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Special Issue – Indigeneity and the Anthropocene, guest edited by Martin Premoli and David Carlson

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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:

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- 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
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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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Editorial

Season's greetings! It brings us great pleasure to welcome you to this guest-edited issue of *Transmotion* on Indigeneity and the Anthropocene. And with no apology for brevity, it also brings *me* great pleasure to usher you straight on to Martin Premoli's wonderful editorial/introduction to this issue… Congratulations to Martin and David for a deeply absorbing issue—the first of two, with the second to come in the spring of 2022. As ever, our team of review editors have put together a fantastic selection of reviews, and we are grateful as ever to all those who work with us behind the scenes to put the journal together and make it a valuable contribution to the field.

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David Stirrup December 2021
David Carlson
Theodore C. Van Alst
James Mackay
Bryn Skibo-Birney

"We are fighting": Global Indigeneity and Climate Change

MARTIN PREMOLI[1]

Recently, numerous islands across the South Pacific have appeared in headlines for their increasingly acute vulnerability to our global climate crisis.[1] The most recent climate models predict that if the Earth warms by two degrees Celsius, many low-lying islands (such as Tuvalu, Solomon Islands, Kiribati, and the Maldives) will disappear beneath the ocean's rising water levels. Signs of this possible future have already started to manifest: today, these island communities face an onslaught of environmental problems linked to climate change, such as fresh-water shortage, unpredictable and intensified storm patterns, flooding, coral degradation, and the destruction of crucial foodways. Even though these island nations have done little to set the global climate crisis in motion, they are in many cases the first to feel the blowback of climatological breakdown.

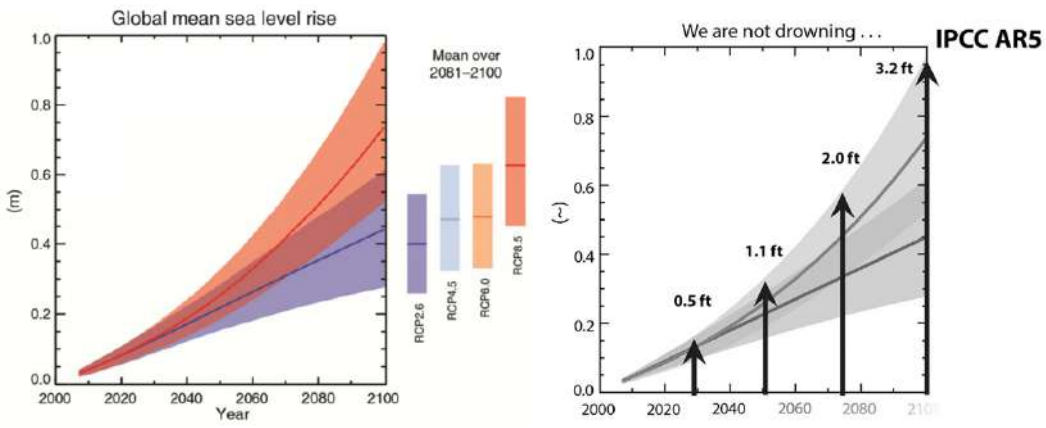
In response to the magnitude of this crisis, islanders from the South Pacific have developed numerous forms of aesthetics-based activism, drawing on creative expression to advocate for climate justice. Their work emphasizes the necessity of bolstering climate change discourse with questions of social justice and Indigenous sovereignty. This can be seen, for instance, in the poetry of CHamoru poet, activist, and scholar Craig Santos Perez. Over the past decade, Perez has emerged as one of the leading voices from the Pacific for navigating the Anthropocene's submarine futures. His work is often inspired by his ancestral and personal ties to Guåhan (Guam), and he has received several prestigious literary awards for his writing, such as the Pen

[1] Martin Premoli is a settler-scholar, currently based in the unceded territory and ancestral land of the San Manuel Band of Mission Indians (Yuhaaviatam).

Center USA/Poetry Society of America Literary Prize (2011), the American Book Award (2015), and the Hawai'i Literary Arts Council Award (2017).

Across his oeuvre, Perez draws on and experiments with poetic form to explore the intersections of colonialism, climate change, and Indigeneity. His excellent 2020 collection, *Habitat Threshold*, serves as a useful case in point. In this collection, he draws on a range of poetic forms (such as odes, sonnets, haikus, and elegies) to frame, unsettle, and invigorate numerous environmental issues, including species extinction, plastics pollution, nuclear toxicity, and food sovereignty. His poems toggle between local and global scales, allowing for a diversity of perspectives to emerge. As Eric Magrane writes in his review of *Habitat Threshold*, "this is a vital book of ecopoetry: Perez is an essential voice in the face of the ongoing and relentless intertwining of ecological and social calamities of the Anthropocene/Capitalocene" (393).

As an example of his climate justice based approach to Anthropocene discourse, we can turn to the climate change visualization that launches *Habitat Threshold*. Perez begins his collection of poems with a seemingly straightforward climate graph. This graph, charting global sea-level rise, is based on the fifth assessment report developed by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)—an organization that has deeply influenced the direction, tone, and outcome of policy and public debates surrounding climate change.[2] At first glance, Perez's reproduction of the graph appears to simply echo the information found in the IPCC's fifth assessment report. His graph presents readers with information pertaining to the issue of long-term sea level rise, based on scenarios of greenhouse gas concentrations. Following the conventions of a standard bar chart, the horizontal "X" axis functions as a timeline, starting in the early 2000s and ending at the year 2100. Meanwhile, the vertical "Y" axis measures sea level rise in meters. Reading these two axes in relation to each other allows us to visualize sea level rise as it is *projected* to occur in the future.



(Original) (Reproduction by Perez)

Upon closer inspection, however, we begin to notice how Perez has made crucial changes to the graph's content and form, pushing readers to re-think the graph's significance.[3] This is clear, for example, through an examination of the graph's (re)titling. While the IPCC's visualization of sea-level rise is titled "Global mean sea level rise," Perez instead opts for a very different header: "We are not drowning…" Those familiar with climate justice movements in the South Pacific will immediately recognize this phrase as the rallying cry of the Pacific Climate Warriors, whose Oceania-based activism protests the ongoing violence of Western climate imperialism. As stated in an article by 350.org, climate activists deploy this phrase to combat the "common perception that the Pacific Islands are drowning from sea-level rise" and to remind people that "it's not yet time to give up on the Islands" (Packard, "We are not drowning"). The effect of Perez's re-titling is thus deeply significant: through this new (and anti-colonial) title, Perez's graph challenges the reductionist tendencies of the IPCC's official climate visualization, which reduces the complexity of interactions between climates, environments, and societies in order to predict a singular—and typically apocalyptic—climate-changed future (Hulme, "Reducing the Future to

Climate" 247). (This is what geographer Mike Hulme has characterized as "climate reductionism," which might be viewed as a variant of climate determinism.) Rather, his graph insists on the importance of recognizing that the future is not foreclosed and that struggles for life are still of paramount importance.[4]

Through this formal innovation, then, Perez points toward the disruptive and empowering potential of Indigenous activism in the movement toward climate justice. His poem does not denounce or deny the insights offered by positivist models of knowledge production (this would be a dangerous maneuver in our current political climate), but it does push back against the overriding tendencies toward extinction that so often characterize graphs on climate change.[5] The poem thus demonstrates the potential that can come from "entangling epistemologies": that is, integrating Eurowestern positivism with "ways of knowing based in speculation, multigenerational experience, social relations, metaphor and story, and the sensing and feeling body" (Houser 5).[6] These "other ways of knowing," Perez suggests, are crucial for combating climate injustice and for preserving the lifeways of frontline communities in the South Pacific.

Of course, Perez is not alone in seeking climate justice for Indigenous communities across Oceania. Numerous poets from the region have highlighted the simultaneous risk and empowerment of Pacific Islanders when faced with "sinking islands." In 2014, Marshallese poet and activist, Kathy Jetñil-Kijiner, was invited to speak on the imperiled position of the Marshall Islands for the opening ceremony of the United Nations Secretary General's Climate Summit. During her opening remarks, Jetñil-Kijiner argues that we "need a radical change in course" if we hope to tackle the global climate crisis (1:43). She powerfully elaborates on this point through a reading of her poem "Dear Matafele Peinam," an ode to her seven-month-old daughter and their vanishing home island. As another example, during the UN Climate Conference in

Paris, four spoken word poets—Terisa Siagatonu, John Meta Sarmiento, Isabella Avila Borgeson, and Eunice Andrada—performed creative pieces that called attention to the everyday realities of climate disaster, while demanding a global response to the issue. In her poem "Layers," Siagatonu asks her audience why "saving the environment rarely means saving people who come from environments like mine, where black and brown bodies are riddled with despair" (1:01).

While poetry has been a particularly rich site for climate justice advocacy, artists from the South Pacific have worked across the spectrum of aesthetic forms. This includes theatre and performance-based awareness projects (as seen in the performance *Moana: The Rising of the Sea)*, film and documentary (see *Anote's Ark*), and other modes of literary expression (Keri Hulme's short story "Floating Worlds," for instance). Rather than fulfilling the victimization narrative desired by the traditional media, these cultural interventions highlight the simultaneous risk and empowerment of Pacific Islanders when faced with "sinking islands" (Ghosh "Poets Body as Archive"). And they foreground the values and insights offered by Indigenous communities in combating the climate crisis. Through their work, then, these artist-activists challenge, nuance, and re-write narratives about the climate crisis—their work has become crucial for navigating what Elizabeth DeLoughrey terms "the submarine futures of the Anthropocene" ("Submarine Futures").

I begin with this quick overview of recent Oceania-based climate activism and artistic uprisings as they speak to the motivating concerns at the heart of this special issue of *Transmotion*. Around the world, Indigenous communities are leading movements to redress and counteract the violence of anthropogenic climate change, along with its driving forces of colonialism and capitalism. These movements critically reflect on how Indigenous peoples define their relationships to the land and water, to

other humans and non-humans, and to history and time in order to push back against the genocidal wave of ecological violence. As Jaskiran Dhillon puts it,

> Indigenous peoples are challenging structures of contemporary global capitalism, standing up and speaking out to protect the land, water, and air from further contamination and ruination, and embodying long-standing forms of relationality and kinship that counter Western epistemologies of human/nature dualism. Indigenous peoples are mapping the contours of alternative modes of social, political, and economic organization that speak to the past, present, and the future—catapulting us into a moment of critical, radical reflection about the substantive scope and limitations of "mainstream environmentalism" (1).

This issue of *Transmotion* builds on these insights, focusing on the innumerable and profoundly consequential ways that Indigenous peoples have shaped and contributed to debates surrounding the Anthropocene, particularly through forms of storytelling and cultural production.

Our focus on stories resonates with Donna Haraway's claim that "it matters what stories we tell to tell other stories with; it matters what knots knot knots, what thoughts think thoughts, what descriptions describe descriptions, what ties tie ties. It matters what stories make worlds, what worlds make stories" (12). In the spirit of this sentiment, our contributors examine stories from a plurality of aesthetic forms, such as literature, photography, film, and other related modes of creative expression. Drawing upon their knowledge as scholars of literary and cultural studies, our contributors tease out the ways in which Indigenous storytelling depicts the complex negotiations of "nature" and "culture" in the Anthropocene. This special issue thus takes seriously the Anishnaabe understanding that "stories are vessels of knowledge" and that, as such,

they "carry dynamic answers to questions" posed by various Indigenous communities (Doerfler et al.)

Given the global scope of the climate crisis, this issue of *Transmotion* focuses on the significance of Anthropocene narratives in a global Indigenous arena. In operationalizing a trans-Indigenous framework, we support Chadwick Allen's assertion that we must undertake Indigenous-centered scholarship that reads Indigenous texts in comparative terms, rather than in relation to a Eurowestern canon. Following Allen, our aim is "not to displace the necessary, invigorating study of specific traditions and contexts but rather to complement these by augmenting and expanding broader, globally Indigenous fields of inquiry" (xiv). Across disparate locales, we consider the potential that an anti- and decolonial Anthropocene discourse can hold for transnational solidarity and global Indigenous sovereignty. Our contributors reflect on how Indigenous artists and activists reconcile the local exigencies of their environment with the global discourse on climate change. Through our deployment of a trans-Indigenous methodology, we hope to offer a thought-provoking venue to explore the diverse and interrelated forms of Indigenous creativity from across the globe.

In what follows, I begin by overviewing some of the main interventions Indigenous thinkers have made in relation to Anthropocene discourse, emphasizing their strategies for decolonizing, problematizing, and unsettling dominant perspectives in this growing field. This is not a comprehensive summary of the field, rather it is a survey featuring *some* of the voices that have contributed to this vibrant conversation. With this context established, I turn to the growing dialogue between eco-critical and Indigenous literary studies to consider how these fields have increasingly dialogued since the acceleration of Anthropocene thinking, and I provide an overview of the scholarly contributions that comprise this special issue.

Decolonizing the Anthropocene

The central theme of this issue has inspired a significant amount of critical interest in recent years. Before discussing how aesthetic works, in particular, have responded to discourse on the Anthropocene, it's useful to map out how Indigenous scholars from a variety of disciplines have productively engaged with and problematized discourse on the Anthropocene. The term "Anthropocene" was coined and popularized by ecologist Eugene Stoermer and atmospheric chemist Paul Crutzen at the turn of the 21st century. In their initial formulation of this term, the Anthropocene designates a newly proposed geological epoch in which humans are considered a collective geophysical force, responsible for drastic changes to the planet's overall habitability. For the first time in Earth's history, humankind had altered the planet's deep chemistry—its atmosphere, lithosphere, hydrosphere, and biosphere—in massive, long-lasting ways. Crutzen and Stoermer dated this rupture to the late eighteenth century beginnings of the industrial revolution, when unprecedented developments in trade, travel, and technology resulted in a drastic increase in global concentrations of carbon dioxide and methane (which are evident in recent analyses of air trapped in polar ice). Along with this important historical moment, they further identify a "Great Acceleration" in the mid-twentieth century, when human population, consumption, and greenhouse gas emissions all skyrocketed. For these reasons, they argue that the "impact of human activities on earth [across] all scales" has made it "more than appropriate to emphasize the central role of *mankind* in geology and ecology" (17).

