'aa'.

Suddenly, there is a transition signaled, again, by audiovisual elements, with the soundscape growing in intensity. Imagery that evokes the Zapatista movement (EZLN) provokes maize/woman to remove the bindings from her body. The same man-in-lab coat/community member now helps Luna cut the tape off her torso, but this looks difficult and dangerous; the huge metal scissor could easily slip and cut into maize/woman's flesh. But it does not. The tape corset is removed; we see its underside where the resplendent maze that was painted on her back is now imprinted on the corset. What did biotech take from maize/woman? Remnants of the resplendent corn are still on her back, but it is smeared, distorted. Luna releases her braids and ties a red bandana around her face, in the same manner that EZLN members protect their



Figs. 9 & 10 Violeta Luna performing *NK603* in Nab'aa'. Photograph by Herbert Reyes, 2011.

identities. The performance ends with maize/woman brandishing a machete, gesturing to the resistance of Indigenous Mesoamerica against new forms of violence.

There is more to say about Luna's work in Nab'aa' and the performance of *NK603* before an audience of war survivors, their children, and their children's children. But it must wait for another telling. For now, I want to return to the thread that connects Petrona's embodiment of a *kamawil*, and its sparking of *kab'awil* and Luna's embodiment of *kab'awil* as maize/woman. Both were trans-temporal responses to current conditions through embodied enactments of Maya epistemological/ontological resistance. By retelling the *Popol Wuj* on their terms—with a female maize deity rather than male—Petrona's performance responded to the erasure of Mayan historical narratives by colonial and neocolonial state discourse in national schools that obviate these histories and present Maya and other Indigenous peoples in the past tense, only. In Luna's

performance of *NK603*, maize is human, and human is maize; both are agentive in the face of technoscientific and necro/biopolitical eruptions in our shared natural and



Fig. 11 Petrona Tzunux Chivalan offering candles in Paxil cave, associated with the mountain where the first maize emerged. Photograph by Herbert Reyes, 2011.

political histories. The performing into being of a *kab’awil/kamawil* ontology of relationality between humans and maize within an agentive material context represents a re-realization of matter and an expanded sense of personhood—both human and other than human—that has the potential to contest the three tenets of genocidal coloniality.

### Conclusion

To conclude, I want us to return now to Ma Lach and Pap Lu’s bones and the stories performed in relation to them. It is their bones that led me to the foregoing reflection on the relationalities humans have with each other, with other organic beings, and with matter in general. Those bones led me to ask what these relationalities have to do with surviving genocidal coloniality. Those bones return to the earth and become, as Pap Xhasinib’ reminded me at his father’s funeral, the veins, flesh, and bones of a living, breathing earth. As such, I consider these bones, which are now reinterred in Nab’aa’s municipal cemetery, as *kamawil*, “*idolitos*,” that is, objects of power, granting, perhaps that “vision that duplicates” (Chacón n.d.), that is, allows for increasing complexity.

Ma Lach and Pap Lu’s bones are the traces of persons who lived, who had names and engendered children. But they are also forensic objects that establish the cold facts of genocide. At the same time, around Ma Lach’s bones took place a ritual of collective mourning—both per-

sonal and impersonal—for many at the funeral, including her son, hardly got the chance to know her in life. Nonetheless, the bones stand in for the relationships she had, and may have had, had she lived her life in full. As Pap Xhasinab's libation, and the concept of *kab'awil*, suggests, these relationships include humans, but also others. He compared bones, flesh, and blood with minerals, earth, and rivers. Though a seemingly simple act, it performatively theorized the relational ontology that constitutes the Ixil world, created through a web that entangles persons, but also other kinds of bodies and things. The *itiixhil tiichajil* that animates flesh and bone to make persons exists in humans and other animals, but also in the surrounding mountains, rivers, and forests of the Ixil world.

Petrona and Luna's performances, Nan Xhiv's name exchange with Tzuk, Pap Xhasinib's libation to the earth/body, and the Xoloche massacre survivors' dialogue with fire to heal from the genocidal fires of three decades before, are each, in their own way, performances of *kab'awil*. This ontological insistence, through small quotidian acts, collective ritual, and staged experiments in performance, is a way of accessing *kab'awil* through *kamawil*. That is, it is a way of accessing a double-vision and even pluriversal vision via living-matter in resistance to genocidal coloniality's construal of all matter as inert and (some) persons as bodies *only* to be used and disposed of as objects. This underscores the ontological workings of what Gerald Vizenor termed survivance, meaning "more than survival, more than endurance or mere response" (15). It is more than mere existence, but what precisely does survivance entail? The foregoing reflection suggests that survivance is a continuous and insistent enactment of Indigenous worlds through all means—from the small performances of daily existence to experimental aesthetic overtures, to more direct resistance when necessary and possible. Another signature term of Vizenor's is an important part of this ontological insistence and resistance: transmotion. Visionary and performative "transmotions" enact, wrote Vizenor, "a dialogical circle" of relationality and resistance, and "not a monotheistic, territorial sovereignty" (15-20). This suggests transmotion to be a constantly dynamic and trans-temporal acknowledgment of our inextricable relationality with and in a living, agentive material world. Transmotion has the qualities of *kab'awil*; it is double-headed and double-edged, requiring great care and responsibility in its wielding—like a wild edible plant named Tzuk.

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### Notes



<sup>1</sup> The United Nation’s Historical Clarification Commission found that the Guatemalan army committed genocide against groups of Mayan people under the pretense of counterinsurgency. Between 1982 and 1983, an estimated fifteen percent of the Ixil nation was killed by the Guatemalan army, with sixty percent of Ixil towns and hamlets destroyed and sixty percent of the population displaced (*Comisión para el Esclarecimiento Histórico*).

<sup>2</sup> For more on our work, see Firmino Castillo, Maxho’l, et al. (2014) and Firmino Castillo (2016).

<sup>3</sup> No’j is a day in the *tachb’al amaq’ tetz ixil* (Ixil ritual calendar) associated with the woodpecker as well as wisdom and knowledge; thirteen refers to the potentiality of the day No’j. The *B’oq’ol, Q’ezal Tenam Oxlaval No’j*, as a governing body with authority over local affairs specific to the canton Xo’l Salch’il, is named for the attributes of the day No’j.

<sup>4</sup> Translation is mine; original in Spanish. Pap Xhas—who had been a combatant in the *Ejercito Guerrillero de los Pobres* (EGP, Guerrilla Army of the Poor) at the time—did not witness the events first-hand; his summary is compiled from oral histories he collected from massacre survivors.

<sup>5</sup> For a complete version of the *Popol Wuj*, a colonial era text translated into Spanish from the original K’iche’, see the version by Luís Enrique Sam Colop.

<sup>6</sup> *Yooxhil* is synonymous with *tichiil*, a gloss of the more formal *itiixhil tiichajil*, which I mentioned at the start of this article.

<sup>7</sup> Original in Spanish; translation is mine.

<sup>8</sup> Community in Resistance Peach Blossoms; *Turanza* is the Ixil word for peach.

<sup>9</sup> In this text, I capitalize Tzuk given its treatment in Ixil as a proper noun. I also refer to Tzuk in the feminine pronoun, following Nan Xhiv’s practice.

<sup>10</sup> Original in Spanish; translation is mine.

<sup>11</sup> The foregoing narrative combines content from the following: Luís Enrique Sam Colop’s direct translation of the colonial era *Popol Wuj* from K’iche’ into Spanish, Karen Bassie-Sweet’s summary of the classic period Maya creation narratives culled from the archeological record, and Ixil oral tradition.

<sup>12</sup> Sometimes *kamawil* are found while looting pre-Columbian graves and archaeological sites, and they are sometimes illegally sold to collectors in violation of Guatemala governmental Decree 26-97 (Articles 11 and 24).

<sup>13</sup> Original in Spanish; translation is my own.

<sup>14</sup> Original in Spanish; translation is my own.

<sup>15</sup> *Kab’awil* is not italicized here, in the discussion of Chacon’s text, following and respecting her convention.

<sup>16</sup> Violeta Luna’s visit was made possible through the auspices of the *Cooperativa Apícola Santa María Nebaj* (Beekeeping Cooperative of Santa María Nebaj), Teatro Tichiil of Nab’aa’, and other Mayan organizations, including FundaMaya, Escuela Normal Bilingüe Intercultural, and TVMaya. Also, Felipe Brito and Pedro Velasco, of the *Cooperativa Apícola Santa María Nebaj*, were extraordinary in their support of this project, having founded their own theater group named Teatro Tichiil a few years earlier.

<sup>17</sup> Vez is a pseudonym, as I do not have contact with the young man and therefore did not secure his permission to use his name in this article.

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<sup>18</sup> Petrona's original statement was in Spanish: "*Siento vergüenza por sentir tanto orgullo.*"

<sup>19</sup> *NK 603* was opened by four short theater works developed by workshop participants mentioned earlier; musical performances by Ixil vocalist, Evelyn Pérez, Ixtab ali'ob': Las Hijas de Ixtab, a "post-industrial" punk-goth ensemble from Guatemala City; and a magic show by a local teacher. For more on Luna's residency in Guatemala, see *Diario de Centroamérica*, May 20, 2011. For more on Luna's *NK 603: Action for Performer & e-Corn* see: <http://www.violetaluna.com/NK603.html>, and <http://hemisphericinstitute.org/hemi/fr/enc09-performances/item/100-09-violeta-luna/100-09-violeta-luna>. The work is also described in Woy-narski (2017).

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## Chasms and Collisions: Native American Women's Decolonial Labor

MOLLY McGLENNEN

“I have always felt there is a significant *chasm* that divides Native people from non-Natives...that began at first contact and continues to this day.” Shan Goshorn<sup>1</sup>

“[My basket narratives] weave old forms of articulation with new forms of iconography to create a *collision*, which echoes the cultural experience of my life.”

Sarah Sense<sup>2</sup>

### ***The Forced Absences within Settler-Colonial Violence***

In his introduction to *Native Liberty: Natural Reason and Cultural Survivance*, Gerald Vizenor states, “Cultural simulations of natives abound in museums, monuments, commerce, art, cinema, literature, and history. These detractions are the derisive signifiers of manifest manners” (5). One needs only to think of an Edward Curtis photograph to recall the powerful, metonymic universality of *indian* iconography created by the settler colonial enterprise. It is mockery, to be sure, as Vizenor indicates; it is also a calculated move toward a common goal of securing settler colonial futures. Undeniably, the “signifiers of manifest manners” shape and continually signal how non-Indigenous North Americans imagine themselves to be. As many Native American Studies scholars have argued, *indianness* as a symbolic construct has been and continues to be hijacked, perverted, and ultimately performed by non-Indigenous westerners throughout a long history of profit from cultural appropriation of Native peoples, whether land, practices, or lives.

The quotes with which I begin this article address the ways in which two Native American visual artists understand and characterize the fallout of the project of “cultural simulations” that preoccupy systems of continued colonial occupation in the Americas. Each creates Indigenous visualities that trouble settler colonial designs of signifying the *indian* -- visualities that are hyper-aware of settler colonial methods of reading Native subjects by binding them to metrics of authenticity. What’s more, their works record Indigenous subjects not as static representations but as dynamic, living peoples that have complicated relationships to the settler state; each of her “visual records” is not a document of closure but is a decolonizing blueprint

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fortified by the vitality of Indigenous lived experience. The “chasm” of misunderstanding about which Eastern Band Cherokee artist Shan Goshorn argues and the “collision” of cultural expressions about which Choctaw/Chitimacha artist Sarah Sense describes provides a way of thinking about artistic renderings of lived experience for Native women. I argue that artistic grammars are decolonized expressions that critically and creatively reckon with both the *chasm* and *collision* of historical and contemporary genocidal terror. The labor of reckoning which Sense and Goshorn take on in their works recognizes that the invention of cultural simulations is the specter of white desire – a necessary fiction which protects and projects white innocence from the on-going project of cultural genocide.

### ***Doing Decolonizing Labor***

The logic of settler-colonial efforts and its narratives collapses Indigenous bodies and bodies of experience into representative truths, which graft Indigenous nations and their histories to stalled-out and fixed branches of human evolution. These distilled, packaged, and symbolic representations of *the indian*, especially *the indian woman*, serve as evidence that dominant narratives preoccupy and energize modern historiography and contemporary actions and policies. Historical amnesia as a tool of colonial control neutralizes and justifies not only continued violence against Native peoples (and theft of land and resources), but also energizes continued aggression through the creation of persistent symbolic violence – that is, discursive dominance. Ojibwe scholar Scott Lyons in *X-Marks* argues how violence stems from what he calls “discursive formations” -- ways of speaking and image making “that are traceable to institutions, the state, and dominant cultural understandings, and always associated with power and hierarchies” (24). These ways of dominance rely on amnesic insulation. Iconography via films and media, even via U.S. currency (as we will see ahead) has produced some of the most common virulent and debasing depictions of Native peoples in the 19<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries and stand as reminders of long-standing and ongoing state dominance.

The works of Sense and Goshorn, in the form of culturally-specific basketry, intervene in and resist both the progressivist unfolding of white settler colonial history and the violent archiving of its accompanying narrative -- a discursive enterprise that wields Native peoples as “simulations” of past-ness as it secures its own future. I argue that Sense and Goshorn present to us what decolonial labor can look like. As I argue this I am also aware of Aleut scholar Eve

Tuck's and Ethnic Studies scholar K. Wayne Yang's warning in their article "Decolonization is Not a Metaphor" that "the metaphorization of decolonization makes possible a set of evasions, or settler moves to innocence, that problematically attempt to reconcile settler guilt and complicity, and rescue settler futurity" (1). While Tuck and Yang are primarily analyzing education studies and activist efforts (mainly the Occupy movement), their reminders about the divide between actual decolonizing labor versus settler decolonial desires remain pertinent. Tuck and Yang stress an "ethic of incommensurability" by arguing that "decolonization as material, not metaphor," obstructs settler moves to innocence (28). As I will show ahead, the visual narratives Sense and Goshorn create are important decolonizing materials needed to disarm the hegemony of settler discursive formations in order to safeguard Indigenous futures.

At the core of this labor, many Native American Studies scholars suggest, lie the contours of sovereignty. In fact, Seneca scholar Michelle Raheja asserts in *Native Studies Key Words* that "to engage deeply in the process of decolonization, it is critical to insist on a much broader notion of sovereignty that takes seriously the importance of sovereignty as it is expressed intellectually, politically, socially, and individually (I would even add therapeutically) in cultural forms as diverse as dance, film, theater, the plastic arts, literature, and even hip-hop and graffiti" (28). Thus, it is quite understandable how contemporary Native American artists are, in many ways, leading that essential engagement with decolonization. Artists like Goshorn and Sense express not just wishes or metaphorical desires for decolonization, but rather provide creative models that particularize unburdened material realities of and futures for Indigenous peoples. I argue ahead that their works demonstrate a labor of dimensionality, which directly combats the emptied-out and un-bodied nature of settler imaginings of the *indian*.

The deep-rooted binary of the primitive *indian* versus the civilized Euro-American sustains the genealogy of modernity. As we know, modernity's project of archiving and historicizing the other has served to disassemble Indigenous cultural practices and methodologies in various ways. This progressivist ideology, as Native American Studies scholar Joseph Bauerkamper states, "authorizes the violence and destruction of colonization [as it] neutralizes historical, social, and legal claims against violence and destruction by willfully and relentlessly forgetting the past." (135 "Videographic Sovereignty"). Thus, the willful work of settler historical amnesia (erasure) must be coupled with unyielding symbolic violence (invention), or "nominal discoveries," in order to conceal the more than five centuries of "colonial siege" and



“virtual exile,” (105-106) as Gerald Vizenor argues. In *X-Marks*, Lyons also understands that recognizing this illogic could be the first step in launching “a counterattack to the genocidal implications that are always inherent in the notion of Indian identity as timeless, stable, eternal, but probably in the minds of most people still ‘vanishing’” (60).

### *Native Women Creatively Theorizing*

The array of visual culture that contemporary female Native artists produce enlivens the ability to work against colonial control by actively producing unburdened discourses, or in the words of Native American Studies scholar Dean Rader, the ability to “tell us [non-Natives] what Americans have told the world Indians can stand for (151 “Indigenous Semiotics”). By engaging with select woven works from Sense and Goshorn, my article attempts to unpack the tensed linkages between the histories of self/representation and decolonizing efforts that combat the ongoing processes of genocide. I want to pay special attention to the way the artists create complex, two- and three-dimensional narratives via basketry that resist metonymic settler-colonial constructions, which not only perpetuate fetishized stereotypes but also normalize and rationalize continual violence, especially against Native women. Basketry weaving, specifically, provides a relevant method of engagement for this type of labor because of what it allows the artists to do and how it allows them to do it. In their own unique ways, both artists utilize a double-weaving technique, which radically upends the intentionally planate nature of settler narratives. Sense’s and Goshorn’s woven works establish not only the “counterattack to genocidal implications” (Lyons) of such stereotypes, they also intervene in the colonial enterprise of normalizing such stereotypes that work to insist on Native peoples vanishing.

Indigenous feminists Dian Million (Athabaskan) and Mishuana Goeman (Seneca) have helped me make even deeper sense of the creative ways Sense and Goshorn resist colonial violences through their work. Because of their attention to gender as it intersects with settler colonialism, Million and Goeman illuminate how Native women artists’ visualities prompt imaginative thinking about Indigenous histories, realities, and futures. Specifically, Million’s theory of Indigenism and Goeman’s analysis of colonial grammars are at the fore of how I am able to read the artists’ visual narratives that emerge through their basketry. Million argues that Indigeneity “must be understood as a lateral and internal strategy to rebuild Indigenous social relations across hemispheres that are not merely reactive to any nation-state’s embrace” (38

“There is a River”). Goeman asserts that “representations of Indian bodies are stagnant, as is the nature of space in a majority of colonial discourses,” (237 “Disrupting a Grammar of Place”). Taken together, Million and Goeman disclose a set of dimensional strategies which -- when exercised -- stymie the practices of state-determined fixity and violent, gendered naturalization of “cultural simulations.”

Moreover, I argue, these strategies recognize the importance of *theorization through creativity* that Sense and Goshorn practice through their basketry. Sense’s and Goshorn’s use of the double-weaving technique (an extremely difficult technique where splints are woven bottom to top, over the lip, and back down again) strategically reorients the viewer and exposes him/her/them to imaginative ways of signifying Native women’s experiences. I want to say that Native women’s visual art produces narratives which work both from the ground up (internally, from tribally-specific knowledges) and in connection to the web of hemispheric Indigenous consciousness (laterally), through “a space,” in the words of Goeman, “that remains unfinished and unconquered” (237). Sense’s work undertakes this by constructing uncompromised Indigenous female subjects in direct collision with the colonial imagining and reproduction of the subservient *indian* princess. Goshorn’s work achieves this by fashioning the realities of Indigenous women as they are affected by extreme chasms of misunderstanding.

If the willful work of settler historical amnesia (erasure) is necessarily coupled with inflexible symbolic violence (invention) for the project of colonialism to continue and spread, then the tribally specific (from the ground up) labor of Native artists must also be commensurate with the hemispheric/global Indigenous connective tissue (lateral) of Native women’s work against all forms of violence and oppression. It seems to me that dimension best addresses the oblate nature of discursive dominance, and it seems to me that Sense and Goshorn are entirely aware of just that.

### ***The Cowgirl and Indian Princess Remix***

***<http://sarahsense.com/Artist.asp?ArtistID=11571&Akey=L6DFM793&ajx=1#!pf22225>***

Chitimacha/Choctaw artist Sarah Sense’s oeuvre<sup>3</sup> reveals nearly a dozen powerful series of works over the past two decades that capitalize on her signature practice of weaving photographs by way of traditional Chitimacha basketry techniques. In this process of weaving in her 2004-2012 “Cowgirls and Indian Princess” series, Sense provides a complex remixing of U.S. history

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and contemporary pop culture through her “interpretations of Hollywood appropriation of the Native experience, most simply explained as the real with the fake” (Sense’s personal website). Much of her work examines and dismantles the gendered and violent construction of U.S. nation-building and those accompanying progressivist narratives that perpetuate, legitimize, and sanitize the on-going aggression against Native people, and in particular women. Sense’s “Cowgirls and Indian Princess” series consists of works that evoke classic Hollywood films (thus, “classic” narratives of hetero-male Euro-American dominance) through iconic actors such as Clint Eastwood, John Wayne, Buffalo Bill, Rhett Butler, Gary Cooper and Ronald Reagan, among other prototypical figures. Often these symbols of aggression, virility, and superiority are placed adjacent to female figures who symbolically register either a stereotypical *indian* princess or cowgirl. Sense’s works, however, are far from a simple counter-appropriation of that vintage west with which viewers are so acquainted. Sense’s series *Gone With Him*, *The Sex Is in the Mouth*, and *Play Dead* are not just transforming western visual metonymy and synecdoche into Indigenous stage-settings; they are also challenging the inevitability and dominance of those common assumptions about Native peoples. Moreover, the artist’s creative process and experience of artistic labor are in and of themselves challenging and transforming structures of power.

Sense relayed to me that while living in Los Angeles in the early 2000’s she started collecting old movie posters as part of what would become her long-standing project “Cowgirls and Indian Princess” (personal correspondence). Through this collecting, Sense told me, she began thinking about how one might reclaim depictions of Native women despite the history of violence perpetuated against them. It was also around this time she was determined to read everything she could that was written on Chitimacha basket weaving—which she found out is overwhelmingly dated and ethnographic and, not surprisingly, sparse. It was over a series of summers on the Chitimacha reservation (which is located in what is now southern Louisiana) and working with and creating programs for Chitimacha youth that she bought a Chitimacha basket from an elder. Studying the bottom of it and its designs, she taught herself the technique *by drawing the patterns*. Being fully aware of how she has circumvented traditional protocol that would have her learn how to weave by first showing interest in and seeking guidance by the four remaining elder weavers in the community and by harvesting and working with the local sugar cane, she went back to the tribal chair to ask permission to continue to teach herself and the

Chitimacha youth by showing him the drawings she had made. Through their conversations together and through his stories and teachings to Sense over time, the tribal chair granted permission for her to continue. From here, Sense's series takes off.<sup>4</sup>

Referencing the classic 1930's *Gone with the Wind* film and the famous Rhett Butler and Scarlet O'Hara pose, *Gone with Him 6* (2011) showcases Sense's technique of splicing and then interlacing imagery by weaving photographs and movie posters printed on Mylar strips with artist tape through Chitimacha basketry techniques. *Gone with Him 6* interrupts representations of colonial dominance ordinarily fashioned by female virtue and male misogyny (Scarlet and Rhett respectively) by inserting female Indigenous presence. In her entire series, in fact, the female images are overtly sexualized with exaggerated presence. The *indian princess* is not a passive, timid victim in *Gone with Him 6*, but is the figure wielding the gun. What is more, that *indian princess* figure, who looks seductively at the viewer with a pistol raised in the air, is the artist herself. Rhett and Scarlet are mere table dressing in this corrupted fantasy. In *Gone with Him 5* (2008), a cousin work, Rhett and Scarlett may very well be the target of the female figure's pistol.

Sense told me that while in her MFA program at Parsons the New School for Design in New York she talked over her ideas for her works in the "Cowgirls and Indian Princess" series with her thesis advisors (Personal correspondence). One of them asked her why she inserts herself into the pieces by saying "you don't look Indian, so how is the effect of unsettling representations working?" (Personal correspondence). Sense told me, laughing, that this is probably the best thing he could have told her because from there she began to see and understand how and why she was moved to turn the lens on herself. By inserting herself sometimes as cowgirl (who is Native) and sometimes as *indian princess* (that isn't necessarily identifiably Native), Sense creates a resistant discourse about self-representation that works against dominant paradigms that reign supreme in American consciousness. In fact, *Gone with Him 6*, like many of her works, exposes the devious short hand that obfuscates settler colonial violence against Native peoples. Turning the lens on herself, Sense incorporates Indigenous presence into the visual terrain, which in the words of Goeman, creates "lived spaces" which belie the fixity of *place* that colonial mappings determine, as well as the fixity of "*bodies* that are made absent in settler-spatial imaginaries" (259). Sense's use of dimensional intervention by

way of capsizing blueprints for conquest and inserting blueprints for Indigenous futures surely compels people (like her thesis advisor) to reckon with their own settler colonial assumptions.

Sense’s remixing of Chitimacha basket weaving onto planar surfaces emulates the traditional practice of “double weaving,” where a basket is woven from its base upwards along the sides, to the lip, and then back down again to the bottom. Even though many of Sense’s works are expressed two-dimensionally rather than three-dimensionally, the artist is working from fundamental Chitimacha techniques. To this point, Sense relayed to me that she may not have been fully conscious of this at the very beginnings, but she soon recognized as she was creating the series over the years that she was finding a way for the practice and its protocols to work so that Chitimacha weaving would continue. (Personal correspondence). While some may critique Sense’s actions as bypassing tradition, I have come to view her creative methods as one of the many crucial ways contemporary Native peoples ensure Indigenous continuance.

Gesturing laterally toward the connective tissue that spans contemporary Indigenous visual culture, Sense’s series *The Sex in the Mouth* (#’s 2, 3, 5 and 7) showcases a more overtly violent figure, Clint Eastwood, from the 1976 film *The Outlaw Josey Wales*.<sup>5</sup> Here, the figure of Clint Eastwood quintessentially captured, half screaming, half snarling, wielding two revolvers, is book-ended by what one might read as *indian maidens*. The figure on the right is Sense herself, once again playing *indian* and playing with the idea of *indian*, a type of ironic (and hilarious) play of seeing and being double. The figure on the left registers any number of stock *indian princesses* modeled by white women. In many ways, this “being double,” as represented by Sense herself, exposes the fraudulence in playing *indian* by revealing the superficiality of it, while -- at the same time -- demonstrating the dimension of actual Native women’s existence.

As we know, in efforts to subjugate Indigenous nations of the Americas, the practitioners of colonization and importers of Christianity recognized the implicit need to subdue Native women through rape and murder in order to secure gendered hierarchies of power. Responding to this logic and action, Indigenous women’s visual works teach us that seeing the west’s representation of Native women is to see the blueprint for conquest and to access the narratives that get contracted to symbolic shorthand. Part of the blueprint, indeed, is the way in which colonial imaginings, renderings, and narrations intentionally abrade, flatten, and consume the representation of Native women as a practice. Seeing actual Indigenous women is to see the history of conquest and the targeting of female bodies for extinction. This targeting, however,

gets adjusted in Sense's work. The literal weaving of narratives necessarily puts settler colonialism in conversation with, interwoven with, Indigenous experience. Violence is re-contextualized. But even more than this, the myth of settler colonial *innocence* is exposed through Sense's planar baskets because they create new vantage points and orientations to violence.

The *Sex in the Mouth* series is plainly about violence and the targeting of Native women in the violence of conquest. It is also, however, about the U.S.'s move to create the illusion of innocence in that enterprise. Josey Wales/Clint Eastwood symbolizes white purity; no matter how rugged his appearance or how vile his actions, his motives are entirely righteous. Because what the face/body of Clint Eastwood symbolizes on the film screen (and therefore in the U.S. imaginary) is so soundly fastened to the onlooker's notions of white heterosexual masculinity, his image perpetually produces a virtuous representation of settler colonialism. In his essay "The Savage Mind," Ojibwe scholar David Treuer argues that there is no innocence to be found in this land, implying the U.S. "American goodness/innocence" is a fiction we collectively tell ourselves that makes permanent the ongoing, yet always hidden, happenings of violence. And this virtuous American dream, he says, is dependent upon the fear and loathing of the racialized other, particularly the *indian*. What Sense does is expose this symbolism of American innocence to daylight and exhibit not only the virulent nature of conquest, but its continual and present day ramifications. Sense's work expresses the decolonizing labor of denaturalizing the settler colonial logic that works only to sustain settler futures.

As the series progresses, the images focus more and more onto the subjects lower half of their faces and the figures become more and more imbricated. Thus, by *The Sex in the Mouth 7*, with only the mouths of the three figures visible and nearly touching, the basket imagery becomes highly sexualized. Yet, the work also seems to suggest the eclipsing of the Josey Wales/Clint Eastwood by two women on either side. The scream of white male virility that is read in earlier works in the series could now be taken as a scream of terror in light of impending doom -- his literal demise by the hands of two women. It is "the mashup of familiar images that defamiliarizes their signification," argues Lenape scholar Joanne Barker in her introduction *Critically Sovereign*. In her discussion of Jemez Pueblo/Korean artist Debra Yepa-Pappan's *Live Long and Prosper (Spock Was a Half-Breed)*, Barker asserts that "[her work] resituates

Indigenous women and their communities in multiple possibilities of the past, present, and future in ways that refuse their foreclosure as historical relics or irrelevant costumes in the services of imperial formations and colonized identities” (30). Thus, Sense’s autonomous messaging moves Indigenous women out of the realm of service to white male violence and the colonial system that is fueled by it. At the same time, she calls our attention to how the practice of playing *indian*, signaled by the white *indian maiden* in the work, encumbers that autonomy by naturalizing white *indian* play.

It is not only Indigenous bodies to which Sense is attentive; it is also Indigenous land. In Sense’s *Play Dead* (#1, 2, 3 and 4) series, the woven planar basket depicts two figures: on the left, Gary Cooper as the righteous and rugged Will Kane from the 1952 film *High Noon*, and on the right, the artist herself in the role of contemporary *indian cowgirl* with a gun. On the original film’s theatrical poster it reads “the story of a man who was too proud to run” foreshadowing the film’s storyline of Kane, the Marshal in a town in New Mexico territory, who remains steadfast in protecting his town and wife from a posse of outlaws who have come to exact revenge on him. Sense’s work, however, delivers an ironic twist on the shorthand that Gary Cooper’s profile provides. Will Kane signifies the morality of white (male) American character and its righteous and manifest connections to and dominion over Indigenous lands. His refusal to be removed, become invisible, or rendered extinct eclipses real Native peoples’ and nations’ moral title to their lands, just as it obfuscates real histories of Native peoples resistance against colonial and genocidal terror. If in the settler colonial imaginary, as Sense alludes to through her title, Native people “play dead,” then that extinction opens up free, vacant land for continued expansion as it sanitizes that violent theft. White men, like Will Kane, become the rightful benefactors of the land. But *Play Dead*, which serially zooms in on the arms of the two figures wielding their guns at each other, illustrates the violence imbedded in the ideology and practice of Manifest Destiny at the same time it reveals the powerful intervention of Native women in that autocolonial narrative of inheritance. Cooper, in this visual narrative, doesn’t stand a chance.

### ***Beautiful Mashups***

***<http://www.shangoshorn.net/baskets/>***

Like Sense, Shan Goshorn<sup>6</sup> is another contemporary artist who uses the double weaving technique. Eastern Band Cherokee artist Goshorn’s three dimensional baskets interlace text and

imagery from both Native and settler colonial documents which establish a visual storytelling of both tribal and colonial traditions and realities. While Sense says that her basket narratives “weave old forms of articulation with new forms of iconography to create a *collision*,” Goshorn says that her baskets reveal Indigenous versions of history, which necessarily uncover – rather than enshroud -- the *chasms* of division between Native and non-Native peoples.

Goshorn’s work *Color of Conflicting Values* (2013) addresses a tribally-specific era of terror for Cherokee people caused by and represented through the tyranny of Andrew Jackson. Employing the traditional Cherokee double-weave technique, Goshorn uses reproductions of the Indian Removal Act of 1830 printed onto arches watercolor paper along with gold foil as her splints for the interior. Goshorn explains in her artist statement that the “applied gold foil represents how the discovery of gold accelerated the process of Cherokee removal.” (Goshorn’s personal website). For the exterior, “the imagery combines the [mostly green] forest vegetation of the mountainous Cherokee homeland” (personal website), but what emerges from this verdant scenery is the replication of the U.S. twenty-dollar bill with Andrew Jackson’s face. Because, as Goshorn found out, she could not digitally scan U.S. currency, she painted by hand the 20-dollar bill that is incorporated into the visual narrative of the basket. Goshorn explains some of the meaning of her artistic choices:

I can’t think of anything more important to Native people than land because it is the very land that links us to our ancestors; consequently, it is what binds us to our families. Unlike the prevalent attitude of harnessing the earth’s resources for financial gain, Native people consider the earth a relative – our first mother- and our relationship to the plants, animals, rocks and soil is familial as well. Few, if any, of our government leaders share this outlook but President Andrew Jackson demonstrated a particularly tyrannical approach to removing Indians from their homeland for personal profit, displacing most of the SE tribes to lands west of the Mississippi so settlers (and he personally) could claim the land. It is galling that his portrait should be on the \$20 dollar bill but perhaps this usage best sums up what was valuable to this man. It seems a bitter irony that US currency is the same color of the beautiful lush mountain forests of my people’s rightful homeland. (Personal website).

Goshorn adds that the Cherokee consider Jackson to be a “traitor of the worst kind.” *Color of Conflicting Values* decodes the settler colonial logic, which narrates the inveterate story of



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Jackson as a great leader worthy of memorialization on the nation’s currency (thus righteous and inculpable), and not as the tyrant who unconstitutionally and vindictively removed Native peoples from the southeast to Oklahoma Territory via the death march known as the Trail of Tears, among other forced removals of Southeast Native peoples.

More than this, Goshorn’s work exposes not only the tyrannical actions of a U.S. president, but the system of violence that permits those actions. What is made explicit by *Color of Conflicting Values* is that it is not enough to simply understand the truth about settler colonial history (e.g. Jackson is not the man that U.S. history lauds him to be); rather, the work steers its non-Indigenous viewer to reckon with his/her/their privileged inheritance from state sanctioned genocide. In particular, *Color of Conflicting Values* reveals how settler idolization of money trumps the care for and life with the land as well as the value of actual Indigenous human beings. Through its history to this day, the U.S. and its settler inhabitants have demonstrated just that: Native peoples and their connections to the land matter very little within in systems bankrolled by greed. Thus, the work signals the fiction of white innocence as well as the unsettling of white futures in reckoning with that fiction. Goshorn’s work suggests the continuities of settler colonial violences that, if not checked, continue to act as forms of tyranny in Indigenous peoples’ lives.

The effects of tyranny and terror, as we know, are themselves gendered. Goshorn’s extraordinary basket *Reclaiming Our Power* (2014) weaves the language of sections 904, 905, and 910 of the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act of 2013 that re-instituted tribal authority to prosecute abusers on tribal lands, especially non-native abusers who until 2013 could act without fear of prosecution<sup>7</sup>. Public testimonies of personal accounts of abuse, Goshorn explains, were what convinced the House and Senate to pass the vote (Personal website). The language of VAWA and statistics of high levels of violence are interwoven with a series of images. The images are taken from photographs from over 50 Native women across the northern hemisphere, women of all ages, wearing street clothes (rather than, say, powwow regalia) and wrapped in intertribal shawls, indicating how this act may serve to protect Native women and “untie the hands of tribal courts to dispense justice.” (Personal website). A community project, the basket is a beautiful array of the Acts’ text interwoven with dozens of Native women, shoulder to shoulder, encircling the work. *Reclaiming Our Power* shows women united -- literally body to body – defending and regenerating their strength and value as Indigenous human beings.

Here again, Goshorn's work interrogates the violence Native women experience as that violence is plainly codified into laws and maintained by official narratives. As a way of keeping present the staggering statistics about Native women and violence (one in three Native women will be raped in her lifetime, for example), Goshorn explains that the splints are made from "the paper text...washed with purple, black and blue paint to emphasize the bruising severity of this violence" (Personal website). *Reclaiming Our Power's* narrative does not rest on this reality; rather, it foregrounds the immense power in Native women's leadership in addressing these ongoing violences. Native women's cooperation in this piece, from across the hemisphere, speaks to the constant and conscientious coalescing with which Native women have always been engaged. Her basket narrative makes apparent Million's and Goeman's articulations of Native women's creation of spaces of interaction, based on both tribal, grounded knowledges and lateral networks of coalition. In addition, *Reclaiming Our Power* illuminates an "active visioning," (39) as Million outlines her theoretical framework. Through the visualities of Goshorn's baskets, these creative coalitions produce "the imaginary that Indigenous peoples hold to when they attach to a future beyond a present that is increasingly ensconced within a medicalized therapeutic diagnosis of our colonial wounding" (39).

Interaction and coalition are actions for which Native peoples have always recognized and revered Native women. Goshorn's 2015 triptych set of Cherokee style, single-weave baskets *Vessel* was inspired by Lakota writer and activist Luther Standing Bear's quote "It is the mothers, not the warriors, who create a people and guide their destiny" (Personal website). On the outside of the baskets, Standing Bear's words are braided with a single image of a young pregnant Native mother, stunningly posed in each basket of the triptych. Goshorn explains:

The interior weaves together words from one of the many emails this young mother and I exchanged during our collaboration, in which she eloquently expresses her gratitude to the Creator for choosing her to help grow this child, emphasizing how beautiful and powerful motherhood makes her feel" (Personal website).

Goshorn's choice of and collaboration with her subject seems essential to her creative process and the ways in which Native women's images are rendered. That she formed a relationship with the subject and includes her words in the baskets lifts her from not only anonymity, but also objectification and the "signifiers of manifest manners." No euphemism for *indian* nor surrogate for Pocahontas, Goshorn's subject inspires an uncompromised Indigenous female presence, with

the animate promise of Indigenous progeny. Unlike the unknowable nature of the *indian princess* figure that occupies so much of the U.S. imaginary, Goshorn’s subject is known -- and loved.

Goshorn is not the only contemporary Indigenous artist who features the relational aspects of subject choice in his/her/their work. Native American Studies scholar Cynthia Fowler, in analyzing the photographs of Seminole/Creek/Navajo artist Hulleah Tsinhnahjinnie, stresses Tsinhnahjinnie’s critical choices for subjects:

This shift from a fictionalized model to a real individual [a friend or relative] is a highly significant change....Thus, it is through these specific women as models in the photographs ...that the viewer experiences beauty” (199).

The figure in *Vessel* becomes a critical site to better understand how the white romanticized and often violent notions of the *indian princess* and her progeny factor into the securing the settler colonial agenda. Instead, the contemporary subject in Goshorn’s basket, supported by her own voice and in conversation with Standing Bear’s visionary words within the visual terrain of the work, signals the promise of Indigenous continuance. The mother and her unborn child not only communicate a threat to colonial constraint, but they also signify Indigenous notions of beauty, which include the sacred responsibility of bringing children into the world. Goshorn explains that in addition to the “divine gift of conceiving, loving and guiding [our] children, ...men and women alike [as] vessels of this sacred responsibility,” the works also “points to the commitment of Native people [treating] our traditions in the same way. Our culture requires dedication, respect and devotion to nurture it and keep it alive” (Personal website). Goshorn ties the literal labor of birthing a child to the labor of cultural continuance. She also ties the continuities of ancestral wisdom to the ways in which present-day Native peoples make sense of their lives and realities. It is, to me, a type of decolonial labor that does not remain in the realm of ideas or discourse, but is actualized on a day-to-day basis by Native peoples. It is also the type of decolonial labor that centers creative theorization and its methods, which primes the onlooker to engage his/her/their imagination rather than latent assumptions.

### ***Conclusion***

The settler colonial utilization of history naturalizes its benign nature while the dominant, monolithic historicization of U.S. history designates the settler as a neutral body. Unchecked, this purposeful and ongoing project has always and will always produce settler innocence and

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protect settler futures. As decolonizing methods, rethinking and re-narrating history does more than monitor this project. Native women artists intervene in ways that expose the fraudulent claim of settler innocence of Indigenous genocide. As revealed by Sense and Goshorn, this labor of creative intervention is not merely reactive; rather, in the spirit of Million's theory of Indigenism, it "is an active doing, the imagining and revisioning...that is never, never static (38), and in the words of Goeman is necessarily resisting a gendered settler grammar. Cultural simulations are the result of the fixity of colonial definitions and historicization. Indigenous creativity provides an antidote to the seemingly impervious logics of settler power.

Each of the works creates narratives that skillfully generate impedance in the type of *cultural collisions* and *chasms of misunderstanding* that both Sense and Goshorn, respectively, express from their beginnings. The weaving in which each artist invests her time and creative energy brings Native women's histories and realities right up against the violence of colonial narratives. Through the process of braiding images and text next to, on top of, beneath, and through representations that have, by themselves, remained motionless and monochromatic (but nonetheless purposeful in the project of settler colonialism), the artists' tribally-specific labor demonstrates the type of embodied decolonizing work that brings dimensional resistance to erasure. Indeed, Sense and Goshorn make indispensable Indigenous women's centrality in that decolonizing work. Through the visual narratives they create, Sense and Goshorn provoke the viewer to lean into the type of animate reckoning needed to shift the dominant paradigms that would otherwise secure the continuance of Indigenous cultural genocide.

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### Notes

<sup>1</sup> <https://kinggalleries.com/woven-creation-shan-goshorns-color-conflicting-values/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.sarahsense.com/>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.sarahsense.com/>

<sup>4</sup> I thank art collector Edward Guarino for introducing me to Sarah Sense's work. I also thank Sarah herself for being so generous with her time, sharing insights about her work, and making a visit to Vassar College.

<sup>5</sup> The film *The Outlaw Josey Wales* was based on the 1973 novel by Forest Carter, a pen-name for Asa Earl Carter who was a segregationist, leader of the White Citizens Council, a member of the Ku Klux Klan, and an unofficial speech writer for George Wallace. Under his pseudonym,

Carter authored *Josey Wales* as well as *The Education of Little Tree* and posed as a Cherokee Indian author.

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.shangoshorn.net/>

<sup>7</sup> I thank Shan Goshorn for being so generous with her comments on an earlier draft of this essay. It was with tremendous sadness I learned of Shan's passing during the final stages of drafting this article. She will be greatly missed.

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## **creation stories: survivance, sovereignty, and oil in MHA country**

STEPHEN ANDREWS

*Berthold before Bakken, and Mandan, Hidatsa, Arikara before Berthold. Before Tribe, there was river and sea, and before water the back information of Time that shapes the meaning of this or any other narrative.*

It is January 2013, and snowfall is beginning to thicken as these thoughts congeal into notes. Just returned from the first of several interviews I was granted permission by MHA administrators to conduct, I am awaiting a cheeseburger at the Wrangler Café in Parshall, North Dakota, home of the Braves, located just on the eastern edge of its namesake oil field, which was discovered in 2006 by EOG Resources in conjunction with consulting geologist Mike Johnson.<sup>1</sup> Commentators on the history of the Bakken boom point to the discovery of the Parshall Field as the “eureka” moment that for oil investors and lease operators alike transformed the Bakken from enormous potential to immediate “play.” By the time my burger arrives, seven years later, so to speak, I’ve already heard whispers of another taking. Not the land outright, as in 1949, but a swindle of mineral and drilling rights to the tune of nearly a billion dollars. *The more things change....*

It is 1943, and flooding along the lower Missouri has “caused billions of dollars in damage and flooded thousands of farms in Nebraska and Iowa.” After nearly “a century of catastrophic flooding,” the floods of ‘43 are a tipping point that triggers a call for a massive engineering project to build a series of dams across the upstream portions of the Missouri and tame the Big Muddy (VanDevelder 26). The Pick-Sloan Plan, according to namesakes Colonel Lewis Pick, of the Army Corps of Engineers, and Glenn Sloan, of the Bureau of Reclamation, will provide access to irrigation for “four million acres of bone dry prairie” upstream while ensuring flood control to downstream farmers in Iowa and Nebraska (27). The “jewel in the crown” of the Pick-Sloan Plan will be the Garrison Dam, set to be located in the heart of Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara country. Once the dam is completed, the symbolic and economic heartland of the Three Affiliated Tribes of the Fort Berthold Reservation, an area that includes

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the tribal headquarters at Elbowoods, will be submerged under “a six hundred square-mile lake.” The Tribes will lose 153,000 acres of bottom land that has some of the richest topsoil in the world—18 feet deep in some places, according to Cory Spotted Bear—and many will be forced to attempt farming and ranching on the less arable “bad” lands west of the river.<sup>2</sup> The Tribes, with help from Wyoming Senator Joseph O’Mahoney, fight valiantly for four years to “forestall” what Paul VanDevelder refers to as an “inevitable catastrophe” (28). On October 9, 1945, during Congressional hearings on the matter, Senator William “Wild Bill” Langer of North Dakota asks the Chairman of the Three Affiliated Tribes, Martin Cross, how long his ancestors had been living in the area in question. “Since time immemorial,” the Chairman replies (117-18). Given that answer, what could possibly constitute ground of equal value or the price of “just compensation?” By then, though, all involved know too well that relocation to acreage of equal value would not be forthcoming in a Plan that has all the earmarks of a *fait accompli* in which the cultural and economic well-being of the Tribes seems a mere and increasingly irritating afterthought. Built to accommodate the submergences and dislocations of what the Elders would thereafter refer to as “the Flood,” New Town, located on Highway 23 some 70 miles northwest of Elbowoods and twelve miles west of Parshall, will be established as the new tribal center as of 1951.<sup>3</sup> As if in cruel mockery of the immemorial “heart” of Tribal life now lying submerged under the waters over Elbowoods, New Town is about as far north as one can go and still be on the Reservation. But at least it was dry.

Several other tribes along the Missouri, including the Sioux, were traumatized by the effects of the Pick-Sloan Plan. But as Michael L. Lawson points out, “the most devastating effects suffered by a single reservation were experienced by the Three Affiliated Tribes... whose tribal life was almost totally destroyed by the army’s Garrison Dam” (29). Recently, in December of 2016, MHA Chairman Mark Fox highlighted the irony of these tragic events in commemorating the restoration of nearly 25,000 acres that had hitherto been under the control of the Corps of Engineers. “Half of our adult men were fighting for their country and their homes in World War II when the federal government began making plans to take our lands for the Garrison Dam,” Fox said. “The flood caused by the Dam displaced 90 percent of our people from their homes. It literally destroyed our heartland” (“Interior Department”). The legal basis of such action, referred to by the government as a “taking,” can be found in Amendment V of the Constitution: “...nor shall private property be taken for public use, without just compensation.”



“Just compensation,” unlike beauty, is not in the eye of the beholder so much as in the pen of the colonizing power, in this case represented by the Army and the Bureau of Reclamation, both working on behalf of descendants of settlers rather than in the best interests of the Tribes. As if to underscore this point, amateur historian and blogger Judi Heit points out that “the Corps of Engineers, without authorization from Congress, altered the project’s specifications in order to protect Williston, North Dakota, and to prevent interference with the Bureau of Reclamation irrigation projects. However, nothing was done to safeguard Mandan, Hidatsa or Arikara/Sahnish communities” (“Ghost Lakes”). Do I need to add that Williston is not on the Reservation and that the majority of its residents were white? When all was said and done, according to legal scholar Raymond Cross, son of the aforementioned Martin Cross, “just compensation” for the Fort Berthold Taking Act (Public Law 437), signed into law by President Truman on October 29, 1949, turned out to be 7.5 million dollars—a paltry sum indeed for land on which the people had been living since “time immemorial.”<sup>4</sup> “Just compensation,” then, turns out to be just *compensation*, just one more turn of the colonizer’s screw, and hardly surprising at that.

Colonization,” according to Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, “is not just the invasion and inhabiting of a place owned by others; it is the setting up of laws to legitimize the power of occupancy and ownership” (2012 138). As an example of the kind of legitimizing she has in mind, Cook-Lynn points to this same “mid-twentieth-century Missouri River project, which, through federal law, destroyed millions of acres of treaty-protected land for hydropower over the objections of the citizens who lived there” (138). For Cook-Lynn, herself a member of the Crow Creek Sioux Nation that was also adversely impacted by the Pick Sloan Project, the social goods of cheaper power, accessible irrigation and effective flood control are each a metonym for a history of Native eliminationism in the name of social progress. As such, these “goods” will not be allowed to blunt the urgencies of her central and abiding question: “*for how long will the courts and academia and the intelligentsia of this country refuse to describe this history as genocide?*” (68 emphasis in original). As a means of pointing out the ramifications of that history, Scott Richard Lyons makes a useful distinction between “migration” and “removal.” Lyons imagines that *migration* has a “value” akin to what “Gerald Vizenor has called transmotion: a ‘sense of native motion and an active presence,’ that is recognized by ‘survivance, a reciprocal use of nature, not a monotheistic, territorial sovereignty’” (5). *Removal*, Lyons later states, “was a federal policy established in 1830 by President Andrew Jackson, *and it would now go by the name of ethnic*

*cleansing*” (“Introduction” 8, emphasis added). Not only would it go by that name now, but as Cook-Lynn reminds us, “[o]n Indian reservations *even today* the writing and enforcement of the laws of colonization are always charted by the federal system, often without the consent of the governed” (138 emphasis added). *Even today*—pipelines and competing jurisdictions crisscross Indian Country and undercut the very idea of sovereignty.

In October of 2013, Lisa DeVille and her husband, Walter, gave me a tour of the oilfields along an unpaved BIA road in the Mandaree area, where they live (see figure 1).<sup>5</sup> It was a chilly day, with a light



Figure 1: Residue from flares turns some snow in Mandaree yellow

snow falling as we

drove around. What took my breath away, however, was not the cold but the extent to which the landscape had been taken over by the apparatuses of the oil industry. We saw artificial palm trees near a trailer park, which already seemed the beginnings of a man-camp on someone’s private land (see Figures 2 and 2a below).



Figure 2a



Figure 2: the artificial palm trees are located at top left corner of this mini-man-camp.

(Man-camps were not allowed on Tribal land at the time of my interviews, although there was ongoing debate as to whether or not man-camps should be allowed in exchange for MHA housing.) We also saw evidence everywhere of how valuable water is to the pumping process. A blue sign along the road indicates “water depot # 3” belonging to a company out of Watford City (see figure 3.) Earlier that summer Lisa DeVille had told me that she knew of one reservation family who was getting \$150, 000 for their water—per *month*. Even if the rate turns out to be annual, that figure would no doubt represent a considerable boost to the family’s economy. According to Fox, it takes “two to three million gallons of water” to drill a well. In what will turn out to be an even greater irony than the oil itself, the water of Lake Sakakawea, beneath which lies the Tribal heartland, will be even more valuable than the oil.<sup>6</sup> From Fox’s perspective, MHA will have gone from what Raymond Cross, borrowing from Bonnie Duran, calls the debilitating effects of “intergenerational post-traumatic stress disorder” (Cross 2000, 958), a disorder



Figure 3: Where fracking is concerned, there is no oil without water.

underscored for his generation by a righteous rhetoric of too much water and not enough solid land, to a post-oil future in which MHA, facing West, will have surplus water for a world that cannot get enough of it. “One day,” Fox says by way of emphasizing his point, “in this nation and in this world, a barrel of potable drinking water is going to be more valuable than a barrel of oil.” All the more reason, then, to minimize wastewater contamination, which

may turn out to be easier said than done. According to a 2016 Duke University report, “there have been approximately 3900 brine spills reported to the North Dakota Department of Health by well operators.” The report goes on to define “brine spills” as “the accidental release of brine that may potentially impact groundwater or surface water” (Lauer). The key words here are “accidental” and “reported,” since both the DeVilles and the aforementioned Tribal Business Council member, Cory Spotted Bear (Twin Buttes Segment), are convinced that there are

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occurrences of illegal dumping. Illegal dumping, while pernicious in its cumulative effects, may turn out to be the least of their worries. On July 8, 2014, a leak in Crestwood Midstream’s Arrow Pipeline “dumped more than 1 million gallons of brine and oil in a Mandaree tributary of the colossal lake formed by the Garrison Dam” (Nauman). That “colossal lake” is what Fox is envisioning as a liquid lock box for MHA’s future.

Moving forward, as with looking back, the problem that the oversight of environmental hazards presents is that so much is out of the direct control of MHA. In what follows, I will trace out the implications for Tribal sovereignty as it pertains to the aspirations of two MHA members—Lisa DeVille and Cory Spotted Bear—both of whom I interviewed in the summer and fall of 2013. In doing so, I will elaborate on and interweave four different types of creation stories: the tale told by oil which, like the immemorial past of the MHA people, is a resource buried under the weight of its own history; the aspirational stories told by Spotted Bear and DeVille and the examples they embody that take sustenance from that deep past *in order to* progress toward a workable and sustainable future; the critique of the dominant culture’s political creation story as elaborated by Raymond Cross, a legal scholar for whom the founding of a doubled America—“one Indian and one non-Indian” (Cross 2004, 61)—might now, in a post-boom world, become an opportunity for renegotiating “the existing civil compact between the Indian and non-Indian peoples” under the aegis of what he calls, following Charles Taylor and Clifford Geertz, ““deep diversity”” (64). These creation stories will themselves be served by another type of creation story, the writer’s peculiar form of re-creation which we have come to call the *essay*.

### I. Essay/essay: the first doubling

All stories, according to self-described “postindian ironist,” Gerald Vizenor, are creation stories—none more so than that late arrival, the essay. Merging the neo-pragmatist critique of Richard Rorty with his own critique of the logic of Manifest Destiny that he calls “manifest manners,” Vizenor goes on to say that “[t]he shadows in trickster stories would overturn the terminal vernacular of manifest manners, and the final vocabularies of dominance” (“Shadow” 68). For “native stories,” as Vizenor explains in “Penenative Rumors,” “are the canons of survivance: the tease of seasons, scent of cedar, oneric names, shamanic creases, and the

transmotion of sovereignty” (23). He might as well have said “canyons,” where the tease of natural reason sent by cedars and the twists and turns of elemental forces over time have creased the very landscape of selves that are decidedly “not...essence, or immanence,” but are instead “the mien of stories” (20). Quoting literary theorist David Carroll, Vizenor is careful to emphasize that “master narratives”—the upper case Creation Stories of manifest manners and final vocabularies—“perpetuate an injustice” in their “denial of the right to respond, to invent, to deviate from the norm” (27). Such deviations—which I take to be synonymous with Vizenor’s notion of *mien*—are definitive, if necessarily diffuse, as implied in the following Vizenor quote from Jean François Lyotard’s “Lessons in Paganism”: “the people does [sic] not exist as a subject but as a mass of millions of insignificant and serious little stories that sometimes let themselves be collected together to constitute big stories and sometimes disperse into digressive elements” (“Shadow” 68). That key word “mien,” then, which figures as attitude and affect, is a sign of presence and belongs neither to teller nor auditor but links them both to the contingencies of the story being narrated.

As Vizenor suggests, every story impels many miens and no single story speaks for the order of things. Since “[t]he native essay is the transmotion of nature, culture, and sovereignty,” the stakes, as Vizenor sees them in “Penenative Rumors,” are high indeed (25). In what amounts to an essay on essays, Vizenor takes pains to point out the multifarious “*miens*” of the essay form. It is, he says, “resistance,” “contention,” “mediation,” “venture,” and above all “contingency”; it is also a “tease of creation” as well as a “trace of survivance and sovereignty” (23-4). As if to underscore that the essay is ultimately in the service of something larger than itself, Vizenor switches from indicative to imperative mood: “The essay *must* tease creation,” and “[t]he tease must reverse modernist theses, models of the social sciences, and the narratives of a native absence as an *indian* presence” (23, emphases in original). In Vizenor’s hands, the essay is the medium that best expresses his sense that “the eternal tease is chance” (*Postindian Conversations* 19). “Chance,” as I understand it, teases us in the form of contingency, and provokes us in the form of risk. From that perspective, Vizenor’s notion of the essay is very much in line with that of Michel de Montaigne, who is generally credited with being the inventor of the modern essay. For Montaigne, the essay ushers forth “a new figure—an unpremeditated and accidental philosopher” (“Apology”). Philosopher Ann Hartle opposes “accidental philosophy” to what she calls “deliberate philosophy.” The former, being “nonauthoritative”

(34), seeks not to “aim at a preconceived conclusion” but instead follows a path “of discovery that allows the accidental ‘some authority’” (87). Deliberate philosophy, Hartle stresses, seeks nothing less than “divine *stasis*,” as in Plato’s “eternal forms” or Aristotle’s “first causes” (27) or in the implied teleology of manifest destiny. With its reliance on the logical forms of “the syllogism, the disputation, and the treatise,” deliberate philosophy “assumes the truth of one’s premises,” and so “aims at a predetermined conclusion” (87). We can see that the protocols of deliberate philosophy are very much in line with those of what Vizenor calls “modernist theses” and “models of the social sciences.” As he explains in *Native Liberty*, “I write to creation not closure, to the treat of trickster stories over monotheism, linear causality, and victimry” (6). The task of his project, then, is to figure out how to restore “some authority” to the ongoing traces of “survivance and sovereignty,” traces that are constantly under threat of sedimentation by the deliberative discursive pressures brought to bear by 500-plus years of “accidental” *indianness*. Here, too, Lyons’ distinction between *migration* and *removal* is on point: the story-telling essay is a migratory form. “Stories,” as Kimberly Blaeser reminds us, “keep us migrating home” (qtd in Lyons, 5). Their discursive counterpart, the argument grounded in “deliberate philosophy” with its quest for logical purity, is necessarily a function of removal—more akin to assay than essay.

For our present purposes, it is useful to know that the word “essay,” used as a verb, was once synonymous with the word “assay.” Both imply a “trial” or “test” (Hartle 4, 63). To *essay*, according to the OED, is to “put to the proof.” The emphasis, as I understand Hartle and Vizenor, is less on “proof” than on “*put*”: for the obligation of the essayist is to *chance* the topic under review. In what would seem a slightly different register, one tests for the presence of a mineral by assaying, or *proofing*, its ore. But are these truly different registers? Inasmuch as there is no gold standard for the logic of an essay, how, for example, does one test for presence in an essay? As poet Diane Glancy reminds us in a short segment on Vizenor entitled an “Essay on the Essay,” the “variable units” of Vizenorian language are “the four directions of trick, disturb, interpret and realign.” Glancy figures these verbs, each stressing a dislocation or a dislocation, as cardinal virtues in Vizenor country, even as they map out the contours of Glancy country as well. Within, she goes on to explain, are “texture,” and “a geology or geography of written language as conduit” (“The Naked Spot” 279). The transmotion of Glancy’s figurations, from “texture” to “geology” to “language,” invites a pivot from the creative storytelling of *essays*

to the creation stories imbedded within geologic *assays*. In this case, the assays I have in mind are the core samples by which petrologists test for oil. While the geologic story they tell originates thousands of feet below ground and millions of years ago—from time immemorial, we might say—the surface story plots out a narrative of transmotion wherein the tragedy of removal might potentially allow MHA an opportunity to frack out a migratory and redemptive irony of the last laugh. After all, as we shall discuss, they, too, according to their creation stories, came up to the surface from deep underground.

## II. Reading from the ground up

The idea of geology as a story seems a foundational metaphor for North Dakota's Geological Survey Department. In their 1997 guide book to the geology of the area around Dickinson, North Dakota, Robert F. Biek and Edward C. Murphy explain that “geologists often view the earth as a book.” They go on to add that “the story is not told in words and sentences...but in layers of rocks that record geologic history. Each layer is like “a page in a book,” with pages “grouped into chapters and the chapters into four great volumes” (2). These “volumes,” from the earliest to the most recent, are the Precambrian or Cryptozoic, Paleozoic, Mesozoic, and Cenozoic Eras (3). While Biek and Murphy go on to stress the incompleteness of the text of geology, figuring that it might better be thought of as an “incomplete diary,” they nevertheless insist that the “record...with careful observation can be pieced back together” (2-3). In *The Face of North Dakota* (2000), State Geologist John P. Bluemle sounds a more cautionary note while utilizing a similar bibliographic analogy: “The rocks and sediments found in North Dakota are not all the same age,” he writes. “Like the pages in a long and difficult history book, they record events of the past. The ‘book’ however, is incomplete. Many pages are missing; other pages—even entire chapters—are torn and tattered, difficult or impossible to decipher.” Missing pages notwithstanding, Bluemle assures his readers that geologists “know” that “the record of life in North Dakota goes back between 500 and 600 million years” (135).

Much of that knowledge is gleaned from core samples drilled in order to assay for petroleum (Biek 3). And, in keeping with the bibliographic metaphor, these core samples are readily available for review at the Wilson M. Laird Core and Sample Library. With 18,000 square feet of climate-controlled storage space, this voluminous facility “currently houses

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approximately 70 miles of cores and 34,000 boxes of drill cuttings,” including about 95% of “the samples collected” from “the North Dakota portion of the Williston Basin” (“Core Library”). Cores from the Bakken formation constitute a significant portion of this archive, and to a State geologist they provide the necessary texture with which to plot out their ur-text—a creation story of the deep structure of North Dakota geology that intersects at surface level with a complicated social history wherein land, water, and people converge. The plot has its rising action in volume 2 (the Paleozoic Era), with a series of transgressions and regressions of warm inland seas, and of the consequent deposition and sedimentation of layers upon layers of mud mixed in with the organic residue of lush, tropical vegetation.<sup>7</sup> “Long after the sea...dried up,” or so the storytellers say, “the weight of thousands of feet of overlying rocks, coupled with heat from the earth’s interior” triggered in that organic slush chemical transformations that produced petroleum. Additional pressure “caused the petroleum to migrate from the source rocks (mainly shale) into more porous rocks (mainly sandstone and carbonates)” [Bluemle 147-8]. As of now, the richest deposits in the Williston Basin are to be found in the Bakken Formation, so named in 1953 by geologist J. W. Nordquist after H.O. Bakken, the man who owned the land in Williams County, North Dakota, on which the Amerada Petroleum Corporation took core samples from its test hole #1.<sup>8</sup> A relatively thin layer of source rock—only 46m thick at its “depocenter” (defined as the site of maximum deposition)—the Bakken is a layer of “organic-rich shales” that “overlies the Upper Devonian Three Forks Formation and underlies the Lower Mississippian Lodgepole Formation” (“Diagenesis” 4). This would date the formation at about 360 million years.

A comparative analysis of core samples done by a well-trained eye can pinpoint where the oil is and approximately how much of it has been generated. Indeed, this is how the late Julie LeFever, geologist and longtime Director of the Laird Core Library, earned her affectionate sobriquet of “Miss Bakken.” She “knew where the oil was,” according to colleague Kent Holland. “She looked at nearly every Bakken core, logged it, and put that information together. She knew it was there before the technology existed to extract it” (Orvik). According to a study published in 2001, by Janet K. Pitman, Leigh C. Price, and LeFever, the Bakken “generated approximately 200 to 400 billion barrels of oil in place” (“Diagenesis” 1). As the 200 billion barrel swing might indicate, oil generation estimates are in dispute. As geologists develop ever more sophisticated computer models, the amount is adjusted—sometimes higher, and sometimes lower. Even if all could agree on a fixed amount, generated oil does not necessarily equal



“recoverable” oil. There is a great, and one supposes often frustrating, disparity between what nature is deemed to have generated and what technology and pricing will allow to be recovered. In a 2006 paper co-authored by LeFever and Lynn Helms, legendary geologist Leigh Price is quoted as placing the recovery estimate “as high as 50%.” Headington Oil Company, operating in Richland County, Montana, put a “primary recovery factor of 18%” for their operations, while North Dakota’s Industrial Commission came in with the most conservative estimate of from 3-10%. Admitting that the “Bakken play” in North Dakota is still in a “learning curve,” LeFever and Helms go on to point out that technological adjustments (including horizontal fracking) and the price of oil “will dictate what is potentially recoverable from this formation” (“Bakken Formation”). In 2008, the State of North Dakota estimated that 11-14 billion barrels were recoverable, whereas in 2013 the US Geological Survey put the number at just under 7.4 billion (Gaswirth, et.al.).

Be that as it may, they don’t call it a “boom” for nothing. Actual production in the Bakken, even with the recent plunge in oil prices, is still above a million barrels a day.<sup>9</sup> And for various reasons, not all of them good, that boom may very well reverberate in MHA Nation for a long time. The Reservation is located right at ground zero of what North Dakotans affectionately refer to as “the Patch.” For MHA, the metonym “the Patch” is counterpoised to an earlier metonym, “The Flood,” the traumatic effects of which have been intergenerational. It remains to be seen as to what is ultimately “recoverable” within that scenario.

Maps of the Bakken Total Petroleum System (which also include the Three Forks formation that undergirds the Bakken) show that the area under review stretches east-west from longitude 99° in east-central North Dakota to longitude 107° in eastern Montana, and north-south from the Canadian border (although the actual geological formation extends into Manitoba and Saskatchewan) to latitude 45° in South Dakota. Compare those boundaries to the following:

Commencing at the mouth of the Heart River; thence up the Missouri to the mouth of the Yellowstone River; thence up the Yellowstone to the mouth of the Powder River, thence in a southeasterly direction to the headwaters of the Little Missouri River, thence along the Black Hills to the headwaters of the Heart River; thence down the Heart River to the place of the beginning. (“Laws and Treaties”)

So reads the language of the 1851 Treaty of Fort Laramie. Starting at the mouth of the Heart, the boundary circles back, as if to come home. These days, the southern boundary of “home” for the

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MHA Nation is some 100 miles north, as the crow flies, from present-day Mandan, a city situated at the mouth of the Heart on the west side of the Missouri across from Bismarck, the state capital. A two and a half hour drive will get you to tribal headquarters at Four Bears, across the river from New Town. At approximately 500,000 acres, the tribal land base is miniscule compared to the roughly 12 million acres allotted in the original treaty (“Demographics”).<sup>10</sup>

In the oral tradition, this lost area is referred to as “the heart of the world.” It was here, at the Heart River villages, that the Mandan expanded their agriculture-based economy by establishing a “great trading bazaar” that became a “commercial hub” along the Mississippi-Missouri trade routes (VanDevelder 17). When Spotted Bear recounted this history to me, he used the analogy of Sam’s Club—a one-stop retail-warehouse shopping experience under the corporate aegis of Walmart—to connect MHA’s past prowess as traders to today’s commercial circumstances. Archaeology bears this out. According to Elizabeth Fenn, at one particular Mandan site in Hull, North Dakota (south of Heart River), “investigators have unearthed items traceable” to locations as far-flung as the Pacific Northwest, Florida, the Tennessee River, the Gulf Coast, and the Atlantic Seaboard (18). Given the centrality of trade to agriculture-based and hunting-gathering peoples alike, it would indeed be fair to call the Heart River villages “the heart of the world.” But the people of MHA had other reasons for calling this the “heart” of their world. In one version of their creation story, Lone Man and First Creator engage in a friendly contest to create their respective portions of the world. They begin and end at the confluence of the Heart and the Missouri (Fenn 5-6).

As it turns out, each of the Three Affiliated Tribes has some version of a creation story that indicates an origin from deep underground. One Mandan account, for example, as told to Wolf Chief by Chief, his Mandan father-in-law, tells of “a high point on the ocean shore that the Mandan came from. They were said to have come from under the ground at that place and brought corn up” (Bowers 2004 156). Wolf Chief was Hidatsa, and they, too, had tales that reckoned an underground origin. In one account, from an unnamed source, it is said that First Creator “caused the people who were living below to come above, bringing with them their garden produce” (Bowers 1965 298). In Arikara origin stories the people are likewise said to have come up from the ground, or from an underground cave. As Star tells us, “A long time ago, people lived in the ground” (Dorsey 18).<sup>11</sup>

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In the time “long ago” it was corn and other garden produce that the people brought with them from below. Since 2008, what comes from below has primarily been a volatile mix of oil, natural gas, and wastewater. The nearly constant movement of tanker and supply trucks is literally spreading and widening BIA roads, most of which are unpaved. This constant rumble of oil-related products is further complicated for MHA members by issues pertaining to resource allocation, Native sovereignty, environmental concerns, and federal, state, and local laws. Since the advent of Bakken oil, MHA highway fatalities—“40 in the last few years,” according to Fox—have increased at an alarming rate<sup>12</sup>; drug and sex trafficking are rampant; and with the Four Bears Casino and the expected revenues from oil, fewer and fewer youth are seeing any good reason to further their education beyond high school. I learn all this from several persons I was granted permission by Tribal administrators to interview during the boom year of 2013. All of them had at least a college degree, several had Masters, and one, Fox, a law degree. Three of them had served in a branch of the armed services. All are very alive to the deep irony of recent tribal history in which MHA’s best land had been “taken” in the late 1940s by the Federal government on behalf of the Pick-Sloan plan to dam up the Missouri for purposes of flood control. The notion of “transgenerational trauma” in reference to that post-Flood generation is a touchstone concept expressed by almost all the people I interviewed.<sup>13</sup> The youngest of these, Cory Spotted Bear and Lisa DeVille, live on the west side of Lake Sakakawea, in Twin Buttes and Mandaree, respectively. MHA Nation, and Mandaree in particular, turns out to be at the heart of the most productive portion of the Bakken boom. Their stories show the extent to which creation is an ongoing process.

### III. Cory Spotted Bear

“I’m to the top of my head in the earth here,” Cory Spotted Bear declares. We are sitting around the dining room table of his house in Twin Buttes, North Dakota, on an early afternoon in July, and he is explaining to me why he has no desire to move away. Because he has just graced me with an hour-long survey of the history of the MHA people, I think I know that this statement means more than a deep personal commitment to the priority of place. As we have seen, since time immemorial “the people” of MHA have always imagined themselves as having come up from the ground. Spotted Bear, too, sees himself as emblematic of that tradition. And at 36, he

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feels that he is just now beginning to emerge from the ground up to grow into a vision of himself that he has been cultivating since his senior year in high school.

Signs of a continuous past are all around us. There was the sweetgrass burned in the smudge pot to welcome me into his home and to sanctify the time and space of our conversation. There is talk of building an earth lodge on the grounds of the local elementary school, just across the street from Spotted Bear’s home. Later in our conversation he will tell me that he is preparing for a sun dance and will need to get a proper tree for the ceremony. Spotted Bear is a mesmerizing speaker, so I am not surprised to learn that he is often called on by outside groups to talk about MHA-related issues. For that reason, our time today will be limited, although he will give me even more of it than I had hoped. A humble man, he seems almost embarrassed to explain that shortly after I leave he will be relating his Tribal history to a documentary film crew from Wales, chasing down the hoary old myth of the “Welsh” Mandan.

Spotted Bear is proud to say that he grew up a reservation boy, raised in the old ways by his grandmother, Olive (“Ollie”) Benson. Mrs. Benson happened to be a “full-blooded Norwegian,” or *masi*, but Spotted Bear tells me that because she was raised on the reservation and because she had learned the old ways from her husband, Lorenzo “Larry” Spotted Bear, he thinks of her unapologetically as a conduit for the old ways. One of these teachings is to honor one’s relatives. In light of that, Spotted Bear considers himself to be “socially Mandan,” while acknowledging his Norwegian and German ancestry. “You must acknowledge your parts in order to be whole,” he tells me. But make no mistake, Spotted Bear affirms the synergy that the parts add up to when he tells me, with pride quite evident in his voice, that, since both his mother and father were half, he considers himself to be “full-blooded Indian.”

Trying to make tradition continuously present also means coming into contact with the vestiges of genocide. There is the “historical trauma” that Spotted Bear identifies with assimilation and acculturation when talking about his father and mother and why they were ill-equipped to raise him. “After boarding school,” he says, “they say we did not know how to love our children.” He was raised during formative years by his Uncle and Aunt, Dennis and Berta, who taught him a good work ethic by way of the many chores that a working ranch requires. Chores and good grades were a negotiating point for the avid young basketball player.

As with many Native men, Spotted Bear sees in basketball an opportunity for young persons to be “warriors.” During his senior season in high school, he had what he refers to as an

“embarrassing experience with weed,” one that left him feeling psychologically unsettled for a couple of months. “I felt like something was missing,” he says, “I always felt like I was forgetting something, or like there’s something that should be there that wasn’t there.” Spotted Bear says he didn’t really have a language for making sense of those uneasy sensations until years later after he had begun sun-dancing. As he began to come to terms with what he calls “the ceremonial way of life,” he learned that “when we are not doing good, part of our good spirit leaves us. It can’t be around us anymore because it is so pure, like a child.” As he tells it, he now understands what his spirit was doing during those two months. “It was up in the heavens, talking to other spirits, talking to my ancestors, talking to my grandmas and grandpas. And it was getting wisdom, and it was getting stronger, and it was preparing to come back and start helping me down in this earth again.”

Grounded once more, the consequences were very real for Spotted Bear. He began to think about deepening his education in various ways. The BA he earned at Haskell and the MA in Indigenous Studies from the University of Kansas may have provided him with a credentialed portfolio that pointed him to the future, but his experiences at these institutions also buttressed an intensifying commitment to learning the old ways from his Elders, what he refers to as “teachings.” Without them, he would continue to feel as empty and rootless as he had after that episode in high school. In asking about the old ways, Spotted Bear was struck by how often his Elders would affirm the value of getting an education. Both his Grandma Ollie and his Grandma Martina spoke of its importance, the latter doing so on her deathbed. His late aunt, Alyce Spotted Bear, herself an internationally recognized educator, had, during her stint as Tribal Chair, guided MHA through the Joint Tribal Advisory Committee (JTAC) investigations that eventually led, in 1992, to the allocation of an additional 149.2 million dollar compensation for the tribal lands appropriated by the Forth Berthold Taking Act.<sup>14</sup> Raymond Cross had successfully argued that case all the way to the Supreme Court. For Spotted Bear, a more complete education would have to embody not only the academic finesse exemplified by Elders such as Alyce and Raymond, but it would also have to include learning the intricacies of tribal ways that had been passed down since “time immemorial.”

After a detailed, and at times emotional, explanation of tribal and personal history, Spotted Bear says, “Maybe you want to know my take on the oil.” Based on my introductory phone call, he knows that interviewing him on this topic is the primary reason for my visit. But

being a consummate host, he gently explains the deferral in relation to the old ways. “The intelligent answer is the pondered answer; I’m pondering things still,” he says. “I’m okay with this oil if we can do it in compliance. But because we went through so much trauma, we tend to do things out of order. I could run an oil-field service, but are we going to build a house on the ground or are we going to build a nice foundation first?” After a short pause, he continues. “Let me paint a picture for you: there are those of us who absolutely love our way of life—the Earth way, the fact that we are businessmen.” It is in this context that he talks about Sam’s Club and the Mandan reputation as traders extraordinaire. Rightly proud of this tradition, Spotted Bear thinks the oil can be leveraged in such a way that MHA can continue to be trade brokers long after the oil is gone. “Today,” he says, “what my view is right now is that we can do these things in balance.”

Lest I get the wrong idea about his self-interestedness, he quickly explains that he doesn’t get any oil revenue. “There is talk of a People’s Fund,” he says, “and I might possibly get a

monthly stipend off the interest from the fund. I live paycheck to paycheck, so to have a little boost financially would be nice. But let us not as a people forget the



gentlemen that we are. Maybe we can extract this oil in a way that creates balance.” This last is easier said than done, as he well knows.

At his invitation, we hop into his pickup for a tour of the area. He takes me up on the buttes where many of the pump units, gas flares, and container pits are located. We see trucks lined up at one site (figure 4 above). Are they bringing the much-needed water for the fracking



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proppant, or are they waiting to carry out the wastewater? It's hard to tell. But Spotted Bear frequently patrols the backroads, doing what he calls "community watch" on what is, after all, *his* community. He occasionally queries truckers pulled over to the side of a dead-end road or some out of the way spot, and guesses they are probably illegally dumping drilling wastewater, which, by some accounts, is "ten times saltier than ocean water" (Stockdill). "We left such a small scar on the earth," he says wistfully, thinking back to his ancestors. "We lived in close proximity to nature" (see figure 5, below). Then, as if to emphasize the potential for oil to disrupt that equilibrium, he goes on to say that if "you create a culture that you can be proud to claim, then in the process you are reclaiming your past." To that end, he and others have started The Earth Lodge Movement, dedicated to living in earth homes as sustainably and as self-sufficiently as possible. "We are going to have a wind turbine," he says, "even if we have to buy one from Menards." Spotted Bear's dream is that as "inherent stewards of the land," MHA will be at the forefront of green energy. It's in his cultural DNA, we might say. "I really believe I'm a plant, and that I can walk around. This oil," he continues, with a sweep of his arm, "this oil is going to make the wind blow harder." I take him to be making a double-edged statement: that oil will make going green more economically feasible, since the financial resources from oil revenue could enable development of sustainable alternatives; and that if they wait until after the oil dries up, going green will become more environmentally necessary but by then it may be too late.

Since my interview, Spotted Bear has been elected to MHA's Tribal Business Council, where he currently serves the Twin Buttes segment (MHA is divided into six administrative segments—the other five are New Town/Little Shell; Parshall/Lucky Mound; White Shield; Mandaree; and Four Bears). The fact that his subcommittee assignments are on the Education and Economic Development committees bodes well, I think, for both Twin Buttes and for MHA.

#### IV. Lisa DeVille

I first met DeVille in the cafeteria at Fort Berthold College, in New Town, on July 10, 2013. She immediately handed me an inch-thick dossier of documents related to various issues, most of them oil-related, including some of her own environmental impact studies. As I thanked her for the dossier, I couldn't help but think of the Lac-Mégantic, Quebec, disaster four days earlier in which a train containing Bakken oil had derailed and exploded, killing 47. The oil, so pure as to

be highly volatile, had been loaded in New Town. According to an article in the *Globe and Mail*, local residents in New Town “like to boast that the honey-coloured oil is so light they can take it right from the well and pour it into truck engines because it requires little refining” (McNish and Robertson). A point of local pride had just erupted into an international nightmare, and as I would come to find out, those are precisely the kinds of disasters that Lisa is concerned to prevent at the local level. By the time I met her, DeVille had already garnered quite a bit of attention as a go-to source for many journalists working on MHA-related stories about “the Patch.” Part of her appeal, I suspected, is that she is very outspoken, absolutely unabashed about telling it like it is from the perspectives that matter most to her: as a 37-year old mother of five; as an enrolled member of MHA (Manda/Hidatsa); as a member of Mandaree Segment much concerned with issues of equity and sustainability in relation to the distribution of oil revenue that MHA holds in common; and as a citizen who is very critical of the lack of oversight on the part of Federal, State, and Tribal leaders in regard to environmental impact. As with Spotted Bear, she, too, wants to push ahead into an oil-based future with an eye toward promoting traditional values.

Raised in straitened economic circumstances, DeVille knows too well what it is to do without. “I grew up hard,” she informs me. “I didn’t have a father. It was my grandmother who raised me. We had alcoholism, my husband had alcoholism in his family. So we grew up hard. No money. Sometimes we only ate once a day.” That personal past is what drives DeVille to focus her activism around the holistic mantra of “healthy hearts, healthy minds, and healthy homes.” Given the amount of oil revenue coming into Tribal coffers, she is adamant that there are “many, many, opportunities that Mandaree should be having right now. Our children shouldn’t be sitting there 90% obese. They shouldn’t be sitting there diabetic at the age of twelve or whatever. There should be a rec center, and they should be incorporating more culture into our community.” By “they,” DeVille means Tribal administrators, who, she feels, have thus far let them down.

DeVille’s activism—and she is *very* active—may very well put her at odds with the





Tribe's decisions as to how to allocate the money. She feels that since such a disproportionate amount of the oil revenue is coming from the Mandaree segment, and since her community will be left literally and figuratively holding the radioactively-contaminated fracking socks after the oil is gone, a greater percentage of the revenue should go toward building up the infrastructure of Mandaree. She says they need to invest in the schools, build a health clinic and a fire station so that folks don't have to go 30 or more miles for their basic health and emergency needs (figure 6). She says Administration gave each reservation school \$150,000. A good start, to be sure, but DeVille is also on record as insisting that Mandaree should have instead received a million dollars from the same fund. That, from her perspective, would be fair and just.

The 1940s Taking had such a traumatic effect on the Tribe as a whole that reparation in whatever form is bound to be attractive, especially if it comes with a healthy serving of poetic justice that made the bad land they'd been shunted off to turn out to be the most valuable, at least in the short run. DeVille is quick to point out that her husband, Walter, receives oil money from some of his land but that, like Spotted Bear, she does not. All of this oil bonanza is happening so quickly, and so inequitably, that she worries that MHA, in some ways, is not ready for it. For this reason, they have to be prudent, she thinks, about how they proceed. "We're modern today," DeVille explains, "but it doesn't mean we have to give up our traditions." To punctuate her point, she tells me that she knew what she wanted to be as far back as 7<sup>th</sup> grade. "It was either going to be nursing, attorney, or business, one of the three. I wasn't sure yet." She attributes her success in education to the fact that she had people who believed in her. Her grandmother, who had just recently passed away, made the biggest impact on her education. One day while they were picking juneberries, she told her granddaughter, "People say there's oil under here, but they can't get to it because of the boulders. They'll figure out a way to get it, but I won't get to see it." "But she did get to see it," DeVille says. "Then she told me, make sure you get your education, because you know the white man, what they did to us before. When that oil gets here they're going to be taking again. You get your education so when they put that paper in front of you, you know what they're giving you." Or taking away, as the case may be. But DeVille is also quick to point out that without sufficient oversight, Tribal authorities themselves may be involved in underhanded or misguided deals that ultimately benefit themselves at the expense of the Tribe.<sup>15</sup> Listening to DeVille and her friend exchange opinions on this, I hear myself chiming in with "The taking continues, but now it's an inside game," to which they readily assent. One

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manifestation of this, as DeVille describes, is tribal leaders using “tradition” as a way to bolster their own status. DeVille’s own commitment to tradition is very much in evidence in the way she talks about her own upbringing and about how she is raising her own children. Her eldest son was with her on the day we talked, and DeVille, who is Catholic, spoke proudly of his having been selected to be a Tribal spiritual leader. “If you don’t know who you are,” she says, “you’re lost.”

Since our initial talk, DeVille’s tireless efforts on behalf of keeping various constituencies—Tribal, State, and Federal—attuned to the need for environmental awareness and oversight have been recognized by the North Dakota Human Rights Coalition (NDRHC). On Nov. 13, 2015, she received the Arc of Justice Award from the Coalition. Barry Nelson, outgoing chair of the Coalition, expressed the following sentiments in reference to her activism: “Lisa DeVille embodies the NDRHC Arc of Justice Award in her lifelong quest for justice and for advocating for the protection of the land about her. She is someone that people can look to for inspiration and leadership.” Nelson went on to explain that DeVille was nominated due to her “strong record of achievement combining skills in diverse areas of organizational development, group/staff leadership, program development, project management, building partnerships and community relationships.” It is clear from the award and from her increasingly diverse portfolio of committee and interest-group activities, including membership on the Dakota Resource Council and the National Environmental Justice Advisory Council, that DeVille is well on her way to becoming a State and National figure on issues of environmental justice. But increased visibility, while serving as a useful magnifier by which to augment her critical opinion, is not her primary concern. Global exposure is merely a function of local commitment. DeVille’s primary concern is that MHA keep its share of the exceptionally pure and extremely volatile oil safely on track for *equitable* and *sustainable* use for all members of MHA, now and in the future.

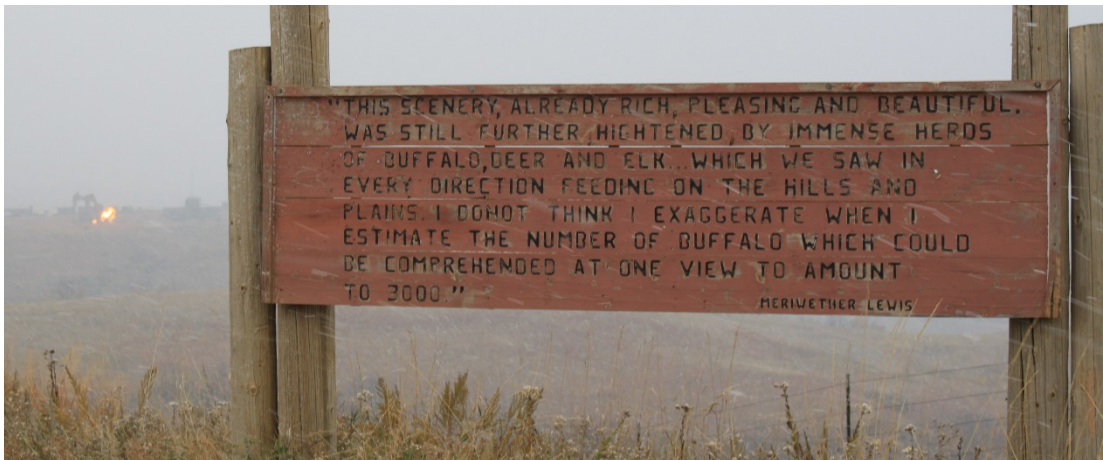
I can easily envision a future in which Spotted Bear and DeVille both continue to develop into exceptionally savvy and effective leaders. Spotted Bear’s way of surveilling his Twin Buttes community is to drive around and be a visible sign of Native sovereignty; DeVille’s way is to keep an ear to her scanner. “Something happens almost every night,” she says, “either a spill, something tipped over, or something’s exploded.”

Raymond Cross has consistently argued that if MHA is to benefit from the extraction of oil rather than be victimized by it, then “reasonable legal and social regulation” mandated by the Tribes will have to win out. If not, what looks like a boon now may end up “jeopardiz[ing] the progress the tribal people have made in their recovery from the disastrous effects of the Garrison Dam taking some sixty years ago” (Cross 2011, 569). However, Cross thinks there is “reason for optimism” since “both the federal and state governments have an important stake in helping the tribe regulate oil and gas development.” But in order to turn Cross’s optimism into hard fact, the other two governments will need to “acknowledge the tribe as an *indispensable* regulatory partner in the realization of this common goal” (569, emphasis added). I take Cross’s sly invocation of “indispensable” as a way of gesturing toward the hard sovereignty grounded in the commerce clause of Article I, section 8, clause 3 of the Constitution, wherein is stated that “Congress shall have power to...regulate Commerce with foreign Nations, and with the several States, and with the Indian Tribes.” Constructing the Tribes as “indispensable” *partners* is a way to undercut the authority of the halfway covenant articulated by Chief Justice Marshall in *Johnson v. McIntosh* (1823), in which the “doctrine of discovery” is presumed to trump Native occupancy, and in *Cherokee Nation v Georgia* (1831), wherein tribes are defined as “domestic dependent nations.”<sup>16</sup> Rhetorically, if not legally, Cross’s adjective “indispensable” turns “dependent” into *independent*. Rhetorical finesses notwithstanding, “the meaning of Indian tribal sovereignty within the framework of U.S. Indian law” and its application across the legal landscape, as David Carlson reminds us, remains “ambiguous.” Carlson goes on to explain that “even in the most generous interpretations tribal sovereignty has been held...to be something inferior to state sovereignty” (30). This “something inferior” originates with the Marshall Court’s establishment of the “principle” that “discovery gave title to the government by whose subjects, or by whose authority, it was made, *against all other European governments*, which title might be consummated by possession” (*Johnson*, emphasis added).

As we were about to wrap up my October guided tour of Mandaree, we came upon a brown, weather-beaten sign overlooking Lake Sakakawea, presumably set up by the BIA. Once I read it, the situational irony between text and context was too tempting to leave untended, so I got out and snapped a few pictures. The content of the sign, as it turns out, is a quote attributed to

Meriwether Lewis, one half of the duo appointed by Thomas Jefferson to lead the Corps of Discovery.

This scenery, already rich, pleasing and beautiful, was still further hightened by Immense herds of buffalo, deer and elk...which we saw in every direction feeding on the hills and plains. I do not think I exaggerate when I estimate the number of which could be comprehended at one view to amount to 3000. (see figure 7 below)



The attribution is correct and is excerpted from a relatively lengthy journal entry by Lewis dated Monday, September 17<sup>th</sup>, 1804. Given the placement of the sign overlooking the Missouri near Mandaree, one might be excused for thinking that Lewis was referring to what he encountered on that fall day in what is now MHA country. As it turns out, though, the location that elicits from Lewis such a gushing survey of aesthetic beauty “hightened” by a detailed reckoning of material plenitude is actually located near the town of Oacama, in Lyman County, South Dakota, closer to the present-day Crow Creek Sioux Reservation than to the Heart of the World in Mandan country some 400 miles upstream (*Journals* 79-82). Placing the quoted passage back into the historical context exposes some of the complications imbedded in the concept of sovereignty.

Reflecting on the Lewis and Clark bicentennial “celebrations” that proliferated some 15 years ago along the expedition’s route, Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, historian and member of Crow Creek Sioux Nation, offers a survey of a different kind. “As one surveys the history of massive land thefts, treaty violations, U.S. court decisions, genocidal policies, and the diminishment of tribal sovereignty that followed the Lewis and Clark adventure,” she writes, “the hope of many Indians that people of good and free will may rise up and make correct moral determination is

fragile indeed” (“The Lewis and Clark Story” 42). Such fragility is further exacerbated by the aesthetic and environmental imperatives invoked by the sign itself. Dislocated from its point of origin, the sign unavoidably becomes a sign of absence, emblematic of all the dislocations so recently enacted under the right of eminent domain. Vizenor, in comments reflecting on Jefferson’s attitude toward Native Americans, says that “Natives were named in connection with the vast distances of an unexploited nation.” Viewed as a direct threat to the “vast,” “unexploited” distances described so agreeably in Lewis’s account, “Natives,” Vizenor concludes, “were removed as a vindication of the environment. The *absence* of the *indian* in the histories of this nation is an aesthetic victimry” (*Fugitive Poses* 21 emphasis in original). This sign, then, in its presumption of a universalizing pose that dislocates geographic and cultural specificity on behalf of celebrating, in the abstract, *what was once here*, affirms, as well, the ways in which aesthetic contemplation itself is an avatar of discovery. Franklin K. Lane, the Secretary of the Interior when the first National Parks Portfolio was published in 1916, imagined such contemplative engagement with iconic American landscapes as a “further discovery of America” (“Introduction”). Add to this the unavoidable fact that one can no longer view this particular sign, at this particular place, without making visual contact with the oil rig and pumps operating in the background, and one can begin to appreciate the extent to which Native sovereignty is indeed a vexed concept. Legal pragmatists like Cross would take solace, however, in the fact that “sovereignty,” as Carlson stresses, “is truly meaningful in its *use* and not as a mere formal category or abstract concept” (30). “Sovereignty is the guiding story in our pursuit of self-determination,” declares Lyons, “the general strategy by which we aim to best recover our losses from the ravages of colonization: our lands, our languages, our cultures, our self-respect.” As a guiding story, it is necessarily a nested narrative, one that simultaneously invokes the promises of home even as it threatens the possibility of homelessness. Best then to imagine, as Lyons does, that the “pursuit of sovereignty is an attempt to revive not our past, but our possibilities” (449). From that perspective, those rigs and pumps are as much a sign of “possibilities” at work as they are a prompt for environmental protectionism. If the sign proper underscores Native absence, the rig and pumps that ostensibly “mar” the “beauty” of the landscape affirm Native presence as much as they underscore global capital. Where work is to be done on behalf of “environmental protectionism,” that work will have to be undertaken and enforced by the very people who have for so long been its primary victims.

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For Cross, then, living the lessons of the Taking, here and now, means insisting that sovereignty will have to be both protected by the Tribes themselves and respected by State and Federal governments. According to Cross, it is sovereignty itself that hangs in the balance of environmentally responsible oil production. “[T]he biggest potential adverse effect,” he writes, “would be to erode the tribe’s status as an economically viable, and culturally intact, political entity. Therefore, development, if it is not regulated in a legally and socially responsible manner, may threaten the tribe’s cherished political and legal rights as a federally recognized Indian tribe” (Cross 2011, 543). The warrant for Cross’s concerns in regard to the potential for erosion of sovereignty, if not its evacuation altogether, can be found in an obligation mandated by the 1886 treaty with the Federal government “to use its tribally reserved lands...as the means of achieving economic self-sufficiency” (543). That self-sufficiency, and the sovereignty that Cross insists it anchors, “will be sorely tested by large-scale development on tribal lands, though, because development brings with it novel regulatory challenges that will test the tribal people’s sovereignty in new ways” (544).

In order to reinforce the Tribe’s continuing socio-political ties to reservation land, Cross references the tribe’s creation stories that “tell of how Lone Man and First Creator selected the Fort Berthold lands as the tribal people’s permanent homelands.” He goes on to emphasize that by virtue of “the people’s continuing re-enactment of their cultural and religious practices, they strive to renew their ties to these lands and to help secure the creator’s continued blessing for their good uses of those lands” (Cross 2011, 545). In anchoring his call for tribal sovereignty in his people’s traditional creation story, Cross reaffirms his own status as a tribal member, an affirmation that in turn acts as synecdoche for the *Tribe’s* adherence to the mandates of the 1886 treaty. From Cross’s perspective, American legal mandates and his own Tribal obligations constitute twin creation stories that, if treated with mutual respect, may “enable” the two cultures to “navigate in what has become a ‘splintered and disassembled’ modern world” (Cross 2004, 65). Following constitutional scholar Martin Becker, Cross views “the privileged moment” of the founding of the United States of America as a signal event when “[t]wo Americas—one Indian and one non-Indian—were simultaneously created” (61). This *creational* doubling up becomes, for Cross, an opportunity for a *creative* doubling wherein Native and non-Native Americans can dialogically “re-negotiate” their “civil compact” with one another. The short term goal for Cross would be very much in line with the notions he espouses on behalf of safeguarding MHA

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sovereignty by virtue of having a greater say in regulating environmental protections—it's about “mutual and reciprocal respect” (64).

Such dialogue will have to “meet a high standard” of mutual receptivity in which the “interlocutors must embody” what anthropologist Clifford Geertz describes as ““new ways of thinking that are responsive to particularities, to individualities, oddities, contrasts, and singularities,”” that are in turn “responsive” to a “plurality of ways of belonging and being, and that yet can draw from them—from it—a sense of connectedness that is neither uniform nor comprehensive, primal nor changeless, but nonetheless real” (qtd in Cross 2004 65). Such a radical doubling, Cross stresses, will not be found in “dreary tomes written by constitutional law scholars or the drab scientific texts written by Indian anthropologists or ethnographers”—will not be found, as Vizenor might phrase it, in the texts of manifest manners. It will instead be through the “respective ‘creation myths’ these people offer to justify the great individual and collective sacrifices demanded by the founding of the shared America we know and love today” (66). From that perspective, as Cross makes clear, it is the recognition of Native creation stories, Native experiences and Native sacrifices—in short, Americans’ reckoning with Native survivance—that will provide the grounds for this new foundation.

“Native stories of survivance are the creases of transmotion and sovereignty,” Vizenor reminds us (*Fugitive* 15). A crease implies a fold unfolded, a mind made up and then unmade, an opening that refuses the very closure that created it. Such is the history of American treaty making, and hence the necessity for strategies of survivance. But how often can one fold and unfold along the doubled crease of the Constitution before wearing thin the fold that binds us? Better to move forward into the future—however accidentally—with a clear legal vision and a trickster’s soul, than to be doubled over in the pain of a traumatic past that cannot be recovered.

And yet “recovery,” as it pertains to a past immemorial and the oil beneath the ground, will continue to be a key word—for the costs associated with rising waters have been that high. One would love to imagine a future in which the people of MHA, if they are careful stewards of their treaty obligations and their natural resources, will be in the right place to make the profitable commercial exchange when the price for water rises, as it inevitably will. While the past clearly has levied its costs in the form of intergenerational trauma, MHA leadership will have to proceed into the near future with eyes wide open and ears to the ground in order to ensure that the next generation is not permanently scarred by the negative environmental and

cultural effects so often associated with extraction (figure 8, below). There is, for instance, anecdotal evidence of an alarming increase in human and drug trafficking, both of which are exacerbated by too few law enforcement officers, many of whom lack resources and jurisdictional authority (Finn, et al. 8, 10). There also seems to be a growing trend among the young to devalue higher education, a trend



Figure 8: Sign on BIA 12, just west of Mandaree.

based, in part, on the promise of “easy” money from oil revenue or casino work. Marilyn Hudson, Raymond Cross’s sister, was disappointed to report that there were no students from New Town High School who were admitted to either of the state’s two flagship universities in 2012-2013. There is danger, too, of MHA members being economically squeezed out of housing and other resources due to shortages and higher costs engendered by the oil industry. According to Fox, MHA has had to raise wages just to remain competitive.