Since its early formulation, the term has become the subject of ever-growing critical debate. In particular, numerous critics have taken issue with the term's tendency for generalization and abstraction: Crutzen and Stoermer's hypothesis frames climate change as a problem caused by the human species writ large (this is evident in the line referenced above). Moreover, their framework obscures the ways in which

environmental violence is disproportionately created and differentially distributed, particularly along the lines of race, class, and gender. To counteract these tendencies, scholars across disciplines have theorized spinoff "-cenes," ones that more closely inspect the historical processes and epistemologies that directly contributed to anthropogenic climate change. Jason Moore's notion of the "Capitalocene" identifies the global capitalist system—with its prioritization of limitless growth and "cheap nature"—as the primary culprit in the creation of climate vulnerability. Another influential alternative, the "Plantationocene," links climate change to the transatlantic slave trade and its afterlives. Developed by Sophie Moore and collaborators, this term confronts the enduring legacies of plantations and unpacks the ways that these integral sites were produced through processes of intensive land usage, land alienation, labor extraction, and racialized violence (first indentured servitude, and later slavery). These terms thus highlight the reality that "we may all be in the Anthropocene, but we are not all in it in the same way" (Nixon 8). And, moreover, they speak to the crucial implications of how we define, delimit, and narrate our ecological and climatological crisis.[7]

Writing from an Indigenous studies framework, Zoe Todd (Métis) and Heather Davis have offered one of the most compelling reconceptualizations of the term. In their article, "On the Importance of a Date, or Decolonizing the Anthropocene," they examine the ways that climate change discourse might productively shift if we reconsider the Anthropocene's origin point. Challenging the typical mid-20th century start-point, Davis and Todd propose linking the Anthropocene to the Columbian exchange (1610). This is an important historical flashpoint, they explain, for two reasons:

> The first is that the amount of plants and animals that were exchanged between Europe and the Americas during this time drastically re-shaped the

> ecosystems of both of these landmasses, evidence of which can be found in the geologic layer by way of the kinds of biomass accumulated there. The second reason, which is a much more chilling indictment against the horrifying realities of colonialism, is the drop in carbon dioxide levels that can be found in the geologic layer that correspond to the genocide of the peoples of the Americas and the subsequent re-growth of forests and other plants (766).

In other words, this moment is significant because it offers the kind of "evidence" that geologists and scientists need for determining the onset of a new geologic epoch. When large-scale events have occurred in the earth's deep history (such as global cooling events), they leave a geologic marker that is visible in the earth's sedimentary strata—this is referred to as a "golden spike." In order to determine if the Anthropocene constitutes a new epoch, scientists have endeavored to trace and locate a new golden spike within the earth's geologic bedrock (and indeed, multiple "golden spikes" have been proposed). As Kathryn Yusoff notes, this method operates as a disciplinary endeavor to geologically map the material relation of space and time according to stratigraphic principles and scientific precedents—and it is therefore grounded in the distinctly positivist values inherent to a Eurowestern scientific system (Yusoff, Chapter 2).

Todd and Davis find the aforementioned moment to be significant for other reasons, however. Using a date that coincides with colonialism in the Americas, they explain, allows us to understand the nature of our ecological crisis as inherently ascribed to a specific ideology that is animated by proto-capitalist logics based on extraction and accumulation through dispossession. This process also entailed the disruption of the kin relations that characterize Indigenous perspectives and forms of knowledge. As they put it, the Anthropocene registers "a severing of relations between

humans and the soil, between plants and animals, between minerals and our bones" (770).

These logics of accumulation and dispossession, however, are not sequestered to a remote past. As Todd and Davis observe, they continue to shape the present day, producing our current era of growing climate destabilization. Today, the economic infrastructures of settler-colonies around the world depend on extractive industries: natural resources are transported to international markets "from oil and gas fields, refineries, lumber mills, mining operations, and hydro-electric facilities located on the dispossessed lands of Indigenous nations" (Coulthard "Thesis 2"). In many cases, cooperation between the federal government and private businesses paves the way for these extractive processes, further cementing settler control over the land while undermining Indigenous authority and sovereignty.[8] In recent years, this has led to the frightening manifestation of what Ashley Dawson describes as "extractivist populism," wherein the bigotry and repression of authoritarian populism has combined with and amplified the ecocidal intensification of resource extraction—both in the name of "progress" and the "people's good" (Amatya and Dawson 6). These ongoing instances of energy and resource extraction consistently highlight the recursive or cyclical nature of climate violence, which cuts across linear conceptions of time and straightforward notions of progress. To adapt the words of Patrick Wolfe, settler colonialism as climate change is a structure and not an event (388).

Beyond identifying capitalism and colonialism as the core problematics of the Anthropocene, Indigenous scholars have also stepped forward as central figures in providing alternatives to climate colonialism, offering "both knowledge and leadership in understanding and addressing environmental crises" (Deloria et al. 13). The Potawatomi scholar and activist Kyle Whyte has dedicated much of his work to crafting what he calls "Indigenous climate change studies," an Indigenous-based approach to

climate change. His formulation of Indigenous climate change studies is supported by three basic tenets. First, climate change is an intensification of the ways colonial structures of power have always shaped environments. Second, Indigenous communities can better prepare for climate change by renewing Indigenous knowledges, including languages, sciences, and forms of human and nonhuman kinship. Third, the perspectives of Indigenous peoples who are already adapting to the postapocalyptic conditions of colonialism changes the ways these communities imagine futures affected by climate change. Together, these elements yield a mode of praxis wherein one "perform[s] futurities that Indigenous persons can build on in generations to come. [It is] guided by our reflection on our ancestors' perspectives *and* on our desire to be good ancestors ourselves to future generations (160).

Instances of Indigenous climate change studies have proliferated as climate breakdown has accelerated, signaling the salience and necessity of this approach. In one example, Whyte describes a collaborative encounter between the state of Alaska and Koyukon people of Koyukuk-Middle Yukon region in the Arctic. In order to navigate unprecedented climatic shifts in the region, the state proposed hunting regulations on moose that would hamper Indigenous harvesting practices. As an alternative, Koyukon youth and elders drew upon their traditional knowledge of the seasonal round to create an alternative system that displayed their own understanding of seasonality. Ultimately, their seasonal wheel demonstrated that "shifting the moose hunting season later so as to correspond with the Indigenous view of seasonality makes more sense than the date proposed by state and federal regulators" (218). The Yukon example thus illuminates the promising potential of Indigenous climate change studies, and it illustrates the central role that Indigenous self-determination must play in planning for climate change adaptation.

Importantly, Whyte and other Indigenous scholar-activists, have cautioned that these practices should not be utilized as tools for last-ditch efforts at climate recovery. Numerous attempts at "integrating" Indigenous knowledge systems (such as the work found in the "Our Common Future" report) have often been reductive and appropriative in their approach. As Leanne Simpson observes, Eurowestern environmentalists often believe that "traditional knowledge and indigenous peoples have some sort of secret of how to live on the land in a non-exploitative way that broader societies need to appropriate" ("Dancing the World into Being"). This kind of approach has the tendency to romanticize Indigenous knowledge, reproducing stereotypes of the "ecological Indian"—the "traditional" Native who lives in harmony with the untouched environment. Moreover, Eurowestern approaches to Indigenous knowledge often operate through a logic of intellectual extraction, in which knowledge is removed from its context, from its originary language, and from traditional knowledge holders. To counter the extractive and fetishistic tendencies of mainstream environmentalism, it is crucial to cultivate a model of "responsibility"—an environmentalist approach founded on respectful, long-standing relationships with Indigenous people and with place ("Dancing the World into Being").[9]

Finally, it is crucial to recognize that decolonizing Eurowestern environmentalisms is only part of what is necessary for advancing an ecological model grounded in responsibility and humility. As Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang explain (and as is suggested by both Whyte's and Simpson's emphasis on place), decolonization must agitate for practices of restorative land justice. In their article "Decolonization is not a metaphor," Tuck and Yang argue that "decolonization in the settler colonial context must involve the repatriation of land simultaneous to the recognition of how land and relations to land have always already been differently understood and enacted; that is, *all* of the land, and not just symbolically" (7). For Tuck and Yang,

decolonization cannot function as a stand-in for "the discourse of social justice"; instead, it must aim to recover the Indigenous lands that were stolen by settlers through numerous and ongoing appropriative strategies. In turn, land recovery would then allow for the resurgence of "Indigenous political-economic alternatives [that] could pose a real threat to the accumulation of capital in Indigenous lands…" (Coulthard "Thesis 2").[10] Such insights are crucial for developing an anti-colonial approach to the Anthropocene: these scholars help us understand that implementing Indigenous modes of environmental knowledge—which are tethered to place—necessitates the dismantling of extractive capitalism and the repatriation of Indigenous lands. Ignoring this reality impedes the restoration of the life-ways, practices, and kinship networks that are necessary for living responsibly in the midst of profound ecological change.

As this overview suggests, Indigenous studies has already proven to be a pivotal site of exchange for conversations surrounding the Anthropocene—and this critical work is only continuing to grow and evolve as the climate crisis spins further out of control. The various activists and intellectuals I have discussed above allow for a fuller (and more accurate) picture of our current geological epoch to come into view. Their work powerfully demonstrates the numerous ways that capitalism and settler colonialism have ushered in our warming world—and they illustrate how these violent logics are ongoing and evolving. Just as importantly, however, these thinkers also emphasize how efforts for resistance and resurgence are being led by Indigenous communities around the world. In doing so, they push for an honest conversation regarding how we have found ourselves in the throes of global environmental catastrophe—and, possibly, how we can imagine a future freed from domination, and built instead on a foundation of climatological justice.

EH, Indigenous Aesthetics, and Climate Justice

The work of imagining futures anchored in climate justice has been a primary endeavor for scholars in the environmental humanities (and the subdiscipline of eco-criticism). As an interdisciplinary (and sometimes anti-disciplinary) field, the environmental humanities "envision ecological crises fundamentally as questions of socioeconomic inequality, cultural difference, and divergent histories, values, and ethical frameworks" (Heise 2). Rather than insist on the belief that science, data, or technology can awaken us to the severity of our climate's breakdown, scholarship in EH insists on emphasizing the political, social, cultural, and affective forms that the climate problem takes in different communities, cultures, and imaginaries (2). While scholars in EH acknowledge the importance of scientific understanding and technological problem-solving, they also remind us that these discourses are themselves colored by the disciplines that grant them power, and that they "stand to gain by situating themselves in [a] historical and sociocultural landscape" (2). The reality of this notion comes into clear view when we consider the ongoing nature of the climate change "debate," particularly as it has played out within the United States. As scholars such as Mike Hulme and Dale Jamieson have shown, doubling down on the insights generated by the scientific community does little to shift social and political opinion about the climate crisis, especially when these insights remain disconnected from the larger cultural contexts and histories that influence our ideas and experiences of the climate (3). To dream of more sustainable futures, then, we must tap into the capacities of narrative (and other humanistic disciplines) for reimagining "the environment" and humankind's place within it.[11]

This special issue approaches the environmental humanities from an Indigenous-oriented angle, combing EH's interests in climate and narrative with the kinds of questions and concerns I've outlined in this introduction's second section.[12]

Scholars working at this critical crossroads have already begun exploring some of the most crucial concerns raised by Indigenous creative work. Much critical analysis, for instance, has examined how different genres (such as the gothic, dystopian, or speculative) assist us in navigating the specific epistemological and ontological challenges posed by the jarring disruptions of the Anthropocene (Anderson, DeLoughrey, Dhillon). Other work has documented the ways that Indigenous narratives intersect with and inflect forms of environmental activism and protest (Cariou, Kinder, Streeby). A growing body of literature considers the archival function of Indigenous storytelling, tracing how these stories retain and transmit ecological knowledge across long swathes of time (LeMenager, Perez). Other work has discussed some of the ways that Indigenous narratives foreground questions of multi-species kinship, gender and sexual equality, anti-racism, and environmental justice in order to advance more equitable climate futures (Adamson, Goeman). And most recently, a collection of scholars encourage us to re-consider the utility of the Anthropocene metric in and of itself: "the Anthropocene is a narrative, one cooperatively composed and begging now for crowdsourced revision, with sequels that are not linear or conclusive but alternately recursive and speculative, plodding and precipitous, stale and untried" (Benson Taylor 10). These are only some of the issues and insights examined by an Indigenous-oriented ecocriticism—one that works toward the development of a decolonial climate movement on a global scale.

Our special issue aims to further explore such preoccupations and discover new points of critical reflection. We begin with an essay by Kasey Jones-Matrona on Jennifer Elise Foerster's *Bright Raft in the Afterweather.* In this essay, Jones-Matrona examines how Foerster's poetry draws on Indigenous scientific literacies (that account for both human and nonhuman knowledge) to re-map Creek lands, histories, and futures in the Anthropocene. Jones-Matrona then connects these re-mapped

cartographies to the prospect of healing, arguing that, even in works with catastrophic themes and settings, healing is a crucial aspect of Indigenous futurist work. In centering the significance of healing, Jones-Matrona elucidates and "amplifies an Indigenous-specific notion of the Anthropocene."

Through an examination of Ciro Guerra's *Embrace of the Serpent*, Holly May Treadwell explores and further develops the notion of the Capitalocence (as theorized by Jason Moore). As Treadwell explains, *Embrace of the Serpent* rejects the notion of the Anthropocene and its homogenous view of "human" activity, explicitly demonstrating that it is specifically capitalism as an extension of colonialism that is having such detrimental and violent effects on the climate. Treadwell focuses specifically on the way that the Capitalocence, as depicted in *Embrace of the Serpent*, paves the way for extinction on three fronts: "the extinction of people via forced labor, decimation of land, murder, and dispossession; the extinction of Indigenous cultures, comparing the personification, conservation, and kinship with nature, to capitalism's commodification, exploitation, and demonization of nature; and the extinction of nature itself via its domination and cultivation." Treadwell closes their essay by asking how Indigenous knowledge might challenge the wave of extinction propelled by the capitalization of nature.

Abdenour Bouich's essay on Tanya Tagaq's novel *Split Tooth* looks at the ways in which Tanya Tagaq's formally inventive work critiques the destructive "developmental" ethos of colonial capitalist modernity, which targets Indigenous Inuit peoples of Canada. In particular, Bouich's reading focuses on the text's depiction of the ecological disasters provoked by resource extraction and global warming brought about by global capitalism and, in particular, Canadian capitalist expansionism in the Arctic region. While accounting for the scale of such petro-violence, *Split Tooth*, Bouich contends, also employs a variety of literary forms to catalyze the resurgence

and the recovery of "Indigenous ontologies, epistemologies, and politics that have long been dismissed by colonial discourses and narratives." In doing so, the text can be read as what Daniel Heath Justice calls an Indigenous "wonderwork"—a genre-crossing text grounded in the resilient worldviews of the Indigenous Inuit of Nunavut.

In their essay on Celu Amberstone's novella "Refugees," Fernando Pérez Garcia also considers the affordances of formal experimentation, focusing on the decolonial possibilities of Indigenous futurism. The article draws on Leanne Betasamosake Simpson's and Glenn Coulthard's work on Indigenous resurgence to explore how the novella comments on Canada's exploitative economic system, which relies heavily on the extraction of natural resources and the ongoing dispossession of Indigenous communities. According to Garcia, Indigenous futurist fiction not only provides "Indigenous meaning to past and ongoing colonial experiences," but it projects an Indigenous presence and epistemology into the future. "Refugees," in particular, acts as a channel for the expression of possible collective self-recognition through relationships based on reciprocity between human and non-human forms of life. Such an imaginative endeavor—which envisions sovereignty from Indigenous perspective—is central for conceptualizing alternatives to environmental collapse.

Similar concerns are taken up by Kyle Bladow, in their essay on Louise Erdrich's speculative novel, *Future Home of the Living God*. Bladow's essay assesses how "recent literary depictions of Indigenous futurity coincide with grassroots activism that has been ongoing for generations and that is finding new iterations in current movements for climate justice and against settler colonial resource extraction." Bladow coins the useful term "oblique cli-fi" to describe recent post-apocalyptic novels, written by Indigenous writers, which feature catastrophes that are not necessarily caused by climate change (but which have been considered under a cli-fi rubric due to the increasingly close relationship between climate change and catastrophe). Erdrich's

oblique cli-fi shows how responsibilities toward land and kin were never contingent upon permanent, unchanging ecologies but instead exist in states of dynamism and change, allowing for flexible re-creations of environmental stewardship. From this perspective, *Future Home of the Living God* envisions hopeful prospects for a reservation community in an otherwise dystopian narrative.

Finally, Isabel Lockhart's contribution considers the diverse work of Métis writer, scholar, documentary filmmaker, and photographer Warren Cariou as a formal counterpoint to dominant representations of the Athabasca tar sands. In contrast to the aerial aesthetics favored by Canadian photographers, such as Edward Burtynsky and Louis Helbig, Cariou favors literary and aesthetic forms that approximate the feel and smell of tar. Crucially, this "from below" perspective on the tar sands not only seeks to make sensible the impacts of the oil industry, but it also illuminates Indigenous presence against the settler social relations that underpin extraction in the region currently known as Alberta. Lockhart's essay thus concludes with an examination of how Cariou develops an alternate, Indigenous politics of action that switches, as they put it, from representation *of* bitumen to relationships *with* bitumen. "By intervening directly in the use and meaning of bitumen," Lockhart argues, "Cariou's practices offer us an alternative to the terms of urgency, visibility, and action that so often frame climate art."

These reflections, anchored in the rich field of Indigenous literary studies, can help re-signify and reorient interdisciplinary conversations about the Anthropocene, particularly when it is framed as a product of longstanding colonial violence. Moreover, these contributions seek to emphasize the necessity of centering Indigenous voices in conversations about climate justice, sovereignty, and environmental sustainability, while modeling generative approaches and methodologies for this endeavor. Such

work is crucial for attending to life-destroying and world-creating effects of the colonial Anthropocene.

Notes

[1] See, for example, the *New York Times* article "A Remote Pacific Nation, Threatened by Rising Seas" or the article *The Guardian* titled "One day we'll disappear: Tuvalu's sinking islands."

[2] Over its 23-year history, the IPCC has been presented as the authoritative voice of climate science and the global knowledge community (Hulme, "Meet the Humanities"). However, it is important to keep in mind that in constructing their assessment reports, the IPCC privileges literature produced in the natural science disciplines, especially the earth sciences, while the minority social science citations stemmed from economics. Literature from the humanities is left almost entirely unacknowledged. The framing of climate change thus constructed by the IPCC—and the framing that has thus circulated through societies and informed policy—contains a bias: it is dominated by positivist disciplines (which, for example, focus on geo-engineering our way out of climate collapse) and neglectful of interpretive ones (which might ask us to re-consider our patterns of extraction and energy usage).

[3] Riffing on his previous work with what Perez calls "poem-maps" (poems that reimagine authoritative Western mappings of the South Pacific), we might call these poems "poem-models." These poem-models present—and then formally experiment with—scientific graphs and models that visualize and predict climate change.

[4] And moreover, his title adds specificity and context to the graph—something that remains absent from the IPCC's placeless and contextless visualization. His graph, in other words, forces readers to confront the *specific* places and people most affected by global warming and rising water levels. As a result, we interact with the graph's contents in a more intimate and engaged manner.

[5] For a critique of extinction narratives in the context of the Pacific Islands, see Rebecca Oh's article "Making Time: Pacific Futures in Kiribati's Migration with Dignity, Kathy Jetñ il-Kijiner's *Iep Jaltok*, and Keri Hulme's *Stonefish*."

[6] In her eye-opening book *Infowhelm*, Houser argues that recent environmental art blends scientific information (the positivist epistemologies that have dominated environmental understanding and decision making in the Eurowest) with other (often marginalized) epistemological modes, reminding us that scientific information "is a representational device in its own right" (2). Her monograph builds on her previous work regarding climate visualizations, where she argues that "environmental visualizations, especially those addressing climate change, cry out for humanistic

interpretation because they are not realist translations of natural phenomena. Their representational features bear a great burden of signification, especially as the objects roam from their typical origins in specialized journals, to blogs and policy documents, and even into skeptics' arguments. The interpretive tools the humanities have honed are vital to getting beyond the perceived self- evidence, the transparency, of visualizations in climate discourse" ("Climate Visualizations" 358).

[7] Crucially, these theorists do not deny the significance of historical moments (such as the "Great Acceleration"), rather they seek to emphasize how such dates lose political and social import if they do not account for the very real differences between peoples, governments, and geographies in contributing to eco-system collapse. For instance, a 2013 study concluded that since 1751, a mere ninety corporations have been responsible for two-thirds of humanity's greenhouse gas emissions (Goldenberg 2013).

[8] As Jaskiran Dhillon notes, these political moves are "in direct violation of treaty relationships that actively produce settler state sovereignty over the land" ("What Standing Rock Teaches Us About Environmental Justice").

[9] In the essay, "Love and Theft; or, Provincializing the Anthropocene" Stephanie LeMenager further problematizes the "long-standing tendency of Euro-Western environmentalism, and its various iterations in the academy, to use Indigenous thought without fair attribution or sufficient understanding" (102). LeMenager's essay powerfully points out the "incomensurabilities" between Indigenous knowledge and fields like the environmental humanities (a field that, at times, risks treating Indigenous knowledge as a decontextualized tool kit). LeMenager asks, "is it possible for […] settlers to think alongside Indigenous scholars and writers, or merely to listen, without enacting theft in the form of translation and misuse?" (103-4).

[10] Coulthard argues that this threat would be triple-edged: first, land recovery would reconnect Indigenous people to land-based practices and forms of environmental knowledge (antithetical to capitalist accumulation); second, it would offer means of subsistence that would enable a departure from a capitalist market system, focusing instead localized and sustainable production of life materials; third, it would connect Indigenous modes of governance with "nontraditional economic activities."

[11] As Adeline Johns Putra writes in her study of climate fiction, "research at the interface of narratology and neurophysiology has shown that narratives have a greater impact than non-narrative modes of communication, because the experience which is simulated in reading them is a powerful means of forming attitudes" (245).

[12] This claim is reinforced by many of the author's cited above, such as Todd, Davis, and Whyte, who often draw on the discourse of storytelling (and genre fiction, such as science fiction) to make claims around the importance of telling new Indigenous stories

and imaginings in the Anthropocene. Whyte, for instance, writes, "Surviving the Anthropocene requires new ways of imagining, and Indigenous writers have led the way in this front. Indigenous imaginations of our futures in relation to climate change—the stuff of didactic science fiction—begin already with our living today in post-apocalyptic situation" (160). Todd and Davis similarly of fiction and speculation for engaging the colonial dimensions of the Anthropocene.

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Indigenous Anthropocenes in Poetry: Mvskoke Homelands in Jennifer Elise Foerster's *Bright Raft in the Afterweather*

KASEY JONES-MATRONA

In his book, *Red Alert: Saving the Planet with Indigenous Knowledge*, Daniel Wildcat calls for a "cultural climate change" (5). This would entail a change in our thinking and actions regarding climate change and the environment. To Wildcat, the best solution for spurring a cultural climate change is "indigenuity," his term for Indigenous ingenuity (74). Mvskoke (Creek) poet Jennifer Elise Foerster's work begins to answer this call for a cultural climate change by amplifying an Indigenous-specific, and Mvskoke-specific, notion of the Anthropocene in her second collection of poetry, *Bright Raft in the Afterweather* (2018). She blends time, weaving past, present, and future (in no particular order) to convey a catastrophic future mirrored by difficult but resilient Mvskoke pasts and presents. In a 2017 interview with the University of Arizona Press, Foerster discussed the environment in *Bright Raft in the Afterweather*. Foerster states, "The characters of the poems are suffused by their ecologies and energy systems, including the systems we can't see" (UA Press). Foerster often features recurring characters and voices in and across her collections, and these characters have important connections to the environment and to Mvskoke stories.

Foerster also discusses important connections between poetry, the environment, and healing. She states, "Poetry, I believe… can reveal the invisible landscapes, histories, and stories that we've forgotten, that we need to remember in order to continue. When I say 'transform' I'm talking about healing, which naturally involves ecological balance" (UA Press*). Bright Raft in the Afterweather* highlights the

importance of Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) and cultural healing in narrating one version of a Mvskoke Anthropocene. Foerster utilizes this moment of the Anthropocene to story Mvskoke homelands, histories, and futures by recognizing human and nonhuman agency. I read Foerster's poetry as a symbiocene, a balance between human and nonhuman, and a poetics that seeks to heal, not solely express survival. The Mvskoke Anthropocene in *Bright Raft in the Afterweather,* conveys Mvskoke specific experiences of colonial climate disaster leading to broken contracts with the natural world along with Mvskoke ingenuity in survival and imagining futures.

Indigenous Anthropocenes

The term Anthropocene is one used popularly in scholarship now, although there are efforts to restructure the study of this epoch to take non-Western perspectives into account. Eugene Stormer began the study of the Anthropocene in the 1980s, and atmospheric chemist Paul Crutzen popularized this term in the early 2000s (Grusin vii). The Anthropocene is "the proposed name for a geological epoch defined by the overwhelming human influence upon the earth" (Grusin vii). However, scientists cannot agree on exactly how recently this era began. Scientists debate the start of the Anthropocene, ranging from 1610, to the start of the Industrial Revolution, and even as late as 1964 for reasons such as a decrease in atmospheric carbon dioxide, the increase of fossil fuel burning, and peaks in radioactivity (Lewis, Maslin 175-177). The date does matter, although it may never be agreed upon, because it affects the perception of human action on the environment (Lewis, Maslin 177). Geographers Simon Lewis and Mark Maslin note that the arrival of Europeans in the Caribbean in 1492 along with the "subsequent annexing of the Americas led to the largest population replacement in the past 13,000 years," and "the cross-continental movement of food and animals alone contributed to a swift, ongoing radical reorganization of life on Earth without

geological precedent" (174). This summation of the profound impact of colonization on Indigenous populations allows for an argument of a much earlier start date to the Anthropocene.

Many Indigenous scholars date the beginning of the Anthropocene based on environmental impact at the beginning of European colonization of the Americas. Recent studies reveal that European settlers killed roughly "56 million indigenous people over about 100 years in South, Central, and North America" (Kent). This led to a rise in abandonment of farmland followed by reforestation that decreased carbon dioxide levels, and by 1610, "carbon levels changed enough to cool the Earth" (Kent). The genocide of Indigenous peoples and the swift shift in land management changed the temperature of the earth. In her book *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None,* Kathryn Yusoff writes that "Black and brown death is the precondition of every Anthropocene origin story" (Yusoff 66). The beginning of any Anthropocene narrative includes enslavement of Africans and/or genocide of Indigenous peoples. Similarly, Donna Haraway writes, "It's more than climate change; it's also extraordinary burdens of toxic chemistry, mining, depletion of lakes and rivers under and above ground, ecosystem simplification, vast genocides of people and other critters… in systematically linked patterns that threaten major system collapse" (159). Genocide is directly and systematically tied to environmental destruction, and Yusoff notes that while colonial Anthropocenes all start the same way, no population experiences the Anthropocene in the same way, hence the plural of the term. Further, various tribal nations have experienced (and continue to experience) the Anthropocene differently.

Citizen Potawatomi scholar Kyle Powys Whyte argues that what Indigenous peoples "are currently facing is not different from environmental destruction of settler colonialism in North America" (1). Settler colonialism brought the destruction of local plants, animals, and lands, along with the genocide of Indigenous peoples. Just as

Kent's argument previously linked genocide to environmental destruction, Whyte also draws the connection between initial colonial struggles harming tribal lands and waters to contemporary twenty-first century struggles. Whyte argues that "in the Anthropocene… some indigenous peoples already inhabit what [their] ancestors would have likely characterized as a dystopian future" (Whyte 2). The dystopia that colonizers created for Indigenous peoples upon first contact only persists today, and it functions in complex systems that threaten various forms of sovereignty.

While many focus arguments on the start date of the Anthropocene, it is also important to shift the focus of the study of this epoch to humanitarian and environmental concerns stemming from colonization. Elizabeth DeLoughrey argues that "postcolonial critiques of the world-making claims of ecology and empire have been overlooked in the scramble for originary claims about the Anthropocene" (12). Here, DeLoughrey contends that more pressing questions entail asking *whom* and *what practices* caused the Anthropocene. This is also why scholars argue about the naming of Anthropocene. Heather Davis and Zoe Todd argue that the "Anthropocene is a universalizing project; it serves to re-invisibilize the power of Eurocentric narratives" (Davis et al. 763). In their scrambling to date the Anthropocene to the 1600s or later, scholars and scientists overlook questions about early colonial structures and systems. Lewis and Maslin argue that "the Anthropocene as the extension and enactment of colonial logic systematically erases difference, by way of genocide and forced integration and through projects of climate change that imply the radical transformation of the biosphere" (769). This is precisely why we must tease out tribally specific Anthropocene narratives, in order to combat colonial erasure and to highlight the ways Indigenous traditional knowledge systems helped tribes to survive the origins of colonial catastrophe.

Mvskoke Anthropocene in *Bright Raft in the Afterweather*

Bright Raft in the Afterweather is divided into 4 sections: "Before the Hurricane," "At the Midnight Galleries," "After I Bury the Nightingale," and "The Outer Bank." Some common threads are the movement of the sea, the slippery nature of memory, the disjointed body or the disembodied self, and fractured or circular time. In the poem, "River," a woman questions "what if we were to dream / each moment before us as we dream / each moment behind us?" (16-18). Imagined futures and remembered pasts, along with imagined pasts and remembered futures, are critical to Foerster's collection. Through these memories and reflections, Mvskoke homelands are conjured, from the past, present, and future. Gan et al. believe that there are ways to study this kind of palimpsest of both human and nonhuman life as they theorize the "ghosts" of the Anthropocene. They write, "The winds of the Anthropocene carry ghosts—the vestiges and signs of past ways of life still charged in the present" (Gan et al. 1). These "ghosts are the traces of more-than-human histories through which ecologies are made and unmade" (Gan et al. 1). This argument implies that both making and unmaking constitute the Anthropocene, not unmaking alone.