To emphasize the path MHA must travel to engage the future that is best for them, Fox uses the example of two nearby tribes. His aspirational ideal is embodied by the casino-rich Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux, located just southwest of the Twin Cities. There, each enrolled member receives over a million dollars a year (see *Daily Mail*, 8-12-12). Based on the money already coming in to MHA coffers and on projections of future revenue, Fox says that MHA “should wake up and we should be Shakopee—or close to it.” In this ideal vision, “everybody’s got a home, everybody can work if they want to, have an education, [and their] health system’s good.” As an example of what not to do, Fox points to the once oil rich Fort Peck Reservation, circa 2013. “If we don’t change the course of where we’re at, we’re going to end up being Fort Peck,” he admonishes. “Go to Fort Peck. What do you see? Poverty is worse, crime is worse. They didn’t make the right choices.” As a case in point, in 2011, as Fort Peck geared up for another run at extraction, residents of the nearby community of Poplar were dealing with the recent past in the shape of a “plume of salty brine” that was already contaminating the local



drinking water (Groover). Poised between the promise of Shakopee and the problems of Fort Peck, Fox emphasizes that “if the end result of somebody coming in and extracting that oil” is that we have to “take the revenue just to deal with the extraction of it, then we’ve made a poor choice. If that is the end result, then we better just leave it in the ground like a bank account.”

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise noted, I will use the acronym MHA—for Mandan, Hidatsa, Arikara—to refer to the Three Affiliated Tribes of Fort Berthold Reservation. I would also like to take this occasion to thank the following persons: guest editor Melissa Slocum for her wise guidance throughout this process; the anonymous referee for helpful commentary and constructive criticism; Gina Donovan for helping format the images; and special thanks go to Glenda Embry of MHA, for helping me get in contact with the persons I interviewed for this project.

<sup>2</sup> In some places, especially along the Little Missouri, MHA land does meet the criteria for a specific type of geologic formation predicated on erosion and deposition, formations that we have come to call “badlands.” I’ve also heard the term “badlands” used by some MHA members to refer in general to the land west of the Missouri. Whether technically “badland” or functionally “bad” land, underneath lie some of the richest oil deposits in the Bakken, and hence in the United States. As will be seen, that irony is not lost on members of MHA.

<sup>3</sup> Some of the proceeding information about the Taking is used in the service of a different argument in an article of mine entitled “Abducted by Puritans: Adoption and Submergence on the New Frontier,” published in *North Dakota Quarterly*, v. 75, nos. 3 & 4, 2008.

<sup>4</sup> Cross uses this number in his essay “Tribes as Rich Nations,” 79 *Or. L. Rev.* 893 (2000), p. 963. VanDevellder, from whom I cite the signing date, uses the figure of 12.5 million, which he refers to as a “compromise package” (p. 133). Upward adjustments were made after the initial offer, and this may account for the discrepancy between the two figures. Neither figure accounts for the discrepancy between compensated and “real” value.

<sup>5</sup> All photographs are the property of the author.

<sup>6</sup> Conversation with author, July 10, 2013. At the time of the interview, Fox was Tax Director for MHA, in which role he was instrumental in oversight of oil leases and access to water.

<sup>7</sup> Biek and Murphy suggest that fossil evidence from the Mississippian period “reveals a warm sea” (6).

<sup>8</sup> On the origin of the name “Bakken,” I rely on information gleaned from Steven G. Grape’s “Technology-Based Oil and Natural Gas Plays: Shale Shock! Could There Be Billions in the Bakken?” Washington, D.C. U.S. Energy Information Administration, November 2006, as well as Joanne Lerud’s *Lexicon of Stratigraphic Names of North Dakota*, Report of Investigation No. 71, North Dakota Geological Survey, p. 7.

<sup>9</sup> Figures were quoted by Alison Ritter, public information officer for North Dakota Department of Mineral Resources, in a phone conversation with the author on June 26, 2017.

<sup>10</sup> The total is about 1 million acres, of which approximately 50% is trust land. The rest includes private holdings as well as the approximately 150,000 acres under Lake Sakakawea (“Demographics”).

<sup>11</sup> Dorsey begins his *Traditions of the Arikara* with several origin stories, many of which begin with phrasing similar to Star’s. “A long time ago, the Arikara lived under the ground,” Four-Horns tell us (31); and according to Hawk, “we were told by old people that our people came out from the ground” (32).

<sup>12</sup> According to a study by Karen Vachal, during the period of 2009-2013, 38% of the severe injury crashes on MHA roads were the result of “heavy vehicle crashes.” See the 2016 report, “Tribal Crash Reporting in ND: Practices, Perceptions, and Systematic Implementation,” North Dakota State University, p. 6. <http://www.mountain-plains.org/research/projects/downloads/2016-mpc-518.pdf>. Accessed 7-29-17.

<sup>13</sup> I first encountered this phrase in Cross’s “Tribes as Rich Nations.” That essay predates these interviews, but it is in no way clear if it is Cross who is responsible for its currency among MHA members.

<sup>14</sup> For a summary of JTAC and its consequences for MHA, see the account provided in *The History and Culture of the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Sahnish*, on the North Dakota Studies.org website:

[http://www.ndstudies.org/resources/IndianStudies/threeaffiliated/historical\\_1900s\\_jtac.html](http://www.ndstudies.org/resources/IndianStudies/threeaffiliated/historical_1900s_jtac.html).

The conditions leading up to and the persons involved in the JTAC settlement are described extensively in Paul VanDevelder’s *Coyote Warrior*. As one might expect, and as I heard repeatedly that summer, many of the current tribespersons chafe at the implication that it was “one man” or even one family responsible for the settlement.

<sup>15</sup> There was much talk that year about the case colloquially known as “the Dakota Three.” A class-action lawsuit was filed by Ramona Two Shields and Mary Louise Defender Wilson, with the appeal being filed December 26, 2013 in the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals. It alleges that Spencer Wilkinson, Jr. (MHA member who was, at that time, also in charge of the Casino), Rick Woodward, Robert Zinke, and a certain “John Doe” alleged to have funded the trio, “leased roughly 85,000 acres of land, bundled the leases together for sale, and then sold the leases in 2010 to a third party for \$925 million.” According to the suit, “while defendants received over \$10,000 per acre from their own sale, they paid some putative class members lease bonuses of only \$250 per acre or less” [*Shields v. Indigenous Law and Policy Center*, Amicus on Behalf of Appellant(s)].

<sup>16</sup> For the language on Article I of the US Constitution see

[https://www.usconstitution.net/xconst\\_A1Sec8.html](https://www.usconstitution.net/xconst_A1Sec8.html). For the quote from *Cherokee Nation*, see *Justia*, <https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/30/1/case.html>.

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## **The Value of Perseverance: Using Dakota Culture to Teach Mathematics**

ANNMARIA DE MARS & ERICH LONGIE<sup>1</sup>

What does it mean to be an Indian, Anishanaabe or a Dakota? McGlennen argues convincingly that native identity is not a connection to place, to a particular reservation. Legally, being the member of a native nation can be defined as tribal enrollment, regardless of residence (Spirit Lake Tribe). However, concerns over cultural appropriation seldom arise because another falsely claims residence or tribal enrollment. Being a Dakota or an Ojibwe means more than regalia. This is not the identity native people seek to protect. Rather, backlash from native communities is against the exploitative use of culture, including dress, dance, music, etc. often for financial or other personal gain and taken out of context (Scafidi). As a Dakota who fought a decade-long battle to abolish the hated Fighting Sioux nickname, this is the type of cultural exploitation that is our concern (Longie, 2015).

Members of native nations are connected through a shared history and values, but by whose definition? Blaeser (168) noted that the history of native people is most often presented in romantic stereotypes "...unconnected to the every day lives and survival of contemporary Native people..."

There is diversity among the 500 American Indian groups in degree of preservation of tribal language and in tribally specific religious and social activities (Red Horse, Lewis, Feit, & Decker; Weibel-Orlando). Yet, many social scientists feel it is possible to identify certain core indigenous values (e.g., Sue & Sue); generosity, courage, honesty, harmony with nature, non-interference; patience; circular time; and a broad view of the family. Blaeser cites endurance, relatedness, survival, spirituality and time as important cultural ideas. Vizenor also emphasizes survival, resistance and relation with nature as important contexts of native culture.

In the United States, despite hundreds of years of oppression and campaigns of extermination, the Native Americans have survived and persevered (Longie, 2006). When our youth wear clothing emblazoned with "Native Pride" whence comes the source of that pride? It's not the poverty or the plethora of other problems endemic to most reservations— it's our character, those values that people should emulate that have enabled use to endure and survive as

a people despite those challenges.

Perseverance in the face of hardship may be *the* unifying characteristic of native peoples. The present study applies perseverance and fortitude, two major values of the Dakota to game development, with the objective of improving academic achievement of Native American children.

Perseverance is defined as a steady and continued effort, usually over a long period, and especially in spite of difficulties or setbacks.

The Dakota cultivated perseverance. Traditionally, rules were rules of survival and if they weren't followed, the whole tribe was at risk. Those who enforced the rules persevered in their chastisements until individuals conformed to the law. Without perseverance, the Dakota would not have survived the world they lived in. Their perseverance is one of the main reasons why their descendants are here today. Fear is the greatest enemy of perseverance. There is the physical fear of being killed or injured by an enemy or wild animal. Another type of fear that persists today and relates to education is fear of failure, of not being able to measure up to expectations.

We were born during what many American Indians call the greatest generation, those in the 1940s and early 50s who overcame poverty, racism, alcoholism, lack of transportation to get an education, fight for a job within the system and bring jobs and self-governance to the reservations. This generation because of their perseverance brought much of the development we see on the reservations today - housing, manufacturing, tribal colleges -that overcame many barriers that benefit the reservation today. Prior to this generation, there was nothing on the reservation - no running water, no housing. This generation, in turn, opened the opportunities available to Indians now. We overcame the prejudice of the border towns, even the bad treatment of us when we went into the stores and restaurants in towns adjacent to the reservations.

Why was our generation able to do that? Maybe because we were the first generation exposed to technology. We were exposed to television, gas stoves, etc. during our adolescence. As Edmunds noted, rural reservations were “inundated by a cultural invasion” that began with radio and television and has continued through videogames, the internet and social media.

A lot of us went to non-Indian schools off the reservation. We were put in the “slow” class with the poor white students. They never expected us to join the extra-curricular activities because they didn't think we were worth it. Yet, these same people were the ones who came



back and started many of those improvements on the reservation. They didn't let the racism deter them.

Today reservations are a much better place to live than they were 150 years ago, 100 years and even 50 years ago when the author was a boy on the Spirit Lake Dakota Nation. There are better schools, there are jobs, and hardly anyone suffers from malnourishment. Yet, schools have a huge drop out rate. We propose a simple answer to the problem of academic achievement— return to the traditional value of perseverance. When the job becomes difficult some workers simply quit or do not attempt to look for work. The problem has become so severe on reservations that some casinos mandate an employee orientation for tribal members who have been fired or quit jobs at the organizations *three or more times*. When adults no longer practice perseverance, we do not pass this virtue down to our children. As a result, when attending school becomes difficult or uninteresting, they simply do not attend. Research on one reservation found that the average student in elementary school missed an entire month of school (Longie, 1995). A return to traditional values of perseverance and fortitude was hypothesized as a solution to this problem. Spirit Lake: The Game was developed by Dakota elders and tested with Dakota children in an effort to channel the new technology to benefit the next generation by integrating their traditional values, culture and history. In this manner, we follow in the footsteps of such Native American leaders as Yellowtail (Hoxie & Bernardis) and Deer (Kidwell) who applied the education they learned in the white man's schools to defend and maintain the culture and sovereignty of their tribes.

Historically, the Dakota were the ultimate survivors. In spite of a war of annihilation by the Europeans, they survived. In spite of being put on reservations and living in poverty, they survived. In spite of the numerous social ills that plagued reservations they survived. Now in the twenty-first century, Dakota are one of the fastest growing populations in the country. How did people manage to survive in spite of tremendous odds? Simple, it was in their character to persevere. They were taught this virtue from childhood.

In his book, *Dakota Life in the Upper Midwest*, Samuel Pond writes this about the Dakota before the coming of the white man,

if they would have accompanied them through one year, in 1834 they would have learned that they did not contrive to live without hard labor, also that they did not shrink from hard work, but acted like men who were determined to take care of

themselves and their families. If they had been as indolent and inefficient as many think they were, we should have never heard of them, for they would have perished long ago. (23)

Years later, John Fire Lane Deer, who was born in a twelve-by-twelve foot cabin gives an account his life on a South Dakota reservation. John Fire Lane Deer persevered despite extreme hardships and became a noted medicine man. Here is the first paragraph of his story, *Hard Times In Sioux Country*:

There were twelve of us, but they are all dead now, except one sister. Most of them didn't even grow up. My big brother Tom, and his wife were killed by the flue (sp) in 1917. I lost my own little boy thirty-five years ago. I was a hundred miles away, caught in a blizzard. A doctor couldn't be found for him soon enough. I was told it was the measles. Last year I lost another baby boy, a foster child. This time they told me it was due to some intestinal trouble. So in a lifetime we haven't made much progress. We medicine men try to doctor our sick but we suffer from many new white man's diseases, which comes from the white man's food and white man's living, and we have no herbs for that (311).

Today's reservations continue to provide role models who have faced enormous difficulties in their lives yet they persevered. Research on academic success at the community college level found integration of Native American culture, from accommodation of intergenerational responsibilities to incorporation of Native American history throughout the curriculum, to be related to significantly higher retention of at-risk students (Rousey & Longie).

In contrast to the types of cultural appropriation seen in mainstream films, video games offer a more functional application of Native American culture, specifically, Dakota culture. While at first glance, traditional Dakota values and educational video games may be an unexpected combination, there is much more to being a Dakota than regalia, pow-wows and sweat lodges. Other cultures that wish to copy the Dakota are advised to copy these values – honesty, courage, generosity and perseverance. Both the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics and the Common Core standards emphasize the importance of perseverance in mathematics (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers). The very first standard of mathematical practice is “Make sense of problems and persevere in solving them”. Spirit Lake: The Game is an example of how the value of


perseverance in the context of traditional Native American culture can be applied in contemporary society.

In the United States, Native Americans are both the fastest growing minority group and the lowest performing in mathematics (DeVoe, Darling-Churchill & Snyder). Over 1,000,000 Native Americans live on federally-designated reservations; students from these sites perform even lower than the mean for all Native Americans (De Mars & Longie).

Many variables correlate with academic outcomes for Native American students, as well as the general population. Numerous studies have found *time* to be a factor predictive of achievement in mathematics (Hersh and John-Steiner). The time factor includes time devoted to solving a problem, the perseverance shown, time spent on homework and instructional time. As one of the barriers to effective instruction in classrooms of predominantly disadvantaged children is behavioral, i.e., lack of sustained attention (Laffey et al), we hypothesized that increased attention would translate into higher mathematics achievement. Spirit Lake: The Game was created to test this hypothesis.

To heighten attention, we incorporated Native American culture in an educational video game in two ways. First, in the general story line we based everything from clothing to the landscape to daily activities on authentic tribal history, given research showing that student

## EARN YOUR ARROWS



In traditional Native American societies, everyone worked hard. Can you imagine when a Dakota hunting party went out that one of the hunters would sit down under a tree and whine,

*“You other hunters go on without me. I’m tired. It’s hot. Have you seen those tatanka? Those things are really big! I think I’ll nap in the tipi here while the rest of you go hunting buffalo. It just sounds too hard. Just give me some of the meat when you get back.”*

Can you imagine any real warrior ever saying anything like that?

To earn your arrows, you need to do some work. Read these next pages on how to solve problems.

When you are done, you will be back to the game - with your arrows!




Figure 1: Introduction to Problem-solving lesson



Figure 2: Buffalo hunt scene in Spirit Lake

engagement, as evidenced by physiological and behavioral responses, is enhanced when users perceive features of a learning environment to be visually realistic (Sibuma). Second, we emphasized traditional cultural values of perseverance and fortitude as applying to achievement today.

Figure 1 above shows the introductory screen of a unit on problem-solving that begins by encouraging students to follow in the footsteps of their ancestors who did not shirk difficult tasks. After earning their arrows through completing math problems that helped the tribe - such as dividing the 48 hunters into hunting parties of 8 hunters each, and determining if any would be left out – the player has earned the right to join the buffalo hunt. As reinforcement, the player is actually able to hunt buffalo in a 3-D world, as shown in Figure 2 above.

Each game level follows this same pattern that includes subject matter instruction *with* culture rather than in place of instruction in the content area. After instruction, students are presented with math challenges. Correct answers lead to game play that is integrated with the problems, just as the problem of dividing into hunting parties is followed by hunting virtual buffalo. Incorrect answers route students to corrective instruction that must be completed before returning to the game.

## EVALUATION

### Sample

To test the efficacy of the game, we selected a sample of 62 fourth and fifth-grade students from two schools located on an American Indian reservation in central North Dakota. The schools are located approximately twenty miles apart on the same reservation. The schools are demographically similar. Both have student bodies over 95% Native American, both have 20-25% of students proficient in mathematics in grades three through five. Neither of the schools met state targets for Annual Yearly Progress in mathematics or reading. Both are high-poverty schools located in the same rural persistent poverty county. As the program is designed to be implemented within a school, random selection of individuals is not possible. One school was randomly selected as the control group and a second as the intervention. Games were played by all of the students in fourth- and fifth-grade at the intervention school.

We implemented the program in the fall semester. All fourth-grade students at both schools and all fifth-graders at the control group school were administered the pre-test and post-test with the exception of students with learning disabilities too severe to be tested. The children who were excluded were essentially non-readers. According to teacher report and our own observations, their reading and mathematics skills were second-grade level or below. In the intervention school, five fifth-grade students from each of the three classrooms were selected by their teachers to participate. Demographic statistics for the sample, by group, can be seen in Table 1. There were no significant differences between experimental and control group schools in gender distribution, or in age within grade.

**Table 1**  
**Sample Demographics**

	<b>Intervention (N =39)</b>		<b>Control (N=23)</b>	
Gender				
% female	51%		48%	
Grade				
• Fourth grade	70%		51%	
• Fifth grade	30%		49%	
	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
Age (All students)	9.7	0.8	10.1	0.6
Grade				
• Fourth grade	9.5	0.6	9.9	0.7
• Fifth grade	10.4	0.9	10.3	0.5

## **Instrumentation**

We created a 24-item test, matched with North Dakota state standards for grades two through six. We initially planned to use released items from the state standards test. However, North Dakota is one of the few states that does not release test items. Thus, we used released items from the California state standards test. The published California standards addressed by these items matched verbatim with North Dakota standards. While research with a substantially larger, more diverse sample found a Cronbach alpha of .84 for this test (De Mars), internal consistency reliability coefficient we computed for the current sample for the same test = .57. This relatively low value is likely a result of the high ceiling of the test, with many students simply guessing at the upper-grade items, as discussed below.

## **Data Collection**

All fourth- and fifth-grade students from the two schools took the pre-test in their respective school's computer labs using the same on-line test created with SurveyMonkey software. All students in the intervention group and all students from the control group school who were still enrolled in the school took the post-test, with the exception of students in special education, as noted above. At post-test, approximately 25% of the students at each school were no longer available. Some were absent or suspended but in most cases the school staff remarked, the students were merely "gone". We administered tests at the beginning of the fall semester, and again, eight weeks later, after students had played the games two to three times per week in their classrooms for 25-30 minutes per day. We collected usage data to estimate total time on task during the hours allotted for the intervention group. To progress in the game, students are required to answer a challenge question or form approximately every two minutes. Each answer records the number of attempts, response and a date-time stamp. The total minutes the class spent on task during a session was computed automatically by subtracting the time of first input from a student in the class from the time the last student in class answered a question.

## **DATA ANALYSIS**

We performed all analyses using SAS/STAT software, version 9.4 for Windows. We computed

descriptive statistics computed for demographics, pretest items, pre-test and post-test total scores, by grade level and by school. We performed two repeated measures analysis of variance (ANOVA) to test for statistical significance. One analysis was conducted with only school and time as the predictor variables. A second analysis included school, time and grade. As both analyses yielded essentially identical results, only the latter is presented here.

Four outliers, two from the intervention group and two from the control group, were deleted from the final analysis. Three of these had low scores (less than five) due to having left the remainder of the problems blank. In one case, the student had been called out of class after beginning the test. Analyses were run with and without the outliers. The effect was minor, and resulted in slightly smaller, but still significant, effect in favor of the intervention group.

## **RESULTS**

The percentage correct for each item on the pre-test can be seen in Figure 3 for fourth-grade students and in Figure 4 for fifth-graders. Some evidence for validity can be seen in the higher scores for fifth graders and the pattern of progressively lower percentage correct as the items move from the second- to the fifth-grade level. Also, consistent with published state reports showing the majority of students at these two schools to be below grade level, it was only at the second-grade level that all of the fourth-grade students' percentage correct was higher than the



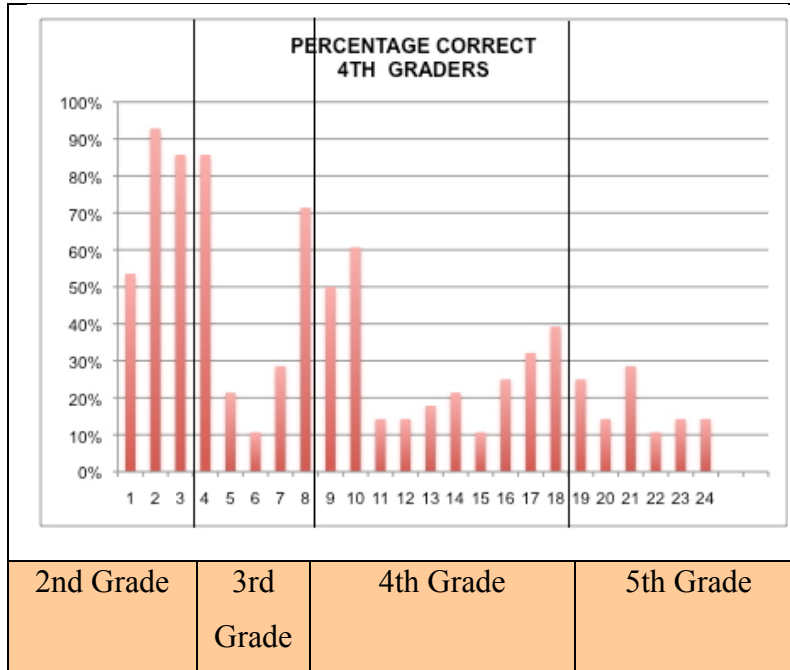


Figure 3: Grade Four Pre-Test Scores, All students

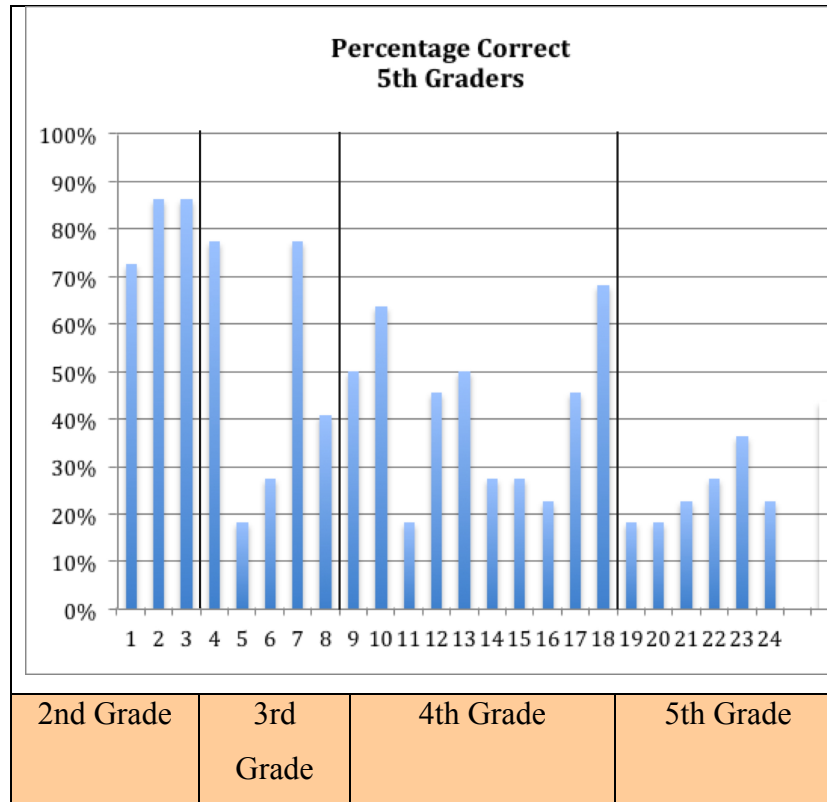


Figure 4: Grade Five Pre-Test Scores, All students

25% predicted by chance, with multiple choice items with four options. On only two of the five third-grade level items were fourth-grade students’ scores above the chance level.

Similarly, with the fifth-grade students, as can be seen in Figure 4, on only one of the five fifth-grade level questions did more than 25% of the students respond correctly. Clearly, students were performing significantly below grade level.

Means, standard deviations and number of subjects, by grade, are shown in Table 2 for the intervention group and Table 3 for the control group. As would be predicted based on the low performance on individual items, mean pretest scores were very low for both groups. Out of 24 questions, the average student answered less than ten correctly.

While both groups increased from pre-test to post-test, it can be seen that the improvement of the two intervention groups substantially surpassed the two control groups. The effect is best illustrated graphically, as in Figure 5. The control groups increased only slightly in mathematics achievement, as would normally be expected after only eight weeks of mathematics instruction of 45 minutes or less per day. In contrast, the fourth-grade intervention group improved the mean test score 64% while the fifth-grade intervention group improved 29%.

**Table 2**  
**Descriptive Statistics, By Grade Level, Intervention Group**

	Pre-Test			Post-test		
	Mean	S.D	N	Mean	S.D	N
<b>All</b>	9.3	2.3	37	14.3	5.2	40
<b>Grade</b>						
<b>4</b>	9.2	2.5	25	15.1	5.3	28
<b>5</b>	9.5	1.9	12	12.3	4.6	12

**Table 3**  
**Descriptive Statistics, By Grade Level, Control Group**

	Pre-Test			Post-test		
	Mean	S.D	N	Mean	S.D	N
<b>All</b>	9.0	2.1	21	9.7	2.6	22
<b>Grade</b>						
<b>4</b>	9.3	2.5	10	9.9	1.9	11
<b>5</b>	8.6	1.7	11	9.5	3.3	11

Results of the repeated measures ANOVA are summarized in Table 4. Consistent with the results portrayed in Figure 3, it can be seen that there was a significant effect of time, with scores improving from pre-test to post-test. There was also a significant interaction effect of time by school, with students from the experimental group improving significantly more from pre-test to post-test than did the control group.

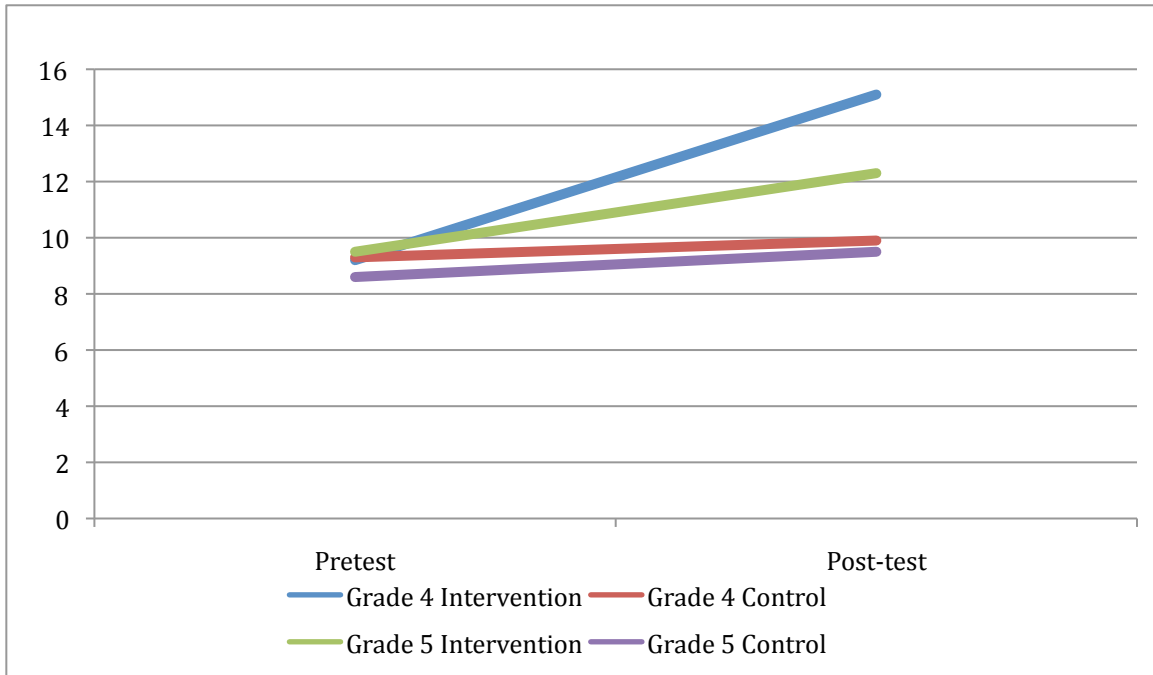


Figure 5: Pre-test and Post-test mean scores by grade and school

Although the fourth grade increased more than fifth graders, this difference was not statistically significant. It should be noted, for reasons discussed below, that the fifth-grade class spent significantly fewer minutes using the program. While the fourth-grade classrooms spent an average of 24-28 minutes per session using the program, or 48- 56 minutes per week, the fifth-graders had less than half of this amount of time on task, approximately 17 minutes per session, due to conflicts in availability of the computer lab and early school dismissal due to weather.

**Table 4****Repeated Measures Analysis of Variance, Tests of Hypotheses**

Source	DF	Type III SS	Mean Square	F Value	Pr > F
<b>Time</b>	1	164.97	164.97	12.91	0.0007
<b>time*school</b>	1	91.04	91.04	7.13	0.0100
<b>time*grade</b>	1	11.58	11.58	0.91	0.3454
<b>time*school*grade</b>	1	22.00	22.00	1.72	0.1953
<b>Error(time)</b>	54	690.00	12.78		

## CONCLUSION

The goal of the Dakota Learning Project (DLP) was to integrate Dakota culture with research in mathematics education and computer gaming in order to raise the mathematics achievement of Native American children. These pilot study results were extremely promising in both providing preliminary support for efficacy and providing guidance for future research. The game proved to be highly engaging to the students and related to significantly higher test scores. Teacher reports, the site coordinator observations and the time students were on task all support a high level of student engagement.

Time—including time devoted to solving a problem, the perseverance shown, time spent on homework and instructional time—is a much better predictor of mathematics achievement than measures of mathematical aptitude (Dehaene; Hersh & John-Steiner). Through educating students in the traditional values of perseverance, courage and survival against all obstacles, teachers used the game to encourage students to spend more time on the mathematics challenges in the game and not give up.

We applied research on the use of effective educational game design throughout development, combining feedback from the game regarding correctness of answers with elaborated instructions and meaningful incentives (Delacruz; Nelson; Van Eck & Dempsey). In Spirit Lake: The Game these incentives were the opportunity to experience culturally-based activities in a 3-D virtual world, such as gathering herbs to save the tribe from an epidemic or hunting deer.

Several changes are recommended in future research based on our experience of evaluation of educational video games in two reservation schools. Problems in organization and low-performance in these low-performing rural schools were greater than anticipated. Achievement was lower, resources scarcer and absenteeism higher even than the high level of challenge we had anticipated based on past experience in this and similar reservation communities. At post-test, approximately 25% of the students at each school were no longer available. Frequent scheduling conflicts occurred, both for individual students and facilities. While it was possible to teach fourth-graders as a whole class, this was not an option for the fifth grade as all classes desired to be involved and it was not possible to schedule six classes twice per week. Instead, the computer lab was scheduled and five students from each class were

selected. The time required for students to travel from their classrooms and back again reduced time available for using the program. On some days, the computer lab had been double-booked and the site coordinator and students would spend another ten minutes or more looking for an available space.

We originally proposed to have third through fifth-grade students participate, as the game was targeted to teach mathematics at this level. However, pretest results for fourth- and fifth-grade students showed the majority to be achieving a year below grade level. Within these particular schools, it was determined that third-grade students were not performing at a high enough level to benefit from the program. Therefore, the pilot was conducted only with fourth- and fifth-grade students.

In the interest of creating a workable prototype within a short time frame, we used commercial solutions, SurveyMonkey for collecting pre-test and post-test and SAS software for data management and statistical analysis. Use of a multiple choice format allowed students to randomly guess at an answer and still have a 25% probability of getting the answer correct. This guessing, along with the generally low pretest scores resulted in low-test reliability. We have since re-written these tests using our own code to be all open-ended response.

These complications in the research should not discourage further work in the area of educational games based on indigenous culture. The gains in test scores were both substantial and significant. Perseverance in solving problems in mathematics is part of the Common Core standards adopted by 37 states. Spirit Lake: The Game emphasizes perseverance, a core Dakota value, and although no quantitative measure was included for perseverance in the pilot, qualitative indicators suggest an improvement on this dimension.

Students in both of the schools researched showed little perseverance initially. If a problem was difficult, the student simply gave up. This same lack of perseverance was shown during the intervention. In the first weeks, if students could not answer a question, he or she immediately asked the teacher or site coordinator for the answer, or guessed at random. After three weeks, half-way through the intervention, many of the students were observed, unprompted to begin using a pencil and paper to try to work out problems in the game. On the post-test, 5% of the students simply quit well before finishing the test. All of these were from the control group.

One advantage of *Spirit Lake: The Game* and other video games is the capability of automated collection of student engagement. While observational measures of student time on

task are more reliable than teacher or student self-report, their use is prohibitively expensive, requiring multiple on-site assessments of each classroom and specialized training (Fredricks et al.). Games, in contrast, can monitor student activity by the number of minutes each student is interacting with the program.

The present study lends indirect support for the proposition that teaching traditional values, particularly perseverance, can impact Native American student achievement through increased effort. Future research will compare games with and without lessons in traditional values to directly test for effects on perseverance in instructional activities and resulting impact on achievement.

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### Notes

<sup>1</sup> AnnMarie De Mars is from National University & 7 Generation Games; Erich Longie is from Spirit Lake Dakota Nation.

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## **Mind, Memory and the Five-Year-Old**

GARY F. DORR

I was moved to memory by the glass. The fragile glass was now the concrete upon which I began to build a reason for why I liked sitting there in that restaurant with my mother. I could just as easily have been staring out the windows of the old Datsun station wagon my parents drove when I was only four years old, smelling the sudden burst of coffee as my father opened the steel thermos my mother had filled only minutes earlier. The odors of blood, hides and entrails were also deposited into the bank of my memory. I remembered hanging over the back of the seat, straining to be close to my father. I could very easily have been delivering lunch to my father at his meatpacking plant. Only, something wasn't right. I wiped the dust off of my memory's photograph.

Now, I see that I was only straining to get close to my father because I had been placed into the rear storage compartment of the car. If I had been able to keep from wetting my pants, I would have been allowed to sit on the seat. I competed for what little time my father had, and, when I realized I wouldn't gain his sole attention, I began to stress out; both ends of me grew wet. I agonized over which was worse. I questioned whether the stupid, uncontrollable tears were more humiliating than the wetted pants. Now I remember that staring through the glass, away from my family's glaring faces, was about all I had left to do.

My memory has been serving me well since the day I was adopted. I remember being three years old and listening to my caseworker, Mrs. Arnold. I was riding "shotgun" in her green car and standing up on the same cloth-covered seat as she was sitting on.

"Do you know where we're going today Gary?" she asked with a great big loving smile. I wanted to hear her tell me again, so I shook my whole body from left to right to indicate a solid no. "I'm taking you to see your new mommy and daddy today," she said through a smiling, confident face. I grinned and tilted my head back to let some of the excitement out before I burst. I just grinned, swayed, jumped, and shook different body parts to release the excitement as it built up. Oh, but she knew what she was doing all too well! She presented the script, a well-worn script, but with each new actor, I am sure she still achieved standing ovations from a heavenly audience. She began, "When we get to your new house I want you to give your new mommy a big hug; can you do that?" I asked why I should hug her and she answered, "Because

she is your new mommy and she’s going to love you.”

“Will I have a bed to sleep on?” I inquired, missing the totality of the moment as only a child can.

“Gary, your new mommy and daddy told me they have a bed just for you—now what do you think of that?” she asked, finishing with a rounded, exclamatory mouth and raised eyebrows, meant to excite me more. I was jumping and waving my arms and grinning. I was grinning for sure.

We arrived at the house soon after. I wore my giant green shorts and a horizontally striped shirt that almost every three-year-old is familiar with. To top it all off, literally, I had my big, black, cowboy hat. I remember the hug and saying, “Mommy Mommy,” but what may have been the most vivid moment probably came at my first dinner, when my identity, as I knew it, was carelessly taken away. Mom took the hat away from my bushy little head to maintain proper dining etiquette, and “Asshole!” rang from some region of the table, very near to where I was sitting. I said it casually, but with enough force to convey my point: do not take the hat. The lively linguistic abilities, for which I will always be famous to my mother, came from my earlier life with alcoholic and abusive parents. Despite the gravity of it all, I can’t remember anything before the moments I rode with Mrs. Arnold down Wiley City Road, over the creek and up the drive to my new house.

Being new to a family was tough enough, but, in addition, they were white. It never bothered me at the start. I knew Mom and Dad to be just that. My sisters seemed to get along with me ok. I remember once, after a frustrating toilet-training session, my older sisters sought to rescue me from the terror of being flushed down the very same toilet by the frustrated father of a difficult four-year old. Yes, that was a sure sign that I was going to be a part of this family forever. I possess a truly unique answer to the question, “What are sisters for?” We moved from that house where Dad’s toilet training academy failed to achieve any success. We made it a whole 50 yards north to what we would call our “White House.”

It was in an alfalfa field next to that house where I made my first promise to myself. In the moments just before making that promise, I was with my father. Something on the TV made mention of the year 2000. I looked at my dad and asked him when that year would get here. He tried to explain it to me by helping me add twenty-eight years to my age then. Together, we talked about how much I would change. I thought it was an important moment. I walked to my

office, which the farmer next door called his alfalfa field. I had gotten spanked for going to the office without supervision before, but it didn't seem to matter to me that day. I picked a spot, and I got down to business; I started to remember.

In that moment, I promised to remember as much as I could. I would be grateful, as a grown man, for the wisdom gained from that promise. I smelled the alfalfa, heavy with spring rainwater. I tried to remember the shape of the clouds as I tilted my head back. When I leaned back, my head touched the red fur on the collar of my little red-and-blue jacket. I remembered Mom telling me to put my jacket on if I was going outside. I looked down and saw that I had my all-time-favorite tiny blue boat shoes and plaid pants to remember. I took note of the sounds from red-winged blackbirds playing in their jungle next to the creek and a pair of meadowlarks sitting on the fencepost right next to my dad's red truck. I looked at the house, just a couple of butt-swats away, and I committed everything inside it to memory.

How could I know that as New Year's Eve, 1999 approached, the same small child in my mind would still be walking in that field, anxiously waiting for any spare moments I had to share with him. I would never have guessed that my inner child would serve memory so well. For though the saying goes, "if memory serves me correctly," rather, it is we who are slaves to memory. The memory exists to bind us to lessons taught one day, but sometimes learned years later. That brave little guy in my memory deserves a medal for remembering so much more than just that day.

I remember the pain of being pushed into a family, without choice, where we did not swear. I remember the feelings of frustration, generated both by my rebellion and my family's reaction to it. I remember the feelings of inadequacy from not learning to use a toilet until well after the age of five. I shock even myself with the harsh memory of just "being Indian." I was in Kindergarten when boys teased me for trying to become white. I was ashamed, but I didn't know of which side to be ashamed. Was I ashamed that I was Indian or that my parents were white? This feeling was never more evident than when we went to parades or rodeos in Toppenish. I looked at the other Indian kids, and I tried to keep my distance from my parents. I couldn't bear the weight of the argument that standing next to them would present. It didn't help any when I got in trouble; my mother would grab me and make sure I got an earful. I looked around fearfully, searching for any Indians who might run to my rescue, never dreaming she was my mom. This feeling of shame can never be explained to my family with any success. I guess

you just had to be in my black patent-leather parade shoes to understand.

Years later, an Army friend, Captain Bhatt, asked me, “When did you first know you were a part of your adoptive family?”

“The Puyallup Fair!” I fairly shouted in the voice of that little boy, Gary. My family had parked in the back of a huge grass parking lot. I was about eight-years old, daydreaming the feel of my stomach in my throat and the sky beneath me as I looked at a huge roller coaster. Fortunately, my dad was watching the cow-pie in front of me at that moment. He grabbed my hand with his huge rugged fingers and spoke firmly but not harshly.

“Watch out son!” he spoke into the recorder, deceptively stored between my ears.

Those words were instantly seared into the chest of my soul; never before that moment and never again has my father referred to me as “son.” I knew then and there that I was part of this family. No wet pants or skin color could ever be a barrier after that. A passing girl spoke to her own family in those same moments. “Oh, did you hear that, he called that little boy his son, how sweet,” she said to the people on her left and right. A white guy calling a little Indian boy “son” was what she thought was so cute; the importance of the moment nullified whatever would have normally made me cringe in embarrassment. Many times I have found my peace from remembering those magic words. I discovered many inadequacies as I aged. Remembering I had a father who called me his son was all I needed to find my balance again.

I knew I had to tell somebody about this insightful lesson that I had kept hidden for so long. I headed for the mall where Mom is the marketing director, and I shared the memory of the cow-pie incident with her after lunch. As I finished, we each dabbed a tear from the corners of our eyes. I knew then that I would never have to look away in shame again; nevertheless, as I left the hour-long lunch with my mom, I found myself looking up at people walking by that glass wall again. I turned toward my mother. Earnestly, I wished that the sweet little five-year-old with the tiny blue boat shoes and the big wet spot on his plaid pants could have been on the other side of the glass to see that I was no longer looking away in shame. Then, those shameful tears on his face would have disappeared, replaced by his huge grin. That very instant, I began to grin; I was grinning for sure.

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## the seed runner

JENNY L. DAVIS

*And whenever they catch you, they will kill you. But first they must catch you,  
digger, listener, runner, prince with swift warning. Be cunning and full of tricks  
and your people shall never be destroyed.*

-Richard Adams, *Watership Down*

I have always been a runner. Not the athletic, fast kind like Jim Thorpe, or the superhero kind, like the Flash. But the kind that find themselves bolting at the first sign of trouble—running in the opposite direction of everything: fear, responsibility, and if you believe my grandfather, hard work. Running’s how I wound up at the Pratt Industries Detention and Training Program in the first place.

I had been out past curfew a week shy of my 13<sup>th</sup> birthday—at the library after class to see a real color copy of the Astonishing X-men #17 that had just come in. I had never seen an original color print of a comic—only black and white copies of copies they kept in the library and I spent hours enthralled finally seeing the colors of my favorite world—totally mesmerized by Jean Grey’s red hair and the bright pink of Gambit’s outfit. By the time I left, it was already past curfew and I had to sprint to get home before the patrols caught me. But being a runner doesn’t mean I’m fast—they picked me up less than two blocks from my grandfather’s house and took me to the local detention center. After only three days, I was sent up to Pratt without seeing my grandfather or siblings again. They promised me a letter had been sent telling my family where I’d been assigned, but I hadn’t received any mail or packages since arriving, so I doubt anyone was ever notified. It didn’t really matter, everyone assumed any kids who disappeared ended up at Pratt, or worse, and there was no point in going looking for them.

Pratt would have been worse, if it weren’t for Jimmy. He was the only thing that made that place bearable. We had arrived on the same day and connected instantly. So we signed up for the same class schedules and picked the same dorm room and stole every spare moment to re-imagine it as Xavier’s School for Gifted Youngsters. We spent all our time together, which was pretty easy, since we were put in the same grade and Pratt was an all boys’ detention program. Beyond that

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nobody paid too close of attention to us—there were 300 boys to keep track of and any one of us was pretty interchangeable for another. He had only heard a little about comics, so we spent as much time in class and free time talking about who had what superpowers, who had allied with who, and whether Magneto or Apocalypse was more evil. We teamed up for all of our projects, like helping each other memorize the wording of the 2039 Corporate Sovereignty Act that divided the country into four major corporate zones to avoid conflict between them. Within only fifteen years of extreme resource mining throughout the continent, it became clear that the only remaining land worth having was tribal land—protected for nearly 50 years by strict environmental policies in most tribes. The top corporations soon established guardianship clauses that allowed them to exert “protection” over those territories based on their more extensive resources. Pratt Industries had created the new residential detention program—Strategic Training Units—designed to train delinquent Indian minors within their Corporate jurisdictional boundaries for futures in the company. Any “infractions,” even minor ones, like being out just after curfew, could get you sent up to Pratt for a year, maybe longer. I was there almost 11 months.

Eight months in, the cadets caught us away from the quad, Jimmy and me were just far enough to be out of the visual line of any window in the square, those concrete buildings filled with the residential school students, our teachers, and the guards who watched us all.

We hadn’t even realized we were off the quad—we were too caught up in our game of X-Men, this time Cyclops and Wolverine—to notice the shift from blacktop to gravel and grass under our feet. We knew we were in trouble before they even spoke. I froze, my adamantium skeleton instantly dissolving into dust within my skin.

“And who do we have out of bounds?”

The cadets were only 14 to 16—identified as ideal candidates for the Bureau and brought to “low conflict” sites for training. The difference of those 3 years might as well have been 10.

“No wards are allowed off the quad.”

Their words were marked with glee as their pupils dilated with anticipation. They were focused on Jimmy. He was always the target. Far from the confident Scott Summers that he always picked to play, Jimmy was short, his chubbiness always standing in the way of his deepest wish: to be invisible, unseen by classmates, teachers, and especially the cadets. It was the focus of the directors, who were determined to fashion us into optimal shape—a sign of their excellent guardianship. But no matter how they changed his diet, or how little they fed him, Jimmy's cheeks refused to grow less round, his middle never grew less soft, as though his flesh was carrying out a war against giving up ground fueled only by the tenacity of his ancestors (and the snacks his classmates were sometimes able to squirrel away to share with him in the dead of night). His hair, too, attracted their disdain. It stood straight up along his forehead, and no amount of gel or grease would hold it down all day.

It was sticking up when they threw the first punches, with fists and freshly removed grey helmets, I ran. I could still hear the cadence of crunching by boots against gravel and knuckles against cartilage and bone. Crunch. Shift. Crunch. Smack. The sight of the only person I had left in this world struggling against the knee pad pressing down on his neck yanked the breath from my chest—even as I fled in the opposite direction, I looked back to see Jimmy looking at me. His deep brown eyes begging me to stay—not as a hero, just to deflect even one of the blows. His face contorted by the fear of a child not sure if this might be death, willing me to let him at least die in the sight of friendship.

But I ran. Not for help. No such thing existed there. I ran to ease the terror closing around my throat. I ran to the back hall of sector 2, between classroom buildings 23E and 24A to hide until I could slink back to barracks without being questioned. I don't know how long it took for the pounding to lighten in my ears, and the burning to ease in my lungs, but when I looked up I locked eyes with Ms. Nihi, our biological sciences teacher. My breath, just regained, caught. Had she seen me? Did she know what I had done? But she turned and walked backed into the building that held her classroom.