The notion of Anthropocene ghosts also closely relates to David Farrier's concept of future fossils. Farrier writes, "In my search for future fossils, I took to the air, the oceans, and the rock, from the bubble of ice drawn from the heart of Antarctica to a tomb for radioactive waste deep beneath the Finnish bedrock" (22). Farrier stresses the significance of scouring for "landscapes and objects that will endure the longest and the changes they will undergo" and recognizing that seeking future fossils is also a "search for what will be lost" (22). The notions of Anthropocene ghosts and future fossils are particularly powerful in connection with Foerster's poetry. The characters and agents in the collection haunt the landscape and seascape, the nonhumans, especially,

exist within their own temporalities, living long before and after humans. These are Mvskoke Anthropocene ghosts. Foerster examines the colonial culpability relevant to environmental destruction while paving a way for Mvskoke futures. *Bright Raft in the Afterweather* creates a productive Anthropocene intervention because her poetry imagines (or describes an already current) catastrophic present and/or future while conveying the relationship Mvskoke peoples have with the environment to begin to heal colonial human impact.

Old Woman and the Sea

Creation stories are imperative to all homelands (both physical and spiritual). The first poem of the collection "Old Woman and the Sea" relays a kind of creation narrative through the dialogue of three different agents: a woman figure named Hoktvlwv, the speaker of the poem, and the sea. A note at the end of the poem tells readers that "Hoktvlwv" is Mvskoke for elderly woman. Throughout the collection, Hoktvlwv often appears as a female spirit or figure of the coastline. Hoktvlwv may also be analyzed as a time traveling ancestor. Channette Romero theorizes the use of spiritual temporalities, especially as they are utilized in literature written by women of color. Her concept of "spirit time" seems relevant in understanding who Hoktvlwv is in Foerster's poetry. Spirit time "describes a temporality where spirit beings and ancestors literally reinsert themselves into the present" and "this temporality shows how all times are connected, how the past always touches the present through the existence and embodiment of spirits" (57). Hoktvlwv appears in order to help create futures while also embodying the past and Mvskoke traditions in the collection. The reference to Hoktvlwv as an "old woman" in the title also supports the analysis that she is an ancestor or spirit with powerful traditional knowledge.

"*A star, the sun, was born in the dark. / Salt leached from rocks. / The ocean rusted*" the poem begins (1-3). The poem alternates between italicized stanzas and non-italicized stanzas, creating the distinction between Hoktvlwv's voice and the speaker's voice. The speaker and Hoktvlwv are "talking / at the shore beside the tin carcasses" (4-5). A new world beginning from a previous ending is implied from these lines through language like "rusted" and "carcasses," which suggest a kind of deterioration. The poem also states, "The continent drapes its burnt cape behind us" (9). The scorched mass of land and water creases and decays from slow violence.

Rob Nixon defines slow violence as "violence that occurs gradually and out of sight, a violence as delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, an attritional violence that is usually not typically viewed as violence at all" (Nixon 2). A few examples of slow violence that Nixon identifies that are relevant to Foerster's poetry include climate change, deforestation, and acidifying oceans (Nixon 2). The forced removal from Mvskoke lands in the Southeast by the U.S. government and military is one form of slow violence against both the land and Mvskoke peoples. According to the Muscogee (Creek) Nation website, "The Muscogee (Creek) people are descendants of a remarkable culture that, before 1500 AD, spanned the entire region known today as the Southeastern United States" and "the historic Muscogee, known as Mound builders, later built expansive towns within these same broad river valleys in the present states of Alabama, Georgia, Florida and South Carolina." To Mvskoke (Creek) peoples, "what was important were the rivers, the piedmont, the coastal plain, and the fall line, for these natural features defined the Nation and marked its limits" (Green 1). The Mvskoke nation had a "small fertile crescent," "heavy tree cover," and six major river systems (Green 2). Forced removal and so-called voluntary emigrations beginning in 1827 separated Mvskoke people from their traditional homelands, though, and this would prove traumatic to the land and to the Mvskoke.

Climate change is another form of slow violence, but Foerster does not suggest that it is impossible to heal from this slow violence. She proposes a way forward while acknowledging this violence inflicted upon the natural world. In "Old Woman and the Sea," readers are warned about the impact of humans emerging from the natural world, but potentially failing to return enough care and reciprocity to it. Indigenous scientific literacies and TEK offer further insight to this problem, though. Indigenous scientific literacies are one expression of "indigenuity" that pre-date all other knowledge systems. Grace Dillon writes, "Indigenous scientific literacies are those practices used by indigenous native peoples to manipulate the natural environment in order to improve existence in areas including medicine, agriculture, and sustainability" (25). Indigenous scientific literacies impact everyday life, along with ceremonial and traditional practices, while shaping how Indigenous peoples interact with nonhumans. Robin Wall Kimmerer writes that "the traditional ecological knowledge of Indigenous harvesters is rich in prescriptions for sustainability. They are found in Native science and philosophy, in lifeways and practices, but most of all in stories, the ones that are told to help restore balance" (179). TEK is all about achieving and sustaining balance between the human and nonhuman worlds, but it can be difficult to sustain balance when colonization disrupts these practices. Kimmerer also reminds her readers to turn to story to better understand the goal of balance.

Hoktvlwv shares a Mvskoke story about creation. Hoktvlwv is able to hum/speak/sing things into existence. The poem states "Hoktvlwv hums / A ship's light passes" (10-11). She seems to possess the power to conjure the ship into existence, or at the very least, detect the ship's arrival through the signs that the sea provides. In this way, Hoktvlwv is able to read and communicate with the sea.

Lines 12-15 of the poem read:

Lava, ash

and song began us.

The foam drags back,

unclenches its hand.

The natural elements of lava and ash, along with song, constitute the beginning, or re-beginning, of a Mvskoke narrative here. Hoktvlwv hums and sings, but the sea also produces a song of its own. The movement of the sea is constant. There is a push and pull between shoreline and sea, a giving and a taking away as the sea foam of the waves touches the shore and recedes. The personification of the hand of the sea also relays the grasp and control that the sea has over the land and humans alike. Kimmerer writes that "the animacy of the world is something we already know, but the language of animacy teeters on extinction" (57). Kimmerer notes that Indigenous knowledge inherently purports that nonhumans and the natural world are alive and agential, but Western cultures seek to undermine this fact. The term "animacy" and the idea of personification of nonhuman worlds also threaten the true enchantment and thought, in Eduardo Kohn's terms, of plants, animals, water, land, and all other nonhuman agents. In his book *How Forests Think,* Eduardo Kohn writes, "If thoughts are alive and if that which lives, thinks, then perhaps the living world is enchanted. What I mean is that the world beyond the human is not a meaningless one made meaningful by humans" (72). Kohn's approach to anthropology is one that considers the Amazon rainforest as a host of various thinking and living beings that are no less important than humans. Ecosystems and animals are also indigenous to place, along with humans. Kohn's notion of enchantment is one that provides a great bridge between human and nonhuman in terms of the Anthropocene. The nonhuman world is enchanted, and in listening closely to its messages, human and nonhuman can heal their relations.

In "The Old Woman and the Sea," the movements of the waves mirror the relationship between the natural world and humanity. Reciprocity and balance is intended, but is not always achieved. Later in the poem, the speaker tells us that Hoktvlwv writes in the sand: "*What the sea returns / is enough"* (19-20). She etches this sentiment into the coastline. Readers may question if humans return enough to the sea, though, with this declaration.

The sea has its own kind of currency that it gifts Hoktvlwv, a figure of balance. Earlier in the poem, the speaker states, "sand dollars clink at our feet" (17). The tide sends in this symbol to Hoktvlwv and the speaker. Later, Hoktvlwv "clears a briar path" (24) with "coins in her cart" (23) and the poem ends with the line "Her tracks are jagged and deep" (26). Hoktvlwv collects the blessings that the ocean has offered and moves inland. Hoktvlwv walks away from the shore further inland and leaves traces of her presence for the speaker to follow. She works with and against nature here, clearing briars and imprinting her feet to the earth. This path is one for the reader to follow throughout the rest of the collection.

The term "old woman" is a name found in Nahue stories and contemporary Indigenous narratives with "Hoktvlwv" as one particular Mvskoke example. The name of this poem may also be a re-naming or re-working of the Ernest Hemingway novel *The Old Man and the Sea.* Foerster's poem features the female figure Hoktvlwv and a speaker who listens and learns about the sea and its languages. Hemingway's novel features an old man protagonist and his young friend who fish together off the coast of Cuba. The protagonist, Santiago, struggles with a marlin and shark in the novel. In "Old Woman and the Sea" there is no article "The" before the title like there is in *The Old Man and the Sea*, which suggests more of a communal approach to nature in contrast with the rugged male individualism of Hemingway's title and the themes in the novel. Hoktvlwv is a spirit figure who teaches the speaker of the poem about a

symbiotic relationship with the sea, whereas Santiago is alone in his quest to catch the marlin throughout most of the novel. Although Santiago may think of the marlin as a worthy adversary, he does not seem to establish or seek a mutual relationship with the ocean or its beings. He just wants to catch and kill the marlin. Hemingway expresses a dualistic man vs. nature ontology as Santiago reflects heroic individualism in trying to tame nature. Whether the title of the poem is a reference to Hemingway's novel or not, the human-nonhuman relationship contrast is noteworthy to consider.

Nightingale

"Nightingale" is a four and a half page poem that appears roughly mid-way through the collection. Hoktvlwv also appears in this poem, but on land, along with a nightingale and the speaker. "I've heard the nightingale tapping at the window, / seen her singing in the pitch-black trees" (1-2) the poem begins. The black trees are important in this poem as a source of memory and permanence. The trees are also a kind of Anthropocene ghost. Researchers have studied the changes in the use of southeastern Mvskoke homelands after forced removal. Foster et al. studied the Fort Benning Military Reservation, which is "situated along the fall line which borders the Appalachian Piedmont and the Gulf Coastal Plain in central Georgia and Alabama" (150). They discovered that:

> The military base is on land that was occupied for at least 15,000 years by Native Americans. The native population used the land for hunting and seasonal occupation for the majority of that time and then during approximately the last 2000 years engaged in shifting cultivation of native plants. They fished and hunted for deer, bison, and turkey. The native horticultural techniques included removing trees by girdling the trunk, burning undergrowth, and multicropping the same field every year until the crop yield was unsatisfactory, after which they

> would establish new fields nearby (Williams 1989:35). Fields were usually on the rich soils near major rivers such as the Chattahoochee River (Foster 2003). The land was used in this way until around 1825 when the Native American peoples were forcibly removed to Alabama and eventually to Indian Territory (now Oklahoma). (150-151)

After Mvskoke removal, the use of land shifted drastically. The history shows that "settlers from Georgia and other regions of the United States began using the land for intensive agriculture" (Foster et al. 151). To study the change in geographic features of the land, Foster et al. used land survey maps and satellite data (151). They also "supplemented archaeological settlement data with historic data from 'witness trees.' Witness trees are land boundary markers that were recorded on historic maps by government land surveyors" (Foster et al. 151). Originally, "pine forests dominated the landscape at Fort Benning in the early 1800s. Native Americans lived where Fort Benning is located until about 1825. At that time over 75 percent of the land area was in pine forest with the second highest category, mixed forest, covering only about 12 percent" (Foster et al. 153). However, "by the early 1970s, pine forests had declined to about 25 percent of the cover, and deciduous forests dominated the landscape" (Foster et al. 154). From these studies, it is clear that settlers, specifically the U.S. military, quickly altered Mvskoke homelands and depleted the forests. However, the data collected by researchers also reveals that the palimpsest of Mvskoke presence remains. Foster et al. conclude that "anthropological data offer information about human impacts on the past, the intensity of the impact, and the type of impact. Historical data are necessary for an understanding of culture and the relations of power that underlie how humans interact with landscapes" (155). The mapping and tracing of Fort Benning that Foster et al. performed is an important approach not only to track

the colonial changes to a portion of Mvskoke homelands, but to also trace the Mvskoke history and cultural practices embedded in the land.

The Foster et al. study of "witness trees" of the Southeastern Mvskoke homelands provides for a way of understanding how natural monuments witness the nonhuman and human activity of a landscape. Daniel Williams calls nonhuman witnesses "attestants" to theorize "the sense of an ensemble bridging human and nonhuman worlds in a testimonial sense" (7). Williams writes, "The portmanteau concept of the nonhuman witness… helps disclose the narrative, ethical, and ecological work performed by peripheral objects in literature, showing the necessary entanglement of human and nonhuman concerns" (2). In "Nightingale," the witness trees seem to extend the boundaries of homelands, creation, loss, and re-creation beyond physical levels. They are attestants to change over time.

The dark trees in "Nightingale" have a profound impact on Hoktvlwv and the speaker. The speaker states, "Hoktvlwv walks out in the moonrise. / She wakes the nightingales, pierces their throats, / steals the eggs and the blind chicks crackling" (8-10). Hoktvlwv is a figure of both creation and destruction, death and birth. She propels an awakening of the nightingales and the resting earth. The attestant trees are present for the continual cycles of slumber and reawakening of the human and nonhuman worlds and the transformation that occurs in the poem.

The poem continues:

> Later I carried her into the woods—
> scratched off sap—balm
> for her body—stitched us
> a new bark throat (12-14)

The speaker utilizes sap and bark from the dark tree to heal Hoktvlwv, and the verbs "carried" and "stitched" suggest a kind of birth and re-making. The speaker fashions a

bark throat and the tree becomes part of Hoktvlwv's body. Hoktvlwv embodies the tree, then, which is a marker and witness of Mvskoke history and story. The tree has its own time and slow rhythm. As a much older enchanted (in Kohn's terms) being than humans, the tree possesses the power and knowledge to heal.