Jimmy didn't come back to the barracks that night and was still gone in the morning. The buzz among the students was that he was in the medical building. That's when I got myself assigned to latrine duty—easy enough to do if you were willing to take the initial harassment from the cadets. It was their worst official punishment. The barracks had been built in a hurry, and all plumbing for showers and toilets was in the centralized bunkers. No one was allowed to



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leave their barrack at night, so everyone was given buckets for their piss. The person on latrine duty had to go through all of the barracks at night and empty the previous day’s pails into a giant drum on wheels that was dumped periodically in the sump pit near the back of the compound. It was exhausting, it took half of the night, and it was utterly disgusting. But it meant having relatively free range at night. That’s when I learned that it wasn’t the uniforms that separated the students and the cadets, it was their urine. The students pee was dark, it came in a range of unfortunate browns and yellows and the smell of it filled my nostrils and refused to leave. In biology, I learned that that came from a general state of dehydration and unfortunate diet. The cadets’ pails, on the other hand, were filled with much clearer, less offensive smelling urine—it was the only good thing about them.

Jimmy was in the med building and had not regained consciousness since the beating. He was barely recognizable with his swollen face turned nearly purple against the clear plastic breathing tube down his throat, his full lips stretched, cracked and dry, around it. I visited him each night for two weeks. I would pull up the only chair in the room so I could sleep with my head and forearms against his thin medical cot, hoping to add a little warmth to the always frigid Pennsylvania night air. I talked to him, telling him he was Charles Xavier, capable of mentally controlling the entire operation from his bed without having to move a finger. And at sunrise I would run back to my barracks before the cadets began their training rounds. Then, one night I came in, sweating from having rushed through emptying all of the pails and practically sprinting the drum to the sump and back, to find him gone. No notes or remnants—just an empty bed. Forever disappeared in one of the pits just west of the barracks where such favorites of the squad always seemed to end up. In his absence, my only comfort was to imagine him as Jean Grey—a phoenix resurrected in some future timeline to save us all.

Ms. Nihi never mentioned the day she saw me, but she did request me to do extra study halls in her section. She was one of only three teachers at Pratt that were one of us but I never knew what tribe, and it was rumored she had even requested the position there. She drowned me with assignments in biology, botany, and even genetics but I didn’t care. I barely noticed when the security started to tighten and we were suddenly marched from class to class in groups led by cadets. The assignments filled the spaces that used to be taken up with daydreams about using telekinesis and teleportation to get me and Jimmy away from Pratt without the required corporate zone authorizations, money, and travel tokens. And the extra study halls meant I was allowed to

stay after class which suited me just fine—the nervousness on site was growing and the cadet presence increased almost every week. The sight of their uniforms made me nauseous and light headed every time I saw them. One day after nearly two months of staying after class for study hall, Ms. Nihi quickly walked up to me and whispered urgently for me to pack my things just before several sirens went off across the grounds. She anxiously checked the area outside her classroom before coming back inside and pulling something from around her neck, shoving it into my hands along with a full backpack I had never seen before.

“What is it?”

I didn’t know what was happening, I had never seen her in any state other than calm and confident.

“It is our oldest responsibility. The seeds and pollen from the first corn. Seed runners have kept them safe for thousands of years. They must never find it. It’s the proof—the link between human, animal, and plant. Once its genome is mapped, they could unlock—and change—anything, and everything they wanted. Everything would be different...lost.”

She draped the small leather bag around my neck, still warm from her skin. A strange contrast to the always cool fabrics of the uniforms I’d worn in the year since arriving.

“You must run. You must never stop running. If you do, you will die, and they will have all of us.”

She thrust a backpack into my arms and pointed South. “Go to the tree line and wait for the flames to reach the clouds. Then...run.”

As I watched stunned and confused, she let down her hair before dousing herself and everything else in her classroom in the chemistry lab’s alcohol. As she struck the spark, she danced—spinning a fancy dance of fire in all four directions at once. I ran.

I ran. I am the seed runner. I was chosen because I have always run—along the edges and in the shadows. Panic grips me with blinding fear, and I run.

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# PRETEND INDIAN EXEGESIS

[The Pretend Indian Uncanny Valley Hypothesis in Literature and Beyond.](#)

TREVINO L. BRINGS PLENTY

Social media avatars of the Pretend Indian variety disrupt flow, but it's only a pebble unripppling in a massive confluence. Pages or profiles enhanced by Indian imagery are bait to attract a group of people to add or like them. It's the selfie ethnic-wound licked by its victims, used by its predator.

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We have the academic Indian lecturer who is not tied to any indigenous community. A system validates them and meets inclusion requirements of diversity and multiculturalism. Would this create an Indian if non-Indians who bestow Indianhood unto them validate them? They are suspect when they have never stated any story at the beginning of their career of Indianness. They steer in Tribal educational systems only to later find themselves some sense of Indian descendancy.

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We are told to be brave in writing and in telling our stories. Is it braver for a settler-colonial operating writer to colonize a Native American narrative? To pepper their work with enough suggestion to have its readers conclude its authorship true. To wear an underrepresented people's skin is enticing. I get it: to feast on struggle, to explore imagined roots; to lay the foundational work for academic jobs and publishing opportunities.

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If I'm to consider myself a Native American writer, a Pretend Indian is taking my potential success, taking

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away and dismantling opportunities for my peers and future generations. I guess this makes my work a consumable flavor for a Pretend-Indian-Ethnic-Munchhausen individual. I'm not offended. I acknowledge tactic, another tendril to colonization. We know the dangers of inviting a settler-colonial agent into the group. We hope they don't steal our stories, we hope better of them, we hope they don't set to default and rip apart communities. We hope they don't prove a disappointment.

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Then the Pretend Indian's work is published, then they are hired to a coveted academic position, then there is a movie or made-for-TV-show about their overcoming adversity as a Native American surviving in two-worlds. Then they Zach Morris the shit out of their story (see episode “Running Zach”); then they Thunder Heart a vision to the stronghold; then they John Dunbar a blanket and woman; etc....

So I guess what are the next steps? Are they allowed back into the group after their abusive behavior?

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To honor ancestors is to absolve the Vague Indian Family Lineage Narrative, VIFLN. It served, for whatever mental health reason, a family-held origin connection to place. To honor that vague story is not to exploit it, but leave it be. No documented records, adoption, or severed family oral history clouds the VIFLN. The concerted effort to genocide a people and the continued erasure from intuitions and dialogue, we get that. How does a VIFLN decolonize and strengthen resistance to the dominant settler-colonial narrative? One could construe the VIFLN as another tactic for colonization. VIFLN is a shadow untethered to communities and people. It continues to say the past when Indigenous people live now and are future-bound.

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Honor how the current tribal group identifies itself. If they say descendancy (patrilineal or matrilineal) or Blood Quantum as part of its identification, this is your language. Know who you are related to in the group identified. Who are your relations? They make who you are, they are the stories championed in your narrative. If you don't know your relations, leave them alone. Don't bother them. Don't parasite the experience.

VIFLN is not the language of abundance; it doesn't instill thrivance for a people. Generate your own VIFLN ceremony to unsettle it from your mind. Be critical of your VIFLN. Everyone else is because it's not just a feeling, it's deeper and more widespread than that.

~

As shitty as it might sound, there is a part of me that appreciates the Pretend Indian, PI. They are tricksters who antagonize a hard belief. I have to check my eye roll when they relay their noise. In hearing them I imagine a live choose-your-own-adventure-story unfolding. Usually, they start out west with tribal affiliation, but if you press them for more details of the claimed identity, their claim starts to move east and/or becomes more fantastic and prestigious. It's an inverse Manifest Destiny masticating people's stories for how the PI builds cultural cache. It's a deep seeded white privilege thing to feel underrepresented as a luxury; slumming tragedy and exploring plight.

When they say it's not our way to do something, in my mind I think, don't include me in your "our way."

I know they feel privileged when I discuss decolonizing settler-colonial institutions with them. This validates them in thinking they are part of the group when really I might be talking about them indirectly.

I appreciate the PI as the ultimate assimilated Indian. Their vague descendancy is magical. I imagine unicorns with the story or those rumored ancestors walked with dinosaurs.

I do fear the PI, they can pass for non-Natives. In that, they can be deadly. They can use your information to pad their story. It's literate scalping. They collect their bounty. They ingest you - entrails and all. Rim the skull's eye cavity. They wrap your skin over their face, tongue the inside of your mouth. They cultivate your image. Prop you up in bed and slide their body next to yours. Wire-frame your brown body seated in a landscape of their own invention. I can appreciate that kind of image colonization.

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The Pretend Indian does not fear tribal disenrollment.

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How does the Pretend Indian decolonize?

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To say they have Indian blood in their family without evidence or actual tribal criteria eligibility, the Pretend Indian has this story to feel more American than plain-White. The Pretend Indian, in all their heart, is Trans-Ethnic.

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The Pretend Indian, in exploring their native roots, emerge from their chrysalis thinking themselves butterflies when they actually are moths.

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If Native Americans are 1% in the U.S. population, the Pretend Indian is the 1% of said 1%. But a 1% based on a story or a feeling. So a 1% imagined.

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The Pretend Indian is an alt-reality. Their operating system is calibrated through a magical pan-Indianism experience. A Pretend Pan-Indian; a Pan-Pretend Pan-Indian. There is nothing to stop the Pretend Indian from grabbing on to other identities.

The Pretend Indian collects other Natives on social media to validate their existence. The Pretend Indian steals Native dialogue to better hone their rhetoric. The Pretend Indian feeds on brains.

I cringe when the Pretend Indian poet drops Native words/themes in their work. Then say we are all related. No. I don't think so. You are all on your own. That's all you. That's your hot mess. I can't wait until we are Post-Pretend Indian. "It's not working," I will tell them, "All of it. Jus' stop."

The Pretend Indian is a construct of non-natives poorly imagined people. A coffee table book people.

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P.I.: I heard my great-great-great... Grandmother was Indian.

Me: mine was too. Now leave me alone.

~

The Pretend Indian has their identity as a core belief, which generally is difficult to change. I get it. The imagination of a story took root. And when inserted into an urban community, there is general acceptance or at least some tolerance. The Pretend Indian uses the identity to build themselves into the urban community narrative. This is a bit more difficult to do in a direct Indian Nation; there are people who will remember you and your family depending on the strength of the community.

Because I can't pass for White, I'm deadly aware wherever I go to not stand out much, to be cautious in my actions.



To be a Pretend Indian to an individual who might suffer personality disorders must be some sense of relief. To be special among other White people while still benefiting from a racist system, it's like a life "theme" or "flavor." I get it. I could, if my ethics were absent, pass as some other Native American theme or flavor. But what would the benefit be?

Be critical of the Vague Indian Family Lineage Narrative. As in this case, a memoirist uses that narrative to become an authority to write of an Indian relationship without appearing to be a white captivity story.

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The Pretend Indian gets a double whammy. They get to enjoy the wonderment, delight and dangers of a narrative from a people who are the subtext of the American Dream: genocide. And not really be a part of the said group, only their wet dream of their participation in that group. Then discard that not to be bothered with further inquiry into the Indian group. Then Pretend Indians rage hard. Pretend Indian anger at those Indians who call them out. Is it lateral oppression/violence when it is Pretend Indian on Indian prejudice? Is it “divide and conquer” tactic when Indians fight among Pretend Indians? The Pretend Indian is the kitsch and Tchotchkes of the American experience.

It feels like sand in one's underwear when Indians hear the Pretend Indian talk about us. The Indians, in their mind, tell the Pretend Indian, whatever you are saying, that's not my tribe. That's all you, creeper.

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The Pretend Indian wants all the Indian glory without all the Indian gory.

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The Pretend Indian doesn't correct the mistake when referred to as Native American. The Pretend Indian will go into details about their features that might hint of an imagined Indian. The Pretend Indian secretly wants to kill any Indian that questions the Pretend Indianness.

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Construct the perfect Indian Name. Must have a Christian worldview. Mammals are cool. Reptiles not so much. Nature references must be Indian Poetic; very bland. Nothing scientific. No John Quark-Dust or Jane Quantum –Leap; no John Gravitational-Lens. Maybe Jane Schrodinger's-Cat. Maybe.

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The Pretend Indian is a formula. A phantom entity in the community, just as real as their story. The Pretend Indian is a zero multiplied by everything.

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Imagine two Pretend Indians seated across from one another. Is it an identity doppelganger fairytale; mirrored motions and phrases? How do two Pretend Indians greet each other? Would they become feral and claw at each other? Or spontaneously combust at any Indian utterance? Do they just nod at each other knowing they are both Pretend Indians?

~

What Indian accoutrement does the Pretend Indian pocket? Stone, bone, feather, leather, or made in china relics. How Pretend Intertribal is the Pretend Indian? Do they think collecting Indian names is like collecting Magic or Pokémon cards? Collect and trade or sell.

~

To begin with, Poetry is a hard sell. Very few invest in it unless they are craft practitioners. In an anthology

collection, to have the Pretend Indian’s work next to your work – it cheapens the experience. If I were to explore seemingly cultural themes then to read the Pretend Indian’s similar work, there is the cultural mockery.

~

Can an Indian Pretend Indian? Can they racially be of the group and ethnically not, but be a Pretend Indian Indian-hobbyists? Can they be intertribal, but not of the infatuated ethnic target? Does coupling up with a targeted group also lend one full reign of cultural practices of said group; a mutual orgasmic cultural knowledge acquisition.

Knowing Indians don’t have the same political power as Settler POCs, does this make it easier to pillage Indian knowledge after having implanted themselves into the targeted group and then assume the group is milquetoast?

Taking knowledge, labor, worldview, intellectual and cultural property is a colonial act, but isn’t this interpretation of property a colonial attribute too? Does the idea of “nothing about us without us” or “stories about us without us is not for us” (“us” being the targeted group) still apply if one has used a consultant for a project? The consultant used as a buffer and validation of the project and the scapegoat if the project is criticized.

Do accolades for the project get a pass if other Indians praise it? Does the offended group have any recourse to defend their cultural property if “they” other Indians applaud the project? Should the offended group stay silent to the deafening praise of the project because if the project is uplift with its creator, it benefits all?

~

Did the Pretend Indian become a US citizen in 1924? The militant Pretend Indian is scary but mostly confusing. The Pretend Indian is about wolves. The Pretend Indian wolf is so sacred. I can’t even.

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The Pretend Indian is the dreamcatcher on the rearview mirror. The Pretend Indians' ancestry tall-tale gets so vast, ...again. I can't even.

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The Pretend Indian's drunk Indians are the drunkest, most tragic, but proudest Indians to shed a single tear when garbage is thrown at them.

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The Pretend Indian is the error message in a universe that has error correction compensation code.  
If you don't like the Pretend Indian, this validates their pretend oppression.

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The Pretend Indian is a micro-aggression. The accumulative effect compounding on a targeted community until justified outrage strikes. As damaging as the Indian mascot issue, the Pretend Indian causes psychological distress. Their actions are a taunt waving white privilege.

The Pretend Indian author gets off on his actions. Their conflated fabricated blurbs indicate a pathology hell bent on damaging a people's spirit to gratify self. The masturbatory nature of what he flaunts as a white male who can yell racism if criticized but ignoring the fact that it is racism that positions him seemingly untouchable. He systematically uses gaslighting tactics every time. It's too easy to digitally manufacture plausible deniability or credibility.

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Ethnicity is just a flavor. Anyone can identify as any ethnicity. This is the heart of my Pretend Indian, PI, series. We see the John Smelcers, the Rachel Dolezals,

the Andrea Smiths, the Ward Churchills enter targeted communities. They stir any deemed detractors, agitators into their gaslighting web and continue to move forward with their agenda. Often positioning themselves in authority to dictate what Indians are allowed to do or what a community can achieve.

The tactics used are systemic and if challenged the PI falls back on their white fragility to mask perceived persecution. These individuals find there really isn't a border to contain whatever identity they wish to profess their persona. They are okay not to correct someone if they are mistaken as part of the group. These PI's fluidly move in communities and hide in the complications of Indian identity. Other Indians or other folks with their agenda are quick to point out the plausible tracks for the vagueness of the assumed identity. People were adopted out, people had to hide their race on historical documentation, whatever the muddiness is on any historical record, these are dragged out and propped in the conversation. The PI shines brightest in this fogginess and in-fighting.

There is a special kind of shittiness expressed by some Pretend Indians. Usually, if they spend any amount of time with Indians, an interior Indian seeds itself in the PI and begins to wildly bloom. Next thing we see is the PI try on Cherokee, Lenape, Lakota, or etc... bloodlines to aid their personal narrative. They gather information from grandmother Internet. They start to incorporate “we” when around other Indians. A nation of Pretend Indians rises. And they delight in the plight-skin of their identity conquest. The PI is a bizarro-world Indian. The PI is pleather. The PI is the Great Gazoo Indian popping into one's life to remind you they are there to shit on everything, dumb-dumb.

This is why it's important I have in my bio some indication of my tribal enrollment; my citizenship to my nation and the sovereignty it represents. Not everyone has this significant qualifier. But this might be labeled bully-tactic because the PI is triggered and will lash out (white

fragility). But it's none of my business if the PI feels usurped by the Indian enemy. It's confusing, I know.

~

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The Speaker of this piece of writing is Lakota who sometimes self-identifies as Indian, American Indian, Native American, and Indigenous. They have heard of stories of Indian blood in their ancestry going back ten generations, which contributes to their current Native roots presupposition. The Speaker is an enrolled card-carrying member of a tribe and a Native Nation Citizen.

Review Essay: **Weaving the Present, Writing the Future: Benaway, Belcourt, and Whitehead's Queer Indigenous Imaginaries**

**Billy-Ray Belcourt. *This World Is a Wound*. Frontenac House Poetry, 2017, 63 pp. ISBN: 978-1-927823-64-4. <https://www.frontenachouse.com/dd-product/this-wound-is-a-world/>**

**Gwen Benaway. *Passage*. Kegedonce Press, 2016, 120 pp. ISBN: 978-1-928120-08-7. <https://kegedonce.com/bookstore/item/81-passage.html>**

**Joshua Whitehead. *Full-Metal Indigiqueer*. Talon Books, 2017, 119 pp. ISBN: 978-1-77201-187-6. <https://talonbooks.com/books/full-metal-indigiqueer>**

**Joshua Whitehead. *Johnny Appleseed*. Arsenal Pulp Press, 2018, 223 pp. ISBN: 978-1-55152-725-3. <http://www.arsenalpulp.com/bookinfo.php?index=479>**

In Ohlone-Coastanoan Esselen writer Deborah Miranda's remarkable tribal memoir, *Bad Indians*, Two-Spirit ancestors ask:

Who remembers us? Who pulls us, forgotten, from beneath melted adobe and groomed golf courses and asphalted freeways, asks for our help, rekindles the work of our lives? Who takes up the task of weaving soul to body, carrying the dead from one world to the next, who bears the two halves of spirit in the whole vessel of one body?

Where have you been? Why have you waited so long? How did you ever find us, buried under words like *joto*, like *joya*, under whips and lies? And what do you call us now?

Never mind, little ones. Never mind. You are here now, at last. Come close. Listen. We have so much work to do. (32)

The writers I engage in this review, Billy-Ray Belcourt (Driftpile Cree), Gwen Benaway (Anishinabe/Métis), and Joshua Whitehead (Oji-Cree) are taking up this important work, listening, theorizing, creating, (re)membering, and, to use Miranda's words, "weaving soul to body" while they travel, as queer, trans, and/or Two-Spirit people, through the twenty-first century. In doing so, this younger generation of artists weave Indigenous futures with a ribbon gifted them by those queer Indigenous writers who have passed on—including Paula Gunn Allen (Laguna Pueblo/Sioux), Beth Brant (Bay of Quinte Mohawk), Connie Fife (Cree), Maurice Kenny (non-citizen Mohawk), Carole laFavor (Anishinaabe), and Sharon Proulx-Turner (Métis Nation of Alberta)—as well as those like Chrystos (Menominee), Qwo-Li Driskill (non-citizen Cherokee), Janice Gould (Koyangk'auwi Maidu), Tomson Highway (Cree, Barren Lands First Nation), Daniel Heath Justice (Cherokee Nation), Miranda, Greg Scofield (Métis), and so many more, who continue to construct powerful Indigenous imaginaries in the twenty-first century.

Perhaps the single clearest point that arises from re-reading these four books back-to-back is that *this new generation of LGBTQ/2S Indigenous intellectuals is on fire*. They write poetry, fiction, essay, and theory, give innumerable interviews and readings, hold conferences, present talks, take MA and PhD exams, mentor each other and their peers, teach in classrooms, workshops, and through informal interactions, tweet funny and painful observations about their lives, and, far

beyond stagnating in academia, work with and for Indigenous communities and LGBTQ/2S Indigenous youth. Writers like Benaway, Belcourt, and Whitehead *inhabit* and *create* incredible energy and possibility: the four books discussed here manifest this truth.

Benaway, a Two-Spirited trans poet whose new book, *Holy Wild*, will be published before this review goes to press, was awarded a 2016 Dayne Oglivie Prize for LGBT Emerging Writers from the Writers' Trust of Canada. Currently a PhD student in the Women and Gender Studies Institute at the University of Toronto, she has earned accolades for *Passage*, her second book, which is a collection structured around movement and water, as the title suggests. The five sections of the book—each named after one of the Great Lakes—travel through a painfully recalled childhood, a divorce, and the author's embodied experience of love, sex, and life as a Two-Spirit trans woman.

Benaway's work is both lyrically gorgeous and haunting; while aesthetically beautiful, her poems detail childhood abuse from a father who refused to accept his child's non-cis identity, clearly showing the tyranny and danger present in the normative demands of heteromascularity. As she writes in "Gills," "you hit me for as long as I can remember / with whatever was at hand . . . // you said I disgusted you, / . . . / never wrestling with my brother / or catching the baseballs you threw" (27). Bearing witness to physical and psychological violence, then, is part of the project of *Passage*, a book that asks how one might "mourn the unspoken," and also "how to witness / be honest with the dead" (45). The layers of memory and articulation unearthed in each section propel the speaker toward a reclamation of "the sovereignty of truth / of saying it happened" (50).

Benaway is not the first Indigenous writer to do such important work, as Tanana Athabaskan scholar Dian Million reminds us. Million calls such essential witnessing "felt theory," describing it as a way to articulate Indigenous realities and subvert academic gatekeeping that would deem the deep emotions like those seen in *Passage* as something less than academic. In sharing this often-difficult narrative, which entangles connection to land and water together with themes of abuse, transphobia, and transformation, Benaway's text speaks about the power of story to engender wholeness, to "weave soul to body" and chart a new route forward.

In charting this route, *Passage* also, then, maps a narrative of survivance. In "If," for example, Benaway writes:

if exploration isn't always conquest  
if discovery can be shaped of visions,  
if instinct is another word for truth.  
if passage is more than movement,  
I've already made it back. (10)

Thus the movement of *Passage* is not necessarily away from, but *through* and, ultimately, *to* a sense of self as a Two-Spirit trans woman. While aspects of this path to self-discovery—or perhaps more appropriately a path to revealing the self there all along—can be found throughout the collection, the two final sections of the text—"Lake Erie" and "Lake Superior"—particularly highlight tropes of transition and change. For example, considering Lake Erie's path from pollution to reclamation, the speaker notes, while "you grow / verdant again, / . . . / I've changed too, / no longer a child- / a woman with / blue eyes" (71). As this stanza suggests, Benaway's focus on her decision to make visible her womanhood marks the affective link between the human body and the more-than-human world; here, water = body = life. In this



equation, to be trans is a movement, a change, a place of growth that mirrors the shifts of land and water that Indigenous people have recognized/been part of for millennia. As Benaway says in “Ceremony,” one of the final pieces in the book, these poems bear witness to such connections. They are “the voices // of [her] grandmothers,” and, as a result, become “an offering,” “a promise,” and a blessing (110-11). Thus, while an incredibly personal book from a self-described feminist confessional poet, *Passage*, in its lyric beauty, its bravery, and its testament to survival and rebirth, is a gift to readers as well.

Benaway and Billy-Ray Belcourt often reference each other’s work and the lyric brilliance I mark in Benaway can also be seen, in a significantly different narrative form, in Belcourt’s debut collection, *This World Is a Wound*. I first encountered Belcourt when he gave a paper at the 2015 Native American and Indigenous Studies Association conference. He was an undergraduate at the time and his presentation on Indigeneity, sexuality, and haunting was one of the most thought-provoking papers I heard at a conference filled with high-powered Indigenous intellectuals. Belcourt quickly found his place among them, winning a Rhodes scholarship to Oxford, completing a Master’s degree in Women’s Studies there, and starting a PhD at the University of Alberta. In 2017, he published *This World Is a Wound*, which, among many other awards and nominations, won a prestigious Griffin Poetry Prize in 2018.

Belcourt crafts numbered lists and prose poems and often eschews punctuation and capitalization in his powerful meditation on the intersections of violence, love, and the body. Rather than considering the physical space of embodiment, Belcourt explains in his epilogue that “*This World Is a Wound* is a book obsessed with the unbodied” (58). What does it mean, he asks in poems like “The Oxford Journal,” for a Native person when a “sense of loss . . . tailgates their body” (48), when “death and Indigeneity” are conceived of as “co-constitutive categories” (58)? Belcourt writes his way to and through questions of disembodiment even as he bears witness to settler attacks on the bodies of Indigenous people like Colton Boushie, Christian Duck Chief, and Barbara Kentner, as well as to the violence of settler systems that can only imagine death for Indigenous people. The latter is seen in poems like “God’s River,” which recalls when Health Canada sent the Wasagegek and God’s River First Nations, not requested healthcare provisions, but body bags in the wake of a 2009 swine flu outbreak. In the face of this systematic failure, Belcourt writes, I “think maybe / reserve is / another word / for morgue / is another word / for body bags / - call it home anyways” (29).

At the same time, like Benaway, Belcourt offers not just the pain and daily trauma of ongoing colonization, but also a litany of beauty and humor when he considers what it means to queer, Indigenous, and twenty-something in the 2010s. In “The Creator Is Trans,” for example, he imagines a eulogy constructed “with phrases like / *freedom is the length of a good rim job* / and *the most relatable thing about him* / *was how often he cried watching wedding videos on youtube*. Homonationalism, amirite?” (24). This mixture of sex, pop culture, high theory, and humor is classic Belcourt, whose vast intellectual range is informed by a deeply caring ethos and, at times, comic self-deprecation. His poems move with a rapid-fire pace from the erotic as healing, heartbreak, and/or a mode of disappearance, to academia, contemporary politics, and Indigenous polities.

*This World Is a Wound* follows *Passage* in its marked interest in the body/unbodied and the intersections of the body in relationship. Both texts offer overt engagements with sex, love, and Indigeneity in the twenty-first century, but Belcourt’s perhaps more directly considers how the

parameters of these vital interchanges are mediated by the technological realities of the current era. While the explicit references to the erotic aren't new—writers like Beth Brant and Chrystos have published in a collection of lesbian erotica, Maurice Kenny published in gay zines like *Fag Rag*, and oral traditions thrive on earthy jokes—the movement between cyberspace, dating/hook-up sites, and daily life marks a new space of contemplation for queer Indigenous literature. Whitehead's poetry and prose further bears this out.

How does one represent oneself, read others, find connection, fuck and get fucked in the blue-green glow of the digital present? Like Belcourt, Whitehead, too, addresses these questions of technological mediation and (dis)embodiment. For Whitehead, who is currently a PhD student at the University of Calgary, we see this focus in both his debut poetry collection, *full-metal indigiqueer*, and his first novel, *Jonny Appleseed*. Far from being some utopic version of a present in which electronic interactions allow for an escape from racism and ideological violence, Whitehead reveals how Grindr and other online sites for dating, hookups, and web-shows reanimate colonized ideologies—as the protagonist of *Jonny Appleseed* comments: “These men are all too easy; they're all a bit voyeur and a bit voyageur” (151).

Though *full-metal indigiqueer* and *Jonny Appleseed* are, of course, vastly different—they are poetry and novel, code and story—they overlap in meaningful ways both with each other and with Belcourt and Benaway's texts. In an essay entitled “The Body Remembers when the World Broke Open,” Belcourt comments that:

In supposedly reconciliatory times like ours, Indigenous artists are burdened with answering the call to envision a good post-colonial future, but we are still hurting in the present and we are not finished trying to figure out how to activate collective survival.

Whitehead speaks to this over-determined queer Indigenous present by considering intersections of loss, pain, and hope. In fact, as the book jacket to *full-metal indigiqueer* explains, Whitehead creates “a sex-positive project that sparks resurgence” “for those who have, as Donna Haraway once noted, ‘been injured, profoundly.’”

A brilliant, experimental journey through the present and the future, *full-metal indigiqueer*—which was shortlisted for the Stephan G. Stephansson Award and Indigenous Voices award—is narrated by a hybridized Indigiqueer digital trickster, Zoa, who communicates in code, hashtags, and textspeak. If Benaway is overtly confessional, and Belcourt occasionally confessional, Zoa offers us something new—the third-person confessional—as they rocket through life, a “steeltown ndn moloch / [a] supersonic thunderbird / [a] graveyard scrapyard cyborg” (“thegarbageeater” 35). In the process, Zoa writes the present and initializes an Indigiqueer future.

This collection demands and rewards reader participation: *full-metal indigiqueer* is not for those hoping to sit back, skim, and be spoon-fed ancient Native wisdom (a fact equally true of every text reviewed here). When opening the collection, readers follow a trail of code encased in white circles that gradually increase in size on an otherwise entirely black page. This visually provocative introduction leads us to Zoa, our guide through Whitehead's world. In the first section of the text, Zoa finds their name, initializes their programming, and hurtles into a queer coming-of-age journey filled with first encounters and the deeply evocative presences/absences experienced by the queer Indigenous speaker. We see, then, a story of adolescent parties and first



misogyny, and settler hegemony that cause a non-cis femme person to be attacked for rejecting a violent masculinity. While Two-Spirit roles and identities have at times been simplified and romanticized, Whitehead extends no such trite answers; thus, his readers encounter twenty-first century Two-Spirit realities, which are named and highly valued in his writing, *and* they simultaneously see the infiltration and violent ramifications of Judeo-Christian prohibitions against queerness.

*Passage, This World Is a Wound, Passage, full-metal indigiqueer*, and *Jonny Appleseed* represent just one aspect of the rich and complex worlds engendered by these authors' lives, writing, and activism. I want to urge you, then, not only to read the texts discussed here, but also to seek out that wider intellectual community. Thus I offer just a few pieces for further reading.

In the past year Belcourt has published numerous essays including (but by no means limited to), for *Canadian Art*, "Settler Structures of Bad Feeling" and "What Do We Mean by Queer Indigenous Ethics," co-written with Lindsay Nixon (Cree-Métis-Saulteaux curator, editor, writer, and McGill art history PhD student). In this same period, Benaway's long-form essay "Between a Rock and a Hard Place" won *Prism International's* 2017 Grand Prize for Creative Nonfiction, and her powerful 2018 essay on her experience of surgery, entitled "A Body Like Home," is no doubt soon to follow. Benaway also edited and wrote an introduction for a special issue of Indigenous trans/queer/Two-Spirit writing and art for *THIS: Progressive Politics, Ideas, and Culture* that highlights the work of emerging writers, like the aforementioned Nixon, whose memoir, *Nítisânak*, was released September 2018 by Metonymy Press, and Kai Minosh Pyle (Métis/Anishinaabe) among others. (Pyle was first runner-up for the *Prism International* prize.) Meanwhile, Joshua Whitehead's open letter on his rejection of a major award nomination, "Why I'm Withdrawing From My Lambda Literary Award Nomination," offers a highly nuanced theorization of the difference between Cree Two-Spirit and trans ideologies.

I began this essay by noting "*this new generation of LGBTQ/2S Indigenous intellectuals is on fire.*" I conclude by arguing that, in their essays and the four books reviewed here, Gwen Benaway, Billy-Ray Belcourt, and Joshua Whitehead craft some of the most important creative and theoretical interventions in Indigenous studies today.

*Lisa Tatonetti, Kansas State University*

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**Daniel Heath Justice. *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter*. Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfried Laurier University Press, 2018. 284pp. ISBN 978-1-77112-176-7.**

<https://www.wlupress.wlu.ca/Books/W/Why-Indigenous-Literatures-Matter>

Daniel Heath Justice's latest book works from the clearly stated premise that Indigenous literatures matter and sets out to explore how and why they do so. At the same time, he already makes clear in the introduction that this premise cannot simply be taken for granted. This is especially the case in social contexts both inside and outside North America in which settler-colonial perspectives and assumptions about Indigenous people's "primitiveness" and/or "disappearance" foreclose discussions about the value or even the existence of Indigenous literatures. Prevalent conditions of ongoing settler colonial domination pervading all aspects of life, society, politics, and culture make narratives of, as Justice puts it, "*Indigenous deficiency*" the most widespread and readily accepted story about Indigenous peoples from the U.S., Canada, and elsewhere (2, emphasis in original). Clearly, these stories cannot coexist with the idea that Indigenous peoples are capable of creating their own narratives that do not only counter these imposed, harmful stories but are proof of and represent Indigenous people as existing within rich, complex, and vibrant communities that have their own multifaceted literary traditions and practices.

It is the great achievement of Justice's book that it not only answers but also preempts the tedious question everyone, Native or non-Native, involved with Indigenous literatures (whether as scholar, teacher, or writer, or a combination thereof) has probably heard at one time or another: "Is there writing by 'Indians' at all?" Beyond answering this question strongly in the affirmative (as does any other book on Indigenous literatures or by an Indigenous writer), Justice's book also responds to the questions that might follow from the first: why is it important (to know) that there are Indigenous literatures; what is their significance for anyone interested in literary productions; what do they accomplish; and how and why do they matter? And one way in which they matter, as Justice clearly shows, is that not only their presence but the stories they tell and how they tell these stories work against and refute the very assumptions that lead to the question of and skepticism surrounding Indigenous literatures in the first place. By unpacking the key terms of his title—"Indigenous" (along with "settler," as the contrary position), "literature," and also the combination "Indigenous literature"—in an astute, rigorous, but also compassionate and generous fashion, Justice already by the introduction makes clear that Indigenous literatures matter vitally. The four major chapters following the introduction are then dedicated to discussing how they do so specifically. Namely, Justice addresses Indigenous literatures—as a teaching tool, as a site of interlocution, and as form of interrogation—via four questions that give each chapter its title (cf. 28): How do we learn to be human? How do we behave as good relatives? How do we become good ancestors? How do we learn to live together?

If we approach the book simply as an introduction to Indigenous literatures mainly from what are today the U.S. and Canada, this is clearly an unconventional approach, although it is also an approach that liberates the book from issues of periodization, canonization, or identification of thematic foci that can be burdensome for more "conventional" literary introductions. In fact, the open-ended questions serving as chapter titles are not only intriguing sub-questions to the main question stated in the book's title but—when thinking about a wider readership for the book, or

its use in classrooms—also provide intellectual points of entry for readers who otherwise might shy away from more “conventional” academic perspectives on Indigenous literary histories, forms, and practices. Beyond that, these titles also make clear that this book can only imperfectly and incompletely be called an introductory text to Native writing. It is rather, as Justice puts it himself, “part survey of the field of Indigenous literary studies, part cultural and family history, and part literary polemic” (xx). Further, it “asserts the vital significance of our literatures to healthy decolonization efforts and just expressions of community resurgence” (xx). With this outspoken commitment to the potential political role of Indigenous literatures, Justice demonstrates throughout the book how each of the questions put by the chapter titles speaks to ongoing issues that Indigenous peoples face in their continuing existence under settler colonial conditions. Additionally, they resonate with long-lasting social structures, cultural practices, and communal self-understandings that characterize the multi-faceted and multi-dimensional ways of Indigenous peoplehood.

For Justice, the key term for such a decolonization- and community-oriented approach to and analysis of Indigenous literatures is, maybe not surprisingly, kinship. Kinship being a complex, dynamic, and evocative term, Justice makes sure never to fully define or “fix” it, but he offers a number of varying approximations of it throughout the book. When combining some of these, kinship appears as encompassing “an active network of connections, a process of continual acknowledgments and enactment” (42), that is embedded within “obligations to the diverse networks of relations and relationships” (74) and characterized by “chosen connections and commitments, as well as political, spiritual, and ceremonial processes that bring people into deep and meaningful affiliation” (75). Ultimately kinship, as evoking manners of social formation that exceed settler models of societies defined by the nation-state, becomes the term that links the concerns of the questions guiding the four chapters and also constitutes a central category for putting the readings of the individual texts in relation to each other.

In addition to a survey, a cultural/family history, and a literary polemic, the text can thus be read, intriguingly, as I find, as a study of Indigenous literatures guided by what Justice has called “kinship criticism” in his 2008 essay, “Go Away, Water” (Justice 2008, 147). In this essay, Justice suggests an “explor[ation] of how the principles of kinship can help us be more responsible and, ultimately, more useful participants in both the imaginative and physical decolonization and empowerment of Indigenous peoples through the study of our literatures” (154-55). Expanding his initial interest in this idea, Justice spells out more explicitly and practices this theory throughout his most recent text. Kinship becomes the central category for analyzing Indigenous literatures for their significance, and the referent connecting the central terms of the four main chapters: human, relative, ancestor, and living together.

In the first chapter, a reading of Ella Deloria’s novel *Waterlily* (1988) shows that, for the novel, kinship is the basis for practicing humanity and civilization. Further in the same chapter, continuous investment in kinship also helps to counter narratives of Indigenous vanishing while still allowing characters and readers to acknowledge historical losses, as Justice’s discussion of Geary Hobson’s *The Last of the Ofos* (2000) shows; the ongoing imagination of kinship similarly places the last Ofo speaker into a web of relations. As Justice states, the character’s isolation does not erase how he identifies through the principle of kinship: “as a nation of one, he embodies multitudes” (55). In the second chapter, “How Do We Behave as Good Relatives,”

LeAnne Howe's *Shell Shaker* (2001) shows the dangers when "even the foundational bonds of kinship are at risk of crumbling" (80) under settler colonial assault, but also how it remains possible across time to "uphold your obligations to one another, no matter what the cost" (83). In the same chapter, Justice explores the relations between other-than-human peoples—namely between the racoon people and Nanabush, the "Ojibway trickster-transformer" (92)—in Drew Hayden Taylor's *Motorcycles and Sweetgrass* (2010). Importantly, Justice also discusses kinship as "a very powerful and equally vexed set of understandings" for queer/two-spirit Indigenous writers who face settler impositions of heteronormativity from outside as well as, potentially, homophobia and anxiety over non-normatively gendered bodies in their own communities.

In the third chapter, on the question of how to become good ancestors, the focus lies on the relation of past, present, and future and the commitments to kinship these entail. This focus leads Justice to explore the memoir of Lili'uokalani, Queen of the sovereign Kingdom of Hawai'i, and how her writing of resistance speaks to present-day Kanaka Maoli struggles against U.S. settler nationalism. Further, he discusses recent works of Indigenous futurism such as Cherie Dimaline's *The Marrow Thieves* (2017), in which new forms of kinship form the basis to remake traditions and communities for future generations in the midst of fatally increased settler assault and colonially induced ecological catastrophe.

Finally, the fourth chapter, on the question of how to learn to live together, extends the question of "relation" to relationships between Indigenous peoples, settlers, and people of color. In Leslie Marmon Silko's *The Almanac of the Dead* (1991), a number of characters come to realize that the forms of oppression Black and Indigenous peoples are subjected to in the Americas depend on each other. As this realization helps Black and Indigenous peoples to unite in resistance, the novel envisions the potential of an apocalypse that does not restore white patriarchal supremacy, as is often the case in more conventional apocalyptic fiction, but opens the possibility of a future that entails "different kinds of relatedness, different models of kinship, different ways of living with and on the earth and her varied peoples" (Justice 2018, 173). And in *The Only Good Indian...* by the Turtle Gals Performance Ensemble from Toronto (the only play examined in the book, as Justice himself admits), the vagaries of Indigenous women performing for largely non-Native audiences at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and today are considered in a way that connects figures like E. Pauline Johnson and Gertrude Bonnin/Zitkala-Ša to contemporary characters. The struggles of Johnson and Bonnin contribute to efforts of Indigenous women artists such as the Turtle Gals today to stage their own vision, which they, in turn, do "in collaboration and in community" (179) with these earlier performers preceding them and with whom they finally become united on stage.

As their "shared creation becomes a transformative act of love" (179), the second connective thread next to, and related to, kinship becomes apparent (as it has in previous chapters): love becomes a central quality through which multiple forms of kinship can be enacted, embodied, and experienced. One vital way in which Indigenous literatures matter is that they can point to and imagine the possibilities of such love which, in turn, points to the potentials of decolonial struggle and resurgence: "We love: courageously, insistently, defiantly. We love the world enough to fight for it—and one another" (180). The possibilities of love toward which Indigenous literatures can point are ultimately embedded in ideals of relation and thus evoke larger contexts and modes of being and embodiment that extend beyond settler models of



individualistic society, instead moving to embrace kinship-based community formations that ideally are both expansive and inclusive.

From the texts selected here in the space of the review, it is already apparent that Justice attends to a varied corpus, which includes well-known, but also many lesser known or underrepresented, examples. In addition, the book moves across multiple genres that mainly include narrative, poetry, memoir, non-fiction, and, to a lesser degree, plays. Within the chapters, Justice also provides important contextual information, such as a brief discussion of the history surrounding the terminology of queer and two-spirit for Native people who do not identify as heterosexual, or a consideration of the achievements and limitations of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) in the third chapter on how to become good ancestors.

Justice provides personal and family history in the context of Cherokee peoplehood and settler violence of removal and allotment in the fifth chapter, “Reading the Ruptures,” before pointing in the conclusion to the many ways in which Indigenous literatures have mattered to him, how he has seen it matter to others, and how the work of young Indigenous writers ensures a future of Indigenous writing that will continue to matter. The focus on personal/familial histories and perspectives in the last chapter and conclusion highlights a quality that characterizes the entire book, namely Justice’s personal involvement with the subject matter and with the wider community of Indigenous writers and (literary) studies in North America today. This does more than simply add to the highly readable and enjoyable quality of the text. The fact that Justice writes on the matter of why Indigenous literatures matter in an analytically clear and intellectually generous, compassionate, and inclusive manner, always making clear how and why they do so to him, might make it easier for readers less familiar with Indigenous writing, history, and culture to consider the significance of Indigenous literatures to them *personally*, even if the possibility did not occur to them before. The book ends with an appendix that makes a case for the richness of Indigenous literatures in a more encyclopedic fashion and provides an excellent starting point to explore more Native writing. It does so by revisiting an earlier project of Justice that introduced one Indigenous writer every day for one year via Twitter, with the hashtag “HonouringIndigenousWriters.” The appendix is followed by a bibliographic essay, “Citational Relations,” that provides the bibliographical information in an essayistic form that makes the documentation of the sources themselves intriguingly readable and extends the notion of a relational criticism into citational practice.

With a book in which there is, as has become evident, so much to like (and possibly even, in the spirit of the book, to love), it is hard to argue. Even so, at the end of my review, I would like to raise two points that I do not see as objections so much as ways to continue the critical conversation, as Justice himself invites readers to do in the introduction. Firstly, I wonder if Justice’s account of kinship as a central value of Indigenous writing might be extended by a more expansive focus on Native mobility and the increased urban experience that comes with it. I might be mistaken here, but in his discussions of Indigenous urbanization, usually in the context of displacement and dispossession (see, for example, 59-60, 65), Native mobility and the urban experience appear as a form of loss (mentioned together with the generational disruptions of the Residential school system, for instance) or a trade-off (separation from reservation, but the creation of new affiliations), rather than an Indigenous living situation in its own right, which includes the connection between Indigenous peoples coming from a now-urban area and

Indigenous peoples having moved there from other places for various reasons. These reasons might not always be reducible to dispossession or displacement but, more complexly, might also include different forms of Indigenous agency manifest in mobility (I am thinking, in this context, of the online project led by UCLA, “Mapping Indigenous L.A.” [<https://mila.ss.ucla.edu/>], as well as the recent literary portrayal of urban Indigeneity in Tommy Orange’s *There There* [2018]). Secondly, in the third chapter on the question of ancestors, Justice discusses how Native writers use genres of speculative fiction to their own Indigenous-centered and decolonial ends and, within this illuminating argument, introduces his term of “Indigenous wonderworks” to distance such works from the conventional terms of fantasy and/or science fiction, which denote genres conventionally rooted in the settler colonial imaginary. In this context, I would have wished for a more sustained discussion of this term in relation to the recent term of “Indigenous futurism” coined by Grace Dillon (who is mentioned and cited for *Walking the Clouds* [2012], her anthology of Indigenous science-fiction, but without reference to her coinage). This absence is particularly notable as Justice makes a reference to Octavia Butler as arguably a key proponent of Black or Afro-futurism. Especially in the chapter with a focus on Indigenous future, I think a consideration of “Indigenous futurism” in relation to “Indigenous wonderworks” could have been helpful, as it also might have shown how the two terms emphasize different aspects of the same, or at least a similar, phenomenon; furthermore, if “wonderworks” might be said to be the term better suited to describe writing that does not immediately gesture to potential futures, I would have welcomed such a discussion, too.

Of course, these are only two minor caveats that should not at all deflect from this review’s emphasis on the important accomplishment Justice’s book represents. In a time where the question about the existence and worth of Indigenous literatures still has not ended, it now stands as the number one recommendation to anyone asking this question. But much more than that, it can provide readers—students as well as general readers—with a passionate introduction to the richness of Indigenous literatures, specifically in North America, and can give teachers a very helpful tool for their future courses. Additionally, it gifts those of us interested and/or working with Indigenous literatures (including myself) with the opportunity to refamiliarize ourselves with old favorites, discover new ones, view Indigenous literatures through the rewarding perspective of a kinship-based criticism, and remind ourselves (in case this might be necessary) why we are doing the work we are doing, and why not only the writing but also the reading, studying, and writing on Indigenous literatures continue to matter.

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**Lee, Lloyd. Ed. *Diné Perspectives: Revitalizing and Reclaiming Navajo Thought*. Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2014.**

Lloyd Lee (Ph. D.) is Kinyaa'áanii, born for Tlááschíí (Towering House, born for Red Bottom). His third clan, his mother's father's clan is Áshijíí (Salt) and his fourth clan, his paternal grandfather, is Tábaahá (Water's Edge). He is an Associate Professor of Native American Studies at the University of New Mexico and the Director of the Institute for American Indian Research (IFAIR). His personal story makes up the preface of *Diné Perspectives: Revitalizing and Reclaiming Navajo Thought*, which is almost verbatim to the version found in the introduction of his self-published book *Diné Masculinities: Conceptualizations and Reflections* (Createspace Independent Publishing Platform, 2013). In collaboration with twelve other Diné authors, this book culminates from essays that “reflect elements of cultural Diné knowledge, analysis, creativity, planning, living, and reflecting” (xiv).

*Diné Perspectives: Revitalizing and Reclaiming Navajo Thought* appears to be constructed to reflect the teachings conveyed by Sa'ą Naaghái Bik'eh Hózhóón<sup>1</sup> and is thus divided into four parts. In applying the epistemologies imbedded in Sa'ą Naaghái Bik'eh Hózhóón, the thirteen authors reflect “the four-part planning and learning process encompass[ing] the following tenets: Nitsáhákees (Thinking), Nahat'á (Planning), Iiná (Living), and Siíhasin (Assurance), [in respective order]” (Lee 6; Werito 27). This monograph at once advocates for the revitalization and reclamation of Diné epistemology by using and critiquing Western constraints of knowledge dissemination. Sa'ą Naaghái Bik'eh Hózhóón is not only understood to encompass the four tenants, but it is a cyclical continuum: “Specifically, the Diné philosophy [Sa'ą Naaghái Bik'eh Hózhóón] is associated with and orientated to the four cardinal directions, starting with the east direction; the four seasons, starting with the spring; and the four parts of the day, beginning with early dawn and moving around in a clockwise direction with the path of the sun. This is commonly referred to as the *T'áá shá bik'ehgo na'nitin*, or the Sun Wise Path Teachings” (27).

The chapters intersect life stories, art, poetry, prose, and scholarly essays that reveal multivalent Diné epistemologies and philosophies, or matrices; a term Lee borrows from Viola F. Cordova who defines matrix as a “web of related concepts” (3).

**Nitsáhákees** (Thinking). Part 1: “Frameworks and Understanding” invites us to think critically about how the stories of individual Diné conceptualize Sa'ą Naaghái Bik'eh Hózhóón.

Shawn L. Secatero's chapter, “Beneath Our Sacred Minds, Hands, and Hearts. One Dissertation Journey” recounts his path in developing a study, anchored in a corn model theory that “can be deemed as a higher education model that encompasses spiritual, mental, social, and physical well-being” (21). Together, these also capture the Diné principles of Hózhó, which is the focus of the next chapter by Vincent Werito.

“Understanding Hózhó to Achieve Critical Consciousness. A Contemporary Diné Interpretation of the Philosophical Principals of Hózhó” provides a critical, albeit personal, framework for understanding the complexities and intricacies of Hózhó. Werito reiterates the common translation of Hózhó as becoming or being “in a state of harmony and peace...” (26). What is most powerful about Werito's chapter is that it uses the tools of Applied Indigenous Studies by constructing and applying Sa'ą Naaghái Bik'eh Hózhóón to unpack the Diné hermeneutics of Hózhó. In addition to ceremonial understandings of the term, he also writes:

“hózhq̄ is more significant when the meaning is conceptualized, actualized, lived, and reflected on at a personal level” (29).

His first section, conceptualizing nitsáhákees, is “Kodóó Hózhq̄ Dooleeł: It Begins in Beauty, Harmony, and Peace.” The second section actualizes nahat’á, “Iiná Baahózhq̄ Bó’hoo’aah: Learning about Hózhq̄ in My Childhood.” Werito’s third section shares present-day experiences through the concept of iiná, “Hózhq̄q̄go ‘Iiná: Living in Peace and Harmony.” Finally, he concludes his chapter with a section that reflects siihasin, “Hózhq̄ Nahásdl̄ij̄: It Is Fulfilled in Beauty” by also interweaving the tenets of Sa’ą Naaghái Bik’eh Hózhq̄q̄n. This last section, named after how Diné were taught by the Diyin Dine’é to end prayers, provides reflection on how he continually improves his knowledge of hózhq̄. Werito organizes this subsection with four principles that reiterate nitsáhákees (“thinking for one’s self”), nahat’á (“critical conscientization, which entails a plan to strategize ways to empower myself and other Diné peoples”), iiná (“action...to achieve life goals”), and siihasin (“reflection”).<sup>2</sup> His chapter aims to encourage “Indigenous scholars [that] we can utilize Indigenous thought to make sense of Western concepts and vice versa” (37).

Esther Belin’s chapter, “Morning Offerings, Like Salt” challenges us to think critically about contemporary “California style” and other urban and relocated Diné experiences that delineate Sa’ą Naaghái Bik’eh Hózhq̄q̄n. Her vignettes begin by acknowledging her presence among rocks from the northerly of the Navajo Four Sacred Mountains; she says “I am surrounded by the rocks from Dibé Ntsaa” (39). Belin’s positioning continues in musing about and critiquing the Navajo Nation’s complicity in the erasure of traditional ways of belonging, being and doing. Her vignettes return to the rocks and tell of how her parents instilled Sa’ą Naaghái Bik’eh Hózhq̄q̄n, albeit with a hybrid of terms from Diné bizaad and bilagáanaa bizaad. Belin’s chapter incorporates history, theory, and personal anecdotes of life by the ocean with wit and nuance, while also maintaining a strong position as one who is on the path to “full Diné personhood” (42) despite being legitimated by her 4/4 blood quantum and census number.

All four parts of this book, end with a chapter by Venaya Yazzie. Through her poetry and artwork, Yazzie concludes each part with a creative perspective that offers “the essence” and “visual metaphor” (9) of each section, thereby revealing yet another way to revitalizing and reclaiming Sa’ą Naaghái Bik’eh Hózhq̄q̄n. In this first section, Yazzie’s poem, “7pm thought, memory @ Dziłnaodil̄thle-Eastern View” evokes Diné epistemologies of the kinetics of naashá (which she interprets as walking, moving, existing, and living), along with imagery of Dziłnaodil̄thle, located centrally among the four traditional sacred ones. Her artwork titled “Dinétaah” (traditional homelands meaning “among the Diné”) concludes this section.

**Nahat’á** (Planning). Part 2: “Analysis of Methodologies” shares how to plan out and actualize reclamation and revitalization of Sa’ą Naaghái Bik’eh Hózhq̄q̄n through the works of leading Diné scholars.

Larry W. Emerson’s chapter, “Diné Culture, Decolonization, and the Politics of Hózhq̄” offers six concepts to critically engage in order to return to the teachings of hózhq̄ and k’é (relationships, kinship) with a firm eye on global Diné futurities. Like others in this book, he begins with introducing himself by adhering to Diné clan protocol, and he outlines his personal journey to affirm why his plan to actualize is worthy of implementation. Emerson’s honest personal narrative of the disastrous role that colonization has played is one that many can relate to. He was “taught to deny [his] Diné identity, history, culture, language, and politics” (51). Colonization is the first of the six concepts and it caused an imbalance across Diné Bikéyah

(Navajo land). This imbalance is the opposite of hózhó. To return to hózhó, necessitates decolonization and Emerson writes it is “impossible without a creative drive to change things that are not appropriate and are unhealthy for Diné peoples” (52). He offers a concise history of colonization from the era of the Spanish invasions of the mid-sixteenth century through the pivotal return of Diné from Hwéeldi in 1864 that marks a new Navajo history to contemporary times, where he says we are in a “quasi recovery from colonialism” (54). Emerson broadens his critique of neocolonialism to include Navajo Nation citizens who have embraced Western ways of being, knowing, and living, which have had unhealthy results. He transitions to the second of his six concepts, the theory of “Intergenerational and Historic Trauma,” to help elucidate why hózhó and k’é are rendered meaningless throughout the Navajo Nation. The third concept is decolonization as theory, and Emerson’s goal is to educate other Diné in order to engage “community-wide healing, transformation, and mobilization” (58) that will embody a form of liberation. In order to get to this freedom from internal (Diné) and external (non-Diné) oppression, he proposes a return to our “beautiful philosophy of life” (61) whereby hózhó is at the core. The fourth concept naturally flows from decolonization theories, and it is that of indigenization, where he sees the role of kinship as ongoing, among other Indigenous ways of doing, knowing, and being, as pivotal to Diné continuity. Indigenization necessitates traditional knowledge, which is the fifth concept that Emerson outlines. He views “traditional knowledge in two branches: (1) theory and practice and (2) as a set of primordial truths” (63). The sixth and final concept Emerson proposes that will revitalize and reclaim Navajo thought is to recognize Indigenous Human Rights, which Lee takes up at length as a complete chapter in the final section of this book. Emerson’s foray into this brief introduction of Indigenous Human Rights affirms for Diné elders and scholars how we can safely move towards thinking, planning, living, and reflecting using hózhó and k’é.

Historian Jennifer Nez Denetdale traces “The Value of Oral History on the Path to Diné/Navajo Sovereignty” by beginning with her own family story that involved her grandmothers and Diné culinary practices that involved the use of a long lost tsé’ est’éei (cooking stone). Denetdale’s captivating narrative corrected my own knowledge of traditional foods. Formerly, I only knew of this bread as Hopi Piki Bread, and her story illuminated that this was, in fact, also a Navajo delicacy called nóogazi. Her chapter aims to promote cultural sovereignty (of which she provides several sources on how this concept is understood) through oral stories and Denetdale emphasizes that stories from the Diné Creation oeuvre, particularly those that emphasize the importance of Diné women, of matriarchy and of k’é, relationships, are key to reclamation and revitalization. She says oral stories reflect traditional thought, and knowing and narrating oral history, the tellers and re-tellers of the stories implement decolonial, didactic tools that teach “how to return to those philosophies and values” (73). Denetdale’s scholarly journey began with her rejection of non-Navajo versions of Navajo history, which “erod(-ed) tribal sovereignty and den(-ied) the genocide and ethnic cleansing of Indigenous peoples” (71) in the section “Decolonization, Cultural Sovereignty, and Oral History.” In arguing for the actualization of oral traditions as a framework to decolonize how history has been conveyed, she clarifies that it is a way “for finding our way back to the ways in which our ancestors envisioned the past and the future” (71). In the next section, “Decolonization and Oral History,” Denetdale highlights the “Long Walk (1863-1866) [as] a historical watershed” (74) because ancestors of the survivors memorialize experiences of the Long Walk through oral stories, which are counter-stories to the American (Western) narrative. Historical stories and creation narratives interweave to make meaning for contemporary Diné. Denetdale’s own oral history research combined with

the didactic stories of creation: of the importance of place, Diné Bikéyah; of how clans were formed, which relay the importance of k'é and hózhǫ́; of the role of girls and the ceremonial significance of becoming Kinaaldá, of becoming women like 'Asdzaa Nádleehé. Denetdale explains, "Changing Woman is one of our most benevolent and compassionate of the Holy Deities. She is the Mother of the Diné peoples. In the telling of stories about women and cooking, the imagery of ideal Navajo womanhood was relayed" (78). This invites a return to Denetdale's story of the tsé' est'éí, in the final section "Reverberations." The significance of recovering this cooking stone, invited the re-telling of her grandmothers who used it and as such, enacted cultural sovereignty and sustained their family.

The third chapter in part 2 is by Melanie K. Yazzie and is called "Narrating Ordinary Power: Hózhǫ́jí, Violence, and Critical Diné Studies." The chapter commences with a memory that explains what "ordinary" and "hózhǫ́jí" (Blessing Way) mean by way of the poetic beauty of Luci Tapahonso. Yazzie then expands her narration to include the poetic dystopia envisioned by Sherwin Bitsui with both reflection of, and theorizing of, power and violence. Turning to Foucault, Fanon, Linda Tuhiwai Smith and Patrick Wolfe, Yazzie relates her own personal journey when she was an (extra-)ordinary graduate student in developing Critical Diné Studies methodology that captures the intersections these writers (and others) introduce in order to "center the ubiquitous issue of power...a conceptual tool for addressing the realities of colonial violence *alongside* and *in relation to* the realities of hózhǫ́jí in ordinary Diné life..." (91, emphasis in the original). Similar to Denetdale's argument that stories are valuable for reclaiming and revitalizing Diné thought, Yazzie expands upon this: "Like power, oral traditions are alive and constantly changing" (92). This leads to the section "Critical Diné Studies and Oral Documentation." Before engaging in her argument, Yazzie summarizes Andrea Smith's call for Native American Studies to "take up queer theory's insights regarding 'subjectless critique'" (92) because "subjectless critique legitimizes the use of oral traditions to uncover these forms and influences of power, because oral traditions potentially describe the complexities inherent to constructions of knowledge and history" (93). To give more credence to her argument, Yazzie also evokes Michel-Rolph Trouillo to demonstrate how Diné oral traditions act to historicize and centre "Diné subject formation" (93). She ends this section by outlining three ways that these interwoven insights propel her theory of Critical Diné Studies, grounded by oral traditions and Diné subjectivity vis-à-vis the Diné everyday and the Diné ordinary. The final section in this chapter, "Critical Diné Studies and Interdisciplinarity" argues for Diné studies scholars to "draw from interdisciplinary studies on colonialism and histories of modern power to inform our critiques of colonialism, settler desire, power, and discourse as they play out in the lives of ordinary Diné peoples" (95). She offers several examples of interdisciplinarity as an approach, while also maintaining Diné cultural significance in order to address power (which she notes there is no equivalent term in Diné bizaad). While her arguments are sound, in terms of analyzing how the five-fingered negotiate power, violence and hózhǫ́jí, Yazzie does not engage directly with how her theory moves Sa'ą Naaghái Bik'eh Hózhǫ́n forward. Instead she pleads for "our research ... to rigorously commit to understanding all these forms of power if we are to ... commit ourselves to being responsible members of k'éí, past, present, and future" (97), which implies that clan membership, oral stories, and hózhǫ́jí are anything but ordinary.

**Iiná** (Living). Part 3: "Political Challenges" outlines the contemporary realities of life for upkeeping Diné thought amid assimilative and genocidal governmental policies.

Yolynda Begay examines “Historic and Demographic Changes that Impact the Future of the Diné and the Development of Community-Based Policy” and Andrew Curley’s chapter is “The Origin of Legibility: Rethinking Colonialism and Resistance among the Navajo People, 1868-1937.” Begay critiques the governmental policies that continue to measure Diné identity, and like others in the book, prefer to identify by way of k’é. Her chapter “evaluates the current and historical Diné population dynamics and how these dynamics impact tribal enrollment policy” (106). Her aim is to ultimately heed the call to adopt a decolonial way of Diné recognition, i.e. tribal enrollment, to “integrate traditional knowledge into policy” (107). As the title of her chapter suggests, she employs the use of figures, charts, and data to track changes in enrollment and recognizes an imposed “Political Identity” versus “Diné Worldview on Identity” that includes not just head counts, but also traditional names that became moot for governmental officials and thus anglicized. Begay recognizes the contemporary and lived experiences of Diné who are negatively affected by policy. And given the rising population, she argues that this is the moment, in the here and now, to rethink the enrolment policy for a sustainable Diné future and doing so by asserting our sovereignty and reclaiming pre-assimilation, decolonial ways of belonging, which may or may not define identification and include enrollment.

Andrew Curley’s astute observation that “When trying to understand Navajo Thought in an era of colonialism, we must also examine how we became the Navajo Tribe in the first place” (129) introduces his study on “The Origin of Legibility: Rethinking Colonialism and Resistance among the Navajo People, 1868-1937.” His analysis of how Diné (the term) was erased and replaced by another term: “Navajo,” is one that critiques the U.S.’s rationale of attempting to make the Diné a “legible” minority who were to be in tune with, aligned with, and standardized with everyone else. These attempts were not without resistance from Diné people, and Curley hopes “this chapter contributes to the development of a new understanding of our recent history with greater emphasis on how we came to look the way we do in the eyes of the federal government—namely, though [sic] the establishment of political institutions around new forms of political leadership” (130). Curley’s chapter is framed by the political timeline, spanning from the Treaty of Bosque Redondo in 1868 to 1937 with the establishment of the second Navajo Nation tribal government. He charts governmental policy and its contentious impacts on Diné, who did not sit idly by and resisted colonialism through acts such as ceremony, outright ignoring policy to that of enacting violence; these continue today. Living as Diné (and not as Navajo) recognizes and promotes Sa’ą Naaghái Bik’eh Hózhóǫn in ways that simply reading about Navajo history does not.

**Siihasin** (Reflection/Assurance). Part 4: “Paths for the Future” engages readers to reflect upon how to move forward with active Diné presence that includes examining Diné language and culture loss as well as implementing articles outlined in the UN’s Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Both Kim Baca and Tiffany S. Lee reflect on the contemporary challenges that Diné youth have in learning and living the language and culture. Baca’s short essay, “Sustaining a Diné Way of Life” introduces two Navajo youth whose divergent stories reflect many in similar situations. They go to a Native American public school in Albuquerque and claim that their twice weekly Navajo classes instill Sa’ą Naaghái Bik’eh Hózhóǫn. This short essay highlights their struggle with Diné identity, while they yearn to embody Diné identity.

Tiffany S. Lee’s chapter “If I Could Speak Navajo, I’d Definitely Speak It 24/7” proposes the creation of “Critical Language Consciousness” that is communal, collaborative, and holistic.



She reflects upon why Diné bizaad is not at the heart of Diné education, given the presence of a few key immersion schools that are on the Navajo nation. This query invites more queries of why Diné language is not prioritized as part of the contemporary daily Diné life and worldview. The answers, she argues, are found in Critical Language Consciousness, whereby students have become “well informed of the injustice and oppression that their people and Indigenous people across the world have suffered, and they desire to make a difference” (160). Knowing about the effects of colonialism is a prerequisite to transformative thinking that will continue to inspire language reclamation and revitalization. The section “Diné Youth and Diné Language” exposes the divergent views of youth who are either proud of their Diné identity or ashamed of it. As an educator, Lee advocates knowing genocidal and colonial histories that have promoted Diné language loss; she notes that youth who have become critically conscious are the ones who yearn to make changes in terms of language revitalization. She has a wealth of research that spans from engaging her university students in written reflection to interviews that discuss how to reclaim languages to a questionnaire aimed at exposing high school students’ attitudes on Diné language. The results of this combined research make up the next section “States of Confusion, Marginalization, and Stigmatization.” While many were confused, felt marginalized or stigmatized for either not speaking or speaking incorrect Diné bizaad, Lee has stories of “Diné Youth Language Activism” whereby youth “have been very active as change agents in instigating language revitalization efforts in their families and communities” (166). All of the ways youth have taken initiatives to reclaim and revitalize Diné bizaad are inspirational and range from becoming language teachers of sorts to family and community to combating racism by actively resisting censorship of the language. These stories highlight how youth are in control of their own language destinies through critical language consciousness and how as a community of Diné, we need to embody Sa’ą Naaghái Bik’eh Hózhóǫ́n in ways that continue to motivate and inspire language reclamation and revitalization.

This final section coalesces active Diné presence via language with active Diné presence as recognized by the “Navajo Nation and the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples,” which is the name of the final chapter of the book and authored by Lloyd L. Lee. He provides a concise summary of the premise of the declaration, including the initial oppositional votes, now reversed, from the U.S., Canada, New Zealand, and Australia. Lee then scrutinizes seven articles that the Navajo Nation is implementing whose topics are: self-determination through economic development, protecting Diné traditions, customs and ceremonies, repatriation, language education, subsistence and development, land, recognition of rights pertaining to cultural heritage and Indigenous knowledges, and determining identity and membership. In focusing on these specific articles, Lee “offers a discussion on how Diné individuals and communities can hold the tribal government and the United States accountable” (171). To scrutinize these articles, Lee incorporates evidence where the “Fundamental Laws of the Diné” worked in tandem with the declaration to advocate for a decolonial and sustainable system of governance for each respective topic. Lee encourages turning to the laws to support a sustainable Diné continuum that focuses on language, education, and privileging stories. Together, the recognition and implementation of articles from the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples alongside thinking, planning, living and reflecting, by way of Sa’ą Naaghái Bik’eh Hózhóǫ́n, will aid in a transformative future for Diné people and Diné worldviews.

This outstanding book synthesizes diverse stories of Diné artists, writers, thinkers, and community members and is written for both academic and non-academic audiences. *Diné*

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*Perspectives* privileges Diné readers of all ages and it invites further dialogue about how one actively works towards Diné revitalization, reclamation and renewal of Sa'ą Naagháí Bik'eh Hózhóón, the foundational epistemology that will ensure Diné continuum.

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*Notes*

<sup>1</sup> In speaking with local elders in the Shiprock area, I have been instructed not to reduce our foundational epistemology of Sa'ą Naagháí Bik'eh Hózhóón to a metaphor, or to the acronym of SNBH, as the authors in this book do. When in contexts outside of academia, elders do not say “SNBH” in every day or ceremonial parlance. To continue to do so reverses Diné continuance and is an act of epistemicide.

<sup>2</sup> all quotes are from pages 34-35.

**Annette Angela Portillo. *Sovereign Stories and Blood Memories: Native American Women's Autobiography*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2017. 204 pp. ISBN: 978826359155.**

<https://unmpress.com/books/sovereign-stories-and-blood-memories/9780826359155>

Annette Angela Portillo's *Sovereign Stories and Blood Memories: Native American Women's Autobiography* (2017) inscribes itself into an important and emergent field of enquiry. In this book, the author seeks to reclaim "narratives of truth and survivance" (ix) and promises to "extend and adapt the work of Native American autobiography theorists" (17). Portillo's central claim is that "the memories of these women who tell and write their stories of survivance are articulating a place-based and land-based language. And their autobiographical discourses express communal storytelling practices that embody ancestral identities across multiple regions, times, and spaces" (17). The first chapter of the book serves as an introduction to the key terminology and offers a brief overview of its methodological concerns. This chapter furthermore briefly argues that a recuperation of indigenous epistemologies and sovereignty is essential for understanding Native American women's life writing, and relates these concerns to an overall settler colonial context. Portillo positions her approach to self-writing and autobiography primarily in relation to older scholarship such as Arnold Krupat's studies of authorial collaboration and authenticity (1988 and 1994), Hertha D. Wong's discussions about heteroglossia and tradition (1992), as well as Greg Sarris' exploration of authorship and authority (1993) and John Beverley's work on testimonio (1992, 1993 and 1996).

Chapter two offers a "remapping" of the authority of the Kumeyaay elder, Delfina Cuero, from an anti-colonial Native-centered historiographical perspective meant to reassert Cuero's agency. Analyzing Cuero's relationship with the anthropologist Florence C. Shipek, who edited the narrative, Portillo demonstrates how Cuero uses a land-based, indigenous epistemology to reclaim an erased presence in the US-Mexico borderlands of the Kumeyaay and their neighboring tribes. As Portillo writes, "Cuero's stories not only assert the ongoing presence and challenges brought to her people; her narratives and blood memories serve as witnesses to new forms of genocide, resistance, and healing" (24). The chapter includes a historical discussion of Kumeyaay agency and knowledges, based on Michael Connolly Miskwish's scholarship, and a short discussion of genre and the publication history of Cuero's narrative. These serve as points of departure for Portillo's textual analysis, which covers silence and humor as subversive acts, Cuero's awareness of her multiple audiences, and land-based strategic performances of "transborder citizenship" (39), which leads Portillo to conclude that Cuero "ultimately controls the narrative voice, because she chooses which stories to tell Shipek and, more importantly, which ones to explain" (35). The chapter ends with a somewhat awkward sketch of the relevance of Cuero's story to twenty-first century concerns about transnational indigeneity in the light of increased militarization of the border and its attendant (geo)political discourses. These are important issues that deserve more attention than the three pages Portillo awards them, and their presence in this form is more surprising than illuminating.

The third chapter explores Leslie Marmon Silko's self-published life story *Sacred Water* (1993) and the memoir *The Turquoise Ledge* (2010) as reconceptualizations of autobiography as a genre. The two narratives are multimodal, and Portillo argues that "through storytelling and

photography Silko creates an indigenous feminist practice that redefines colonial specializations [sic] of indigenous land and peoples” (53). Portillo begins the chapter with a short account of the history of photographic colonization of Native bodies and identities, starting with Edward S. Curtis. This leads into her discussion of Silko’s subversion of the power-discourse related to photography and her construction of a land-based epistemology in the two self-writings. Moreover, Silko expresses sovereignty and self-determination by refusing to acquiesce to the publishing industry when she decides not only to publish *Sacred Water* herself, but to physically construct the book (58-59). Portillo argues that “Silko complicates the notion of photography as objective, pure, and authentic” (60) by incorporating the visual into the textual narrative of the autobiographical form. Moreover, Portillo claims that this complication of form relates to the complication of the human as separate from the natural. Portillo discusses Silko’s conception and critique of ‘landscape’ as a misleading word and her extensions of the notion of kinship to non-human actors at length, and she argues persuasively that the toads, snakes, bees and other critters become more than just symbols of survival, they become central to survivance (63). In this way Portillo accounts for Silko’s complex critique of environmental destruction as more than mere nature writing or an ecofeminist (settler) preoccupation with conservation, but rather as related to blood memories of the land and “as unmappings of colonial discourses” (18).

Chapter four jumps back to the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and explores the life stories of Sarah Winnemucca Hopkins, Zitkála-Ša, and Pretty-Shield. Beginning with Frank B. Linderman’s interview with Pretty-Shield (recorded in 1932), Portillo inserts the life-stories into their sociohistorical contexts and argues that Pretty-Shield’s narrative, which falls into the as-told-to genre, is an expression of agency. Similar to Cuero’s refusal to divulge information, Pretty-Shield’s and other ethnographically collected life-narratives express a sense of resistance by consciously refusing to confirm romanticized preconceptions of indigenous women. Through the use of humor and silences, Pretty-Shield becomes “an agent of storytelling rather than simply an ethnographic informant” (102). With Winnemucca’s 1883 *Life among the Piutes* as a point of departure, Portillo discusses the irony of indigenous women strategically using “the autobiography, a traditionally Eurocentric, male-driven genre” as a way to “talk back and rewrite official histories of indigenous peoples” (103). While exploring the tropes of ‘blood memories’ and community in *Life among the Piutes*, Portillo reiterates arguments about authenticity and Winnemucca’s complicity in the perpetuation of stereotypes of her people, concluding that she in fact sought to rewrite dominant master-narratives through the construction of new forms of storytelling (oratory, performance, and autobiography). Several of Zitkala-Ša’s stories from the early twentieth century similarly reflect a critique of hegemonic stories, and Portillo argues somewhat confusingly that Zitkala-Ša “not only lectured and wrote essays that openly critiqued the government but also supported assimilationist ideology” (113). Discussing her “complex” position, Portillo situates Zitkala-Ša in the context of the boarding school system with its attendant genocidal discourses and claims that her “sovereign stories and blood memories forced readers to engage in the process of acculturation and torture endured by numerous children” (116). It is, however, unclear from Portillo’s writing how Zitkala-Ša’s writings managed to acquire this power to “force” engagement. Ultimately, Portillo claims that rather than being the victims of editorial usurpation, both these women create sovereign stories that “reright and rewrite Native American history and culture” (91), and she categorizes their narratives as “protofeminist stories [sic] that assert resistance and agency” (119).

Chapter five contains the book's most original contribution to scholarship, as it details the recent emergence of online, internet-based modes of storytelling and knowledge sharing. Beginning with a history of the Zapatista Movement and its revolutionary methods regarding online and media network construction, Portillo argues that "indigenous organizations, tribal communities, indigenous social justice movements, and individual bloggers have 'indigenized the internet,' thus creating and participating in a communal space of testimonio that resonates with the storytelling practices of indigenous peoples" (128). The Idle No More and NoDAPL movements are highlighted as specific examples of how the new media can benefit indigenous peoples, build coalitions across nations and other borders, and share information. The precise connection of this first part of the chapter to the overall purpose of the book is unclear, and unfortunately Portillo only perfunctorily discusses the more relevant "communo-biographies" (134) by two indigenous women—Margo Tamez and Deborah Miranda—towards the very end.

The final chapter takes as its departure the author's personal reflections of and experiences with teaching Native American studies broadly, and women's autobiographies specifically. Portillo mentions how she engages with an empathic and decolonial pedagogy that centers on debunking stereotypes, unlearning colonialist logics, deconstructing the canon, and fronting an indigenous-centered knowledge system, as contextualization for literary fiction, poetry, and self-writing. As Portillo writes, "I underscore the importance of complicating simplistic definitions of Native American identity and emphasize that each primary text should be read from tribally specific histories and perspectives" (143). Through an examination of Ruby Modesto's *Not for Innocent Ears* (1980), Portillo exemplifies her pedagogical approach, which she calls a "conversive relational methodology" (150). Furthermore, she stresses the importance of tribal community engagement and exchange when teaching indigenous literatures, and argues "that inviting elders and members of indigenous communities to share their specialized knowledge with a class is an integral component in any course on Native American studies" (148). For new teachers of Native American studies, this chapter provides an excellent point of departure. For more experienced teachers, most of Portillo's claims and approaches will already be familiar.

The last two chapters are less well-developed and their ties to the first three chapters are somewhat tenuous and unclear. A deeper engagement with the central claim about women's self-writing and decolonial pedagogy, respectively, would have brought the book full circle more elegantly. Moreover, it is perhaps surprising that Portillo does not clearly position her work in relation to recent developments in indigenous feminist scholarship. Mishuana Goeman's 2008 article on "(re)mapping" is employed to illustrate the importance of stories to native feminisms, but Goeman's spectacular *Mark My Words* (2013) is relegated to a footnote (164). Siobhan Senier's *Voices of American Indian Assimilation and Resistance* (2001), Winona LaDuke's *Recovering the Sacred* (2005) and Cheryl Suzack, Shari M. Huhndorf, Jeanne Perreault, and Jean Barman's *Indigenous Women and Feminism* (2011), to name just a few pertinent volumes, are strangely overlooked in a book that argues that some of the authors discussed resist assimilation narratively, are "protofeminists," or write against (white) ecofeminism. Other feminist works, such as Paula Gunn Allen's *The Sacred Hoop* (1986) and Devon Mihesuah's *Indigenous American Women* (2003), receive scant attention. A more diligent and informed conversation with indigenous feminist theory would have clarified Portillo's particular contribution.

*Sovereign Stories and Blood Memories* at times shows signs of scholarly shortcomings, especially as relates to theoretical foundations, methodologies, and academic practice. N. Scott Momaday's notion of "blood memories" which is so central to Portillo's argument is never fully explained or operationalized. For example, the important debate between those who see the term as essentialist and racist, such as Arnold Krupat (1989) and those who seek to reclaim it, such as Chadwick Allen (1999 and 2002) is only superficially touched upon in the book's first chapter (2-3). Further, in successive chapters, 'blood memories' seems to be used almost synonymously with 'stories' and a deeper discussion and clarification early in the book would have avoided this terminological vagueness. Similarly, in chapter two, Portillo argues that, "it is therefore more appropriate to read [Cuero's] narrative through a critical 'listening-reading' technique" (30), a technique she does not clearly explain, nor mention again, throughout the book, although she does briefly mention it in the introductory chapter.

A more careful selection of academic sources would also have benefitted *Sovereign Stories and Blood Memories*, as the book often rests on a rather thin foundation, which adds a sense that the author omits pertinent sources, or is unaware of their existence. For instance, it is thoroughly surprising that, in a discussion of the US-Mexico borderlands in chapter two, Portillo claims that, "We rarely think of the borderlands area in terms of its intercultural significance for the multiple indigenous groups who claim this geopolitical space as their ancestral homelands" (46), without acknowledging the essential scholarship on the topic from Gloria Anzaldúa's seminal *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987) to the more recent *Indian Given: Racial Geographies across Mexico and the United States* (2016) by María Josefina Saldaña-Portillo. In addition, the communal "we" Portillo utilizes problematically gives the impression of a widespread scholarly lack of attention, which I would argue is incorrectly diagnosed. Similarly, a discussion in chapter three of the role of mythologizations, photography, and US settler colonialism is rendered superficial as it skips from Curtis to contemporary Hollywood "Indian" representations (54-55) with no mention of the history in between. Furthermore, the inclusion of controversial scholars such as Andrea Smith and Ward Churchill as sources deserves further discussion and debate. Especially the latter scholar's work should not be cited without discussion of the serious issues of academic fraud associated with his work, a debate which falls outside of the scope of this review. However, when used as one of three sources given for claims about boarding school experiences (other than life-stories), it indicates a lack of both awareness of the problematic nature of the source, and of the extensive scholarship undertaken by others on the topic.

In addition, certain elements of *Sovereign Stories and Blood Memories* appear unclear or fragmentary. As mentioned above, Portillo includes a short account of the publication history of Delfina Cuero's life-narrative. As this section provides the foundation for Portillo's claims about agency, narrative survivance, and subversion of colonial discourses (and publication practices and power), a more thorough discussion would have benefitted the explication and argument. Likewise, Portillo's discussion of Pretty-Shield's life-story deserves a more in-depth explication than the four pages it receives (98-102). Overall, many points of the book seem preliminary or unfinished, and with a total text of just 160 pages (not including notes and bibliography), further analysis and discussion could easily be accommodated practically.

At times, Portillo's book unfortunately reads like a hastily rewritten dissertation which, in addition to the academic shortcomings listed above, includes many (but perhaps minor) irritations, including but not limited to: lack of proofreading, omission of cited works in the bibliography (71) or careless referencing—such as paraphrasing scholars but only providing a page number, when the bibliography contains three texts by that one author (103)—terminological inconsistencies (such as spellings of tribal names outside of quotes (“Paiutes” p. 108, “Piute” p.105) and oscillation between “indigenous,” “Native American,” “native,” and “Indian” without justifying the terminology), as well as structural and compositional issues which a more rigid editing process would have alleviated. For instance, the introduction switches chapters five and six in the summary section, so that Portillo incorrectly characterizes her own book, stating, “Thus, I end my book by providing a brief overview of new media and review [sic] how the internet is becoming indigenized...” (20), when in fact, the last chapter is focused on decolonizing pedagogy. Of course, individually these are minor concerns, but taken together they may imply an underlying compositional deficiency, and in connection with the academic shortcomings, they indicate fundamental issues relating to academic practice.

In sum, although this book offers convincing readings of the selected life-writings, most of its claims and conclusions can be found more fully explicated in other works in the field. However, as a book-length exploration within an otherwise fairly understudied field, it may spark further and deeper scholarship in the future.

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**Kirby Brown. *Stoking the Fire: Nationhood in Cherokee Writing, 1907-1970*. University of Oklahoma Press, 2018. 292 pp. ISBN: 9780806160153**

<http://oupress.com/ECommerce/Book/Detail/2298/stoking%20the%20fire>

In *Stoking the Fire*, Brown makes a significant contribution to an understudied era in Cherokee literature. Brown carefully situates his work within and in connection to Cherokee scholars and Cherokee studies as well as wider bodies of work on nationhood, adding to the growing body of literature that argues literary and intellectual production can play an important role in articulating and asserting tribal nationhood. Brown engages with an impressive number of scholars including Craig Womack, Daniel Heath Justice, Rose Strelau, Mishuana Goeman, James Cox, Clint Carroll, Joshua Nelson, Amy Ware, Jace Weaver, and Robert Warrior, connecting to many important trends and innovations in American Indian and Indigenous studies.

While there is an expansive and growing body work in Cherokee studies, Brown rightly notes an important gap. After a comprehensive survey of the literature, he notes that the time period from Oklahoma statehood in 1907 to the early 1970s has been the subject of one book and a handful of chapters, essays and dissertations. Furthermore, many of the scholars that engage that period characterize allotment and statehood as so devastating that they neglect to consider the ways in which Cherokees continued to imagine their communities and nation. Remarkably, Brown notes that his own archival work only begins to scratch the surface of an expansive, understudied and unknown body of texts and individuals who were actively engaged in grappling with the complexities of that time period.

In *Stoking the Fire*, Brown traces the complex ways in which the work of historian Rachel Caroline Eaton (1897-1982), novelist John Milton Oskison (1874-1947), educator Ruth Muskrat Bronson (1897-1982), and playwright Rollie Lynn Riggs (1899-1954) remembered, advocated for, and envisioned Cherokee nationhood during a time when the Cherokee state was not functioning. Brown moves beyond the binary categories of accommodation and resistance, taking a careful and nuanced approach to see influence of history, place, family, race, and politics on the diverse ways in which these authors understand themselves as Cherokee and how they conceived of and represented Cherokee nationhood in their work. In addition to exploring the complexities of Cherokee nationhood in the first half of the twentieth century, he also considers how that vision of nationhood continues to speak to the current times. Brown asserts these texts are equally valuable for what they tell us about the Cherokee past as they do about Cherokee futures. Brown's attention to gender is a welcome aspect of the book. He devotes more than half of the book to two Cherokee women and addressing questions relating to gender representation in both Oskison's and Riggs's texts. His recovery of many of Bronson's public addresses, essays, and political works and his attention to Eaton's *John Ross and the Cherokee*

*Indians* (1914) makes a strong case for the importance of Cherokee women in Cherokee literary traditions as both keepers and producers of knowledge.

In chapter 1, “Citizenship, Land, and Law in John Oskison’s *Black Jack Davy*,” Brown utilizes Cherokee constitutional traditions to draw new and innovative insights from this frontier romance. Brown reads the novel through the lens of Cherokee constitutional history and convincingly argues that the novel’s conflicts centered on land, citizenship, and Cherokee legal authority usurp the romantic aspect of the plot. While the novel conceives of the ideal citizen in both racialized and gendered terms, Brown notes that it is an example of the “complicated ways that Indigenous-authored texts can at once speak back to settler discourses from the colonial margins even as the silence those that are similarly marginalized within their own national borders” (65).

In chapter 2, “Oppositional Discourse and Revisionist Historiography in Rachel Caroline Eaton’s *John Ross and the Cherokee Indians*,” Brown details the life of Eaton and her efforts to detach the discourse of civilization and American notions of Christian virtue from whiteness and US settler state in order to leverage it to defend Indian nationhood. Amazingly, less than a decade after the dissolution of the Cherokee Nation, Eaton utilized local archives, oral history, and family collections to write a counterhistory of Cherokee nationhood told through the life of John Ross. In her nationalist biography of Ross she tells a story of Cherokee struggle for survival and moral right against US violence and broken promises. In the end her positioning of the Cherokee Nation as an acculturated civilization worthy of existence as a modern people is valuable but, as Brown notes, she leaves no room in her narrative for a legitimate place for Cherokee traditional practices.

A number of scholars have analyzed Lynn Rigg’s *The Cherokee Night* (1936) and disagree widely over this post allotment episodic play that some argue evokes the value of cultural purity and focuses on the disintegration of Cherokee families. In chapter 3, “Blood, Belonging, and Modernist Form in Lynn Rigg’s *The Cherokee Night*,” Brown offers a new entry point into the play and departs from previous readings by focusing on “Rigg’s theoretical commitments to formally innovative, politically committed theater, and the play’s explicitly modernist, self-conscious disruption of linear time” (120). Brown effectively details his innovative reading of the ways in which the play disrupts lineal, national time and he ultimately concludes that the play can be is a critique of blood discourse and the possible renewal of Cherokee families.

In chapter 4, “Cherokee Trans/National Stateswomanship in the Nonfiction Writings of Ruth Muskrat Bronson,” Brown recovers Bronson’s diverse array of nonfiction from a forty-year time period. Brown argues that Bronson’s life and work parallel that of Wilma Mankiller and in the tradition of Cherokee women’s diplomacy but also in the broader context as a central figure of early twentieth century American Indian activism. He tracks shifts in Bronson’s politics and

demonstrates that these shifts were a result of her experiences and the contacts and relationships she had outside the Cherokee world.

Brown acknowledges and compromises and contradictions that exist in the works he examines. While Eaton and Oskison are able to subvert the explicit colonialist intentions of the respective genres they wrote in, they situate female, black, and conservative Cherokees to the margins. Bronson struggled to mobilize Christianity charity and reformist discourse to contribute to Indian centered policy reform. Rigg's critique of racialized thinking and blood politics was likely lost of many of the non-Indian readers of his work. Despite these challenges, Brown suggests that the texts carry powerful messages for the current time. He challenges us to consider how Riggs and Oskison contribute to the current debates surrounding citizenship and belonging. Likewise Bronson's dedicated work on behalf of other Indian communities and national organizations, including the National Congress of American Indians, serves as lesson on the importance of intertribal diplomacy. These complexities do not take away from the fact that Bronson, Riggs, Eaton, and Oskison all "in their own ways, spent their lives stoking the fires of Cherokee nationhood across one of the most confusing and chaotic periods of Cherokee and American Indian history" (xvi).

*Stoking the Fire* will be of wide interest to scholars in Cherokee studies specifically and American Indian and Indigenous Studies more broadly. Adding to the growing body of tribally specific literary studies, *Stoking the Fire* provides a compelling framework for how to approach tribal diversity and complexity in a specific time period and consider how historic works can speak to and inform present debates and challenges.

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**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.**

<https://www.nebraskapress.unl.edu/university-of-nebraska-press/9780803269330/>

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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**Tillett, Rebecca. *Otherwise, Revolution!: Leslie Marmon Silko's Almanac of the Dead*. New York: Bloomsbury, 2018. 208 pp. ISBN: 9781623567873.**

<https://www.bloomsbury.com/uk/otherwise-revolution-9781623567873/>

Due to the inherent challenges posed by such a project, there is a small list of monographs devoted exclusively to the examination of one singular work of fiction. Jane Hafen's *Reading Louise Erdrich's Love Medicine* and Robert M. Nelson's *Leslie Marmon Silko's Ceremony: The Recovery of Tradition* are two examples of such works in the context of Native American literature. We can now add Rebecca Tillett's book, *Otherwise, Revolution!: Leslie Marmon Silko's Almanac of the Dead* to the list. Tackling Silko's 1990 novel, once described by Joy Harjo as "an exploded version" of *Ceremony*, is no easy feat (Tillett 7). The novel centers on people living on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border – smugglers, drug dealers, politicians, and police officers, to identify some – on the precipice of the revolution foretold in the titular almanac. Its international scope, fragmented structure, and brutal depictions of racial and sexual violence have long made the novel a difficult read, as the initial reviews excerpted in Tillett's book illustrate. Responding specifically to Sven Birkerts, whom the author quotes to indicate the type of unfavorable reviews *Almanac* received upon publication, Tillett argues that while the book may have been belittled as "nothing less than a paper apocalypse" at first, it has become increasingly relevant following Donald Trump's presidential election win in 2016 (Tillett 6). *Otherwise, Revolution!* thoughtfully examines how Silko's novel contests the neoliberal world that first inspired it as well as the rise of authoritarian regimes in 2018.

Despite these real-world – or what the author terms "extra-textual" – connections, Tillett argues that *Almanac* avoids despairing for the current state of the world or our prospects for the future. Rather, it continually forges a sense of hope through its emphasis on our responsibility to one another, drawing on Glen Coulthard's notion of "grounded normativity." Quoting Coulthard, Tillett defines "grounded normativity" as a conceptual framework where "'our ethical engagements with the world and our relationships with human and nonhuman others' are both 'inform[ed] and structure[d]' by 'the modalities of Indigenous land-connected practices and long-standing experiential knowledge'" (16-7). In other words, at its root, *Otherwise, Revolution!* follows a growing trend prioritizing and promoting Indigenous practices and knowledges in a field, Literary Studies, that has historically neglected them. *Almanac* itself speaks directly to the importance of "land-connected practices" when one of its main characters, Zeta, who smuggles people and weaponry across the border, thinks to herself that "There was not, and there never had been, a legal government by Europeans anywhere in the Americas... Because no legal government could be established on stolen land" (Silko 133). Here, Zeta questions (as many characters in the novel do) the nature of personal relationships based on national identity, especially when these nations are the result of genocide and theft.

But Tillett's analysis exceeds the scope of violent uprising that is implied in Zeta's thoughts and expertly unpacked by previous scholars like Channette Romero and Elizabeth Ammons. The revolution that Tillett promotes as central to Silko's concept of worldwide change pertains to ideology. In each section of Part 1, "Oppression and Dispossession," Tillett tackles various aspects of settler colonialist ideology that we must overcome before any worldwide movement –

the one of Silko's novel or recent examples like *Idle No More*, *Standing Rock*, or the Arab Spring of 2010 – can succeed. Chapter 2, for instance, explores the analogy between vampires and capitalists in that both have become something other-than-human. Tillett explains, “*Almanac*'s capitalists must eliminate the human; they must, like the vampire, become inhuman” (35). Only in this greedy consumption reminiscent of vampires, as well as the dehumanization of the human into labor (or food upon which the system feeds), can capitalism persist. Tillett argues that Silko's *Almanac* shows us that we must shift our focus from a system based on exploitation to one based on obligation: “The correct relationship between humans and Earth, then, is one of mutual respect, support and obligation: a living with and for the land that engages directly with the workings and epistemologies of Indigenous cosmologies and cosmopolitics” (Tillett 28). Chapter 3 extends the book's critique of capitalism to patriarchal violence in a way that is worthwhile for scholars and students of Literature and Gender Studies alike. She writes, “patriarchal power is established and consolidated via the construction of gendered and sexualized hierarchies,” up to and including the feminization of the Earth, a tactic that allows its exploitation and ruin (63). In Chapter 4, the final chapter of this section, Tillett illustrates how these ideologies permeate the intellectual discourse under the guise of objective knowledge: “scientific and academic discourses are put to use as tools for oppression, acting – both consciously and unconsciously – to support and facilitate misogyny and racial and social discrimination in the wider societies governed by vampire capitalism and homosocial patriarchy” (91). These discourses, she explains, have historically objectified and belittled the cultures and practices of marginalized communities, contributing to the racist and misogynistic narrative of settler colonialism that first compelled Silko to compose the novel.

In addition to her succinct examination of how scientific and academic discourses are deployed to perpetuate oppression, Tillett departs from the majority of scholarship on *Almanac* in her focus on the novel's portrayal of ecological resistance. Ecological resistance forms the foundation of the book's emphasis on hope in Part 2. Citing sources as varied as Angelita La Escapia's indigenization of Karl Marx's methodology in her revolution efforts to the elusive figure of Geronimo – who, Tillett explains, “continues to represent the outlaw and that which is outlawed [as well as] an embodiment of the very concept of Indigenous resistance and *Revolucion*” – Tillett argues that the possibility of a better future hinges predominantly on the promotion and practice of Indigenous worldviews (147). In particular, Tillett points to the *Idle No More* movement in Canada as exemplary in its focus on Indigenous sovereignty and an Earth-centric approach. Stemming from her ecofeminist framework, Tillett expands the scope of ecological resistance in Silko's book to include human and non-human agents alike, representative of Indigenous methodologies of resistance and care. That last word, “care,” is especially important, as Tillett shows in her examination of the militant group *Green Vengeance*, whom she criticizes for replicating “patriarchal capitalist paradigms” instead of fully challenging them in the novel (139). *Otherwise, Revolution!* thus shows *Almanac*'s increased relevance not only to scholars in the Environmental Humanities but to students and readers more generally as we face our own climate challenges and concerns in the twenty-first century. In no small way, as well, *Otherwise, Revolution!* shows the value of the humanities to answer pressing questions about racism, misogyny, and ecological catastrophe at a cultural moment when such humanistic (and humane) approaches are often questioned, dismissed, or outright attacked.

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**Jacqueline Emery, editor. *Recovering Native American Writings in the Boarding School Press*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2017. 348 pp. ISBN 9780803276758.**

<http://www.nebraskapress.unl.edu/university-of-nebraska-press/9780803276758/>

In an 1880 editorial, Carlisle Indian Industrial School student Samuel Townsend, a citizen of the Pawnee nation, confronted white Americans who denigrated the intelligence of Native children enrolled in federally-managed boarding schools in the United States. Writing in the *School News* student newspaper, Townsend declared, “Some white folks say that the Indians do not know anything and can’t learn anything, but the Indians are learning something. . . . Maybe those white folks don’t know anything” (Emery 56). Townsend’s words underscore his emphasis on the intellectual capabilities of Native students as well as his willingness to challenge and dismantle white supremacist narratives. That he made these comments while a student at Carlisle, established as the first off-reservation Indian boarding school in 1879 with a mandate to assimilate and “civilize” Native children, also displays a resilience that, according to author Jacqueline Emery, was more common among boarding school students than one might think.

In her edited volume *Recovering Native American Writings in the Boarding School Press*, Jacqueline Emery shares many such accounts that were written between the 1880s and the first two decades of the twentieth century, the period during which the Indian boarding school system in the United States was at its peak. In her introduction, Emery argues that this collection of student writings is important for a number of reasons. First, they provide crucial insights into Native students’ lives as they document their boarding school experiences and interests during an era of intense assimilation in which Native children were often kidnapped from their families and pressured to reshape their lives according to the dictates of white, middle-class society. Second, she characterizes student writings as critical means of communication that were utilized in sophisticated ways by boarding school pupils. Emery asserts, for example, that student authors used school newspapers “to shape representations of Indianness” in these publications, to create communities of Indigenous readers and editors, and to reach out both to their home communities and other Native boarding school students across the United States (2). Student writings were also a means of preserving aspects of Native culture as they allowed students to write about their tribal histories, stories, and cultures in specific and nuanced ways.