The healing witness/attestant tree also binds human and nonhuman in the poem. Elizabeth Grosz studies the phenomenon of the "nature/culture opposition," which implies that nature is "understood as timeless, unchanging raw material, somehow dynamized and rendered historical only through the activities of the cultural and the physical orders it generates" (45). Grosz takes issue with this perspective that nature is something that is changed by humans and culture instead of a set of forces with agency. Grosz argues that "the natural is *not* the inert, passive, unchanging element against which culture elaborates itself but the matter of the cultural, that which enables and actively facilitates cultural variation and change" (47). For Mvskoke peoples, and for all removed and relocated Indigenous tribes, the natural world and new landscapes in Indian Territory inevitably led to some changes in cultural practice based on place. Upon Mvskoke peoples' arrival to Indian Country after forced removal, "the quality of the soil and water, and the diversity of the flora and fauna, varied greatly… depending on location" (Haveman 151). Haveman describes the new Mvskoke land:

> The western Creek country was a mix of rolling and gently rolling prairies, cut up by numerous rivers and streams. Timber grew in "streaks and groves" along the riverbanks and was interspersed throughout the prairie lands. Cottonwood, various species of oaks, and pecan were the most common tree types. The area is sandstone, limestone, and shale country, and the rock not only underlay much of the terrain but also was exposed in many areas near the rivers and tributaries. (152)

The new landscapes and waterways changed the way Mvskoke daily culture functioned and they experienced issues building homes and obtaining fresh water (Haveman 151). The nation's website states:

> For the majority of Muscogee people the process of severing ties to a land they felt so much a part of proved impossible" and they were forcibly removed by the U.S. Army unlike some who took money in exchange for ceding their land. The removal from homeland was extremely traumatic. But, "within the new nation the Lower Muscogees located their farms and plantations on the Arkansas and Verdigris rivers. The Upper Muscogees re-established their ancient towns on the Canadian River and its northern branches" ("Muscogee Creek Nation History").

This eventually led to "a new prosperity" ("Muscogee Creek Nation History"). The natural world always has agency that shapes and changes culture. Returning to the upset of nature/culture opposition, Mvskoke history clearly demonstrates the connections between natural surroundings and culture. Further, Donna Haraway's notion of "naturecultures" directly erases the nature/culture divide as she expresses that her companion species manifesto tells "a story of co-habitation, co-evolution, and embodied cross-species sociality" (4). The surrounding natural world will always influence culture. But human culture can also cause destruction to the natural world as we see with the mismanagement of Mvskoke southeastern homelands by the U.S. military post-Removal.

Mvskoke oral traditions also enlighten the role of the dark trees and the nightingale in this poem. According to one creation story, the Cowetas, a Muskhogean-speaking group, were "delayed during their emergence by a root of a tree that grew in the mouth of the cave" (Grantham 17). In this story, the tree had the power to slow the emergence of people, sending a message of lack of readiness in the

land for humans. Animals are also significant nonhumans. Birds "are an important class of Upper World beings among all Creek groups. They have the ability to transcend all three worlds" (Grantham 32). The three worlds Grantham refers to here are the Upper, Middle, and Lower worlds of Creek cosmology. The middle world is considered to be the Earth where humans dwell and the upper and lower worlds are where powerful spirits and/or "departed souls" reside (Grantham 21). This does not mean that these worlds cannot and do not intersect and interact, though.

The nightingale in the poem has the ability to travel among the worlds and send messages to other beings. This interaction, along with Hoktvlwv's communication with humans and animals, points out the interrelated web of human and nonhuman beings. In her pivotal Indigenous feminist book *The Sacred Hoop,* Paula Gunn Allen argues that "the structures that embody expressed and implied relationships between human and nonhuman beings, as well as the symbols that signify and articulate them, are designed to integrate the various orders of consciousness" (63). Therefore, as Allen argues, human and nonhuman consciousness always do, and should, overlap.

The roles are reversed between Hoktvlwv and the speaker later in the poem as Hoktvlwv nurtures the speaker. The speaker awakes "in a bathtub to an old woman / sponging down [her] bloody abrasions" (45-46). Hoktvlwv heals the speaker, gently cleaning her wounds. Later in the poem, there is a bit of slippage between Hoktvlwv's and the speaker's voices. The speaker states, "I have slipped through the cracks / of the clock hands, / peeled the bark from my throat" (76-78). The speaker mended Hoktvlwv earlier in the poem by pressing bark to her throat, but now they peel it from their own neck while they slip through the clock. Time is non-linear as the speaker becomes Hoktvlwv or Hoktvlwv and the speaker blend into one figure. This may even refer to the speaker returning to the past with Hoktvlwv as a figure from the future. The speaker then states:

Old woman, immortal bird
perched in your silent, forever-green glade
will you weave me a nest,
lay me down in the shade? (72-75)

Here, it is possible Hoktvlwv may be the immortal bird or the old woman who walks alongside the immortal bird, and they last through a time of eternal greenery and life. The speaker asks Hoktvlwv to make her a dwelling or resting place to lay them down. The nightingale as an "immortal bird" relates to an earlier reference in the poem. The speaker refers to the nightingale as an "old ghost" (34). The shade in this passage may represent the end of a human life, or just a period of dormancy between the ending and beginning of worlds. In one of the last lines of the poem, the speaker says, *"leave the root in the ground, / cut just above the node"* (84-85), which alludes to their awareness that one must sever part of the growth of the tree in order for new life to flourish in the future. The root of the tree returns back to the Coweta story of the root of the tree as an agent in the story of human life. It is a symbol and witness to or attestant of new life.

Lost Coast

The poem "Lost Coast" traces the continuous splitting and reassembling of the continent through non-linear time. There is a simultaneous unmaking and remaking occurring in the poems. René Dietrich argues that "remaking becomes necessary in order to counter the threat of nothingness experienced in the historical catastrophe" (331). Further, "more than a post-apocalyptic poem simply being a creation after the destruction, and standing for the possibility of creation in the face of destruction, the processes of creation and destruction are inextricably linked" (Dietrich 336). The ending and beginning of worlds in catastrophic and Indigenous Anthropocene poetics

document the simultaneous making and unmaking which cannot be separated. The re-making or re-building that Hoktvlwv facilitates also suggests that what makes a homeland is spirit and memory, not just a physical place. Foerster's poetry reveals that homelands are not rooted in one solitary place. Homelands can be physical geographical spaces. They can be embodied. They can spiritual. And they can be re-built.

"Lost Coast" is the second-to-last poem in the collection and by far the most directly catastrophic in theme and tone. "The continent is dismantling. / I go to its shores— / the outer reaches of a fracturing hand" (1-3) the poem begins. This dismantling and fracturing may refer to contemporary climate change causing the splitting of earth and glaciers or may refer even as far back as splintering Pangea. In "Lost Coast" the speaker refers to the city as "a ship in a bottle" (10). The city appears to exist within a fleeting, ephemeral moment in time. It is easily manipulated, and will most likely end up being tossed into the ocean. Hoktvlwv appears again in this poem and the following lines refer to her:

She birthed twin girls
by blowing sand
from her palm's crease—

moon unsheathed from clouds,

cities bloomed from her mouth. (5-9)

Hoktvlwv creates two humans out of sand that emerges from her own hand. With the reveal of the moonlight, cities are shaped and they flourish, stemming from Hoktvlwv's being. The two line breaks in this passage function to create space on the page

representing the progression of creation which involves both Hoktvlwv and the moon and night sky.

Like the other poems in Foerster's collection, there is a continuous push and pull, a cycle of destruction and re-creation. The ocean is a hungry tide, coming to swallow the earth that humans have polluted and destroyed. But the speaker also longs to bond with the sea and create a connection. The speaker states, "Dense fog spills over studded chimneys" (13). These lines paint imagery of air pollution spilling out from building chimneys and human chimneys, harming public health, which also harms the environment's health. The human pollution directly connects to rapid changes in the environment, reinforcing the contemporary effects of the colonial induced Anthropocene. The lack of a symbiotic relationship between humanity and the environment also leads to a loss of spiritual connection. The air is clouded with smog and pollution. The speaker of the poem states, "Often I have gone to the sea / and not been able to find it" (45-46). The speaker does not refer to the literal inability to be able to find the sea, but the inability to connect with the water spiritually because of a broken relationship. Kimmerer writes, "Cultures of gratitude must also be cultures of reciprocity. Each person, human or no, is bound to every other in a reciprocal relationship" (115). When this relationship is broken, both human and nonhuman suffer.

Along with the "lost coast," the poem features an urban center where people commute by train, and the speaker tows their "trash to the curb" (18). These mundane tasks are contrasted with catastrophic events like hurricanes and coastal flooding. Hoktvlwv's "body splits into continents" (43). These lines are separated from the previous stanza to create the physical separation on the page as well. Later, the speaker states, "This continent is a memory / remapped each morning" (56-57). Hoktvlwv is part of this continual re-mapping and re-making. Mishuana Goeman writes that "our ability to understand the connections between stories, place, landscape, clan

systems, and Native Nations means the difference between loss and continuity" (300). Stories and memory of loss, of unmaking, also aid in re-making and creating. Hoktvlwv embodies the fracture and the re-making of home and homeland.

Foerster specifically refers to Mvskoke homelands in the southeastern United States as stated in the following lines: "The southeastern deltas / will soon be blooming. Soon / the ark will sail without me" (62-64). The blooming may refer to the flourishing of the tribe, or algal blooms, or an invasion of settlers, or all of the previously mentioned simultaneously. The biblical reference to the ark that leaves without the speaker also creates the possibility of several connotations. It represents the Mvskoke people who left on their own and traveled up to Alabama or migrated West "voluntarily" with money from the U.S. government in their pocket. It also represents forced removal, the throngs of Mvskoke people who were mercilessly forced out from the Southeast by the U.S. government.

The fracturing continent also stands in for the fractures of Mvskoke culture caused by displacement. It represents the duplicity of existing within multiple physical homelands and nations along with the scattering of the population and goals to transfer homelands to spiritual embodied homelands. In the poem, the ocean splits the city. "Dissembled by the sea / the city collects itself / ravenously around me" (77-79). The speaker and the city are surrounded by the sea. One woman survives the coastal flooding:

I gather eelgrass
tangled in foam

weave a raft of seaweed
beneath the churning fog

blow white sand
from the creases of my palm

until there is only
one woman in the sea

and me in the remains
of a coastal city. (86-95)

The speaker uses her ingenuity to survive the storm, weaving a raft. She is the only woman in the sea. Again, there is slippage between the speaker and Hoktvlwv. Earlier in the poem, Hoktvlwv blows sand from her palms to create a new world, but here, the speaker does the same until they are the only person left in the remains of the city. This brings us back to the first poem in the collection, "The Old Woman and the Sea," where Hoktvlwv emerges from the sea to help create a new world.

Hoktvlwv is a powerful Mvskoke figure of survival and ingenuity. The settler colonial population looking to combat catastrophic human impact on the earth have much to learn from Indigenous peoples. Lewis and Maslin write, "This indigenous resistance in the face of apocalypse and the renewal and resurgence of indigenous communities *in spite* of world-ending violence is something that euro-Western thinkers should have as we contend with the implications of the Imperial forces that set in motion the seismic upheaval of worlds in 1492" (773). The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), for example, has only recently started to consider Indigenous scientific knowledge a valuable asset in the face of climate change. Reports and literature reviews produced by the USDA recognize the "possibility" and potential of TEK paired with Western science to slow climate change (Vinyeta et al.). One such report states, "Indigenous populations are projected to face disproportionate impacts

as a result of climate change in comparison to non-indigenous populations" (Vinyeta et al. i). However, the USDA must realize that Indigenous populations have *already* faced disproportionate devastations due to settler colonialism having affected their homelands and cultural practices and inflicted other trauma such as language loss due to not only obvious colonial practices such as boarding schools, but also to a warming climate and environmental change that make words along with practices obsolete. If the resistant USDA, for example, wants to truly address climate change, then they will need to acknowledge Indigenous experience and knowledge and work with Indigenous communities.

In "Four Theses" Chakrabarty argues that "we have to insert ourselves into a future 'without us' in order to be able to visualize it. Thus, our usual historical practices for visualizing times, past and future, times inaccessible to us personally—the exercise of historical understanding—are thrown into a deep contradiction and confusion" (197-198). "Lost Coast" poses Mvskoke survivance in the face of the Anthropocene, past, present, and future. It also models coping and survival for the Western world while encouraging re-evaluation of the Anthropocene in regards to its ties to colonization and removal. As readers can see in these three poems from Foerster, it is possible to visualize a time "without us" in the past and in the future in order to bring justice to nonhumans and begin to make efforts to achieve balance.

Conclusion

The 2020 Supreme Court ruling in the case of McGirt v. Oklahoma affirmed "that much of eastern Oklahoma falls within an Indian reservation" (Healy, Liptak). This was a win for the Mvskoke nation on multiple levels. Ian Gershengorn, one of the lawyers who argued on behalf of the tribe in the hearing, stated, "Congress persuaded the Creek Nation to walk the Trail of Tears with promises of a reservation—and the Court today

correctly recognized that this reservation endures" (KickingWoman). McGirt v. Oklahoma simultaneously ensures that the Mvskoke nation has tribal jurisdiction over crimes committed on their reservation while providing federal recognition of Mvskoke sovereignty over the land.

After centuries of suppression of Indigenous knowledge, language, and cultural practices, through mass genocide, forced removal, devastation of homelands, boarding schools, and continued discrimination, Indigenous peoples and lands have survived many catastrophes. Catastrophe and unmaking are part of re-making, especially for Indigenous peoples. The Anthropocene seems new to settlers who have never weathered such devastation to the degree that global Indigenous populations have due to colonialism and its horrid realities. Art, poetry in this case, can help relay the reality that not only have Indigenous peoples experienced human-induced radical change to culture and the environment before, but that they have survived and re-created. Mishuana Goeman suggests, "Rather than rely on settler-colonial legal systems that restructure Native lands and assert settler ownership, Native communities need to promote the forms of spatiality and sovereignty found in tribal memories and stories" (301). Jennifer Foerster's keen focus on reviving Mvskoke homelands on the page promotes sovereignty and storytelling while challenging accepted narratives of the Anthropocene, imposing one specific Mvskoke Anthropocene narrative.

Beyond human sovereignty, acknowledging nonhuman agency can build reciprocal Indigenous futures devoid of colonial epistemologies that pollute the mind, body, and spirit. As one example of this recognition of the ties between human and nonhuman, Robin Wall Kimmerer recognizes lichens as "some of the Earth's oldest beings... born from reciprocity" (275). Kimmerer writes:

> These ancients carry teachings in the same ways that they live. They remind us of the enduring power that arises from mutualism, from the sharing of the gifts

> carried by each species. Balanced reciprocity has enabled them to flourish under the most stressful of conditions. Their success is measured not by consumption and growth, but by graceful longevity and simplicity, by persistence while the world changed around them. It is changing now. (275)

As Kimmerer listens to lichens and communicates their invaluable lessons, Foerster looks to nonhumans and Mvskoke Anthropocene ghosts to inform humans how the world has changed, is currently changing, and how to translate catastrophe into healing. This healing preserves homelands, forms futures, and may ultimately begin to restore balance.