Further, Emery also argues persuasively that these student writings, while almost certainly subjected to oversight and censorship by school officials, should be considered as important works of Native literature, and not solely as propaganda used by school administrators to illustrate their success in educating Native children. She points out the complicated negotiations between students and non-Native school officials that likely accompanied the publication of articles, such as that written by Samuel Townshend, and also addresses the subtler ways Native authors confronted white supremacist narratives. Emery cites a letter written by Arizona Jackson, for example, who, after graduating from the Seneca Indian School in 1880, enrolled in college where she was forced to contend with the preconceived notions of the predominately non-Native study body. Jackson wrote that her fellow students were shocked to learn she was “the Indian girl” at school, as they presumed Native peoples to be “savages, uncivilized, and anything but the right thing” (39-40).

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The volume is organized into two distinct sections. The first half focuses on the letters, editorials, essays, and short stories written by students while they attended boarding school. The majority of works in this section are culled from boarding school newspapers published by five different schools across the country: the Carlisle Indian Industrial School in Pennsylvania, the Chilocco Indian Industrial and Agricultural School and the Seneca Indian School in Oklahoma, the Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute in Virginia, and the Santee Normal Training School in Nebraska. The second half consists of essays, articles, and addresses written by Native intellectuals after their departure from the boarding school system. Emery suggests that the writing skills of many within this network of Native public intellectuals, such as Gertrude Bonin (Yankton Sioux), Angel De Cora (Winnebago), Francis La Flesche (Omaha), and Laura Cornelius Kellog (Oneida), among others, were honed by their time working on student publications as boarding school students. Throughout, Emery is careful to showcase writings that contain a variety of different perspectives and that both critique and praise different aspects of Native peoples' boarding school experiences.

Emery's arguments about the importance of boarding school writings, combined with the detailed accounts of daily life and the assortment of viewpoints included in this book, suggest a range of ways in which this work will be utilized by readers. As a course textbook, *Recovering Native American Writings in the Boarding School Press* will allow instructors to explore both the history of the Native American boarding school system in the United States and the ways students navigated these oppressive environments. The writings Emery includes in this volume also encompass an impressive selection of previously unpublished primary source documents that students, researchers, and educators can mine for details about student experiences and Native American activism. In terms of their literary value, readers will find much to analyze in the numerous and compelling accounts of boarding school life, such as Gertrude Bonin's description of her first days at boarding school:

The first day in the land of apples was a bitter cold one; for the snow still covered the ground, and the trees were bare. A large bell rang for breakfast, its loud metallic voice crashing through the belfry overhead and into our sensitive ears. The annoying clatter of shoes on bare floors gave us no peace. The constant clash of harsh noises, with an unknown tongue, made a bedlam within which I was securely tied. And though my spirit tore itself in struggling for its lost freedom, all was useless. (254-255)

Emery's work should also inspire the publication of additional collections of Native American boarding school writings. Generations of Native children were subjected to these schools, each of which featured opportunities for students to showcase their literary talents and share their views about their educational experiences. The absorbing nature of these writings and reflections, combined with the insights they provide into an often-ignored chapter in U.S. history, illustrate their value and significance and underscore the importance of publishing additional volumes of Native students' writings.

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**Durbin Feeling, William Pulte, and Gregory Pulte. *Cherokee Narratives: A Linguistic Study*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2017. 228 pp. ISBN: 978-8061-5986-7.**

<http://www.oupres.com/ECommerce/Book/Detail/2274/ Cherokee%20narratives>

Durbin Feeling has been one of the luminaries of Cherokee language and linguistics for a long time. The list of his accomplishments cannot be briefly enumerated, but his value to the field lies broadly in his connection to the Cherokee community of Oklahoma, his deep knowledge of the language, the fact that he has received an education in linguistics, and that he has collaborated with many teachers, scholars, and even tech specialists such that all of us have benefited from the window into the Cherokee language that he has opened. Dr. Feeling and linguist William Pulte first collaborated on a Cherokee dictionary published in 1975. This work has been vitally important to those who study the language because of several crucial features, among them being that it systematically marks tone and vowel length, and it provides templates of the most common verb conjugation patterns. This has given researchers both a toehold on the structure of the language and a jumping-off place for more meticulous analysis.

More than 40 years later, Dr. Pulte has rejoined Dr. Feeling, together with his son Gregory Pulte, to create a most valuable work, *Cherokee Narratives: A Linguistic Study*. The book begins with an informative introduction, which gives a history of efforts to bolster the Cherokee language in Northeastern Oklahoma, and a description of how the narratives are organized. “Narratives” is an apt choice to describe the texts that appear in this work. They represent a very diverse range of types and themes: there are the somewhat expected versions of folk tales, but more often stories about experienced phenomena, especially supernatural intrusion into the natural world, a common theme, as Cherokee literary scholars such as Christopher Teuton explain to us (170-173). Rarer types are a personal diary entry, a memoir, a legal document, a Bible story, instructions for food preparation, and two conversations.

What makes this book unique is the way these narratives are treated: the “linguistic study.” Each narrative begins with a short contextualizing statement of perhaps two sentences. Then it is rendered in four different ways, each with a particular focus and audience. The first rendition gives the narrative in a three-way interlinear format: the first line is Cherokee written in the syllabary, the second line is the same Cherokee written in the roman orthography, and the third line is a word-level literal English gloss. The gloss is somewhat bewildering for those with no Cherokee language skills. The following is an example of one of the more transparent phrases: *dikalvgv* ‘to the east’ *asi* ‘yet’ *jidinehe* ‘when they lived there’ (*Origin of Evil Magic*, p. 51). The second rendition is termed “Morpheme by Morpheme” and consists of the Cherokee in the roman orthography, divided into meaningful units and glossed using linguistic terms. Tone and vowel length are also accounted for with underscores for short vowels and a superscript number system for the tones. The authors use 40 linguistic notations in their analysis, and although Cherokee morphology is rather more complicated than this, this level of analytic detail will be helpful to students of the language who can relate it to their classwork and to linguists. The same phrase in this rendition thus becomes: *dikalv<sup>32</sup>gv* ‘in-east’ *asi<sup>3</sup>* ‘yet’ *ji-di<sup>23</sup>-n-e<sup>3</sup>h-e* ‘Rel-Pl-Pl-live-repP.’ The third rendition is the narrative written in syllabary, and the fourth and final is the English translation. The phrase from above in English is ‘still living in the east.’

We can easily appreciate the astounding amount of painstaking work that the authors have poured into this volume.

The selections themselves are products of a number of speakers using their own family dialects. Based on how they are presented in-text, the larger number of narratives appears to be of transcriptions of oral materials. This means that the reader must prepare for authentic but ungroomed language in many cases. Several of the selections, for example the legal document and a lengthy interview, feature linguistic registers that are far more elevated than one generally encounters in reading material. One very interesting narrative, *Reminiscence* by Mose Killer, shows the only instance I have ever encountered of English-Cherokee code switching as a speaking style. Speakers' hedges have not been edited out.

Translation is always both an art and a craft, and translating between languages that have no genetic connection posits a challenge indeed. The English translations in these narratives reach for clarity in meaning, and are for the most part successful in negotiating clarity and the deep oral quality of the narratives themselves. My expectation for this kind of work would be an English translation that "sounds" like a bilingual Cherokee speaker, which is an admittedly impressionistic standard, but one that has been carefully considered in other languages. Joshua Hinson has an intelligent discussion of this issue with respect to translating Chickasaw texts. Most of the translations here do indeed meet this standard.

A few of the translations might have hewn more faithfully to the original Cherokee. For example, in *The Invisible Companion Black Fox* by Durbin Feeling (33-40), the Cherokee version twice talks about 'road numbered 33' but the English translation says 'state highway.' People are well accustomed to roads being numbered, especially in rural areas, and referring to the road by its number would have preserved a bit more of the original. One translation in particular, *Throw It Home*, also by Mose Killer, stands out because its style is so different from the others. In the structure of the Cherokee version, a story told in first person is encapsulated in a second story also told in first person, such that both first persons need to be kept distinct. Mr. Killer does this in a way that is quite illustrative of how Cherokee discourse works. In the English translation, the central story is related in third person, with occasional quotes.

As a tool for learning the Cherokee language, the book is likely to be most helpful to advanced students who do not need instruction in basic grammar. Understanding language as it is actually spoken is both necessary and challenging to those who would be fluent. The linguistic analysis will be very helpful here to those who can apply it to what they already know. For the Cherokee speaker, these rare and authentic narratives are precious additions to the sparse collection of modern works written in syllabary.

It is unlikely we will be fortunate enough to get another work like this. The authors form a rare collaboration that will not see again. Everyone interested in Cherokee language and literature should acquire this book for immediate enjoyment and long-term reference.

*Marcia Haag, University of Oklahoma*

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**Cutchá Risling Baldy. *We Are Dancing For You: Native Feminisms & the Revitalization of Women's Coming-of-Age Ceremonies*. University of Washington Press, 2018. 193 pp. ISBN: 9780295743448.**

<http://www.washington.edu/uwpress/search/books/RISTOG.html>

Hollywood has, arguably, done more to perpetuate the stereotypes of *the* "Native American"—a haphazard, non-existent, mish-mash of cultures, like those of the Apache, Comanche, and Lakota—than any other place.<sup>1</sup> Yet, when one thinks of the "first peoples" of California, what often comes to mind are the Spanish missionaries or, later, the U.S. settlers that flooded the region during the 1849 Gold Rush. There may be a few who recall Ishi, a "Yahi man [...who became] a display in the UC Berkeley museum" in 1911 and was known as "The Last Wild Indian" (Risling Baldy 75). However, most will likely not think of the many tribal nations of California, perhaps because their populations were reduced by 90% between 1846 and 1864 as a result of, among other causes, the Mexican-American War, Spanish colonizers, miners, and numerous massacres, with fifty-six occurring in Humboldt County alone (55). Yet, in *We Are Dancing For You*, Cutchá Risling Baldy (Hupa, Yurok, and Karuk) works to reclaim, "(re)write, (re)right, and (re)rite" the Flower Dance (ch'íłwa:l) of the Hoopa Valley Tribe,<sup>2</sup> located in what is now known as Humboldt County in Northern California, as part of a cultural revitalization movement that "articulates and supports an Indigenous decolonizing praxis" (9).

As suggested by the work's subtitle, Risling Baldy's main emphasis is on women's coming-of-age ceremonies, but, as she notes, "[i]n the anthropological record of Northwest California, there is little discussion of Indigenous epistemologies of menstruation" (108). For Risling Baldy, a main reason for this erasure can likely be summed up by a single name: Alfred Kroeber—arguably one of the "fathers" of the American anthropology, early chair of Berkeley's still top-ranked department, warden of Ishi, and author of what remains a foundational text on the subject: *Handbook of the Indians of California* (1925). Consequently, Risling Baldy begins (re)writing the history of the Hupa by starting to right what is wrong with Kroeber's account. Because she cannot correct all of his 1,000-plus-page ethnography in her compact monograph, she chooses to focus on the reclamation of women's voices. She points out the fallacies that arise when a white man relies on postinvasion Indigenous male informants, which, unsurprisingly, results in the increased entrenchment of heteropatriarchal ideas in relation to the Hupa. For example, Risling Baldy notes:

Kroeber's approach to establishing the superiority of one Native culture over another included his designation of women's coming-of-age and menstruation ceremonies as "a mark of inferior cultural development." Kroeber wholeheartedly believed that tribes who continued to practice public puberty rites well into the contemporary period would never be able to reach the same level of civilization as tribes who had "never" had public puberty rites or who had given them up altogether. (83, internal citations omitted)

Risling Baldy challenges these notions, among others, influenced by salvage ethnography by conducting an extensive literature review of anthropological texts from the historical to the contemporary and theoretical works ranging from feminist to indigenous perspectives, in

addition to their various intersections.<sup>3</sup> She argues that Kroeber's "scholarship is deeply ingrained with a Western patriarchal belief that menstruation is dirty and polluting," which "meant that Kroeber was particularly critical of women's coming-of-age ceremonies and practices associated with women, menstruation, and power" (83). But, Risling Baldy does not stop there, she also uses primary texts—including Theodora Kroeber's analysis of her husband, Alfred Kroeber's own archive, as well as correspondence from his contemporaries—that reveal letters encouraging Kroeber to "'get in closer and closer contact with the Hupa Indians and take a good look at their religion'" (Risling Baldy 86). Ultimately, Risling Baldy counters the conclusions of Kroeber and his peers by sharing her own personal interviews with Hupa, Yurok, Karuk, and/or Wiyot peoples, usually those who identify as women, who articulate what was ignored, such as the significance of the Flower Dance to the "Athabascan cultures of California and the Southwest," with a specific focus on the Hoopa Valley Tribe (87).

According to Risling Baldy, pre-invasion, the Hupa culture recognized women as equals who possessed strength and luck, especially when menstruating (*tim-na'me*), but the introduction of notions of the "taboo" and Christian ideology, including the idea that women were the cause of original sin and should be subordinate to men, shifted community beliefs and practices. As a result, the Hupa went from performing public celebrations of menstruation to treating it as something that is shameful and should be hidden. In addition to other complicating factors that contributed to this change, Risling Baldy draws attention to a mistranslated word: *Min'ch*. Kroeber and his contemporary, linguist Pliny Earle Goddard—despite neither ever having seen one—contended that *Min'ch* signified a flimsy, temporary shelter known as a "menstrual hut," a term which also appears in the Hupa Online Dictionary (Risling Baldy 111, 169 n67). Risling Baldy challenges this definition by breaking down the linguistic roots to argue that *Min'ch* actually means "something like 'a small, familiar, or dear house'" (113).

However, Christianity and white anthropologists were not the only threat to the Hupa way of life. Risling Baldy argues that the miners (often known as the 49ers), rushing to conquer the land and profit from its resources, perceived coming-of-age ceremonies as fertility rites and an open invitation for sexual assault. As such, another part of the (re)writing and (re)righting is acknowledging the role violence and settler colonialism played in eliminating these rites and people. Or, as Risling Baldy's mother puts it: "My grandfather once told me, 'Remember, Granddaughter, you are alive because some miner was a bad shot'" (52).

Consequently, as Risling Baldy makes clear, many ceremonies are only available in a limited sense: they are found in the writings of white, usually male, anthropologists or government ethnographers and based on what the Indigenous populations were willing to share (some participated in ethnographic refusal). They are further compromised by the fact that what is documented is one particular version of a ceremony, as told by a handful of members—or maybe only one person—of a tribe, band, clan, or family. Hence, they must be (re)rited in that the ceremonies have to be pieced together, updated for the contemporary time, and reimagined to fill in the gaps that have been left, while accounting for the inherent variations and omissions of the "original." Risling Baldy ends her text by doing this work, documenting interviews with those who have participated in the Flower Dance performed by the Hoopa Valley Tribe since 2001, including the first woman to be celebrated in many generations, as well as the medicine women who performed the rite and a number of others who have been a part of this cultural

revitalization. Because of her close interactions with the participants and the community, Risling Baldy suggests that bringing this rite back into the public eye has had a positive impact on the members of the Hoopa Valley Tribe, including a slow, but steady, change in attitudes of and toward women, as well as beliefs about traditional ways. Precontact, *ch'itwa:l* (the Flower Dance) was originally intended to do be one of the four main ceremonial dances, the others being *xonsil'-ch'idilye* (the White Deerskin Dance), *xay-ch'idilye* (the Jump Dance), and *xon'na'we'* (the Brush Dance), with the first three being "world renewal dances" (19). Risling Baldy implies that the revitalization of the *ch'itwa:l*, the most female-focused dance, will start to restore balance (152).

That said, at times, *We Are Dancing For You* may seem like it has too much critical framing and might occasionally feel repetitive; however, this form may actually be necessary for the (re)righting of these ceremonies. Unfortunately, when someone is among the first to analyze or explore a subject, particularly when incorporating personal observations, interviews, or stories, and, *especially* when that person is challenging the established view of things as told by a respected, senior member in the field, like Risling Baldy does in this work, it becomes essential to demonstrate that one is well versed in the extant scholarship and can use that language fluently before introducing one's own argument and knowledge. In other words, in a world that continues to be predominantly heteropatriarchal, anyone who is not a cishet, white, Christian man must demonstrate that they have the right to speak, because, having gone through other rites of passage (such as earning a Ph.D.), they have the authority to do so. Risling Baldy moves between the worlds with ease: one moment calling out the aforementioned "heteropaternalism" or "heteropatriarchy" that were introduced postinvasion, then explaining the *ch'itwa:l* and *K'ixinay*, before shifting back into theory to show how these stories are part of "epistemological frameworks of decolonization, self-determination, sovereignty, and survivance" (8). Her research and bibliography are gifts to anyone who wants to better acquaint themselves with the field. Because each chapter is able to stand alone, it is a valuable pedagogical tool. Overall, *We Are Dancing For You* is a significant contribution to the growing field of scholarship on the Indigenous peoples of California.

*Crystal K. Alberts, University of North Dakota*

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, *Reel Injun* (2009) or an interview with the film's director, Neil Diamond, in *Indian Country Today*.

<sup>2</sup> Risling Baldy is an enrolled member. <https://www.cutcharislingbaldy.com/bio.html>

<sup>3</sup> Salvage ethnography is the belief that Indigenous peoples and cultures would soon be extinct, and a scholar should preserve whatever he could in the time that remained. See Jacob W. Gruber, "Ethnographic Salvage and the Shaping of Anthropology," *American Anthropologist*, New Series, Vol. 72, No. 6 (Dec., 1970), pp. 1289-1299.

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**John Borrows and Michael Coyle, editors. *The Right Relationship: Reimagining the Implementation of Historical Treaties*. University of Toronto Press, 2017. 428 pp. ISBN 978-1442630215**

<https://utorontopress.com/us/the-right-relationship-2>

A recent pattern in scholarly books focused on Indigenous law and policy is for the author (or authors) to take a side in a key debate that largely structures the field. On the one hand, powerful arguments are regularly made that decolonization and the power of self-determination for Indigenous communities must be pursued primarily by fully decoupling from western legal systems and norms. On the other side, one finds representatives of a more legal realist and reformist tradition, who point to the flexibility of legal systems and stress the possibility for change to be effected from within as well as outside of those norms and structures. To his credit, throughout his career Anishinaabe legal scholar John Borrows has managed to avoid the limitations of this binary. Instead, his work has continually highlighted the ways that the legal *nomos* (past and present) of First Nations peoples and the constitutional structure of Canada have the potential to become mutually transformative. In *The Right Relationship*, Borrows and co-editor University of Western Ontario law professor Michael Coyle have brought together a range of essays that embody that same spirit of creative legal thinking. Focusing specifically on the ongoing importance of treaty relationships between First Nations tribes and the national and regional governments of Canada, the book's contributors frankly, realistically, and sometimes hopefully assess the potential for treaty law to become a central tool for upending the repressive apparatus of settler colonialism in the modern state.

*The Right Relationship* is divided into three sections, the first of which highlights the ways that a historically-informed perspective on treaty negotiations and colonial history, dating back to the Eighteenth Century, should significantly alter the way that treaty relations today are understood and pursued. Borrows's essay on "Canada's Colonial Constitution" draws attention to the ways that the constitutional order and narratives of the Canadian state have mis-interpreted treaty history and forced First Nations communities into primary political relationships with provincial governments, as opposed to with the central government in Ottawa. This shoehorning of tribal peoples into the federalist structures of modern Canada has buttressed colonialism by rendering it exceptionally difficult for tribal people to navigate overlapping jurisdictions and to assert the kind of nation-to-nation relationships clearly intended in the original moment of treaty-making. Michael Coyle's contribution, "As Long as the Sun Sets," considers problems arising in the ongoing interpretation of treaty law in the Canadian Courts, an inevitable process owing to constantly changing contexts in which treaty provisions must be understood and enforced. Similar to Borrows, Coyle argues that a historical perspective should inform contemporary practice. In particular, he suggests that the historical record clearly shows that all parties to colonial-era treaty making understood themselves not to be engaged into the creation of temporally bounded executable contracts, but rather in the creation of on-going diplomatic

structures to allow for negotiated co-existence and mutual support—the kind of “right relationship” to which the book title alludes. A key problem, Coyle notes, is that the Canadian courts have employed a more static contractual-model in interpreting historical treaties, which is both a detriment to tribal communities and a source of ongoing political instability in the Canadian state. The third essay in this opening section, Kent McNeil’s “Indigenous Rights Litigation, Legal History, and the Role of Experts,” highlights one of the many challenges standing in the way of Coyle’s and Borrows’s more copious understanding of Canada’s legal heritage. Looking at actual case law and trial records, McNeil documents the ways that the court system relies in problematic ways on the testimony of expert witnesses (professional historians) with flawed or limited understandings of the legal issues at hand, allowing those experts to comment well outside of their actual expertise while also invalidating and silencing the voices of Indigenous litigants. The essay’s specific examples of testimony by University of Cambridge historian Paul McHugh are persuasive accounts of the ways that bias is structurally embedded in the settler-colonial system. In providing that perspective, McNeil offers an important corrective for any reader who comes away from the first two essays with an overly optimistic view of the possibilities for changing the ways that treaties are interpreted by the Canadian state. The problems of “relationship” are clearly at least as much political as they are strictly jurisprudential.

This emphasis on the interplay of historical, legal, and political discourses and practices I have been tracing continues to emerge throughout the collection, both in the remaining essays in Part I (by Julie Jai, Francesca Allodi-Ross, and Sara Graben and Matthew Mehaffey) and in the final two sections. In Part II, “The Role of Indigenous Legal Orders,” contributors Mark D. Walters, Aaron Mills, Heidi Kiiwetinepinesiik Stark, and Sarah Morales all highlight the vital need for Indigenous perspectives to be examined and understood in order to actualize the kinds of treaty relationships that *might* be able to achieve a true “reconciliation” that goes beyond the current, often cynical papering over of ongoing settler colonialism. A major theme in this section is the need to complicate western legal understandings of “rights” as a form of individual property, complicating that notion through Indigenous ideas like *bimaadiziwin* (the Anishinaabe concept of a “good life” predicated on harmony between individuals, communities, and the larger world of natural “relations”) or *ezhi-ogimaawaadizid* (the Anishinaabe imperative for those in positions of leadership to act in ways that recognize those for whom they are responsible). In Part III “Fitting the Forum to the Fuss,” Jacinta Ruru, Jean Leclair, Sara Seck, and Shin Imai focus their critical attention on the sites of interpretation and implementation of treaty law. Comparative perspectives are applied here to highlight the value of looking outside of current norms to find positive alternatives. Ruru, for example, considers the establishment in 2014 of a new forum for the adjudication of treaty remedies in New Zealand as a useful model for consideration in other contexts. Seck’s essay explores some of the ways that norms from international law might be usefully leveraged in domestic legal contexts. But always running throughout the collection are the kinds of cautionary notes represented in LeClair’s essay on “The Potentialities and Limits of Adjudication,” insisting that we not lose sight of the fact that all legal interpretation takes place within the context of structures of power. LeClair is able to show,

by reference to only a handful of recently-decided cases, that a clear-eyed and flexible strategy in litigation must be an essential part of the ongoing work of decolonization.

While the overview I have offered here might seem to suggest that *The Right Relationship* is a book that will only be of interest to legal scholars or individuals working in public policy, nothing could be further from the truth. While the contributors are all legal experts, the essays are written to be accessible to general readers. Each chapter opens with a helpful overview of the arguments being made, and the historical and legal context of each argument is presented fully within individual pieces. The discussions of Indigenous understandings of treaties and treaty making and the intricacies of tribal-centric political thought (particularly Anishinaabe thought) are also exceptionally rich. Take as whole, then, the arguments presented in this volume are both extremely smart and balanced. They combine a realistic sense of the challenges of decolonization with a deep understanding of the ongoing vitality of Indigenous law ways. In this respect, Borrows and Coyle have gathered together a group of voices that represent precisely the kind of well-informed, tough-minded optimism needed to underpin effective activism and advocacy.

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**Yael Ben-zvi. *Native Land Talk: Indigenous and Arrivant Rights Theories*. Lebanon, NH: Dartmouth College Press, 2018. 276 pp. ISBN: 9781512601466.**

<https://www.upne.com/1512601459.html>

In *Native Land Talk: Indigenous and Arrivant Rights Theories*, Yael Ben-zvi brilliantly employs Euro-American human rights theories to examine and compare the distinctive resistances of African and Indigenous Americans to colonization. Delving into a remarkable and varied array of resources—petitions, letters, newspaper articles, and speeches, among others—to examine Euro-American rights claims, Ben-zvi inventively applies these theoretical histories to the petitions and appeals for freedom and land made by Indigenous and African American peoples in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (roughly 1760-1840). The author closely analyzes aspects of settler rights claims and Indigenous and African American histories of resistance (or, as she terms them, “unsettlement projects”) that have received little scholarly attention, aligning the resistance of the latter communities with settler dehumanization and violence. Ben-zvi focuses on rights claims based on birthplace, stating that both colonization and what she casts as the separate resistances of African (“arrivant”) and Indigenous Americans were based in nativities: “*Native Land Talk* explores the historical legacies of struggles over the political significance of belonging, attachment to land, indigeneity, and diaspora” (5).

Ben-zvi’s text clearly presents the British history of positive birthright rooted in feudalism, and its asserted extension across the Atlantic to constitute “subinfeudation...the dominant logic by which settlers” established rights over Indigenous peoples (24). *Native Land* rigorously analyzes the British judicial precedents, colonial codes, and settler assertions—what Ben-zvi describes as “a unified discourse of rights theories”—used to construct a Eurocentric, imperial ideology of oppression, violence, and dehumanization; Ben-zvi does the groundbreaking work of examining how settlers employed this discourse. Her meticulous analysis of European rights as interpreted and extended by settlers is matched by her reflection on related texts and events worthy of close historical analysis. Ben-zvi offers a close reading of Olaudah Equiano’s *Interesting Narrative*, for example, as well as the writings of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Mohegan leaders (her engagement with the history of Brothertown on Oneida land is particularly valuable) and other Indigenous and African American petitioners and negotiators. The strange dichotomy between settler indifference to ancestral African American graves and their fascination with Indigenous American ones (a fascination that ultimately required the passage of NAGPRA [the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act]) is carefully detailed. Perhaps most captivating and original is her discussion of “divergent geopolitical perspectives, spatial practices, and perceptions of Native status in the 1785 negotiations over Cherokee lands in Hopewell” (124). In explicating the history of exploitation and land theft through European mapmaking and contrasting it with Cherokee perceptions of space, the author engages Indigenous perspectives, brilliantly employing cartography and transnational methodology. Ben-zvi’s meticulous research also presents a nuanced critique not only of Jeffersonian philosophy and Jackson’s willful flouting of the United States Supreme Court but also of recent Supreme Court decisions (Ginsburg’s majority opinion in *City of Sherrill v. Oneida Indian Nation*, 2005) reaffirming the theft of Indigenous land.

*Native Land Talk* also admirably attempts to construct a more sophisticated paradigm for discussing human rights, one that breaks through “the mutually exclusive Native/settler and black/white binaries” (67). Ben-zvi rightly asserts that “it would be wrong to assess...[resistance] from perspectives that privilege the settler regime’s orders of history, place, causality, and belonging” (210). Indeed, this is the major purpose of the text: to give voice to enslaved African Americans, freedmen, and Indigenous Americans subjected to and resisting colonial violence. Her frequent citing of their words enriches the text, as when, for example, she invokes a letter from 1793 by a confederacy of Indigenous nations critiquing U.S. expansionism: “Divide, therefore, this large sum of money, which you have offered to us, among these people. ... We are persuaded they would most readily accept it, in lieu of the lands you sold them” (149). Her citation of well-researched, early African American petitions is equally incisive and moving, as when she cites Peter Holbrook’s petition of 1773 thanking God for “lately put[ting] it into the Hearts of Multitudes on both sides of the Water, to bear our Burthens” (94). Ben-zvi’s summation of the European response to these heartfelt pleas is artful: “Indian removal confined Indians to the past through the trope of inevitable disappearance, while African colonization removed African Americans to an abstract, timeless Africa that seemed antithetical to Eurocentric progress” (6).

At moments, however, *Native Land Talk* slips into the construct it challenges, forcing Indigenous and African American voices into Eurocentric constructs. Although Ben-zvi critiques other scholarship for “requiring analyses based on Eurocentric politics and law as though this is the definitive, exclusive perspective from which rights can be studied” (4), *Native Land Talk* employs Euro-American notions of human rights to interpret African American and Indigenous worldviews. While she uses the words of Indigenous peoples found as “fragments in settler publications,” there is little invocation of Indigenous oral history or contemporary tribal perspectives or beliefs. Similarly, she discusses African American petitions in terms of their adoption of Euro-American ideology, rather than attending to the scholarship on unique diasporic cultures and philosophies. As a consequence of Ben-zvi’s employment of European rights discourse, she explicates John Locke and an interpretation of the Biblical Book of Lamentations, for example, rather than Mohegan indigenous cultural perspectives in interpreting Mohegan texts. The issue of Eurocentric language is also at play: in stating that “settlers produced Indigenous dispossession in order to repudiate Indigenous unsettlement initiatives” (126), she might more simply state that the actions and words of settlers justified their violence in the face of resistance.

In arguing that the presence of ancestral graves served Indigenous Americans as “trope,” “political logic,” and “spatially embodied history” that “shifted the logic” of “*partus sequitur ventrum*,” Ben-zvi also runs the risk of imposing Eurocentric logic upon non-European individual human subjects. Ancestral graves were not merely “central discursive elements” (191), but a part of sacred landscapes inseparable from Indigenous culture, language, and belief. Muscogee and Cherokee peoples did not precisely “use the dead to affirm the ongoing histories of their homelands, and...invalidate settler geopolitics” (208); rather, they honored their ancestors as part of a vast spiritual, cultural, and linguistic system, referring to graves not as a “tactic,” but as a wholistic means of referring to this system. To her credit, the author acknowledges that ancestral graves “facilitated complex, dynamic links between the people’s past, present, and future on its homeland” (197). In juxtaposing the rights claims of African and

Indigenous Americans, too, Ben-zvi also minimizes moments of collaboration and common purpose (the African American alliance with the Seminole, to name just one).

Yet Ben-zvi's emphasis upon the importance of the individual—particularly those marginalized by European rights theories and a unified discourse absent of “cultural, geopolitical, or historical particularities” (31)—remains clear. As she states, “human agency interacts with its enabling environmental conditions, thereby becoming meaningful in local, specific ways that resist Eurocentric definitions of human rights” (30). Ben-zvi's invaluable analysis of early African American petitions and Indigenous American letters and commentary, citing the individual voices of disenfranchised and marginalized peoples, brings home the argument she paraphrases of the Odawa leader, Egushawa: “land could not be abstracted from its relations to the communities that inhabited it, giving it specific socio-historic-political meanings” (142). In her close attention to individual voices preserved in little-discussed historical documents—her careful analysis and naming of individuals who attempted to negotiate with or resist domination and violence—Ben-zvi makes a valuable contribution to scholarship on African and Indigenous American agency within the history of colonialism and to scholarship bringing forward specific African and Indigenous American voices that resisted Euro-American violence.

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**Raymond I. Orr. *Reservation Politics: Historical Trauma, Economic Development, and Intratribal Conflict*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2017. 239pp. ISBN: 978-0-80-61-53-9**

<http://www.oupress.com/ECommerce/Book/Detail/2213/reservation%20politics>

In the 1980 Supreme Court Case *United States v. Sioux Nation of Indians*, the judiciary ordered the payment of “just compensation to the Sioux Nation” in the form of hundreds of millions of dollars as restitution for the illegal annexation of the Black Hills in the late 1870s (Blackmun 424). The Lakota people turned down the government’s offer and have continued to do so to this day, even as the fund set aside for their payment has ballooned with interest to well over \$1billion. The motivating question behind Raymond I. Orr’s *Reservation Politics: Historical Trauma, Economic Development, and Intratribal Conflict* is: why has the Lakota leadership declined this wealth in the face of the massive economic and social challenges facing their people?

It is a fair question and one that is well worth asking. Orr, a political scientist at the University of Oklahoma, argues that this question, as well as several other contemporary political questions spread across multiple reservations, can be answered by examining what he calls a given society’s “worldview.” This is a spacious term, and Orr goes to some length pinning it down to a concrete meaning for the purposes of his argument: “A *worldview* ... is the interpretation about the world and our role in it ... constituted from the intersection of our motivations and how we frame or perceive our surroundings” (5). In short, Orr’s central claim is that to understand why a given tribal government makes particular political choices, one must first understand the long-term historical processes at play within a given society, especially the instances (or absences) of major community trauma.

*Reservation Politics* uses a comparative analysis of three reservation governments – the Citizen Potawatomi in Oklahoma, the Isleta Pueblos in New Mexico, and the Rosebud Sioux in South Dakota – to examine the way an Indigenous group’s worldview shapes their reaction to political questions and crises. Orr dives deep into the often complicated and fraught world of intratribal politics and adeptly explains the factions, motivations, and fractures at play in a diverse array of political contexts. Of notable strength is Orr’s examination of the Isleta Pueblo and the importance of witches and other “common secrets” (informal community knowledge often ignored in scholarly literature) within their community. In describing complicated, sometimes puzzling, political and social systems, Orr’s analysis and writing is strong and deft.

Equally impressive is the care Orr shows in describing important, though delicate, social systems and relationships. He utilizes informant interviews with the respect and care indicative of long-term, carefully cultivated relationships based upon mutual trust. On the topic of witchcraft within the Isleta Pueblo community, Orr readily admits that “there are sensitivities around the subject of witchcraft” which he understandably respects and which informed his research and writing (150). But when he “asked those willing to discuss witchcraft whether it should be written about

... Most told me that writing about Isleta society and politics would be incomplete” without doing so (150). Here and throughout the text, *Reservation Politics* takes seriously the fraught nature of social science research in non-Euro-American cultures and lets the research subjects and informants guide the argument and evidence.

However, despite Orr’s well-placed care, the book’s analysis is nonetheless flawed in critical ways. The historical processes which serve as explanatory factors in crafting an individual group’s worldview are often ahistorical and overly simplistic. Orr draws on Freud and Nietzsche (two individuals who, he recognizes, are themselves fraught with historical baggage) among more contemporary social science research to describe the role of trauma in Indigenous societies. “Collectively traumatizing events could be wars, starvation, genocide, and forced relocation,” Orr writes, citing events which North American Indian societies have experienced in spades, and “it should not be unexpected that years of prolonged and direct experience with traumatic events ... would incline individuals toward a melancholic worldview” (70-71). Orr groups his worldview concepts into two broad forms: melancholic, which is shaped by historical trauma, and self-interested, which is created by processes of economic development (9). It is in these broad categories, such as trauma, melancholy, and economic development, that the analysis in *Reservation Politics* falls short. Trauma, for instance, seems to be only inflicted by white colonizers, which ignores the complex social and political webs into which European empires embedded themselves beginning in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Do slave raids by the Yamasee and Westos upon their rivals in the American southeast in the early eighteenth century count as traumatic experiences with similar multi-generational effects as forced relocation? Did attacks and horse raids by nomadic Lakotas and Arapaho upon the more sedentary Mandan at the beginning of the nineteenth century also create historical trauma with twenty-first century implications?

To be sure, neither of these events were destructive on the scale of outright imperial warfare or forced marches and relocations, but such distinctions are not made in *Reservation Politics*, and trauma remains an ill-defined concept throughout the book. Moreover, Orr’s deployment of the concept of trauma and its influence in Lakota politics verges at times on victim-blaming. “Conflict seems internalized among the Lakotas,” he writes toward the end of the book, “neither the white world, as construed by them, nor that of outsiders engages in reservation pillaging or conducts raids on this community ... [C]onflict and violence, I claim, are often internalized” (178-79). Although it is never explicitly stated, Orr’s implicit answer to the question of why Lakota leadership has refused to accept the Black Hills restitution is that they have made the choice out of a deep-seated, community-wide tendency toward self-sabotage and that his recommendation would be that they simply take the money. This line of argument is misguided at best, pernicious at worst and is laced throughout the back third of the text. “Why we are inclined to seek out our disappointments and frustrations is an interesting question,” Orr muses in the final chapter, before commenting that “[a] community, such as that of Rosebud, seems to instigate painful events,” and while “the Black Hills matter might concern honor ... the Lakotas, I believe, refuse to find closure and therefore continue at least some of the trauma of



colonization” (185). Despite his expertise in the politics within Indigenous societies, Orr’s prescriptive message is less than unhelpful here.

Not all the discussion of multi-generational trauma in *Reservation Politics* is quite so tainted. Orr’s use of still-emerging epigenetic science to describe the effects of multi-generational trauma is tantalizing and worthy of greater inclusion in work by social scientists and humanists. However, his narrow definition of what constitutes trauma as well as his apparent diagnosis of flawed Native decision making are difficult to reconcile with the more well-realized portions of the book. Other important and broad concepts such as “melancholia” and “economic development” also fail to find specific historical grounding and are presented as static, vague, and ideal categories, despite Orr’s occasional caveats.

Similarly lacking is Orr’s historiographical intervention. The author is quite right to suggest that scholars need to produce more historical and social science writing on the conflicts and politics within reservations in the twentieth century. However, Orr’s argument that historians are loath to do so because they believe “perhaps it is better to stay quiet on contemporary intratribal and intra-ethnic politics” because of “sensitivities about what should be said” or because “it might be more difficult to remain neutral” are unfounded (29). Indeed, several works exist in the historiography which capably and fearlessly examine the role intra-tribal conflict has played in Indigenous politics, including Akim Reinhardt’s excellent *Ruling Pine Ridge* (2009) and Paul Chaat Smith and Robert Allen Warrior’s classic *Like a Hurricane* (1997), neither of which Orr cites. More research should indeed be done in this field, but the historiographical hole is not so dire as Orr contends, nor is there much evidence that historians and social scientists have avoided the topic out of fear.

*Reservation Politics* is a provocative and often frustrating book. Scholars interested in the issues facing contemporary Native American societies will find it useful for its clarity in describing the complex dilemmas facing the three case study reservations Orr describes. The book is also a good model for how to write comparative analysis. However, the intellectual framework upon which Orr’s argument rests, while certainly compelling in its unique perspective, is shaky and significantly less well-conceived.

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**Walter D. Mignolo and Catherine E. Walsh. *On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics, Praxis*. Duke University Press, 2018. 304pp. ISBN 978-0-8223-7109-0.**

<https://www.dukeupress.edu/on-decoloniality>

Duke University Press's new series on decoloniality, of which Mignolo and Walsh's text is the first product, aims "to interconnect perspectives, expressions, thought, struggles, processes, and practices of decoloniality that are emerging in and from different corners of the globe" (1). Counter to the order of the subtitle, the opening volume is organized so as to emphasize the centrality of praxis in decolonial thought and work. After the co-written introduction, the first section, by Walsh, focuses on "Decoloniality in/as Praxis," discussing examples of decolonial praxes in different locations, while the second, by Mignolo, theorizes and historicizes decoloniality and "The Decolonial Option." The book is closed by a conversation between both co-authors, collecting final (as for now) thoughts. The chapters have many intratextual references, showing intricate relations between the ideas and the praxes discussed in different parts of the text. Written in a reflective style, it should invite the reader into the conversation and the praxis of decoloniality. However, the theoretical section builds heavily on Mignolo's field of semiotics, which could trouble the accessibility of the argument for uninitiated readers.

Central to Walsh and Mignolo's approach to decoloniality is the emphasis on relationality, conceptualized through "vincularidad." Walsh and Mignolo learned the term from "Andean Indigenous thinkers, including Nina Pacari, Fernando Huanacuni Mamani, and Félix Patzi Paco" (1); its use makes visible the genealogy of *On Decoloniality*'s project. "Vincularidad" names the relations between all living beings and the land. In the North American context, this belief is often referred to via the Lakota concept of mitákuye oyás'īŋ, commonly translated as "all our relations." In this spirit, the aim of both this volume and the following texts in the series is to offer insights garnered from local, specific praxes and analytics, which could *relate to or correlate with* praxes and analytics in other locations, rather than claiming universal applicability of its terms. Mignolo and Walsh want a discussion of "*pluriversal decoloniality and decolonial pluriversality*" (2) – that is to say, multiple decolonial approaches from multiple locations through multiple conceptual frames, enacted through embodied ways of knowing rather than the "dislocated, disembodied, and disengaged abstraction" of Western so-called universals (3).

Buried in the middle of section II, chapter 6 ("The Conceptual Triad") is a statement by Mignolo that gets to the heart of *On Coloniality*'s argument and purpose:

Liberation is through thinking and being otherwise. Liberation is not something to be attained; it is a process of letting something go, namely, the flows of energy that keep you attached to the colonial matrix of power, whether you are in the camp of those who sanction or the camp of those sanctioned. (148)

Similar to the current conversation in American Indian/First Nations studies, the emphasis of *On Decoloniality*'s project is on something akin to resurgence, termed "re-existence" by Walsh and the organizing theme of her section. "Re-existence" centers a strengthening of Indigenous practice and praxis over a focus on decolonization. Rather than fixating on what the (settler) colonial needs in order to be convinced of Indigenous freedom, the aim is to achieve liberation through strengthening Indigenous existence and re-existence. The goal is not "decolonization," a

point that is both an end and a new beginning, often mandated by a state which still exists within colonial terms (both Walsh and Mignolo refer to African countries as still having been built on colonial terms rather than by Indigenous government structures and/or geographical organization and consequently doomed to fail in their decolonial promise). Rather, as in the quote above, “decoloniality” is a continual process of “delinking” (see Mignolo’s earlier work) from the “colonial matrix of power” and “relinking” to Indigenous ways of knowing and structuring the world. Decolonization is action; theory is made through action or “embodied practice” (35). This, so far as the “colonial matrix of power” exists in its global encompassing structures, is a daily assignment, a way of being, a way of knowing, a constant struggle against cooptation and *for* Indigenous ways of knowing and being. Walsh, in her section, offers examples of decolonial praxes less known to English language readers. She discusses “Amawtay Wasi (House of Wisdom), the Intercultural University of Indigenous Nationalities and Peoples of Ecuador” (69) which failed in its decolonial purpose to be recognized by the state as a university and was eventually closed by the state. This case study is contrasted with “Mexico’s Universidad de la Tierra (University of the Earth),” which never aimed for state recognition (72). Contrary to Amawaytay Wasi, “Unitierra” as it is known, is conceptualized “not *from* but *with* Indigenous struggles and postulates of knowledge, in conversation with other forms of critical thought and liberation-based theory and praxis” (73). This learning through “deschooling” (73), or learning entirely without the Western-style institutions of learning, is decoloniality in action.

Another key concept to the praxis and theory Walsh and Mignolo discuss is that of “modernity/coloniality,” a “compound expression” which conveys the notion that “there is no modernity without coloniality” and which functions in this text as the shorthand for the “colonial matrix of power” (4). Mignolo, in his section, offers a history of the construction of the “colonial matrix of power” (a concept coined by Anibal Quijano; those familiar with Mignolo’s work will recognize Quijano, who has been at the center of Mignolo’s work since the 1990s) and of how languaging (“enunciation”) is the true regulator of power: Mignolo argues that the way the world is known directly correlates to the way the world is owned and controlled. Specifically, Western naming and mapping are what establish Western pronunciations of ownership and control. The historical evidence used to ground this assertion is that other peoples had traveled the world and made maps before the 1500s, but it was Europe’s claims to knowledge and the spreading of a European version of knowledge through maps and written accounts that made it possible for European settlers to “discover” the lands and waters and, thus, to claim them for themselves. The decolonial response to this epistemic colonialism (which, in this argument, is the precursor of all colonial power), is something Mignolo calls “epistemic reconstitution,” which he defines as “to delink from the CMP [colonial matrix of power] in order to re-link and to re-exist” (227, 229). This re-constitution and re-existence should be grounded in the local knowledge and worldview, resist the power of modernity/coloniality’s epistemology, and so necessarily be pluriversal, depending on location. Mignolo’s section moves through a lot of history and a lot of places to be able to make and support its claims about the historical development of the colonial matrix of power; consequently, it lacks nuance in some places and could irk a reader with in-depth knowledge of some of these particular moments, places, or histories.

Speaking about praxes and analytics based in the location of its authors as intellectuals from (Mignolo) or based in (Walsh) Central and South America, the book’s/series’ argument has a geographically global scope and, historically, goes back to the origination of the human. This

introductory volume addresses some other worldviews but is fairly limited in its discussion of North American thinkers, despite its focus on “the Americas” – referred to as “Abya Yala” by Walsh, “the name that the *Kuna-Tule* people (of the lands now known as Panama and Colombia) gave to the ‘Americas’ before the colonial invasion”) (21). Aside from a quick reference to Glen Coulthard’s work on the politics of recognition in Canada, Leanne Simpson is the only other North American Indigenous thinker with whom this volume engages. That said, the organization of the book, theorizing through praxis and focusing on resurgence/re-existence, recalls Winona LaDuke’s work, as well as many others currently practicing and writing about Indigenous resurgence practices in what is currently referred to as North America. With the theoretical and structural connections seemingly so present, and both authors’ obvious connections to North America (Mignolo is Argentinian but works at Duke University in North Carolina, U.S., and Walsh is American but works at the Universidad Andina Simón Bolívar in Ecuador), one might wonder why the authors chose not to spend a bit more time and space on the peoples of that geographical area. Throughout their writing, Mignolo and Walsh repeat the important claim (seated in the theory and practice they discuss) that they do not want to represent all Indigenous peoples and knowledges, but that they instead start from their localities, in Central and South America, to make larger claims that could be true more generally, without claiming universality. Referencing Leanne Simpson’s work on resurgence sets up the option to a clear parallel between this work and the North American Indigenous theories and praxes on resurgence: from theorists like Sium and Ritskes and many others to lived resurgence, like the annual Canoe Journey in the U.S. Pacific Northwest or the centering of Indigenous language learning in many First Nations. Walsh and Mignolo’s praxis and theoretical framework offer a localized approach to decoloniality that can only deepen the understanding of the need for Native resurgence and re-existence in all their particularities and makes another opening for international Indigenous nation-to-nation relations beyond the nations in what is currently considered North America. Perhaps the following books in the series will take up some of the leads presented here.

As the first book in the *Decoloniality* series, it sets the tone and terms; it opens the conversation on decoloniality that is relevant globally as the Right rises and the colonial matrix of power is only strengthened through global capitalism. *On Decoloniality* brings important insights to the fore from locations not as well-known by English-reading theorists who might not concentrate on colonial language areas other than English. This work’s focus on re-existence and decoloniality as a verb (rather than decolonization as an end goal) is timely also for those working in Native American and First Nations studies, as Walsh and Mignolo offer a plurality of options for relating, learning, and sharing in the work of decoloniality.

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**Stephanie Woodard. *American Apartheid: The Native American Struggle for Self-Determination and Inclusion*. IG Publishers, 2018. 288 pp. ISBN 978-1632460684.**

<https://www.igpub.com/american-apartheid/>

The United States, in the age of Trump, has entered an era in which our politics have become animated by unprecedented levels of corruption and mendacity, while a significant portion of the populace has been driven to vigorous displays of dissatisfaction and protest in response. If this all seems strange and new to many of us, however, it is a reality that has cast a long historical shadow over Indian Country. Stephanie Woodard's new book *American Apartheid* provides an up to date roadmap of the ongoing battles of Native peoples in the U.S. to retain their land base, secure voting rights, halt the exploitative extraction of resources on their lands, and stem the tide of abuse, neglect, and coercion that has often defined relationships with the settler colonial powers that Woodard likens to the oppressive South African system referenced in her title.

Woodard, although not Native herself, has spent nearly the last two decades reporting on indigenous affairs in respected alternative media outlets such as *Indian Country Media Network*, *In These Times*, and *Yes*. Although her reporting at times lacks the granular detail one might expect in a more tribally specific, or even geographically focused, scholarly study, it is clear that Woodard has established trusting relationships with peoples in indigenous communities across much of the country and has served as an effective advocate and ally. Not surprisingly, recent events at the Standing Rock Indian Reservation (Íŋyaŋ Woslál Háŋ) provide a kind of touchstone for the general reader who may have no frame of reference for Native activism beyond the highly publicized 2016-2017 standoff to halt construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline. But Woodard is quick to acknowledge that Native activism long precedes Standing Rock, and her book bears witness to that broader range of cultural and political struggles, zeroing in on her field reporting in Native space, but providing ample historical context covering centuries of survivance. In observing the resilience of Native peoples through all these conflicts, Woodard comes to regard indigenous culture as "a shield that has persisted, indeed thrived, despite all efforts to stamp, starve and regulate it out of existence (xii).

Each chapter in *American Apartheid* is laid out in regards to a specific issue, with the first chapter dedicated to resource extraction on indigenous lands, the second chapter devoted to voting rights, the third to issues of cultural preservation and repatriation, and so on. Because Woodard's reporting over the years has been fairly extensive on each of these issues, she doesn't focus on simply one story or incident per chapter, but instead expands upon a range of encounters with indigenous nations, from New Mexico to Alaska, whose experiences help to illuminate systemic patterns of abuse. For instance, in chapter four, which covers ongoing issues of incarceration, jurisdiction, and police violence both on and off the reservations, she touches base with events effecting the Puyallup, the Northern Cheyenne, the Lakota and others. Her method is typically to locate leaders, activists, or individuals within the indigenous community whose lives have been touched by the issue in question, and to embed herself to some degree in the actions forged to address and confront these issues. This approach helps us to see, in a holistic manner, how indigenous communities are responding to these terrific historical challenges.

We can see how this works when, in the fourth chapter entitled “Rough Justice,” Woodard reports on the death of Jaqueline Saylers of the Puyallup Tribe, who in January of 2016 was shot at close range by police in Tacoma, Washington while in her car, despite being unarmed (145). Although the police were ultimately cleared of charges, the Puyallup were not prepared to let matters drop. In response, they forged “Justice for Jackie, Justice for All,” which began as a support group among family members, but grew into a community-wide gathering of Native, black, white, and Latino citizens, all concerned or personally effected by the issue of escalating police violence. Woodard offers the testimony of various speakers at these meetings but trains her attention on Jackie’s uncle, James Rideout, who, recognizing a responsibility to care for all those in attendance, gathers fresh crab from Puget Sound before the event. Rideout explains to Woodard that “Puyallup” translates into English as “the generous welcoming people.” He explains that “when the police killings happened to people who didn’t have a tribe to back them up, they were alone, on their own out there. When our tribe took a position on the issue, we realized we had an opportunity to take care of them all, to bring them along with us” (168). Tim Renyon, a tribal council member who also speaks with Woodard, clarifies that this is precisely “the original significance of what it means to be a tribe” (169). Moments like these in the book demonstrate Woodard’s sensitivity to discursive frameworks of indigenous-centered knowledge and offer a poignant glimpse into the very human responses surrounding otherwise tragic and difficult, if not atypical, circumstances.

The importance of human relationships privileged in *American Apartheid* are supplemented by the reporting of historical contexts and statistics that, while perhaps not surprising or new to Native Studies scholars, will be helpful to the average reader for whom this book is presumably written. Woodard points to the despoliation of Native lands, observing how a quarter of superfund sites in America are located on Indian reservations (138). She reports on incarceration rates for Natives that are 38% higher than other Americans. While Native peoples comprise a very small percentage of the American population she writes that Native children are “three times as likely to be under lock and key as white kids” (147). Because of unique jurisdiction issues pertaining to tribal lands, even misdemeanors are likely to be tried in Federal Court and typically result in stiff sentencing. Meanwhile, as a result of legal arrangements dating as far back as the 1887 Indian Allotment Act, Native individuals often remain unable to obtain even a fraction of market value for the leasing of tribal lands or the extraction of resources. Taking a long historical view, Woodard notes how the tribes were transformed “from flourishing pre-Contact societies to today’s marginalized and often poverty-stricken communities,” walled off from surrounding prosperity by “federal policies, bureaucratic incompetence, official corruption and racism” (5).

Although Native peoples have fought tirelessly for decades to change these entrenched practices, there are systems set in place to prevent meaningful reform. Woodard reports effectively on how laws have been used, across the nation, to suppress Native votes, particularly in sparsely populated states where Native voter turnout could potentially turn the tide of an election. Those living on reservations, lacking local polling places, typically have to travel hundreds of miles of bad road back and forth to cast their votes, and often face intimidation when they do so. Although Federal laws require that voting be accessible, little effort is extended to meet this requirement on reservations that are, by design, secluded from major population centers. As one

Navajo citizen incredulously exclaims, “don’t penalize me because of who I am and where I live. The government put us on this reservation, and now we can’t vote because we live here” (56-57).

In the village of Togiak, in the Bristol Bay region of Alaska, Woodard reports on how voter turnout among indigenous peoples rose substantially after extensive legal battles requiring ballots to be translated into the Yup’ik language. In addition, early voter opportunities were enacted in order to accommodate subsistence hunting practices that made it virtually impossible for all voters to appear on a single prescribed day. Arriving by bush plane to observe the election day results in Togiak, Woodard notes the enthusiasm of the community at the increased participation, and later attends a celebration feast consisting of local fare such as whale blubber, beaver, moose, herring roe on fronds of kelp, and baked, dried, and jerked salmon. In a conversation with Nicole Borromeo of the Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN), she is told, “our people have a hunger to vote. They go to huge lengths to do so and overcome barriers no one else in the country faces” (76). As a result of the increased voter participation on that day, Woodard reports that Alaska’s Natives were able to “elect a Native lieutenant governor, raise Alaska’s minimum wage and create barriers to placing copper, gold, and molybdenum mines in the watershed of the bay” (76).

There are a few loose ends the book neglects to tie up, narratives threads one might wish to revisit even if the legal battles in question remain unresolved, and some might fault Woodard for being partial in her coverage to western plains and Alaskan Native groups. East coast Nations receive scant attention despite, in many cases, having endured the strains of this “apartheid” system for a greater period of time. Certain issues, such as the epidemic of sexual violence against Native women, while referenced, are not given as much attention as they seem to deserve. Nevertheless, *American Apartheid* effectively covers a great deal of journalistic ground. It is a useful and informative book that certainly might be assigned, either as a whole or by selected chapters, in classes designed to introduce contemporary concerns of indigenous communities to students. The conversations are surprisingly current, taking us into legal decisions only just being brought down by the current administration. But, more importantly, Woodard remains up to date on the ways that Native peoples are defining their struggle, survival, and sovereign identity under long-sustained settler colonial oppression. She discusses culturally engaged educational initiatives and reforms taking place on reservations, how indigenous social workers are using traditional practices to address the ongoing generational traumas of boarding school programs and adoption policies, how the identification of ancient Pueblo aqueducts and water filtration systems might have implications for current legislative action, and she pays special attention to the multigenerational concerns of indigenous leaders who wish to pass along lifeways and resources to their children and grandchildren.

Visiting an ancient camp of the Western Shoshone with tribal member Joseph Holley and his two grandchildren, Woodard observes how historic sites, medicinal herbs, and other artifacts like arrowheads found along the trail were discussed, handled, and carefully placed back in their proper place by the young children. Part of this area was bulldozed over by a mining company in 2016 to make way for a powerline, despite the fact that the site had been determined as eligible for consideration in the National Register of Historic Places. Although the loss from such wanton, toxic, destruction is immeasurable, Holley remains invested in affording his grandchildren the opportunity to engage with this space, so that “the children can then look at



our modern camp and see that it reflects the old one, with places to sleep, cook, gather, work, and pray. They understand that they are part of the entire story” (117). Woodard’s *American Apartheid* offers readers a window into that story as well. Her years of reporting and dedication to the stories coming out of Native space are condensed into very readable, engaging, and informative passages that speak not only to the inevitable and far-reaching consequences of unrelenting materialism and greed in our time, but to the remarkable endurance of indigenous peoples against continuing settler-colonial infractions.

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**Angela Hovak Johnston, editor. *Reawakening Our Ancestors' Lines: Revitalizing Inuit Traditional Tattooing*. Inhabit Media, 2017, 70 pp. ISBN: 978-1-77227-169-0**

Our libraries and book stores are well stocked with publications about the sociology, anthropology, archaeology and history of tattooing around the world. However, the one reviewed here is quite unique. It is the result of an eight year-long personal project by Inuit artist Angela Hovak Johnston to revive the tattooing tradition of Inuit women in Nunavut, Canada. This traditional art had almost disappeared after it was banned by missionaries and residential schools, and it seemed even more threatened when the last Inuit woman to carry such body prints died in 2005. This was the trigger for this project, which lead Johnson and her acolytes to work together in the *Tattoo Revitalization Project*: Marjorie Tungwenuk Tahbone, a traditional Inupiaq tattoo artist from Alaska who taught Johnston the hand poking and hand stitching tattooing techniques; Denis Nowoselski, a contemporary tattoo artist from Yellowknife; Cora De Vos, an Inuk photographer from Alberta; and elder Alice Hitkoyak Ayalik from Nunavut.

The anthropologist and archaeologist in me regrets that the author did not wish to use traditional materials to revive this ancestral art, preferring metal, cotton and ink to bone, sinew, oil and soot. However, the goal was not to replicate this art in all its details, but rather to revive an old technique and resurrect, by the same token, a form of expression almost gone. Traditionally, these tattoos were a rite of passage to puberty, indicating that a woman was ready to endure pain, give birth, and take care of her husband and children. As Catherine Niptanatiak, one of the participants in the project, points out, the tattoos also served as a spiritual protection against the forces of nature (20). For others still, they were simply made to look beautiful.

This book presents a portrait of about thirty women of all ages (from thirteen to seventy-three years old) from the village of Kugluktuk, Nunavut, who agreed to be tattooed by Tahbone and Johnston in 2016. It is their stories that are told through "the personal journeys of the modern Inuit women who inherited the right to be tattooed for strength, beauty, and existence, and to reclaim our history" (4). Some of these women also learned how to use this traditional art during the project, contributing to its revitalization and perpetuation.

A majority of the women chose to receive modest tattoos with simple, yet elegant designs, which are worn with obvious pride: "I can't explain the feeling of pride I have for my facial tattoos" (24), says Colleen Nivingalok, another participant. It is this sense of pride, in addition to the smiles and the joy in the women's eyes, that De Vos managed to capture in her magnificent photos, along with female solidarity. The women in this book all look amazingly beautiful, proud and strong. Some photos also show tears and suffering, and some testimonials are quite moving. For example, April Hakpitok Pigalak talks about an elder who once came to tell stories to a group of young children, but when asked to talk about an old tradition, she refused and remained silent, because she had always been told to no longer practice it (18).

Many participants emphasize the importance of reconnecting with their culture and ancestors, of passing on their knowledge and traditions to their children and grandchildren. This is probably the reason why so many of the designs they chose represent relatives and siblings. Some others are abstract or symbolic representations of the natural elements of the landscape where they live or from which they come. Janelle Angulalik explains that "Since I got my tattoo people say I

look like my granny and my dad” (34), while Jaime Dawn Kanagana Kudlak says that “My aunty Emily is the second person so far to get this tattoo. [...] Since I got this tattoo, I can feel our connection is much stronger” (32). For Mary Ann Kilak Niptanatiak Westwood, it was important to “continue with some of our traditions and also have what grandmothers had” (42).

Although I acknowledge that Johnston is an artist, not a writer or a scientist, I do believe that one important thing missing from this book is an historical or anthropological introduction to the Inuit traditional art of tattooing. It would have provided a useful context to understand the importance of tattooing among ancestral Inuit societies. Perhaps the author could have sought the help of an academic collaborator in this domain to write that up. Moreover, while some stories are powerful and moving, they are frequently too short, mostly taking up three or four paragraphs only. As a reader I wanted to know more about these women. What is their life history? Do they come from similar socioeconomic backgrounds? How were they chosen to participate in the project? What do other, non-tattooed, people of their community think about tattooed people? In my view, the most interesting testimonials are the few that are slightly longer (though still only one page long), such as that of Wynter Kuliktana Blais, who talks about her balanced life between the contemporary and the traditional worlds. Also, the book is almost entirely focused on the positive aspects of the project, which is legitimate, but one wonders what were the problems, obstacles, frustrations, or surprises that must have occurred while running the project, or during its preparation phase. Why did it took eight years to realize, for example? Why were such issues completely omitted? Was it for fear of possibly ending with a less positive or optimistic message?

While this book will be of special interest to most Native Peoples, I suspect that non-Native students, teachers, and academics in the social sciences and the humanities will also find pleasure and interest in reading it, as will the general public since it is simply written, jargon-free, richly illustrated, and affordable. I am also delighted to think that it will bring an unfamiliar aspect of Inuit culture to the attention of many readers. However, the latter should pay close attention to the author’s polite call for non-Inuit people not to receive or replicate tattoos with traditional Inuit designs, so that they will not interfere with this unique and important effort to reappropriate and revitalize an esteemed tradition that was almost lost.

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**Mark van de Logt. *Monsters of Contact: Historical Trauma in Caddoan Oral Traditions.* Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press: 2017. xvii + 252 pp. ISBN: 9780806160146**

<http://www.oupres.com/ECommerce/Book/Detail/2288/monsters%20of%20contact>

This book by Mark van de Logt considers the origins of monsters that occur in the oral traditions of the Caddoan language-speaking Arikara, Pawnee, Wichita, and Caddo nations of the northern, central, and southern Plains and the Pineywoods and Oak-Hickory Savannah of Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Texas. Rather than viewing the monsters as signs of fantasy and myth in stories told by these people, the author convincingly makes the case that they are related to specific historical events and traumas whose origins occur after European contact in the mid-sixteenth century, during a period marked by invasion, war, colonialism, disease, enslavement, starvation, and death. In van de Logt's view, these stories started out as actual events from the observed past and became legends and myths as they were passed down over generations. Thus, he argues, "oral traditions... [are] historical sources comparable in status to Euro-American sources" (25).

Following a careful consideration of storytelling and historicizing oral traditions in Part I, the monsters van de Logt discusses in Parts II and III of this book are specific to each Caddoan Indian oral tradition while the traditions themselves are related to each tribe's unique history and historical experiences. For example, van de Logt begins with the whirlwinds in the Arikara oral tradition, arguing that the whirlwinds which came to destroy the Arikara people represent a series of European-introduced epidemic diseases in the eighteenth century, particularly the smallpox epidemic of 1780-1781. These epidemics reduced the population of the Arikara by about 80-90 percent. The destructive power of the whirlwinds and epidemic diseases greatly weakened Arikara society, and the epidemics were, van de Logt writes, a "disaster of cosmic proportions" (74).

In the case of the Pawnee stories in Parts II and III, van de Logt first addresses the Flint Monster who was terrorizing the people until a young hero killed the monster with a magical willow stick. Van de Logt hypothesizes that the Flint Monster is actually an armor-wearing Spaniard or Apache (or Navaho) Indian from the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries who engaged in obtaining slaves for Spanish markets in New Mexico; the young hero may have been a French *coureur de bois* who killed the armor-wearing monster with a gun. From these story lines, it seems clear that European metal weapons played an important role in the history of Caddoan peoples, as sources of material and spiritual power; subsequently, the Pawnees in the early 1700s began to fight back against armor-wearing foes with firearms provided by French traders. The second Pawnee story in the book concerns the story of scalped men who survived their mutilation and were transformed from people feared by the people into figures with sacred and spiritual powers. Van der Logt links the increased scalping of Pawnee individuals to nineteenth-century genocidal attacks by the Lakota and Cheyenne—due in part to Anglo-American colonialism, settlement expansion, and ready access to guns and horses—on Pawnee settlements, their intent being "to wipe the Pawnee from the face of the earth" (164). With the increased intensity of war between the Pawnee and the Lakota and Cheyenne between the 1830s and 1870s, scalped men became likely sources of spiritual power. Pahukatawa was perhaps the

most significant scalped man because he became a great Pawnee prophet who gave the people hope.

The Wichita story in Part II deals with an evil witch-woman who captured children, hairless and headless men who may have been monks, and the story of Coyote and Spider-Man who rescued a child who was being tortured on an exploding pole (i.e., a cannon) by the evil woman. Van de Logt relates these stories to the 1758 attack by the Wichita, Comanche, and other “Norteno” tribes on the Spanish mission of Santa Cruz de San Saba in modern-day Central Texas, as well as to the Spanish and Indian (such as the Apache and Osage tribes) slave trading common at that time. Van de Logt uses a painting, “*The Destruction of Mission San Sabá in the Province of Texas and the Martyrdom of the Fathers Alonso de Terreros, Joseph Santiesteban*” (c.1765) to link the massacre to details in the Wichita story, concluding that Spider-Man was a Frenchman who had provided guns to the “Nortenos.”

In 1541-42, the De Soto entrada came among the Caddo peoples living in what is now southwestern Arkansas and East Texas. Two Caddo stories concern a masked, old cannibal man who killed Caddos with a mask that had a spiked iron nose, but who was eventually killed by the Caddo with a corn pounder. Van der Logt suggests that the cannibal man may fit the description of a conquistador in the De Soto entrada in Caddo country and that the spiked iron nose may be part of a helmet or iron-tipped lance used by a conquistador during battles and warfare with the Caddo at places such as the village of Tula in southwestern Arkansas. The spiked iron nose is, van de Logt observes, “distinct in American Indian monster iconography, appearing only in the Caddo traditions” (136). The author relies on the accounts written by Garcilaso de la Vega many years after the De Soto entrada to connect the iron-nosed cannibal story to entrada events, eventually concluding that in the Caddo stories, the cannibals were Spanish conquistadors and their brutal weapons were iron-nosed masks.

*Monsters of Contact* provides unique insights about Caddoan-speaking Indian peoples following European contact as well as their perspectives, as expressed in oral traditions on historical events in the past. These events were traumatic, but at their core, van de Logt argues that the stories about monsters pertain to different historic events unique to the Arikara, Pawnee, Wichita, and Caddo peoples brought on by European contact: “The differences in monster iconography show that each tribe had a different history to tell” (184).

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**Robbie Richardson.** *The Savage and Modern Self: North American Indians in Eighteenth-Century British Literature and Culture.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018. x+247 pp. ISBN: 9781487503444.

<https://utorontopress.com/us/the-savage-and-modern-self-1>

Robbie Richardson is a lecturer in eighteenth-century literature at the University of Kent. His recent monograph, *The Savage and Modern Self: North American Indians in Eighteenth-Century British Literature and Culture*, is based upon his doctoral thesis. Dr Richardson is a Canadian Mi'kmaq who wound up pursuing his research overseas, much as I – a Cherokee from the United States – have. And he clearly has the same passion that I have for studying Early Modern European and Indigenous interaction *within* Europe. Indeed, this is what sets his study apart from so many earlier investigations, and it is a valuable contribution to a growing field. The ongoing “Beyond the Spectacle: Native North American Presence in Britain” project at the University of Kent, together with recent publications such as Colin G. Calloway's *White People, Indians, and Highlanders: Tribal Peoples and Colonial Encounters in Scotland and America* (2008), and Kate Fullagar's *The Savage Visit: New World People and Popular Imperial Culture in Britain, 1710-1795* (2012), demonstrate the increasing interest in this area of study. This work provides essential nuance to the pioneering studies of scholars such as Robert Berkhofer (1978) and Karen Ordahl Kupperman (1980) and expands our knowledge of Indigenous interaction and representation in the Early Modern Atlantic beyond the English colonies and simplistic dichotomies.

Richardson examines the use of “Indians” in negotiating elements of early modernity and shaping new formations of subjectivity within British eighteenth-century literature, an oft overlooked period in comparison to colonial literature. He writes that these depictions of “Indians” “critiqued and helped articulate evolving practices and ideas such as consumerism, colonialism, ‘Britishness,’ and, ultimately, the ‘modern self’” (3). He concludes that “the modern ... does not set itself against the ‘savage’ North American in the imaginative works which this study covers, but instead finds definition in imagined scenes of cultural contact” (3). Richardson traces the evolution of this use of the “Indian” and is largely successful in describing particular “sites of encounter”: such as the press coverage of the Iroquois delegation of 1710 and in captivity accounts as well as other, more clearly fictitious, works from the period, such as plays and novels. Indeed, the wide variety of genres covered is one of the strengths of this work. Numerous little-known pieces of literature and individuals have been brought to light and properly contextualized, rather than reduced to the level of listed anecdotes, as was the case in earlier studies covering Indigenous representation. This includes the fascinating figure of William Augustus Bowles, the “Ambassador from the United Nations of Creeks and Cherokee to the Court of London” in 1790-1 (155), whose claims to ambassadorial status were rejected, and I am indebted to Dr Richardson for his work in this area. Research into Early Modern cross-cultural diplomacy within Europe, in which the normative practices of the parties concerned are often highlighted in such encounters via conflict and the resultant mediation, have tended to focus on disputes over protocol between various, officially recognized European representatives or on embassies from the East, as opposed to the West. Richardson's coverage of the Bowles embassy will further my own investigations into the fine line between formal and informal cross-cultural diplomacy.

At the same time, however, the wide variety of subject matter brings to light the book's primary flaw: it is not an entirely convincing analysis because it lacks cohesiveness. This can

be attributed to various factors. I believe that the fact that it is, in part, based on articles published over the course of his doctorate (x) has resulted in the same narrative breaks that so many thesis publications demonstrate. In addition, the last chapter, while a spellbinding examination of eighteenth-century British interest in and imagining of “Indian” material culture, feels out of place with the rest of the volume, which focuses on literary sources. Then there is Richardson’s use of Foucault’s genealogy as the basis for his methodology. It lends itself well to erudition, but is not always an aid to clarity of continuity. As such, it is somewhat at odds with his attempt to sketch a kind of evolution in the use of the “Indian” in forming the subject – although, as Richardson says, his text “does not pretend, of course, to have the breadth of a complete genealogy of the Indian in the eighteenth century” (6).

And indeed, there are noticeable gaps in the work. For example, the chapter, “Becoming Indians,” in which Bowles is discussed, posits that “[u]nlike earlier examples in the century of fluid subjects who could cross cultural boundaries, Bowles is self-consciously driven by ambition” (159) and that this was the time at which “the hybrid figure who appropriated aspects of Indian culture” emerged (165). Yet in 1730, another British subject, Alexander Cumming, appeared in London at the head of a different – much more celebrated – Cherokee delegation and seems also to prefigure Bowles, to an extent. He too was driven by ambition, manufacturing tales of an elaborate ceremony that made him the spokesman for the Cherokee (Pratt, 1998; Chambers, 2014; LeAnn Stevens-Larré and Lionel Larré, 2014), and although Cumming did not – so far as I am currently aware – adapt any aspect of “Indian” dress as Bowles had, he did lay claim to an “Indian” identity of sorts.

While Richardson briefly mentions this earlier delegation (69), he does not examine it in any great detail. This is unfortunate, as an analysis of the press surrounding the 1730 embassy would, I think, have helped to join together disparate chapters. For example, there were many similarities between the coverage of the 1730 Cherokee and 1710 Iroquois delegations. Indeed, Richardson cites the latter in the first chapter as a template for later encounters (25). An examination of the 1730 embassy would have helped bridge the gap to the second chapter, in which he discusses the “Indian” as a cultural critic. In fact, one of the more interesting pieces of literature concerning the 1730 delegation is a satire on the aristocracy that appeared in Issue Number 100 of *Fogg’s Journal* on August 22 of that year. I do not think this particular lacuna in any way undermines the evolution that Richardson has sketched out, but filling it in over the course of his future research will perhaps add additional nuance and further support for his thesis.

Lastly, the hardback volume is attractively packaged, and printed on recycled paper using vegetable-based inks. Considering the inroads that e-publications are making in academic publishing, and as someone who still prefers to have a hard copy of what they are reading while not wanting to contribute to environmental problems, I greatly appreciate the publisher’s selection of materials. However, other choices within the body of the work are less salutary. While the table of contents is fairly clear, and the volume contains a useful bibliography and index, the list of illustrations is confusingly subdivided by chapter, and – more problematically – the citation formatting is clumsy. The combination of in-text citations and endnotes has not resolved the problems usually experienced with the selection of one or the other. It is still necessary to page back and forth in order to obtain a complete reference, and the in-text page citations, while decidedly clearer with regard to what they refer to, break up the flow of the text and form a distraction – at least to this particular reader. For all of the above reasons, I would much prefer that academic publishers simply use footnotes.

Such minor quibbles aside, which in all fairness probably relate more to my own research interests and editorial pet peeves than to Richardson's, this remains a significant and valuable contribution to the literature on British identity formation, as well as the body of work concerning Native American presence in Europe. It is not understating the case to claim that the "Red Atlantic" as a field of study has thus far been rather lopsided in favour of the American colonies. And when developments elsewhere have been discussed, they have generally centred on economics or the Columbian Exchange. It is time to redress the balance by demonstrating that the figure of the "Indian" – whether real or imagined – also played an important role in intellectual developments in other regions of the world. Finally, Dr Richardson was completely successful in producing a work that questions, and ultimately undermines, both our notions of fixed identity and the place of "Indians" on the margins of modernity.

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**Jennifer S.H. Brown.** *An Ethnohistorian in Rupert's Land: Unfinished Conversations.* AU Press, 2017. 360 pp. ISBN 978-1-77199-171-1.

<http://www.aupress.ca/index.php/books/120267>

It is possible to read *An Ethnohistorian in Rupert's Land: Unfinished Conversations* and, without knowing the author, soon recognize the voice of Jennifer Brown. Her style is unique—from her elegant writing, as seen in her use of metaphor and thought-provoking chapter titles, to her penetrating analysis of Indigenous societies and the oftentimes fluid, intercultural spaces of contact zones. Comprised of eighteen essays written over four decades, *An Ethnohistorian in Rupert's Land* nevertheless maintains the style of “unfinished conversations”: questions are raised, debates are continued, and stories evolve. To some extent, Brown’s approach is left open-ended and, while sources are well interrogated, she asks readers to think in different ways as she writes of questions unanswered or queries never posed. In studying different forms of evidence—written, oral, and material—Brown is always “reading voices,” looking for subtexts, connections, and consequences.

As Brown writes, the essays in the book are linked by “threads of interest and concern” (7), but share a consistency based upon the close study of texts and the “weaving of words” from many sources and many forms. All are focused upon the large expanse once known as “Rupert’s Land,” the territory that encompassed the lands drained by Hudson Bay and home to, among others, the Cree and Ojibwe peoples, who inhabited/inhabit what is now Western Canada and parts of the northern United States. In providing her insights into the discipline of ethnohistory, Brown describes her own background as a student, teacher, and writer. The eighteen essays included in the book were chosen by Brown because they have retained interest, not only for herself, but for other scholars. More than just reprints, Brown has updated many of these works with recent research and fresh observations; for instance, her later work with the Mushkego storyteller Louis Bird is nicely woven into many older texts. The pieces are organized under six different themes, though there is, unsurprisingly, much overlap. Each of the six sections is introduced by a short summation of the articles contained therein, providing the thematic link between each of the pieces. The first section, “Finding Words and Remembering,” includes one of Brown’s better-known pieces, “The Blind Men and the Elephant: Touching the Fur Trade” (61-67), an updated version of a keynote talk given at a 1990 conference. Ensuing sections on fur trade marriage and family, Indigenous families and kinship, women’s stories in the fur trade, Cree and Ojibwe prophets, and, lastly, life on the Berens River in Manitoba, round out the collection and demonstrate the breadth of Brown’s scholarship as well as her own involvement in the oral and community history of that particular region. This last section, and especially the final article, “Fields of Dreams: A. Irving Hallowell and the Berens River Ojibwe,” demonstrates Brown’s long interest in the 1930s work of anthropologist A. Irving Hallowell and reveals Brown’s willingness to study not only the texts of fur traders and storytellers, but those of anthropologists and ethnographers as well.

While the articles in this collection provide a broad overview of Brown’s ethnohistorical writing and teaching, they only scratch the surface of the contributions she has made to fur trade history, women’s history, and Indigenous studies in Canada. Like her colleague and friend, Sylvia Van Kirk (whom Brown talks about and cites throughout the book), Brown’s work has changed the

course of these historical topics; in fact, Brown and Van Kirk have been given due credit for helping to create modern scholarship on gender, marriage, kinship, and family in the pre-20<sup>th</sup>-century Indigenous West. Their work has provided much of the impetus for the great expansion of scholarship in gender and family that we have witnessed over the last few decades by scholars such as Brenda MacDougall, Heather Devine, Carolyn Podruchny, Nicole St-Onge, and Adele Perry.

To some extent, the works of MacDougall, Devine, et. al., have replaced the regional, national, and international economic models—such as the economic and geographical studies by authors like Arthur Ray, Frank Tough, and Patricia McCormack—that were once crucial to the investigation of Indigenous history in the West. At the local scale, at places like Fort Chipewyan or the late 19<sup>th</sup>-century communities of northern Manitoba, the works of Ray, Tough, and McCormack helped explain inter- and intra-group economies; on a global scale, they demonstrated how local economies fit within an international capitalist framework, especially in relation to global fur markets. For ethnohistorians, however, the focus has been upon such topics as ethnicity, kinship, and the establishment of racial and sexual hierarchies. Demographic studies, the analysis of ethnic and cultural persistence, and the pursuit of racial and ethnic roots—what cultural historians and anthropologists call “ethnogenesis”—have dominated these perspectives. What is often missing, however, is an appreciation of the community or region within the context of market capitalism, of class division, and how Indigenous peoples influenced and were influenced by local, national, and global economic forces.

Arguably, the more recent emphasis in Indigenous studies on community, family, and cultural forces—specifically, the attempt to explicate the formative nature of Indigenous societies as the key to understanding the history of the West over a number of centuries—was motivated in part by a reaction to the traditional views inherent within the old metropolitan and frontier schools of Canadian history and their opposition to viewing Indigenous cultures within the context of European and Canadian expansionism. In the process, economic history moved from the attention of historians to that of economists who developed mathematical models that proved intimidating to many historians. As the American historian William Sewell has argued, cultural history that had once been interwoven with the economic aspects of social change had, by the 1980s, reacted against economic determinism, quantification, and the positivist outlook that had once united social and economic history (Sewell 146-47).

By discussing the link that once existed between cultural and economic history, I mean only to comment on the role of ethnohistory in the study of Indigenous pasts. I do not intend to criticize or undermine the brilliant work that Jennifer Brown has pursued over many years nor the critical importance of the cultural and kinship dynamics within Cree and Ojibwe societies and with European and Canadian newcomers that is on display in *An Ethnohistorian in Rupert's Land*. Brown's ability to read between the lines of texts of all kinds is without parallel in Canadian ethnohistory. The articles are a pleasure to read, full of insight and analysis, and written with the agreeable style of a born communicator and teacher. A mentor to so many, there is almost a direct line between her writing and the family and kinship scholarship of today. Brown's work continues to impress and influence.

*Robert James Coutts, University of Manitoba*

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**Terese Marie Mailhot. *Heart Berries: A Memoir*. London: Bloomsbury, 2018. 126 pp. ISBN 9781526604408.**

<https://www.bloomsbury.com/uk/heart-berries-9781526604408/>

Indigenous pain is, let's face it, a saleable commodity. 101-year-old Chief Red Fox makes up stories about Buffalo Bill and mourns the passing of a dying race. Tears trickle down Italian-American actor Iron Eyes Cody's face as he stares sadly at the flotsam of civilization. Faux Navajo writer Naddiij squeezes three increasingly terrible books from his imagined damaged boys and increasingly graphic descriptions of brutal child abuse. Nothing better for wide sales to a settler audience than confirmation of Native peoples as fucked-up beyond repair, fading out a little slower than originally projected (they're not in those robes on that lone horse staring out at the prairie any more, nor did they wend their slow way into the hills leaving only Kevin Costner to tell the tale), but inevitably crushed by the oncoming of brute white reality nonetheless. Gerald Vizenor, patron trickster saint of this journal, wickedly mocks such representations in the work of David Treuer, noting that "Any sentiments of native survivance are overturned by woe and mordancy" ("Aesthetics of Survivance" 15).

So when Diana Evans in the *Guardian* [reviews Terese Mailhot's book](#) by saying "This is a slim book full of raw and ragged pain, the poisonous effects of sexual abuse, of racial cruelty, of violence and self-harm and drug addiction," the praise for the author's ability to striptease her damage sets off warning bells. Not that the pain was not (is not) real. Not that the author is undeserving of wide, full, deep, unstinting applause simply for being able to get up in the morning, after enduring a childhood of neglect and abuse both physical and sexual, not to mention the PTSD, the bipolar disorder, the loss of a child taken away by court order for his own protection. Not even that there is no value to forcing the reader to understand the viciousness and ugliness of the lives of many women of colour. But – look. I'm a white cisgendered man who tries to think about and promote First Nations and other Indigenous writing for a living. There's a reason I have to be suspicious and interrogate texts that appeal to my European heart, and in particular those texts that draw on deep wells of pain, just as I needs must be suspicious of my own reactions to Native-authored texts that adopt mystical tropes. Heaven forbid I should enact the stereotypical unthinking liberal audience.

Here's another red-flashing-light-klaxon-alarm-bell moment: the book is actually addressed to a white liberal male audience, the author's real-life partner, Casey Gray. If there's one thing that might truly scare a reader off, it's promoting the father of your child as some form of white saviour. Real-life or not, such a narrative is toxified by the figure of Harper Lee's well-meaning Atticus Finch, his story overwhelming the narrative of Tom Robinson (and all the other Tom Robinsons), and further toxified by all Finch's many descendants, played by Sandra Bullock or Daniel Day-Lewis, nobly helping the hapless sacrificial lambs on the altar of a better America.

Any alert reader will have guessed this isn't building to a condemnation of Mailhot's book. Far from it. This is a love letter. Rather, I want to sketch some of the obstacles Mailhot needed to

avoid in writing in the currently popular form of the agony memoir, a form which has roots in American literary culture that stretch back way, way past Oprah, past Dave Pelzer's [Ayn Randian](#) self-help in *A Child Called "It"*, through Allen Ginsberg's "scribble down your nakedness," through Lowell and Plath, and into the impact of Freudian psychoanalysis on a Protestant culture. The game, always, is to explore scar tissue that is entirely individual to the writer but in such a way as to avoid a parade that comforts the reader, allowing wild flowers to grow in strange formations from spilled blood, like the bear in Mailhot's book who "put her claws into a strawberry patch and produced ripe berries" (13). Elissa Washuta managed such a trick a couple of years ago in *My Body is a Book of Rules* (2014) by varying her style and subject from chapter to chapter, deconstructing her own rape and bipolar condition in such a way that only the most determined reader could make it out with a simplistic narrative of obstacles transcended. Casting herself as the subject of a *Law and Order* episode, annotating every medication prescribed over a year, placing her own story alongside the media narratives of Kurt and Britney, Washuta's text defies the reader not to notice the craft at work, the intelligent mind guiding the story.

Terese Marie Mailhot's craftsmanship is less ostentatious than Washuta's: no complete changes of style from chapter to chapter, here. And there *is* a redemption narrative of sorts buried beneath the veneer, of a violent father, a shower, a recollected image of his pubic mound, a memory finally confronted and brought to light. A child lost, another child conceived and eventually, fiercely, loved. A broken girl brought to tragic wisdom through self analysis and writing classes at IAIA, through a final accounting of the love and wreckage of parents rendered inadequate by the aftermaths of colonialism and their own demons.

But what marks this book out from so many agony narratives is the sheer dexterity of its writing, the product of much hard work and skill. Sentences lull you into thinking you know where they will end, then reach out and shock you with the wrong word, a sudden swerve into indirect metaphor or simile, an unexpected verb.

(Of Casey) "The man I had been conditioning was not happy with me" (10).

(Of her new baby) "His skin is milk, and his body feels electric and unforgiving" (80).

(Of food) "My mind is overwhelmed with breakfast alone" (25)

(Of bad sex) "I remember that I was wearing black lace and new stockings. I wasn't stable, but men don't usually care about that" (15).

This book is already on Hollywood actress-sponsored book club lists, the New York Times bestseller list, Native American Literature 101 syllabi, and on the bedside table of just about every literary critic and scholar I know. It doesn't really need a review in a minor online academic journal (even if we were honoured to run [an early version of one chapter](#) in a previous issue, which you should read right now if you're still on the fence about the incredible artistry of this writer). It will in years to come be analysed to death for the subtle ways it employs Stó:lō storytelling, for the ways it explores a trauma specific to First Nations women in an era of #MMIW, for the sense of survivance it profoundly embodies in refusing either to sugar-coat the

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author's own prickly messed-upness or to pretend that chaotic childhoods lead eventually to stable adults, no matter the amount of therapy. It will hopefully be recognised for its sabotage of white saviour narratives – Casey turns out to be mostly a selfish if sometimes loving jerk – and the ways in which the author insists on the specificity of her narrative, refusing the reader the right to call this anything so banal as a generational statement of Indian pain. My hope is that in amongst all such thematic readings there will always be space to discuss the craftsmanship of the sentence in Terese Marie Mailhot's work. Mailhot truly shakes up the English language, makes it strange, in the way that only the most talented writers can. For a first book, this is an extraordinary achievement.

*James Mackay, European University Cyprus*

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**Denise Low. *Shadow Light*. Red Mountain Press, 2018. 72 pp. ISBN: 9780998514079.**  
<https://www.spdbooks.org/Products/9780998514079/shadow-light.aspx?src=RMP>

**Denise Low. *The Turtle's Beating Heart: One Family's Story of Lenape Survival*. University of Nebraska Press, 2017. 200 pp. ISBN: 9780803294936.**  
<http://www.nebraskapress.unl.edu/bison/9780803294936/>

While Denise Low's two recent works certainly differ stylistically, they incorporate similar themes that contribute powerful messages about Native American identity and the influences ancestors can have on later generations of a family. Low beautifully juxtaposes human mortality with the permanence of nature, focusing on the inheritance of a concealed cultural identity, and exploring the long-lasting effects of generational and historical trauma. These books present Low's observations of her surroundings, as well as her thoughts about her position on this earth and the other people she is connected to. Readers will be drawn to these books for their emotional honesty and their discussion of topics that connect a complicated history to contemporary human experience.

Low's memoir *The Turtle's Beating Heart* is not a linear narration of Low's own life experiences—instead, it contains her reflections on those experiences after she learns more about her Native heritage that has been passed down through her late Lenape grandfather, Frank Bruner. Low explains that “The Root [her paternal lineage] and Bruner families presented themselves as European Americans and participants in American society, not Indians” because “Erasure of identity has costs, but survival trumps everything else” (43). This statement captures the intention of colonizers to remove or erase Native American legacy, though it also affirms the survival of these groups in the face of massive oppression and genocide: Low's grandfather was living during a time where the Ku Klux Klan was developing as a prominent group that would openly harm and humiliate minorities. Low addresses the generational problems that coincide with this attempted elimination of heritage, and her story powerfully uncovers memories while reclaiming her family's cultural identity.

Divided into four parts, the memoir focuses primarily on Low's Lenape lineage through her mother's side. Low writes about her grandfather, her mother Dorothy Bruner Dotson, herself, and contemporary life in Delaware. Rather than recording a history she is familiar with, Low recovers memories of a suppressed part of her family's past and discovers how this new information has actually impacted her throughout her entire life. She explains that “History is an imperfect construction, but it is essential to community identity” (6). While the recovery of her family's legacy is essential to her understanding of identity, her memoir also grapples with accepting the missing pieces of her grandfather's life story and the resulting, imperfect construction of a previously concealed history.

Low was born and raised in Kansas City, and she unpacks truths about her grandfather by investigating her family's past and connecting it to the history of discrimination against Native Americans. Unfortunately, Low can no longer ask her grandfather or her mother about this traumatic history, so she seeks answers through research, people in her Native community, and other, living members of her family. Her memoir outlines that her grandfather originally lived

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“within a block of the original Delaware trading post” but “After the Ku Klux Klan invaded his hometown in central Kansas, his family moved to this haven [Kansas City]” (4). Despite the fact that this city was safer than Frank Bruner’s hometown, his family still chose to hide their Native identities. Low explains this when she states: “Discrimination against Native people has been so fierce that many people, like my family, suppressed their non-European ancestry as completely as possible” (5). It is this concealment that has prevented Low from growing up with a strong understanding of her Native heritage, and it is also what motivates her quest to find answers about her connection to the cultural identity that remained unspoken about for so long. As Low begins to unravel details about her family’s past, she highlights the positives of revealing more about her relatives, but also the negatives that inherently align with a majorly suppressed past. For example, Low explains that generational trauma has affected her family, and she explains that her mother “became isolated, like her parents before her. The habit of broken families is continued, in a pattern of unconscious behaviors. This is a continuing of internalized diaspora” (77). In this section, Low importantly highlights the continuous impact that cultural oppression can have on multiple generations of a family. Also, because she is telling this story to readers now, she also represents a story of survival while resisting colonial ideologies.

This book connects history to the present and recognizes the powerful influence it has on multiple generations of people and the ways that they choose to identify with or disassociate from their cultures. Low explains the effects that historical and generational trauma can have on Native descendants, and her firsthand experiences with these issues demonstrate the complex problems that colonization inflicts on those who are still under its influence. For these reasons, her work contributes a valuable perspective to readers and would be beneficial to scholars studying Native memoirs or other works that discuss topics such as historical and intergenerational trauma.

Low’s memoir pairs well with *Shadow Light*, a beautiful collection of poems that experiments with various styles and structures while maintaining a consistent voice, exploring connections between nature, humanity, the past, and the present. Low’s considerations about her family and surroundings reappear throughout both of her texts. She alludes to family traditions, comments on Native American history and colonization, and her book concludes when she directly mentions her grandparents and the survival of Native cultures and traditions. These reflections provide understandings of cultural connections that are embedded in a family’s history and their physical space—and Low considers how those connections are fractured once the space is colonized. Throughout this book of poetry, Low frequently and overtly references the destructive nature of colonization—therefore presenting a strong position about Native tragedy and resistance to her readers. In “Before the Gnadenhutzen Massacre,” she writes “Wheeling is Wih link, ‘Place of the Head,’ a settler’s decapitated skull hung from a tree,” and then:

They talk

Some stole land already. Some are preachers . . . //



Come morning they will begin the slaughter” (63).

From this sample, readers can see that Low reverts to a historical perspective about the violence European settlers brought to Indigenous lands, and she describes their acts of entitlement that have resulted in cruelty and injustice towards generations of people. This text presents a clear snapshot of a single moment in time in order to demonstrate a constructed, historical perspective that challenges the dominant political narrative.

Along with poems that focus on conflicts, stolen land, and acts of violence, *Shadow Light* also touches upon important topics that detail a connection of cultural and personal history to contemporary life. For example, one of the most enjoyable convergences of the memoir and book of poetry is when Low talks about how she became a poet. In the memoir, Low writes about her experience playing cards with her grandfather:

“This is how I learned poetry, not as ornament, but as spells. By the time I was born, everyone except my oldest sister was tired of children’s books, and so card playing was my first exposure to verse, training for my future as a poet. Words created real consequences. We played for money, and any magic boost was allowed” (122).

The spoken words and verses she learned through card games with her grandfather and the written poetry she now produces demonstrate an integration of two communicative mediums that link the past to the present. Similarly, this excerpt highlights the major impact Low’s grandfather has had on her career, as well as the perspectives she maintains about the power of words to influence actions.

In “Too Many Green Leaves,” from *Shadow Light*, Low compares leaves to cards, alluding to her unique initiation into poetry through card games. The poem states:

I turn ten yours [sic] old  
 I press scarlet leaves in wax paper  
 flatten them with a hot iron.  
 I turn sixty.  
 Huckberries are spades. (43)

Here, the impermanence of earthly qualities contrasts with the natural human function of aging. Low’s metaphor intertwines natural imagery with human experiences and the life cycle, while skillfully incorporating details from her own memories. This poem is one that stands out because it relates to her other reflections about human relationships with the natural world in different poems and in the memoir.

A final poetry sample that couples with *The Turtle’s Beating Heart* comes from Low’s last poem, “Stomp Dance, Wyandotte County.” The poem reads: “My grandfather and grandmother lived on Lenape land near this / spot. Their footprints remain in the ground” (68). The words in this text and in *The Turtle’s Beating Heart* express the deep connection Low feels to her

grandparents after their deaths, and it also signifies the powerful presence people can maintain on this earth even after they leave it behind. This poem beautifully combines with Low's sentiments throughout her memoir—which is why *Shadow Light* further enhances the reading of *The Turtle's Beating Heart* and vice versa.

Works like Low's call upon readers to consider the impermanence of human life and the imperativeness of understanding and appreciating cultures and traditions that existed long before our present day. In *The Turtle's Beating Heart*, Low recalls "As long as people remember, my Cherokee friend taught me, they are not conquered" (131). If anyone might ask why they should read Low's work, the answer is in this line. Low writes to remember her Native family's legacy while simultaneously helping contemporary readers recognize the importance of historically oppressed voices. Stories and poems from Low's memoir and book of poetry contribute to the Native narratives that maintain an important role alongside voices from the dominant culture. These works allow readers to become more aware of a fragmented past and understand that, while memories or recordings of this past cannot be fully recovered, they also should not be neglected. *The Turtle's Beating Heart* and *Shadow Light* ultimately provide necessary observations and assertions that affirm there is danger in forgetting cultural histories and there is power in remembering.

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**Sara Sue Hoklotubbe's Sadie Walela Mystery Series**

Titles under review:

**Hoklotubbe, Sara Sue. *Deception on All Accounts*. Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2003. 240 pp. ISBN: 0816523118.**

<https://uapress.arizona.edu/book/deception-on-all-accounts>

— ***The American Café*. Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2011. 256 pp. ISBN: 0816529221.**

<https://uapress.arizona.edu/book/the-american-cafe>

— ***Sinking Suspicions*. Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2014. 224 pp. ISBN: 0816531072.**

<https://uapress.arizona.edu/book/sinking-suspicions>

— ***Betrayal at The Buffalo Ranch*. Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2018. 232 pp. ISBN: 0816537275.**

<https://uapress.arizona.edu/book/betrayal-at-the-buffalo-ranch>

Sara Sue Hoklotubbe (Cherokee) is the recipient of the 2012 WILLA Literary Award for Original Softcover Fiction by Women Writing the West, the 2012 New Mexico-Arizona Book Award for Best Mystery, and the 2012 Mystery of the Year by Wordcraft Circle of Native Writers and Storytellers. She was also a finalist for the 2012 Oklahoma Book Awards, as well as the 2011 ForeWord Book of the Year. Her Sadie Walela series is based in the place where she grew up: Cherokee country in northern Oklahoma. It mixes mystery, social commentary, and romance, and uses Regionalist characteristics while introducing Cherokee language and culture. Anyone interested in mellow crime novels depicting the life of ordinary Cherokee in rural Oklahoma will find Hoklotubbe's series delectable.

Within the American tradition of crime and detective fiction, too many series depicting Native American characters and settings were written by non-Native authors. Best-of lists citing popular crime novels presenting Native Americans never fail to mention Tony and Anne Hillerman, Craig Johnson, or William Kent Krueger, but still tend to overshadow actual Indigenous authors. Hoklotubbe's representation of Cherokee life matters greatly within the scope of the genre. Her voice deserves to be heard, and it is time the American detective fiction canon begins to incorporate more authors like her.

Do not judge the Sadie Walela books by their tacky covers: there is a lot to like in Hoklotubbe's mystery saga. Sadie Walela is a Cherokee from mixed ancestry who struggles to find her place between her family life on the reservation and the White town where she works. Sometimes a bit stereotypical, the horse riding, wolf-dog owning heroine is nevertheless completely endearing. Alongside her search for clues, we can read between the lines a valuable social commentary on modern Cherokee life in Euro-American society.