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The Capitalocene in *Embrace of the Serpent*: Capitalism's Destruction of People, Culture, and Nature

HOLLY MAY TREADWELL

"Capital was born from extinction, and
from capital, extinction has flowed."

Justin McBrien, *Anthropocene* 116

The Capitalocene, as an alternative to the Anthropocene, claims it is not merely *human* activity that is having such detrimental effects on the planet, but the activities of capitalism specifically. The concept of the Anthropocene puts equal blame on all humans and "fits comfortably with a view of population, environment and history governed by food and resource use – and abstracted from class and empire" (Moore, "The Capitalocene Part II" 238); that is, the concept overlooks the disproportionate role big corporations play in climate change. As the working class are denigrated for using plastic straws and charged to buy plastic bags, just twenty of the biggest companies continue to emit a third of all carbon emissions (Taylor and Watts). The Capitalocene, in contrast, focuses on the role of big industry, and recognises that it is capitalism and its values that have historically caused and continue to cause the most damage to the environment. A central theorist of the concept, Jason Moore states that "Global warming is capital's crowning achievement" ("The Capitalocene Part II" 237) and "'accumulation by extinction' has been fundamental to capitalism from the beginning" (Moore, "Introduction" 8). "The accumulation of capital is the accumulation of potential extinction—a potential increasingly activated in recent decades" (Moore, "Introduction" 8). Extinction here is taken to refer to the "'extinguishing of cultures and languages,' genocide, and

spectrum of biospheric changes understood as Anthropogenic" (Moore, "Introduction" 7; see also McBrien).

The rise of global capitalism came hand in hand with the "founding" of the New World (Quijano 533), sharing a central aim of progress, development, and profit above all, and "life in all its diversity – in people and in nature – seems to have been sacrificed to [this] progress' (Shiva xii). The central victims of this extinction are the subaltern, colonial subjects of this regime, and yet their stories, challenges, and deaths are often omitted by the scholarship around the concept. Indeed, there is a "long history of 'political exchange' between the owners of capital and the purveyors of imperial violence" (Moore, "The Capitalocene Part II" 242). However, "the dangers and challenges that threatened and still haunt the communities of the Amazon, such as death, dispossession, exploitation, destruction of their habitat and acculturation" are not often explored by any media (Mutis 32). An exception to this is Ciro Guerra's *Embrace of the Serpent,* which follows the story of Karamakate, the last surviving member of the Cohiuano tribe who were eradicated in the Rubber Holocaust (Rivera 49). The film follows two timelines: the first is set in 1909 and features a young Karamakate. The protagonist is approached by a fictionalised version of German ethnologist and explorer, Theodor "Theo" Koch-Grünberg, who is searching for the Yakruna plant to cure his malaria. The second timeline is set in 1940 with an older Karamakate approached by a fictionalised version of American biologist Richard Evans Schultes (referred to in the film as Evan), who intends to procure the Yakruna plant in order to increase the purity of the Americans' rubber trees. Whilst the two Western characters are based on real explorers and the narrative inspired by their diaries, Karamakate is a completely fictional character and the Cohiuano are a fictional community. Guerra himself explains the decision, stating that as a non-Indigenous film-maker he "didn't have the right to make a fiction about a real tribe" (Guerra in Guillén). The Cohiuano and indeed Karamakate, however, were heavily inspired by the actor who played

the older character, Antonio Bolívar Salvador. Salvador was one of the last Ocaina people remaining and was displaced by the Rubber Holocaust, escaped, and lived his life with a different community in order to survive (Salvador in Mathiesen; Guerra in Guillén). In this way, the fictionalised narrative is a reflection of a truth lived by many Indigenous peoples throughout the Amazon and this made the work incredibly valuable to the communities who are continually facing the destruction of their cultures (Salvador in Mathiesen).

Indeed, according to Pinzón, the film "is the elaboration of a loss insofar as it invites us to witness the end of a world"; that is, the Native and natural world. The thirty-year expanse of the film foregrounds the effects of the rubber trade and "illustrates how much the Amazon has changed, become commercialized and overcome by colonialism" (Ramji 2). The film demonstrates how capitalism "leaves in its wake the disappearance of species, languages, cultures, and peoples," and how this extinction is no accident, but is achieved through labour, murder, deforestation, depletion of resources, and dispossession all in the name of progress (McBrien 117). This study examines the ways in which capitalism causes the destruction of people, culture, and nature through slavery, mass extraction of resources, and the destruction of land. Firstly, this paper will explore the depiction of the Cohiuano's environmental practices and knowledges, before going on to analyse the contrasting practices and ignorance of global capitalists. Secondly, it will examine how *Embrace of the Serpent* presents the effects of these practices. Specifically, how they led to the destruction of land and biodiversity in favour of mass extraction and consumption, how this extraction led to the displacement and enslavement of Indigenous communities, and how this enslavement and genocide led to the deaths of their cultures. As Arturo Escobar explains, "The capitalisation of nature has been central to capitalism ever since primitive accumulation and the enclosure of the commons. The history of capital is thus the history of exploitation of production conditions" (*Encountering Development* 200). Capitalism, at its very

essence, exploits its environment. This paper aims to show how *Embrace of the Serpent* presents extinction as a result of capitalism, and thus demonstrates the dangerous reality of the Capitalocene.

The film presents Indigenous knowledges and practices through Karamakate's conservation, understanding, and respect for his environment. Karamakate states that the "jungle is fragile, and if you attack her, she strikes back. She will only allow us to travel if we respect her" (*Embrace*). The pronoun "she," the concept of respect, and the necessity of her permission personify the environment and give it autonomy, showing that the Cohiuano people's relationship is one of "respectful coexistence and awareness of the fragility of nature. This attitude speaks more to current ecological concerns and processes of rainforest exploitation" (D'Argenio 137), so the focus on the necessity of respect could be seen as a criticism of the colonisers' disrespect. In the same scene, Karamakate states that they "must not eat meat or fish until the rains begin and we ask for permission to the Owners of Animals. We can't cut any tree from its root" (*Embrace*). The idea that they must "ask permission" connotes the necessity of consent. This, in turn, further endows a sense of autonomy to nature, since the "very setting of rules of behaviour implies an understanding of the jungle as an 'earth-being'" (D'Argenio 137), showing the "dynamic relationship which [Karamakate's] people have with both the stars and the Earth" (Martin-Jones 17). This "dynamic relationship" suggests an active, two-way connection between the tribespeople and forest. Furthermore, the Cohiuano's "rules" for interacting with nature infer that their relationship—like many Indigenous silvical practices—is based on the "sustainable and renewable maximisation of all the diverse forms and functions of forests and trees" (Shiva 58); they "try to maintain their harmony and comply with certain rules that over the years they have determined are necessary for everything to continue to flow harmoniously" (Ibáñez et al 175). Therefore, the rules are based on acquired knowledge and experience,

so the abstention from eating meat or fish before the rains may be in place to avoid destroying the populations of animals who are already struggling during the dry season. Likewise, the rule to not "cut any tree from its root" ensures that the tree will grow back. These rules, then, display a deep understanding of, as well as respect for, nature's needs, and the way in which the "jungle is for [Karamakate] an extension of his own existence" (Ibáñez et al 175).

The film further presents the Cohiuano's relationship with the jungle as a judicious one through a scene where butterflies fly around Karamakate (Figure 1). Their proximity, volume, and the calmness of all parties is the perfect example of "[hu]man's capacity to merge with [nature's] rhythms and patterns intellectually, emotionally and spiritually" (Shiva 54). Whilst this moment could be seen to facsimile the stereotyping of Indigenous peoples as being at one with nature, it functions more to demonstrate Karamakate's respect and understanding of nature. Indeed, butterfly swarms are a natural and normal occurrence, so the scene does not extend into the stereotypical presentation of shamanism and non-human companions. The focus in this scene is more on Karamakate's reaction to them (or lack thereof): he ignores them as they ignore him. He simply exists within the same space as them and is content to share it: he does not brush them away as a nuisance, nor does he move to get away from them. This lack of reaction contrasts to the capitalists' belief in

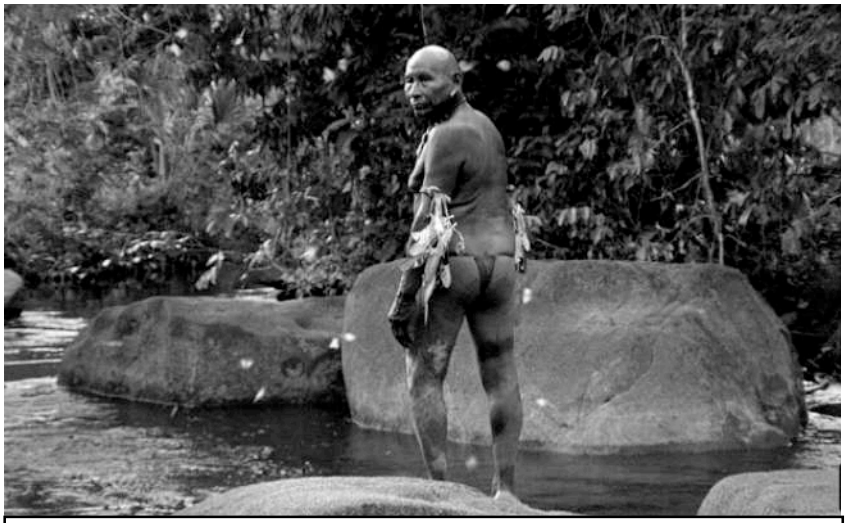

Figure 1

human supremacy as Karamakate appears to accept their coexistence and recognises that both human, non-human animal, and the natural world live with rather than against one another.

The use of butterflies in particular also emphasises this connection. Butterflies are generally solitary creatures, which is reflective of Karamakate as the last surviving member of his tribe. Nevertheless, some butterflies (such as the Coliadinae family) often spend time in groups near bodies of water, which facsimiles Karamakate's home and his reliance on community (Burger and Gochfeld 489). Indeed, as Burger and Gochfeld's study revealed, the larger the group of butterflies, the better their chance of survival (482). In addition, many types of butterflies have been shown to retain memories and knowledge from when they were caterpillars, despite the extreme metamorphosis they undergo in the cocoon (Blackiston et al). This fact can also be paralleled to Karamakate. Despite the complete transformation of his country, the forest, and many other tribespeople's ways of life, and notwithstanding his later difficulty remembering some practices, Karamakate holds on to his culture. He refuses to assimilate and does his best to maintain traditional practices, evincing a kinship between the human and the creature.

In addition, the use of butterflies could function to further support Karamakate's "forest rules" by referring to the butterfly effect. This phenomenon claims that "a butterfly flaps its wings in China and sets off a tornado in Texas," drawing on the ways in which "small events compound and irreversibly alter the future of the universe" (Boeing 14). This is reminiscent of Karamakate's understanding that eating animals during the dry season could have disastrous effects on the ecosystem as a whole. This kinship and the significance of the butterfly as a symbol of both change and cultural retention is emphasised by the dream sequence towards the end, which finishes on the image of a human figure drawn inside a butterfly (Figure 2). This could be a metaphor for the way in which the activities of humans and nature interlink and affect one another. Indeed, butterflies' "flight activity has provided important evidence of global climate change," indicating the ways in which human activity in the context of the Capitalocene can have disastrous effects on nature (Parmesan 2006). The image also reflects Karamakate's understanding of humans as a part of nature by literally depicting us living within it.

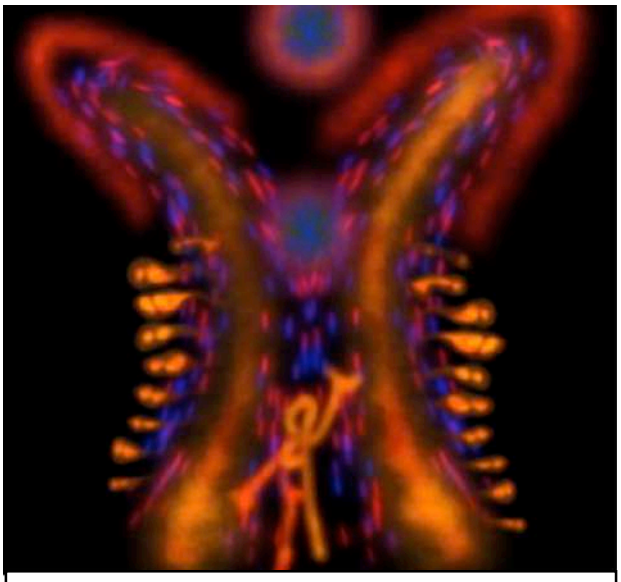

Figure 2

Embrace of the Serpent conveys the Cohiuano people's conservational practices as Karamakate appears to possess "botanical wisdom beyond that developed by Western civilisation" in scenes such as the first visit to the missionary temple (Martin-Jones 19). Karamakate teaches the kidnapped boys about the Chiricaspi plant, explaining it is a "gift to our Karipulakena ancestors from the gods. We received the sun's semen when Yeba, the sun's daughter, scratched his penis and ground the semen to dust. We must do the same with this plant before boiling

it […] This is the strongest defence we have against any disease" (*Embrace*). The belief that the plant is a "gift" embeds nature as a sacred being to be treasured, and the plant's healing qualities demonstrate the two-way relationship, as the jungle gives back to those who take the time to understand and care for it. Karamakate and the Cohiuano show a "far superior knowledge of and engagement with the rainforest ecosystem," a rapport that clearly prioritises the health of the forest and its inhabitants (Martin-Jones 20). Indeed, many Indigenous populations' commitment to and interaction with their environment is based on such pragmatic conservation efforts. For example, using trees' produce to survive whilst conserving the trees themselves and only taking what is needed (Shiva 62). This prioritisation of sustained instead of maximised resource extraction is deployed as grounds for capitalists and colonialists to position Indigenous communities as unproductive (Shiva 10). Correspondingly, capitalist invasion of the Amazon meant that "[r]esource flows to maintain nature's cycles and local needs of water and diverse vegetation have been replaced by cash-flows as a measure of 'yield' and 'growth'" (85). As Escobar attests, "capitalism impairs or destroys the social and environmental conditions on which it relies (including nature and labour)," replacing long-term sustainability with short-term profit and productivity (*Encountering Development* 200).

The film contrasts these sustainable practices and relationships against capitalist activities and attitudes towards the environment. The exploitative capitalist "way of being in the world" is sharply criticised by Guerro and his team (Martin-Jones 16). Karamakate describes the white people as "ants. They'll eat anything, and they die fat. [They'll] devour everything" (*Embrace*). Karamakate's in-depth knowledge of nature would tell him that ants hoard food and are often destructive (Cook et al). Accordingly, the film may be referring to capitalism's tendency to eschew long-term survival in favour of short-term profit, in the shape of mass extraction and consumption (Lumsden). Moreover, ants represent an apt metaphor

for colonial forces and their agents, as they "occupy virtually all major terrestrial habitats" and are known as an "invasive species" (Ward 550).

Karamakate tells the children that "[o]ne day [the Colombians] will finish all the food in the jungle," emphasising their lack of regard for sustainability, lack of general respect for the environment, and their one-way association with the place. As Karamakate explains, his mission was to share the belief and understanding that "every plant, every tree, every flower is full of wisdom" with the children of his tribe, "but the rubber barons and Colombians came" (*Embrace*). The syntactical prioritisation of the barons suggests that it is the extraction of rubber and, by extension, the commodification of nature that brought the colonisers, and it was this incumbent capitalism that stopped him sharing his culture. The extinction of many Indigenous peoples' way of life "is grounded in the experience of alienation and the [colonists'] attitude of entitlement" (Crist 29); their relationship with the ecosystem is one of possession and domination.

Embrace of the Serpent demonstrates how the locals' relationship—predicated on understanding and respect—is sundered by the invasion of capitalism. Practices of conservation are replaced by creeds of commodification. The film accomplishes this through the presentation of the colonisers' disregard for the Cohiuano's prohibitions (such as not eating meat or fish before the rains begin), both in the Christian Mission where the travellers are offered fish for dinner (*Embrace*) and when Theo, addled by delirium, protests the rules. "Permission from whom?," he shouts, "You? The Owner of the Fishes? I'm sick

Figure 3

because of respecting your ridiculous prohibitions! […] This river is full of fish! One less won't change anything!" (*Embrace*). The derogatory, mocking tone—particularly evident in the phrase "Owner of the Fishes" as a mimicry of the Cohiuano's beliefs regarding the "Owner of the Animals"—indicate the level of disrespect that even "nice" colonisers like Theo have for Indigenous cultures as well as nature itself. Theo's claim that "one less fish" won't make a difference reveals his disregard for the importance of each and every life that the Cohiuano treasure. It also encapsulates his ignorance regarding the dramatic effects the smallest of actions can have; that is, the 'fragility' of the jungle that Karamakate warned of earlier in the film. Evan's propensity for throwing his cigarette butts into the river entrenches this disrespect further (Figure 4). He pollutes the waterway without considering that this could harm the plants, animals, and humans that rely on the water itself. These violations demonstrate the capitalist view that "humans could and indeed should control nature", rejecting any form of judicious coexistence (McBrien 125). Thus, the colonisers jeopardise the health of the ecosystem due to their perceived entitlement and view of nature as a commodity that exists for their own use. These attitudes reflect a larger cultural narcissism and human supremacy that white capitalist societies partake in.

Figure 4

The film goes on to depict the effects of this mass extraction of resources and ignorance of the land to illustrate how "capitalism imposes a relentless pattern of violence on nature, humans included" (Moore, "Introduction" 5). Commercial

demands have "frequently resulted in large-scale forest destruction." (Shiva 58-9) *Embrace of the Serpent* presents and criticises this destruction of land and the resultant ligation of biodiversity, laying bare the impacts of these losses on the Indigenous communities who rely on that land. Karamakate claims that the white man's science only leads to "violence, death" as it is dependent upon and derivative of profit (*Embrace*). A prime example of this kind of dominance in the film is the rubber tree, the commodification of which destroyed entire forests through "armed conflict over the control of areas where rubber can be harvested" (Martin-Jones 16). Here, "control" indicates the colonisers' wish to dominate the land, rather than live and interact with it. Moreover, the conflict is inferred to be military in nature, and thus violent. This is emphasised as Karamakate asks, "you want to steal yakruna? What else will you turn into death?" For "rubber means death," which, considering the context of the rubber trade, can be seen as paraphrasis for "the capitalist commodification of nature causes death" (*Embrace*).

Embrace of the Serpent articulates capitalism as "a colonising force on the biosphere stripping it of its biological wealth and potential" (Crist 23) through the cultivation and consequential exploitation of nature "by the capitalist mode of production" (Shiva ix-x). The Cohiuano's sacred traditions hold that "yakruna must not be cultivated", potentially referring to the pejorative biological effects of cultivation (*Embrace*); what is known as "green revolution agriculture" decreases genetic diversity, inhibits their medicinal value, and increases the vulnerability of

Figure 5

plants to diseases, and therefore extinction (Shiva xiii). This drive to extinction is also

evinced by the plant's supposed caretakers, who have given up protecting it from capitalist development, been reduced to drunks, and are shown "toasting the end of the world!" (*Embrace*). The camera alternates between shots of the sacred plant being cultivated and its caretakers toasting (Figure 5), which reinforces the link between the two events. This connection presents the "systematic desecration and prosecution of ancient Indigenous knowledge" and practices by capitalism. (Rivera 49). Whilst the tribespeople see yakruna as ecologically valuable and consider it their "greatest knowledge", Western colonisers merely want it for its exploitable properties—specifically its capacity to enhance the purity of rubber, which the Americans believe will help them win World War II (*Embrace*). Capitalism values only commercially useful nature. This view prepares and precipitates the felling of forests full of trees that "maintain the life of the soil and water and of local people" but do not generate profit, and so are viewed as weeds and "an obstruction to agriculture" (Shiva 74; 59). These "weeds" are replaced by ecologically damaging trees or commercially grown crops that provoke hydrological changes which ravage the forest, alluding back to the butterfly effect and demonstrating how damage to one part of an ecosystem can imperil another. Such deforestation could "lead to the loss of a large number of plant species, which in turn would seriously threaten the tribespeople's way of life and their food security" (Ibáñez et al 177). As Déborah Danowski and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro note, the people of the Amazon are experiencing "a desynchronization of seasonal rhythms and hydrological cycles, and a consequent perturbation of the biosemiotic interactions characteristic of these peoples' traditional habitats" (75). This disruption derives from the "generalized and mounting violent destruction of these environments by the programs for the acceleration of growth pushed forward by nation-states in thrall to Integrated World Capitalism' (Danowski and de Castro 75). Such extinction, then, can be seen as a direct result of the colonisers' lack of regard for, desecration of, and commodification of nature.

Embrace of the Serpent proceeds to express how this mass extraction and the consequent destruction of environment catalyses the destruction of Indigenous communities through displacement, lack of access to resources, and even murder. In many countries, colonial capitalism functions to limit local peoples' access to the forests they previously relied on for survival (Shiva xiv; 78) and threatens "their way of life and their food security" (Ibáñez et al 177). Evidently, the Capitalocene ignores "the rights of communities to their territories and resources," enacting "tremendously uneven patterns of global consumption, environmental impact, and structures of exploitation" (Escobar, *Encountering Development* xxiii). Moreover, the capitalist mode of development in regions such as the Amazon and India does not draw on "surplus produced over and above the needs of the community" (Shiva 4). These extractive forces take everything and Indigenous communities are left in poverty. As Vandana Shiva states, these "resources which supported their survival were absorbed into the market economy," suggesting that these people are displaced by capitalism (11). Such displacement has resulted in 456 million people starving or being malnourished, giving rise to "a crisis of poverty rooted in ecological devastation" and shows that the usurpation of tribal land in favour of capitalist plantations leads to the extinction of Indigenous people (Shiva xiii; xvi). The effects of this displacement are addressed by the older Karamakate, who reminisces that stones, trees, and animals all used to talk to him (*Embrace*). The past tense is crucial in this scene, as the character explains that he can no longer read the petroglyphs he himself drew; "Now they're just pictures on rocks. Now I'm empty. I'm a chullachaqui." In the film, it is explained that a chullachaqui is a creature "which looks exactly like the person but is empty and hollow, a copy that drifts like a ghost" (*Embrace*). This claim thereby connotes that Karamakate's displacement from his land and the extinction of his community has compromised his connections with his environment and culture, rendering him "hollow" and "lost" (*Embrace*). Indeed, Mutis paraphrases Guerra in claiming that "the Chullachaqui is a metaphor for what

the Amazon tribes feel, who fear that their culture, languages and traditions are being lost" (Mutis 39).

The decimation of land in favour of rubber plantations rides high in the film, providing commentary on the connective tissue between disease and deforestation. Sickness also contributes to the extinction of people through Theo's malaria, characterised by his sweating, shivering, and fever (Crump). The relentless demand for rubber caused the ecological homogenisation of areas "whose Native diversity was destroyed and replaced by a few staple crops such as sugar, tobacco, and coffee,", and in this case latex, which fed almost entirely luxury exports to the global west that held no use to the locals (McBrien 120). This paucity of ecological diversity in favour of profit "allowed for malaria and yellow fever to thrive to new epidemic proportions," showing how the exploitation of nature indirectly drives the extinction of Indigenous populations (120).

Another mode of destruction highlighted by the film is direct murder, with Karamakate himself the last survivor of "an Indigenous tribe eradicated during armed conflict over the region's rubber" (Martin-Jones 17). The character regularly reminds the audience that the "Cohiuano don't exist anymore" because white people "killed them all" (*Embrace*). These lines evidence that the extermination of Karamakate's people was a genocide committed by white Colombians seeking to commodify the sharinga trees. This is emphasised when the travellers stumble upon a mass grave and witness bodies hanging from trees at rubber plantations (Figure 6). The kind of genocidal activity Karamakate speaks of was not a rarity during the rubber boom of the early 20th century and is part of the Rubber

Figure 6

Holocaust (Rivera 49). Furthermore, Karamakate states that his people were killed by the "Caucheros," who "razed everything," implicating the concomitant combination of murder and dispossession deployed by the rubber barons who destroyed his people in order to make room for plantations. The people's death is conveyed as the result of capitalist exploitation in regard to the rubber trade. The film's end credits explicitly inscribe this theme; *Embrace of the Serpent* is "dedicated to all the peoples whose song we will never know" (*Embrace*).

Figure 7

Embrace of the Serpent ties the scale of these plantations and the mass extraction performed by the capitalists directly to the enslavement and extinction of Indigenous peoples and their cultures. This extinction was executed through forced labour, as the "arrival of the rubber boom [meant that] many were converted to slavery" (Ibáñez et al 175). Karamakate immediately recognises the lacerations on Theo's Indigenous companion, Manduca (visible in Figure 7). They are patently inflicted by the rubber barons, illustrating the violent prevalence of plantations where barons "brutally subjected the Indigenous peoples to forced labor" (Prasch 93). Such brutality is foregrounded by the mutilated local that the travellers come across, who has only one arm, serious facial scarring, a limp, and an improvised cast on his leg (Figure 8). The man begs Manduca to kill him and, when the others

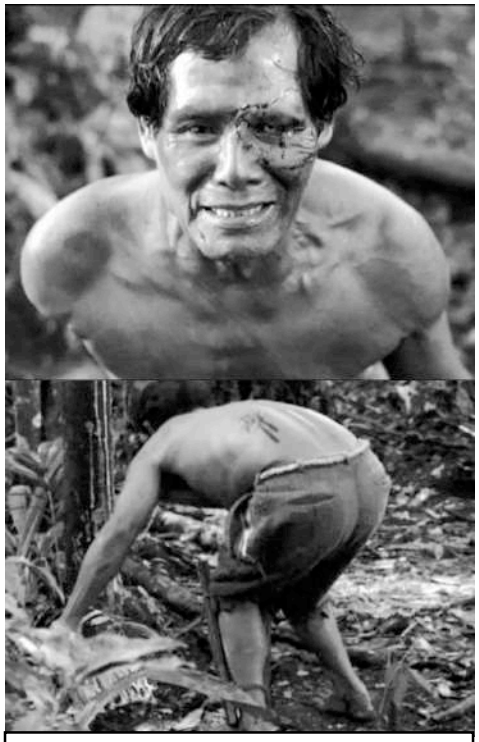

Figure 8

protest, Manduca states that "If I don't [kill him], they'll torture him to death. […] Nobody deserves this hell" (*Embrace*). The invocation of "hell" and its attendant connotations of evil gesture toward the extent of the horrors on the plantation. It is telling that death is considered better than being a slave there. Furthermore, Manduca's knowledge of the man's fate suggests that it is a common one among the slaves. This slavery is the torture that the Indigenous peoples suffer, who "either were murdered or died because of the cruel treatment they received from the rubber barons" (Rivera 49). Suffering and death in this formulation are a direct result of capitalism's drive for profit, as the Native people "were forced to extract the latex; if they did not deliver the fees demanded by the rubber tappers, they were punished in the stocks, flogged and tortured [and when they did deliver] they were given certain goods at exorbitant prices" (Ibáñez et al 176). Here we see how the Native people were forced to participate in the colonial economy as well as being turned into labourers in the interest of that same economy's proliferation. The extent of the commodification of nature, capitalism's demand for maximum profit, and the pressure put on the slaves are condensed in Wade Davis' claim that a single worker would "tap over four hundred trees a day" (306).

This enslavement is shown to be causal to the extinction of Indigenous cultures, evidenced in the Christian Mission, which was based in a former rubber plantation (D'Argenio 141; Figure 9). The aim of such missions was to "civilise the savages and convert them into sons of God and of the homeland" (Pérez Benavides 108). Amongst this erasure was the changing of children's names and banning their Native languages, making it "easier" to instil the ideology of capitalism into the local

Figure 9

population (*Embrace*). Indeed, the missions turned the local children into a "(subaltern) workforce." In conjunction "with the rise of global capitalism and need for primary goods (D'Argenio 141), the missions received state funding to kidnap more children in order to provide more labourers to keep up with demand, demonstrating how the "Capitalocene [as extinction] signifies also the 'extinguishing of cultures and languages'" (Moore, "Introduction" 7). These scenes also outline capitalism's influence in changing "the role of *Homo Sapiens*" from "member and citizen" of the land to "conqueror" (Leopold 204). This pattern transformed "nature from terra mater into a machine and a source of raw material; [removing] all ethical and cognitive constraints against its violation and exploitation" (Shiva xiv).