Protagonist Sadie Walela embodies Cherokee values of kindness and respect. She often goes out of her way to help neighbors, colleagues, and even customers of the bank where she works. She is hurt and discouraged to witness greed being put before humanity and always strives to do better while representing her community. She is a strong-willed, independent woman who finds comfort in spending time with her elders or horse riding on her family's land. She is at the junction between Cherokee and Euro-American societies. From the first volume, *Deception on All Accounts* (2003), Sadie operates as a liminal character, capable of navigating as well as bridging both worlds. Despite racism and hardship, she constantly remains a symbol of hope and reconciliation in the novels.

Although her plots might seem simplistic, Hoklotubbe maintains suspense by alternating voices and intertwining storylines from each chapter to the next. She skillfully inserts twists and masters the typical mystery fiction structure, in which each section ends on a palpable tension climax. She also maintains this rhythm from one volume to the next: although they can each be read as stand-alone works, she punctuates the investigations with remarks linking them together and informing us of Sadie's reflexion on past events. Not only does this demonstrate good character building, it also represents the Cherokee characters' ability to evolve and grow, and therefore avoids the stereotypical trope of Native Americans as static figures of the past.

Sadie Walela starts the series as a disenchanting bank employee, who leaves the business with the hopes of finding a different position that would allow her to bring good to her community. By the third volume, *Sinking Suspicions* (2014), she becomes a travel agent; the book alternates chapters between a murder investigation at home in Oklahoma, and Sadie's trip to Hawai'i. These elements echo Hoklotubbe's biography, who herself left a career in finance in Oklahoma City to follow her husband when his job relocated him to Maui.

With each volume, the quantity and depth of remarks concerning Cherokee life in America increase. Hoklotubbe tackles racism and domestic violence with the same ease as she does the treatment of Native American veterans or discrepancy in economic and professional opportunities for Indigenous people. For example, *Deception on All Accounts* starts with the racism and gender discrimination that management inflicts on Sadie, a bank employee whose loyalty and honesty cannot be accepted as synonymous with her "Indianness" by her Euro-American boss and colleagues. . There are also repeated allusions to domestic violence and spousal abuse throughout the saga, specifically when Sadie discusses her failed marriage. In *Sinking Suspicions*, we are confronted with the legacy of the Allies' presence in the Pacific during WWII and with the treatment of Hawai'ian and Japanese Americans by the federal government.

In *The American Café* (2011), Hoklotubbe alludes to the multiple adoptions of Native American children into White, Christian, Euro-American families. She traces back the emotions of her characters – such as depression, feelings of inadequacy, or struggles with addiction – to the intergenerational trauma too often suffered by the adoptees, the same children whose Native identities and biological families were suppressed or even hidden from them. Like many scholars, the author affirms that renewing ties with the original community, learning the language, and becoming knowledgeable in family relations and genealogy are keys to healing.

In her latest novel, *Betrayal at The Buffalo Ranch* (2018), Hoklotubbe addresses land dispossession and settler encroachment on Native land with a very modern twist. She uses the investigation of a mysterious murder to center the readers' reflection on gentrification and Western obsession with mapping and fencing private property, particularly on unceded tribal land. It is also in this latest volume that Sadie actively becomes the detective, conducting research herself and visiting the crime scenes on her own. In the previous texts, she was always secondary to the action, hearing about clues from other characters or accompanying them and staying behind. Whether it is the duty to protect Cherokee lands from the greedy White ranch promoters which pushed Sadie to take matters into her own hands, or a long due development of a protagonist who had been quite passive for three volumes, it is a new element that makes the latest novel the most interesting of the series so far.

Locality plays a major role in Hoklotubbe's mysteries. Details and descriptions of the various Oklahoma settings make the Sadie Walela series a great example of Local Color crime fiction. Throughout the four volumes, great attention is put to accurately situate Sadie and the action. Lake Eucha, Sycamore Springs, and Liberty are some of the spaces the reader travels to while following Sadie in her quest for the truth. Topographic information and geographical elements add veracity to Sadie's comments on her surroundings. The settings are far from being empty background décor, however. Detailed portraits of people's particularities, such as accents or dialects, outfits, and even diet, make the Walela series a vivid image of contemporary life in Oklahoma. With this mystery series, Sara Sue Hoklotubbe leaves her mark not only on Cherokee modern literature, but on Regional literature as well.

Although the Sadie Walela series might not appear to take as strong an activist stance as other Native American crime novels, this does not prevent it from holding a valuable position within the genre. It contains less suspense and violence, which some crime readers are after, than Sherman Alexie's *Indian Killer* (1996) or Stephen Graham Jones' *The Least of My Scars* (2013). It alludes much more discreetly to the gender and sexual abuse that threatens Indigenous women than Katherena Vermette's *The Break* (2016). The Oklahoma settings are more elements of Local Colors tropes than characters in itself, such as Santa Cruz and the Monterrey Bay area are in Louis Owens' *Bone Games* (1994). However, Hoklotubbe's attention to respectfully engage the reader with Cherokee values, language, and culture, as well as contemporary issues, absolutely places her as a contemporary Native American crime novelist to follow. There is no doubt that Sadie Walela has many more stories to tell.

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**Bojan Louis, *Currents: Poems*, BkMk Books, University of Missouri-Kansas City, 2017. 66pp. ISBN: 978-1-943491-11-7. <https://www.umkc.edu/bkmk>**

*Currents: Poems* by Bojan Louis is a book in at least five languages: English, Navajo, Spanish, Aztec, and the electric charge of an unsettled spirit. Not an easy read, this writing is laden with blood, silt, shit, and bone, bleached by sun, whittled away by wind, sculpted by anger and lament. The poems inscribe an Indigenous story: fury at injustice and inconceivable desecration, the scars left by coerced conversions, forced marches, foreign and domestic violence, some done in the name of religion, some in the name of politics, or love.

*Currents* is a good title for this collection. I sense a number of them in the broken bits of language strung together in a syntax that only just holds meaning, as if the trust in a single language has become a thing of the past, an artifact from a by-gone era when a “common language” seemed possible. At this moment in time, Louis seems to say, poets have to take great care with the spoken/written word, maybe because of the witchery of “text,” its ghost-trail of ones and zeroes—and because the word has become so cheap and deceitful. It once was said to be—and was held—sacred. Louis’s language(s) feels like something that comes unbidden from some recess of pain and witness, though, at the same time, it is shaped, honed, impressionistic.

The reader might want to start by reading through the “Notes” at the back of the volume, and if primarily an English-speaker, jot down the translations and other data in order to trace or track where the poet is heading. The choice of language is not arbitrary. Different sound-maps occur, with a variety of “knowings” that just one language cannot represent. While a single-language speaker likely will not “get” the range of resonances possible in this multi-lingual world, still it can be imagined, acknowledged, and appreciated. The gift of these poems that Bojan Louis has brought forth must be seen in the light of this frayed/flayed world, the never-ending cycle of birth and death, where the sacred and profane touch shoulders, and our humanity is always being tested and often found wanting.

The geography that these poems encompass maps places in the west: Alaska, Arizona, the Navajo Nation. The first poem in the volume, “Breach,” is a good “place” to begin. Situated (imaginatively) in or near Sitka, Alaska, the poem moves through a series of motifs, like a triptych, each part also sectioned into three unrhymed tercets. What does this prosodic structure do? It seems to provide a scaffold for both uncovering and recovering memory, desire, and cognition, somewhat like a dream. In a breach, something breaks through—a wall, a womb, a body of water. A force is at work; this, too, resembles the potential in a dream. We might assume that a poem offers a moment, or moments, of insight into the human condition, into the heart or mind of the poet, into what connects us in this disconnecting world. If that is the case, I look for things done by or done to the speaker of the poem, the subjective pronoun paired with a shifting series of verbs. “It’s years,” the poet tells us, in the “breach” of life and work in Sitka, Alaska, “I’ve been recovered.” Is that good? The language is a bit tricky. One reading of “recover” suggests surviving a catastrophe and being renewed, gathering up what has been lost. Another reading suggests getting covered-over yet again, being obscured, maybe even suffocated.

The tension between these readings is interesting, and Louis tends to move in this way, tightening and releasing the threads of meaning, weaving the piece into a discernable pattern that, on one level, can be understood with the mind, but on another level, must be comprehended with the spirit. The poem opens with images of “parents,” “Mom” and “Dad,” the first humans in a child’s life, first woman and first man. They are mythic figures that provide a pattern of being and doing. Yet in this case “Mom [is] alone, her own decision,” and “Dad, how he was always/ asphyxiated until rolled over.” These figures seem to form or point the way to

The frontier I’m abandoned to,  
 exposed root ribcages above ground,  
 rained on so much there’s no dust,  
 no blow-away—traceless surfaces.

The mix of images/ideas here is characteristic of Louis’s work as a whole. The last line of the second tercet, “The frontier I’m abandoned to” tells us, “I’ve been abandoned to the frontier,” presumably by the parents. But it tells us, too, “I’ve abandoned myself to the frontier.” Is this the same as a banishment? And why does the poet write “the frontier” and not “a frontier”? “The” suggests a definite locale, a border place known and named, though still unexplored, or in the American context, unexploited, the breach between “wilderness” and “civilization,” between history and myth, maybe a place of reckless abandon and a stifling loneliness, unfettered desire and chaos, remote and removed from the “mainland,” a place suggestive of “home.”

Are we encumbered by language or liberated by language? Are we abandoned by language, or do we abandon language by denying the possibility of truth? And human striving, what is it about? For some, it is about name and fame, about accumulation of wealth, material comforts, power. That glittering world dangles before our eyes, telling us, “This is what it’s about.” My sense, in reading these poems, is that they are an act of unearthing, of coming out of the grave that is America, of arriving at the opening into the next world and casting off the dross of lies and dirt that distort our ways of knowing, that distract us from seeking the next level, a way out. At the end of “Breach,” we are in the belly of the whale with Jonah, a “lucky fuck” who was swallowed whole and remains “undigested,”

Hung from the beast’s spine,  
 feet eaten, body untouched.

This seems an inescapable situation, to say the least. Where is our integrity if we have no feet to stand on? If the body is “untouched” in “the belly of the beast,” what are we being saved for? Is the “breach” suggested by the title a promise or a betrayal? I’m not certain I know the answer as I thread my way through Louis’s poems. They raise many questions for me, not as many answers.

I want to look at the title poem, “Currents.” Its structure is similar to “Breach.” Like the first poem in the collection, this poem is a triptych composed of three numbered parts. In each part are three sections, each section constituted in three, three-line stanzas. Like “Breach,” this poem is given a locale, Phoenix, Arizona, almost the opposite of Sitka, Alaska, an arid desert

landscape, although the poem seems less rooted in place than the Sitka of “Breach,” despite some of the city imagery: “a crosstown bus,” “a stiffened step/on concrete,” my sense is that the poem means both to acknowledge and to transcend the limits of place and the memory of place.

Robert Hass, in *A Little Book on Form*, writes, “Two often regarded as an aspect of one, so that with three number as such, the many, begins. And is infinite. Oddness. Not divisible. So that—the trinity, for example—mystery begins here” (53). He shows us the difference between the rhymed verse, triplet, and the unrhymed, free verse tercet, a shape Whitman used in “Song of Myself.” Hass writes, “Formally, you can get to three at least three ways: 1 + 1 + 1 . . . : 1 + 2 . . . ; 2 + 1 . . .” (63), meaning the sequence of images, one piled up against another, or against two, or two piled against one. He says, as well, “In free verse stanza, patterning is partly visual, but it’s also partly aural” (64), and he gives some examples of how various poets employ stress within each line, often two stresses within a line, but sometimes more.

We can think about Louis’s “Currents” (and other poems) in this way too. Right away, we encounter a three-stress line in the first stanza, formed by trochees, augmented by rhyme:

Each new sun asks: be  
no thing more than me,  
have nothing beyond need

We could read the first two lines as a couplet—“be me,” the words say, but since the sun “asks” this of the poet, it may be a prayer, or the reciprocation of a prayer. In fact, the poet tells us in his “Notes”: “The poem opens with a version of a prayer, or offering of corn pollen, done at sunrise in Dine tradition and knowing. It’s my prayer/offering, and I share it with you.” “Have nothing beyond need” leads us to a new stanza, but before we go there, I want to point out that the third line is in excess of the first couplet, and it allows for generosity, a generosity lodged in humility (“be no thing,” “have nothing”), and also in an act of replenishment (“each new sun”).

If “mystery begins here,” the next stanza ushers into that place, providing an image of the human being at prayer, not with bowed head, on the knees, but “opened”:

--send opened your whole  
being, lifted face, arms spread.

The words are reminiscent of Joy Harjo’s “Eagle Poem,” the concluding poem in her book, *In Mad Love and War*. “To pray,” Harjo says, “you open your whole self/ to sky, to earth, to sun, to moon/ to one whole voice that is you . . .” (65). In Louis’s poem, the speaker attempts to pray in this opened and opening way, but acknowledges, “. . . only part of me” [stanza break] “is blessed, a body exerted/after long hours, responsibility,/ and the need to ease tremors.” The longest line in this tercet is “after long hours, responsibility,” which departs from and disrupts the stress pattern of threes, as if the world has broken in here with its busyness, its dutiful “responsibility.” If the sun asks the speaker to be “beyond need,” the speaker recognizes the body’s limits, the difficulty, whether physical or psychological, when there is a “need to ease tremors.”



While Louis employs the three-stress and two-stress lines in this poem, line stress tends to be variable, creating a kind of syncopation that feels nervous and anxious. The effect is a bit unsettling, and the idea, intertwined with the image, adds to the effect:

A dark hall's corner  
a damask of lines,  
the call-to mom uses,

telling me I don't add up.

Is this a poem about the mother's disappointment in her son, the ways in which the patterns she lays down, as in a Navajo rug, do not "add up" in her boy? Is it a poem about the ways mothers sometimes mistreat their children, the "embarrassment" a child is made to feel, the punishments of "slap—freezing feet"? I can't say with certainty, but as with many poems in this volume, I find Louis's journey interesting, his language alluring and his images compelling:

I left and arrived months before the rainy season,  
through cuts along the cliff face  
over Crystal shimmered with mica.  
Like stars burnt out taking eons  
to reveal their absence  
in myth-heavy constellations (from "Arc Flash").

Cliffs shimmering with mica like burnt out stars is gorgeous, and the image is intertwined with the stories of stars, their patterns part of a people's mythic history. The here and now re-emerges in "Arc Flash," as in other poems, and the mechanical world of men and machines seems to impose itself again and again:

Here, a few cars idle  
without drivers,  
warm up before the workday  
while smoke from houses vanishes  
and releases the night sky.

There is much more to say about this absorbing and powerful book of poems: the ways Louis is alive to the labors of the poor, the bent, migrant bodies, the wanton destruction of earth, the poisons of civilization. *Currents* is about our current life, about the human currency which is bartered with blood and sacrifice. Contemporary Native American writing, especially that of younger poets, seizes the fragments and shards left in the wake of colonization, and builds a new edifice of language and experience. Bojan Louis's writing seems to me a struggle to find strength among broken pieces, to rebuild the spirit with determination and love.

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**Heid E. Erdrich *New Poets of Native Nations*. Graywolf Press, 2018. 304 pp. ISBN 978-1-55597-809-9.**

<https://www.graywolfpress.org/books/new-poets-native-nations>

*After all these years, this sudden wealth.*

Those are the first words of Mick McAllister's review of *Carriers of the Dream Wheel* and *Voices of the Rainbow*, both published in 1975 (360). Those books are considered landmarks in American Indian literature because they made available to the general public the work of many poets that public may not have known existed. Those two volumes demonstrated the existence, the richness, and the diversity of native voices.

We can revise McAllister's opening exclamation to talk about Heid Erdrich's anthology of native poetry:

*After all these years, this continued wealth.*

Like those 1975 anthologies, *New Poets of Native Nations* demonstrates the richness and diversity of poetry from Indian Country (and beyond). These poets continue the legacy of those voices gathered in 1975, but they add to them in several ways, including their explicit declarations of nationhood, their use of native languages, and their formal sophistication and experimentation.

*New Poets* may seem like "sudden wealth" if only because the previous substantial anthology of US Native poetry was published in 1988 (according to Dean Rader, quoted in Erdrich's introduction). Closing this 20-year gap also makes *New Poets*, like its 1975 predecessors, a potential landmark. The publicity material from Graywolf Press uses that word to describe the book, and several of its many positive reviews have echoed that language.

Those earlier anthologies were landmarks for introducing readers to many poets they would not have encountered otherwise. Several of those poets went on to become canonical authors for college courses in American literature: Simon Ortiz, Leslie Marmon Silko, N. Scott Momaday, Joy Harjo, etc. *New Poets*, as its name indicates, does not include those names; it contains only a selection of poets who published their first poetry book after 2000, regardless of age or experience. So some of them are new to book publishing but not necessarily new to poetry. Some of them have found some fame already. [Layli Long Soldier](#), [Natalie Diaz](#), and [Tommy Pico](#), for example, have won awards for their poetry books and have received attention in popular media outlets; also, they have Wikipedia entries devoted to them. Other poets here may have won awards but they have yet to receive such broader recognition; no Wikipedia entries for Sy Hoahwah, Tacey M. Atsitty, or Julian Talamantez Brolaski, for example. At least not yet.

(Perhaps that is a good task for someone's native literature class: create Wikipedia entries for these and other native writers.)

So what has changed for native poetry since 1975?

A lot, of course. Too much to consider here. But I can focus on a couple of developments.

One of the earliest rhetorical and interpretive maneuvers in American Indian literary criticism (and one of the most persistent) was drawing connections between contemporary literature by native people and oral traditions. Kenneth Rosen did that in his introduction to *Voices of the Rainbow*: "For some readers it may be helpful to place these poems on the oral/written continuum so central to American Indian literatures in general, and to Indian poetry in particular" (xx). The phrase "oral tradition" does not appear in Erdrich's introduction.

Perhaps it is ironic, then, that the poems Rosen selected were influenced by the aesthetics of native orality and yet none of them make significant use of a native language. That absence may be a sign of colonization's impact, but it does not make the poems less valuable or diminish them as acts of cultural and personal resistance.

And yet perhaps it is also ironic that Erdrich does not use the term "oral tradition" in her introduction and yet native languages frequently appear in this collection. If the absence of native languages is a sign of colonization's impact at the time of *Voices of the Rainbow* and *Carriers of the Dream Wheel*, their presence in *New Poets of Native Nations* is testimony to acts of sovereignty in native communities within the United States (and elsewhere).

For example, Gwen Westerman has a poem entirely in Dakota. "Owotaṅna Sececa" is presented on one page and its English translation, "Linear Process," appears on the following page. Westerman's poems skillfully inhabit particular moments in time but also often evoke the transcendence made possible through our connection with ancestors. That connection and devotion is represented by Westerman's speaking and writing in Dakota. Margaret Noodin's poetry comes in twin columns: the left in Anishinaabewomin and the right in English. For example, "Agoozimakakiig Idiiwag/ What the Peepers Say" describes the emergence of frogs from their hibernation and suggests several kinds of renewed singing. There is the literal renewal of the frogs singing in the spring, but there also are the growing voices of native poets singing in the aftermath of colonization, and there is the singing of the people learning their native languages. Noodin's poetry is lyrical and wise, and it is frequently about the mysteries of being and of language itself.

Cultural continuity and contemporary presence are essential to indigenous survivance, and several poems in *New Poets* reflect that in their relation not to orality but in their relation to typography, to print culture. For instance, in Long Soldier's "Whereas Re-solution's an Act," she presents legal / treaty language with blank spaces to be filled in by the reader: "Whereas Native Peoples are [ ] people with a deep and abiding [ ] in the [ ]..." (25). She presents legal / treaty

language as a trap designed to reduce native concepts into simplistic ones, and so her poem removes them to protect them (although the missing words are provided on the following page). And “Obligations 1” and “Obligations 2” descend their pages so that the reader can trace different connections among the words, creating different poems, sort of like a “Choose Your Own Adventure” poem. Performing such a poem in a spoken forum is hard to imagine; it is made for the page and to be seen / read.

Another example of the influence of print culture is from Craig Santoz Perez, a poet from Guåhan (Guam). His poem “I (Tinituhon)” is presented as a series of paired characters evenly spaced in lines across the page: letters, punctuation, numbers, and symbols. At first scan, the poem’s subject is not apparent since no words are readily visible. The poem requires the reader to slowly follow the characters, piecing together the words they form across the gaps. Again, this is a poem made for the page, to be deciphered with our eyes rather than our ears.

Erdrich’s collection makes clear that Indian County is digital. Several poems make use of texting conventions, again literature we consume with our eyes rather than our ears – although it is true social media conventions have invaded our actual speech, since people do say “hashtag this” or “hashtag that” or “OMG” or “jk.” Excerpts from Pico’s books *IRL*, *Nature Poem*, and *Junk* include conventions created for cell phone keyboards. His poems, which oftentimes originate from his Twitter account, consistently use *n* for and, *NDN* for Indian, *r u* for are you, etc. While Pico’s poems are presented in the sassy slang of his poetic persona Teebs, Brulaski’s entries mix text-message influences with elevated vocabulary. Her poem with the wonderful title “What Do They Know of Suffering, Who Eat of Pineapples Yearround,” uses misspellings that look like text-messaging shortcuts or that suggest emphatic pronunciations. The poem starts with “Lrsn,” which suggests “Listen” but also with some warping, the way “club” becomes “clerb.” It includes *cd* for could, *whos* instead of who’s, *yr* for your, and yet it also includes words such as *battlements*, *pulchritudinous*, and *edifices* in a kind of mock-epic tone (135).

Although there are some “new” poets that I wish had been included in *New Poets*, I realize that some choices had to be made. I realize that I am fortunate to live in a moment exploding with bold and exciting talents. Including every deserving poet would have made a book too thick to pick up. Personally, I am happy Hoahwah is included and the he continues to explore the Comanche Gothic (my phrase, not his) that he started with *Velroy and the Madischie Mafia* (2009). His poems are gruesome, comical, and mystical. Their subjects include a Comanche Princess who drags herself from the grave, a decapitated head singing to itself, and the threat of being eaten by a “raccoon-witch-cannibal-monk” (151). I don’t know that this macabre fun is present in *Carriers of the Dream Wheel* or *Voices of the Rainbow*.

These new poets of Native nations carry their voices into an indigenous future that settler colonialism tried to foreclose and that mainstream publishing too seldom recognizes. I will end this review with the last lines of Karen Wood’s “The Poet I Wish I Was,” which I believe speak to the need for writing an indigenous future. It is a list poem in prose that concludes:

14. *However good we are, we can't change the beginning or the middle – we can only try to rewrite the end* (237).

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**Carolyn Dunn. *The Stains of Burden and Dumb Luck*. Mongrel Empire Press, 2017. 69 pp. ISBN: 978-0-9972517-7-7.**

<http://mongrelempire.org/catalog/poetry/TheStainsOfBurden.html>

Carolyn Dunn, of Louisiana Creole, Tunica-Choctaw-Biloxi, Seminole, Creek, and Cherokee descent, is already known for her works *Echolocation* (2013), *Coyote Speaks* (2008), and *Through the Eyes of the Deer* (1999). Diane Glancy's summation states, "she covers the cartography of memory" in her newest collection of poetry. This cartography of memory, as Glancy terms it, is more than just a map of Dunn's memories, but is also representative of the senses that evoke and hold those memories in place. Place, space, sky, rain, and breath are all common themes throughout the brief collection that elicit a sense of being and emotion that a mere cartography could not contain. While all of these concepts are prevalent in the book, they are not overbearing, and the reader is allowed to take the journey through time, space, and place on their own terms.

Dunn begins her collection with a brief commentary—"Bloodline." She claims, "A place doesn't have to be idealized to still claim the comfort associated with being called home" (1). Home, according to Dunn's pieces, is not free from pain or sorrow, but it is where the heart lies, where memories are formed, and where the soul is at peace. This is evident in one of the first poems in the first section, "In Some Other World," where she writes

My mother's words  
pass through my lips... beckons us home  
with songs that bring corn  
My grandmother's voice  
passing my lips  
escapes the veil  
of some other world (7-8).

She makes no effort to hide the pain and sorrow of home in her work, yet she does not allow that pain to take over. Instead, Dunn uses these notions of pain to serve as a reminder of what once was, what is, and what will be in the future—pain becomes in her poem a means of understanding and home, whether painful or joyous, has the ability to map out that pain and remind us of who we are and where we come from, where our ancestors hope we will be. It is not an idea of loss, but an idea of hope and renewal, a belief that pain and the earth and the ancestors are all working together to make us who we are.

Dunn also writes in the prologue that "Woven in the bone and blood of the Ancestors, it is now a tapestry concerned with keeping of stories, vocalized in song, in whispers, in secret, from stages and from graveyards and birthing rooms around the long pathway of this world to where the next world awaits" (1). It is these stories, these songs and whispers, that are mapped out and transport us to the Ancestors, to home. The second section of the book is a great example of this. In "Words," Dunn writes

Words are our only weapons  
as grief grows  
swallowing knot  
of feathers, bones  
and the undigested bits

turning our steps  
 into shards of glass  
 bone fragments...We are glass, ever  
 shattering  
 at any moment  
 I carry voices  
 on my tongue  
 a world where  
 there can be no mercy, no joy  
 no thought of ever catching  
 the last train home (31-32).

While her words transport us to another world, to home, she speaks of being transported herself, and we make our journeys together.

One of the central themes in Dunn's collection is the idea of the self. Recognizing who we are, how we came to be, and our purpose: these are questions that many individuals strive to answer daily, and Dunn addresses them in her own way. In the third section of the book, "Baskets Filled with Burdens," her poem "Cardinal Directions" asserts that

In this foreign  
 land, the love of  
 place carries  
 the love of space  
 The difference is  
 we love  
 for what we know  
 we are (53).

The idea that space and place are central in understanding who we are and how we came to be can often be forgotten when we are away from home; remembering that home is always with us, always informing and molding us into who we are supposed to be, is critical in our journey to understand ourselves.

As readers, we allow Dunn to give voice to these songs, to the past, present, and future, to grief and home, and to memories. But as readers we are also giving voice to these concepts as well, and in doing so we are the storyteller and the story. Dunn is not the first to approach this concept. N. Scott Momaday and Gus Palmer are but two other Indigenous writers and scholars who have voiced this idea, and Dunn provides us the opportunity, as readers, to practice and realize this notion of inclusivity and mutual sense of being. It is through Dunn's words and ideas that we are able to transport ourselves onto the page and transport the words on the page into our realities.

In her poem "World Renewal," found in the second section, Dunn writes, "We breathe life / into dying songs" (15). Dunn writes about memories and stories and pain and grief as we have and continue to experience them through time and space and place, but these simple lines remind us, ever so gently, that our breath offers the gift of life. By singing the songs of our ancestors, by offering up prayers and poems through our own breath, we are giving our memories and our ancestors life, which in turn nourishes and nurtures us further. We are not only giving the Ancestors life, we are giving ourselves life, too, and, as Dunn suggests, is there any greater gift?



*The Stains of Burden and Dumb Luck* provides us a map of the past, present, and future—a map home—in a way that is unique to Dunn and reflects one Indigenous perspective. Connections between poems and the stories they tell—of ashes and bones, rocks and stolen tongues—create a sort of scavenger hunt for readers. We all have stories that are woven throughout time, space, place, and memory, and Dunn not only tells her stories, but helps us give voice and power to our stories as well. Sometimes we get lost in the stories, and Dunn provides us a map to find our way back. Find the connections, understand the meaning, get lost in the stories, reconnect with the Ancestors, and you just might find yourself again.

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**Michael Wasson. *This American Ghost*. YesYes Books, 2017. 45 pp. ISBN: 9781936919529.**  
<https://www.yesyesbooks.com/product-page/this-american-ghost>.

Michael Wasson's poetry collection, *This American Ghost*, is both visceral and lyrical, taking its reader on a passionate, painful journey of decolonization. By weaving together English and nimipuutimt, Wasson conveys both personal and cultural truths, particularly those that speak to the damages done by US settler colonialism.

The collection begins with an epigraph from *The Iliad*, a mourning Achilles telling Agamemnon, "We are the closest to the dead, / we'll see to all things here" (n.p.). This quote underscores two major themes of Wasson's work: death and intimacy. Images of murder, suicide, and cultural genocide play along the collection's pages, and the pain of those affiliated losses is depicted in exquisitely lyrical passages. The fact that Wasson chooses to quote Achilles, in mourning for his beloved Patroclus who he will avenge, highlights the simmering passion to come. "The Confession," "Ant & Yellow Jacket," and "Another Confession" all describe the pleasures of intimate physical love, yet "Another Confession" also juxtaposes love and death: "there's a word I am / trying to tell you while the dead / skin melts into me / like ghosts / unable to confess their sins" (11). "The Sacrifice" also achieves this juxtaposition: "The sky / once a torn skin like ink starred / with the whited pupils of the dead" and "The beauty of two bodies / reaching into each other" (4). There is an imminent pain shading these early pieces, suggesting more trauma in the latter works.

The titles of "The Confession" and "The Sacrifice" speak to another persistent theme: the ideology of Christianity, or a kind of repudiation of it. Both "Confession" poems are less about requesting forgiveness for earthly sins than unabashed celebrations of physical love such as the first's "Show me / how your mouth moves under / my hard-edged flesh" (1). A quote from Corinthians is the epigraph for "Redemption," and the poem begins with another reference to confession. Yet this poem details the speaker's brother's attempted suicide and suffering, posing the musings of a ghost, "*how to change all these years of loss*" (25). Redemption comes presumably with the sacrifice of a deer at the poem's end, shot by the persona, bringing a "lightening" of the night (26). The theme of the brother's suicide continues in the collection's final poem "Mouthed," in which the same gun that offers up the deer's life also takes the brother's. The speaker asks,

Is that not you  
 I hear drowning  
 in the living  
 room & hunched down

to what  
we never called *god*" (33).

More overt repudiations of Christianity come in "In Winters, As Ghosts" in which the speaker's mother says, "*there's no hell*" as the loss of loved ones punctuates the chill of winter nights. Such personal loss is underscored with intergenerational trauma, as suggested by the allusion to Chief Joseph from his 1877 surrender to the US Army, "Maybe I shall find them among the dead," (37). "The World Already Ended at Y2K" turns on the irony that settler colonialism is already its own apocalypse, as suggested by the first lines, "The silence of the reservation / could fill me / to the point of breaking . . ." (29); the poem warns that there will be no otherworldly redemption, no

arch  
angel here to drag you  
off to hell or purgatory or even  
paradise . . ." (29).

The most fascinating piece to decolonize Christian ideology is "On the Horizon," in which the speaker undoes Biblical language such as

& I said  
let there be dark  
pouring from your mouth  
at day break" (9).

The poem contains similar allusions to the plague of locusts and the Garden of Eden, ultimately throwing off Christianity altogether: "Let another god / forget you were ever born" (9).

These themes of passion, death, and spirituality cannot be separated from the cultural experiences of the *nimípuu* (Nez Perce). Wasson's ubiquitous use of *nimipuutímt* throughout the collection requires the reader to become immersed in the in-betweenness of contemporary US Indigenous experience. For example, the poem "Lit in the Mouth or For the Old Woman Who Died of Song & Loneliness" borrows language from a *nimipuutímt* story in order to expand the personal borders of the recurrent themes of loss, trauma, and the confession of that pain. One of the most compelling pieces in the collection, "The Exile," imagines the experience of Nez Perce elder Titus Paul at the Chilocco Indian Boarding School in Oklahoma in 1922 (37). Though the poem is clearly a lyrical envisioning of that historical moment, it maintains the confessional tone of much of the collection with its first person perspective. "The Exile" contains familiar details of Indian boarding school experience—forced loss of language and culture through brutal forms of discipline—yet, the syntactic gymnastics used to convey these horrors is heart-rending:

because they can      tear every lip from every memory  
of your mother  
because you are  
torn & because you are  
what song fills  
your throat  
with the color  
of carved out tongue” (15).

Michael Wasson’s *This American Ghost* is a collection for lovers of language who are willing to examine the physical intimacies and violences that play out in our most personal relationships. The use of syllabic form places emphasis on individual words, and the ways meaning can turn when words are isolated or paired in surprising ways. Throughout this wordplay runs an unflinching examination of tragedy and how we cope with it. Often, in these poems, that coping occurs in an engagement with the natural world: a deer, the horizon, the morning light, or the winter cold. How such an approach demonstrates human capacity to understand and accept loss can be seen in this powerful, poignant line: “Who is it the dead / remember? the moon / finally asks me” (24). *This American Ghost* makes clear that personal tragedies are intricately connected to realms beyond our individual experiences—to our cultures, our nations, our natural world.

*Kirstin Squint, High Point University*

**Diane Glancy. *The Keyboard Letters QWERTYUIOPASDFGHJKLZXCVBNM*. Poetry Society of Texas, 2018. 74 pp. ISBN 978154322804**

Diane Glancy gives her book, the winner of the 2016 Catherine Case Lubbe Manuscript Prize of the Poetry Society of Texas, the exceptional title *The Keyboard Letters QWERTYUIOPASDFGHJKLZXCVBNM*. This innovative collection includes poems, notes, short prose (preface and backmatter are essential to the whole), allusions to paintings, and texts. The sum is a cartographer's manual to the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Pieces calibrate backroads of Texas, their trajectory, with stopover points at the New Bedford Whaling Museum to see exhibits of the Pequod (or did Melville mean Pequot?) and the Middle Eastern country of Jordan. Christopher Columbus's ship is a moving point/target. In the acknowledgements, Glancy writes about some of her influences: "A visit to the Dali Museum in St. Petersburg, Florida. A list of the most important discoveries of the world. A PBS television program on mathematics. A stormy day in North Texas. . ." (66). These are very personal to her experience, so the book has a journal-like quality; this is a log of her physical and imaginative explorations.

Sequences are not exact. Mashups of locations, fictional characters, real people, Bible verses, inventions—all these contribute temporal axes to the project. Repetition of some of these, like rural Texas and the invention of moveable type, wend through the sequence. These motifs create subtextual timelines. Chronologies collapse in the organic process of this "clump" of writing. Glancy describes her process of writing, "Sometimes a lot of things come together and congeal in clumps, which become a group of poems" (66). The resulting book is a word-bundle, with layers of denotive directions that lead outward.

A guiding theme throughout is the process of metaphor. Glancy writes about "A walk on a rural road when I saw a deer head looking from the edge of the woods. For an instant it seemed like a puppet—a cartoon on a child's program. Something unreal. The question came—how can what I see be trusted?" (66). Images like that deer suspended in the poems, frozen in place by imagination, and in words. An example is the cover photograph of the book, which is a rusty tine found in the fields of rural Texas, transformed by metaphor into a fox's head: "In the field I find a metal piece / triangular as the head of a fox / but smaller" ("The Normal God," 23). The poet explains it is a "point blade" from a discarded hay-cutter implement. The poem juxtaposes metaphors from this hayfield, where once Indigenous people "crossed the prairie and stand there," still present to the dog who senses them. She concludes with uncertainty,

A lost glove.  
A stray cat killed by a predator—  
as if they were connected  
in a plain and unforgiving world. (24)

The indeterminacy is the final thought, the inability of the narrator to find facts beyond language whose syntax creates inaccurate connections in a "plain" reality.

The poet interrogates, along the way, her writer's tool, Roman alphabet of the English language—what Joy Harjo calls "the enemy's language" to emphasize it as an agent of colonization. (Harjo's timbre of protests underlies the book.) The title of the book is a genius move. At each touch the quotidian keyboard under the narrator's fingers, under all our fingers, generates code strings. The keyboard alphabet is wired directly into language reflexes.

Left in random order, letters spell chaos. Strung together, letters can at best create slippage, a continuous and impermanent etymology. Unmoored fragments of writing are the residue of fractured lives for all post-contact inhabitants of North America. Moveable type, a metaphor for displacement and an agent of displacement, unhinges sign systems. The second half of the title is unpronounceable, despite its visual familiarity, which forces readers to confront the scrambled chaos of the abstracted alphabet. Yet it is, like the dislodged metal point of the haying implement, the tool available to writers. Glancy writes about her intention that the book “acknowledges the infinite variety of the combinations of the alphabet that enable our different searches for meaning” (iii). Among the seekers of meaning in this book are Captain Ahab in the novel *Moby Dick* and Salvador Dali, the painter. None of the seekers can avoid the splintered nature of language.

Synesthesia is a signature technique in *The Keyboard Letters*, as one sense suggests another. In the preface, the author writes, “Poetry after all is a vehicle after a whale” (iii). “Vehicle” deconstructs into a vague mode of mental transport. Yet in common usage it is a motorized conveyance for land use. The metaphor “vehicle” suggests the movement of the imagination across oceans and geographies.

Glancy is, indeed, an inveterate traveler, usually by car. The front windshield is a lens for many of these poems, and her optics shifts the view to a visual panorama. The poem “I-35 from North Texas through the Flint Hills of Kansas” exemplifies her skewed perceptions from the driver’s seat. It begins with a comparison of the late winter view as flattened into one sepia hue: “In March the land is tan as hide.” On the journey, she barely avoids an accident, recovers, and continues, distanced by her car’s armor. She concludes the poem:

Ahead of me now, a thin haze of smoke from range burning.  
A round sun leans on a hill to the west.  
To the north, the moon faint as a spot of snow.

Maybe the outcropping of rock along the embankment  
is safe.

Nothing but plainness, and the moving toward survival. (46)

“Ahead of me now” shows the writer’s directional movement in a timeline, without judgement, stated with an eerie calm after the near-miss collision. The near-likenesses of the metaphors parallel the near-miss of the car wreck. Scale in the imagery distorts, as the sun “leans” like a person on a piece of furniture. The roadcuts alongside the car are foregrounded with the sun, despite the vast difference in distances between these physical objects. The moon is far away, a normal perception, but its descriptor “snow” changes a visual image to tactile iciness. Throughout the poem, which is a first-person testimony, the truth has slippage, not outright falsehood. Truth is “plainness” (who has not said the plains are plain?), and again, as in “The Normal God,” Glancy uses the term “plain” for reality beyond metaphor-ed words. Also “plain” are jumbled combinations like *QWERTYUIOPASDFGHJKLZXCVBNM*.

Along with repeated motifs and mixed senses, Glancy uses transpositions to create connections. Her poem about Christopher Columbus’s lies about his voyage—“He wrote the versions of his voyage / until he wondered at the truth of multiple possibilities”—is expressed in terms of Salvador Dali’s painting *The Discovery of America* (48). History is at a distance; the

Italian's version of that history is at another distance. Columbus lies until it is a "habit" and the next lie is "the way a painter far down the road / would paint his landing / with all the clutter he could manage" (50). Dali's third-distant account is even less based on what truly happened.

Another poem that uses stunning transposition is "He Was Crucified, Placed in a Tomb, Backed-out," based on Dali's painting *The Sacrament of the Last Supper*. This painting alludes to Leonardo Da Vinci's *Last Supper*, but with the crew of *Moby Dick*'s Pequod seated at the table. Glancy's version is removed from the biblical event by even more multiple degrees of separation. Her poem notes, "War coming from different translations" (45).

One of my favorite poems, among many, is "A Harness for the Visible World," which riffs on a bowl of pistachios on a table:

The nuts look like something from the sea,  
*Mollusca*—a large group of invertebrates—oyster, clam,  
 mussel, snail, slug, squid, octopus, whelk,  
 most of them in shells, having gills, a foot, a mantle. (38)

Most of the poem appears to be about what the poet sees beyond the table, outside her window, an autumn scene of fall leaves, "minnows in a stream of branches" (38). A bird's nest is like a northern Plains bull boat made with buffalo hide. Then the poet's reflection meanders to a central image—"Pistachio shells upside-down on the table / are small, overturned rowboats" (39). The narrator navigates this "interchange," "while the world drifts again from what it was. Resolute / and disappearing" (39). All the images in the poem, and the poet, are undefined and impermanent. The repetition of forms, like the hard shell of a pistachio, occurs in natural forms across environments. Yet all physical structures dissolve in time.

This is a book to read, and reread, as an *ars poetica*. Underlying the European, Middle Eastern, and North American cultural references is an understanding of the unadorned facts of what survives in this apocalyptic, for Native peoples, existence. In these days of instantaneous satellite maps, nothing remains remote, not even Glancy's setting of the North American grasslands. The maps, however current, cannot keep up with the incomprehensible reality of the land in time. In this Etch-A-Sketch mapping, nothing remains for long. Glancy writes of this in "The Beginnings of Disintegrated, a short poem of four lines:

Send help I am        here  
 in these googled doors

One story starts  
    another disappears. (21)

*Denise Low, Baker University*

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## Contributor Biographies

STEPHEN RICHARD ANDREWS is an Associate Professor at Grinnell College, where he teaches mostly 18th and 19th century American Literature. His primary research interests are literary pragmatism, the poetics of landscape, and the cultural history of baseball. He has published work on W.E.B. Du Bois, William James, and synaesthesia; on Melville's "Benito Cereno" and issues of copyright; on adoption and the captivity narrative; and on the early culture of baseball.

TREVINO BRINGS PLENTY is a poet and musician who lives, works, and writes in Portland, OR. He is singer/songwriter/guitarist for the musical ensemble Ballads of Larry Drake. He has read/performed his work at poetry festivals as far away as Amman, Jordan and close to his home base at Portland's Wordstock Festival.

In college, Trevino worked with Primus St. John and Henry Carlile for this poetry work, studied with Tomas Svoboda for music composition, and Jerry Hahn for Jazz guitar.

Trevino is an American and Native American; a Lakota Indian born on the Cheyenne River Sioux Reservation, South Dakota, USA. Some of his work explores the American Indian identity in American culture and how it has through genealogical history affected indigenous peoples in the 21st century. He writes of urban Indian life; it's his subject.

Other titles by Trevino include: *Wakpá Wanáǵi*, *Ghost River* (2015); *Real Indian Junk Jewelry* (2012); *Shedding Skins: Four Sioux Poets* (2008).

JENNY L. DAVIS is a citizen of the Chickasaw Nation and an Assistant Professor of Anthropology at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign where she is the director of the Native American and Indigenous Languages (NAIL) Lab and an affiliate faculty of American Indian Studies and Gender & Women's Studies. She earned her PhD in Linguistics at University of Colorado, Boulder in 2013. She was the 2010-2011 Henry Roe Cloud Fellow in American Indian Studies at Yale University, and a 2013-2014 Lyman T. Johnson Postdoctoral Fellow in Linguistics at the University of Kentucky. Her research focuses on contemporary Indigenous language(s) and identity, with dual focuses on Indigenous language revitalization and Indigenous gender and sexuality.

ANNMARIA DE MARS has a Ph.D. in Educational Psychology, with a specialization in Applied Statistics and Psychometrics and over 30 years of experience in evaluation research. She is president of 7 Generation Games and an adjunct professor in the Department of Applied Engineering at National University.

GARY F. DORR was the Media Coordinator for the Rosebud Sioux Tribe's Shield the People project. Gary served over 11 years in the United States Army as a military police sergeant. He has several combat deployments in the Iraq, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia area, and a total of four years in the Republic of South Korea. After his service he attended Haskell Indian Nations University where he graduated magna cum laude with a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration in 2004. After graduating from Haskell, he worked for several years in the field of Tribal Land Management for the Coeur d'Alene and Nez Perce Tribes in Idaho. This is where he firmly established himself as and remains an active advocate for tribal landowners' rights.



He maintains a personal relationship to the land as a landowner, hunter, traditional salmon-gaffer, and gatherer under the stipulations reserved to the Nez Perce People in their 1855 treaty with the United States. Gary also served as an elected member of the Nez Perce Tribe Fish and Wildlife Commission. Gary served as a buffalo hunt coordinator and treaty language representative to the Nez Perce Tribe Executive Committee.

MARÍA REGINA FIRMINO-CASTILLO is a transdisciplinary artist and researcher who works at the crossroads. Born in Guatemala, her research trajectory crisscrosses national borders and fields of inquiry, among these: critical dance/performance studies, decoloniality, ecocriticism, and new materialism. Firmino-Castillo's current book project, tentatively titled *Choreographies of Catastrophe: Corporeal Ontogenesis in the Post-Anthropocene*, discusses choreographic responses to the catastrophes of modernity/coloniality, including ecological devastation, enslavement, femicide, genocide, and violence against people living non-normative genders and sexualities. The performances discussed in the book were chosen not for their aesthetic genre or place of origin, but because they demonstrate corporeal modes of ontogenesis, that is, the rehearsing and bringing into being of more livable worlds in the midst of current catastrophes. At the same time, the book examines performances that envision and begin to embody vital futures even in the post-Anthropocene, the immanent era in which humans, no longer dominant, are compelled to enact radical kin-making across life forms. Firmino-Castillo is also co-editing, with Jacqueline Shea Murphy (UCR) and Karyn Recollet (University of Toronto), an anthology on global critical Indigenous dance studies.

CHAD S. HAMILL came to Northern Arizona University in 2007 and received his PhD in ethnomusicology at the University of Colorado in 2008. His scholarship is focused on song traditions of the Interior Northwest, including those carried by his Spokane ancestors. In addition to his book, *Songs of Power and Prayer in the Columbia Plateau*, he has produced numerous articles centered on Columbia Plateau songs and ceremony, exploring topics ranging from sovereignty to Indigenous ecological knowledge. Prior to his current position as Vice President for Native American Initiatives, Hamill served as Chair of the Department of Applied Indigenous Studies at NAU and as Chair of the Indigenous Music Section of the Society for Ethnomusicology. Currently, he sits on the Advisory Council of the Smithsonian's Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage. He also serves as Vice President and Treasurer of the Spokane Language House, a 501c3 that contributes to the sustainability of the Spokane language.

ERICH LONGIE is the cultural consultant for 7 Generation Games. He was born and raised on the Spirit Lake Nation of which he is a member. He is the President of Spirit Lake Consulting and of Cankdeska Cikana Community College.

MOLLY McGLENNEN was born and raised in Minneapolis, Minnesota and is of Anishinaabe and European descent. Currently, she is an Associate Professor of English and Native American Studies at Vassar College. She earned a PhD in Native American Studies from University of California, Davis and an MFA in Creative Writing from Mills College. Her creative writing and scholarship have been published widely. She is the author of a collection of poetry *Fried Fish and Flour Biscuits*, published by Salt's award-winning "Earthworks Series" of Indigenous writers, and a critical monograph *Creative Alliances: The Transnational Designs of Indigenous*

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*Women's Poetry* from University of Oklahoma Press, which earned the Beatrice Medicine Award for outstanding scholarship in American Indian Literature.

MELISSA MICHAL SLOCUM is of Seneca descent. She teaches and writes about creative writing and literature. Her criticism focuses on education and representation of Indigenous histories and literatures in curricula and how her community's Good Mind acts as a theoretical way of incorporating not simply Indigenous issues in the classroom, but also understanding of such issues. Her creative work explores historical trauma within her own community. She seeks to show the many ranges of Nativeness and agency. The result from colonization isn't simply a community greatly affected by trauma, it is also a resilience which comes from an interconnectedness and spirituality which derive from the Good Mind. Those traits create a strong community which retains a sense of self-worth. She received her MFA from Chatham University, her MA from the Pennsylvania State University, and PhD from Arizona State University. She has been grateful to read at the National American Indian Museum in DC and the Amerind Museum in Dragoon. She also received an NEH summer fellowship. Melissa has work appearing in *The Florida Review*, *Yellow Medicine Review*, and the University of Iowa's International Writing Program's Narrative Witnessing project. Her short story collection, *Living On the Borderlines*, is due out with Feminist Press February 2019, and she has finished her novel. She is now working on a non-fiction collection as well as her critical monograph, *Haudenosaunee Good Mind: Combating Literary Erasure and Genocide of American Indian Presence* with Literature Curriculum and Literary Criticism. Her short story collection was a finalist for the Louise Meriwether first book prize.