Embrace of the Serpent ends with Evan experiencing a hallucination after Karamakate prepares the last Yakruna plant for him to consume, with Karamakate stating, "I wasn't meant to teach my people. I was meant to teach you". Whilst this ending could be seen as an example of the White Saviour Complex, it more likely functions to embed the superiority of the Cohiuano's understanding and knowledge over capitalist greed. Evan pursues the plant in order to utilise its profitable properties (i.e., purifying rubber). Conversely, Karamakate instead uses the last of it to show him a snippet of his people's views, knowledges, and understanding of the jungle. In this way, the scientist is enlightened regarding both his own personal ignorance and the ignorance of his culture more broadly. When he awakens, however, Karamakate has disappeared, leaving Evan with no answers or explanations—no full understanding of what he has witnessed. Evan's Western, capitalist views and knowledge structure are thus diminished as he is shown how much he and the culture he represents do not know. Earlier in the film, Manduca warns that "If we can't get the whites to learn, it will be the end of us. The end of everything" (*Embrace*). This final scene returns to this notion as Karamakate realises

that the only thing he can do is teach "the Whites" their own ignorance. Through this scene and indeed Karamakate and Evan's journey more broadly, the filmmakers emphasise the direct correlation between the extinction of people, culture, and nature. Karamakate regains his lost culture and knowledge just as Evan realises that his own capitalist views are ignorant and destructive. As capitalist views and practices are challenged, rejected, and broken within the narrative, Indigenous knowledges and cultures are reclaimed.

Through its presentation of the Indigenous slave trade and the rubber trade, the Indigenous peoples' judicious relationship with nature in contrast to capitalism's destruction of it, and the domination and cultivation of nature, Guerra's *Embrace of the Serpent* evinces the interlinked ways by which capitalism causes the extinction of Indigenous people, cultures, and nature. By depicting this extinction, the film brings to light the songs of many communities who have suffered from the effects of capitalist greed and will continue to be the prime victims of the Capitalocene. It demonstrates the claim that

> Some activities that man has carried out in these lands have brought and continue to bring negative impacts on [Indigenous] ecosystems and natural resources. Economic activities, especially extractive activities, although they have generated wealth for some, have been negative for both their inhabitants and the environment. (Ibáñez et al 177)

The film's depiction of this story from the perspective of an Indigenous person, as indicated by the frequent positioning of the camera looking over Karamakate's shoulder (Figure 10), attempts to combat—to some degree—the erasure of such stories and the

Figure 10

ignorance of the disastrous effects that damage and destroy Native communities. Since the film is spoken "mostly in cubeo, uitoto, ticuna and guanano," Indigenous languages are prioritised over Spanish, German, or English (D'Argenio 136). This counteracts erasure, as it allows Indigenous stories to be told in their own languages. While the West's environmental concerns have a tendency to focus on the aesthetic (the loss of the coral reefs' beauty for example), temperature changes and volatile sea levels represent the catalysts of a new genocide in the Global South. As Escobar explains, "In the sustainable development discourse nature is reinvented as environment so that capital, not nature and culture, may be sustained' (Escobar, "Constructing Nature" 49). The very focus of sustainability needs to change. Potent warnings of the kind that *Embrace of the Serpent* delivers are vital now more than ever, as is the acknowledgement of the Capitalocene's historical and ongoing destruction of people, culture, and nature.

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Coeval Worlds, Alter/Native Words: Healing in the Inuit Arctic

ABDENOUR BOUICH

Introduction

Split Tooth (2018) is the debut novel of Inuk throat singer and artist Tanya Tagaq. As a narrative that addresses colonial traumas in the peripheries of what is known today as the settler-colonial state of Canada, the novel stands out notably for its plasticity in terms of form, style, and aesthetic techniques. It brings together prose, poetry, illustrations, narrative registers that are anchored in Inuit ontologies, epistemologies, and worldviews along with Tagaq's own memoir. Together, the novel is described by Tagaq as "non-fiction, embellished non-fiction and pure fiction" (qtd. in Doherty). Indeed, there is no indication of when the fiction ends and the non-fiction memoir begins (nor vice-versa), "underscor[ing] the inability of those binaries of Euro-defined disciplines to categorize, embrace, or discipline the exciting work of Indigenous artists and scholars" (Beard 317). By not conforming to those western literary genres of realism, fantasy, or science fiction, nor to experimental literary categories of magical realism, speculative fiction, and imaginative literature, *Split Tooth* presents itself as what Cherokee scholar and writer Daniel Heath Justice terms "Indigenous Wonderworks." In his landmark study of Indigenous literatures *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter* (2018), Justice opens with an introduction titled "Stories That Wound, Stories That Heal" (1). He explains that, although many toxic stories were written about Indigenous peoples—especially from a colonial Eurocentric perspective—the most damaging of them all is that of "*Indigenous deficiency*" (2, original emphasis).

According to this story, Justice explains, lack in all its forms is inherent to Indigenous peoples' nature, whether it is a lack of "morals, laws, culture […] language […] a lack of responsibility" towards themselves and their families—a lack that this story attributes to Indigenous biological, intellectual, and psychological deficiency (2). Besides, Justice states, this story asserts that lower rates of life expectancy, employment, and education, along with higher rates of homelessness, substance abuse, and suicide are due to the Indigenous "lack of human decency" rather than a consequence of longstanding colonial violations of Indigenous people's lives, cultures, and identities (3). Mental health issues related to trauma, depression, and despair, according to this story, find genesis in the Indigenous peoples' "lack of mental fitness" rather than being sustained by ongoing colonial oppressive and racist social structures (3). Justice asserts that the story of "Indigenous deficiency works as a protective shell hiding "settler colonial guilt and shame" while simultaneously exonerating society from taking "responsibility for the story's devastating effects" (4). In the introduction of *Decolonizing Methodologies* (1999), Linda Tuhiwai Smith explains that (post-)colonial and settler-colonial governments, states, institutions, and societies continue to ignore the "historical formations" of degrading conditions imposed upon Indigenous peoples' such as poverty, physical and mental health issues, alcoholism, and substance abuse that are direct results of colonialism as well as socio-political and economical marginalisation and oppression (34). Instead, these institutions place the blame on Indigenous peoples, trying to convince them that there is an inherent deficiency within them that explains their "worthlessness, laziness, dependence and lack of 'higher' order human qualities" (34). These are, indeed, part of the "Stories That Wound" to which Justice refers in the title of his introduction.

However, Justice also insists that there are other stories, which he refers to as "Stories That Heal." Written from Indigenous perspectives, these bring about

spiritual and bodily healing by reminding Indigenous people that they are not "determined by the colonial narrative of deficiency" that have been long internalised and accepted as fatal truth (5). The author explains that these stories are found in Indigenous literacies, yet they should not be understood simply as "diverse literary forms" or looked at from a narrow aesthetic prism, for "they perform other kinds of vital functions in their respective cultures, many of them ceremonial, ritual, and spiritual" (23). Justice asserts that Indigenous "speculative" literatures carry within them these "Stories That Heal." In fact, he explains that Indigenous speculative literatures provide "transformative modes" which, through a "complementary and distinctive range of reading and interpretive strategies," make it possible to dismantle the monolithic and fatalist "models of 'the real'" and provide transformative visions of other lives, experiences, and histories" (142). Therefore, Justice avers that the "ethical import" provided by speculative fiction—whether fantasy, horror, or science fiction—demands to be looked at critically and pedagogically (142). He maintains that within Indigenous speculative fiction, "the fantastic is an extension of the possible, not the impossible; it opens up and expands the range of options for Indigenous characters (and readers); it challenges our assumptions and expectations of 'the real,' thus complicating and undermining the dominant and often domineering functions of the deficit model [of the real]" (149).

However, Justice questions the relevance of the terminology that informs speculative fiction when it is viewed from Indigenous cultural and literary perspectives. He takes issue with terms such as "fantasy fiction" or "speculative/imaginative literature" as they are "burdened by dualistic presumptions of real and unreal" and "leave [no] legitimate space for other meaningful ways of experiencing this and other worlds" (152). Even more problematic for Indigenous cultures and literatures, explains Justice, is that the term

"fantasy" suggests a kind of fabrication which, if understood from a Freudian psychoanalytical perspective, could suggest a pathology of neurosis and delusion (152–3). Instead, he proposes the concept of "wonderworks" that implies a polylithic understanding of the world and reality (152). Justice explains that "[w]ondrous things are *other* and *otherwise*; they're outside the bounds of the everyday and mundane […]. "They remind us that other worlds exist; other realities abide alongside and within our own" (153, original italics). Indigenous wonderworks are grounded in Indigenous peoples' cultural specificities and experiences, allowing for the resurgence and the recovery of Indigenous ontologies, epistemologies, and politics that have long been dismissed by colonial discourses and narratives (154). Furthermore, per Justice, Indigenous wonderworks subvert the "expectations of rational materialism" that insist on the inevitability and fatality of "the oppressive structures and conditions" as inherent to Indigenous experiences (154–5).

This article examines the ways in which *Split Tooth* revisits various sites of colonial and neo-colonial traumas that the Inuit endured and still endure in the Arctic region of what is known today as Canada. The novel provides a vigorous critique of colonial capitalist modernity and its destructive "development" from which the Inuit suffer, with a particular focus on the ecological disasters provoked by resource extraction and global warming brought about by global capitalism and Canadian capitalist expansionism in the Arctic region. In doing so, *Split Tooth* highlights the ways in which environmental disasters and their anthropogenic effects find geneses in colonialism's ecocidal logics. In fact, this is precisely what is argued by settler-Canadian scholar Heather Davis and Métis Anthropologist Zoe Todd in "On the Importance of a Date, or Decolonizing the Anthropocene" (2017). In their article, Davis and Todd call for a re-evaluation of the start date of the Anthropocene by linking it to western colonisation and approaching it as a continuation and accumulation of colonial dispossessions, genocides, and ecocides (761). The

authors explain that the logic of the Anthropocene resides in "the ruptures and cleavages between land and flesh, story and law, human and more-than-human" caused by colonialism and contemporary petrocapitalism (775).

Davis and Todd's parallel between the start of the Anthropocene and the beginning of western colonialism of "the Americas" suggests that Indigenous peoples are well acquainted with its repercussions. In *Split Tooth*, the relationship between colonialism and Canadian petrocapitalism, and environmental destruction in the Arctic region is aesthetically registered not only through a panoply of narrative registers in which non-human agencies that pertain to Inuit worldviews and knowledge systems are mobilised, but also through a subversive appropriation of the Gothic and phantasmagoria. In parallel, aspects of the western Gothic are deployed as a subversive strategy to capture the protagonist's trauma of sexual abuse and rape that is implicitly equated with colonial encroachment and environmental destruction in the Arctic. Reflecting on the land's agency and ability to exert an influence of human and the other-than-human beings in "Indigenous Place-thought & Agency amongst Humans and Non-humans" (2013), Vanessa Watts writes: "Our truth, not only Anishnaabe and Haudenosaunee people but in a majority of Indigenous societies, conceives that we (humans) are made from the land; our flesh is literally an extension of soil" (27). This conceptualisation, which Watts calls "Place-Thought," is "based upon the premise that land is alive and thinking and that humans and non-humans derive agency through the extensions of these thoughts" (21). In *Split Tooth*, the protagonist inscribes her path of healing within the worldviews and knowledge systems that inform the Inuit perspectives and visions of the natural environment and landscape of the Arctic. As such, the power of Tanya Tagaq's novel lies in the way in which it presents itself as a narrative of healing and survivance.

In the context of colonial traumas, survivance is, as Anishinaabe writer Gerald Vizenor puts it, neither mere survival, nor endurance and passive presence; rather, "survivance is an active repudiation of dominance, tragedy and victimry" (*Fugitive Poses* 15). In a recent article by Valerie N. Wieskamp & Cortney Smith, entitled ""What to do when you're raped"" (2020), the authors conduct a rhetorical analysis of Lucy M. Bonner's illustrated handbook *What to Do When You are Raped* (2016). In it, they explore the potential of the "rhetoric of survivance" in expanding the discussion about trauma and sexual violence within Indigenous women and girls (73). Wieskamp and Smith start with a critique of the Euro-American discourses of trauma and sexual violence that they consider incompatible with the experiences of women of colour (73). In addition to their racial and gendered tendencies, they explain, Euro-American discourses of trauma follow a linear "traumatological timeline" which assumes a stable subject position before traumatisation. Thus, traumatised individuals are capable "of being forever cured of that trauma, even if they cannot regain their initial subject position" (76). This understanding, the authors contend, victimises those who fail to detach themselves from their trauma (76). Moreover, Wieskamp and Smith state that Euro-American conceptions of trauma and healing are highly individualistic, such that the accountability of the state's structural oppression is hidden via grammars of psychology and individual well-being (73). In *Split Tooth,* the narrator is not trapped in a traumatic compulsion. Nor does she accept the status of a passive survivor of her trauma in which healing and recovery are, as Deborah L. Madsen points out, equated with a therapeutic re-assimilation or reintegration of the fragmented self that aims to bring the patient "to a condition of cultural productivity," and in which "the concept of psychic integration or assimilation" is imperatively conflated with social assimilation ("On Subjectivity and Survivance" 64).

As such, the novel can be read in terms of what Yellowknives Dene scholar Glen Coulthard calls, in *Red Skins, White Masks* (2014), a rejection of the colonial politics of recognition (17). In this study, Coulthard draws on Fanon's critique of the colonial politics of recognition to investigate the current situation of Indigenous-settler state relations in Canada (17). The author explains that Fanon's critique of the colonial politics of recognition consists of two dimensions. The first dimension presents a structural problem that lies at the heart of colonial recognition as it occurs in "in real world contexts of domination" such that "the terms of accommodation" concerning this recognition are regulated and shaped "by and in the interests of the hegemonic partner in the relationship" (17). The second dimension, he adds, presents a subjective problem that consists of the colonised people's psychological and affective attachment to "structurally circumscribed modes of recognition" that facilitate and perennate "the economic and political structure of colonial relationships over time" (1718). In *Split Tooth*, the protagonist resists pathologisation and victimisation while simultaneously rejecting assimilation by asserting her self-determination through her historical consciousness, political agency, and cultural affirmation. In this way, the novel manifests what Coulthard calls a "*resurgent politics of recognition*" which he conceives as a decolonial praxis that focuses on Indigenous self-empowerment "through cultural practices of individual and collective self-fashioning" (18, original italics). As an Indigenous wonderwork, not only does *Split Tooth* reflect Indigenous perspectives on the world, reality, and existence, it also offers a decolonising reading of healing that is articulated as an ongoing process of survivance entrenched within the natural environment of the Arctic. Therefore, the novel presents itself as what Justice calls a story that heals.

Traumatised Land, Traumatised Bodies

Split Tooth is set in a small, peripheral town in the Arctic region of Nunavut, situated in the northern territories of what is known today as Canada. The peripherality of the town is not limited to its geographic location in relation to the core-capitalist metropoles of the settler-colonial state of Canada. Indeed, through a myriad of narrative registers, such as non-human agencies, Indigenous Inuit narrative registers and storytelling, free-verse poetry, and scientific terminologies of geology, the author formally and aesthetically registers the town's peripherality in a logic of an uneven and traumatic modernity produced by the expansion of Canadian colonial capitalism. The plot of *Split Tooth* is told entirely from the first-person perspective of an unnamed adolescent girl and is centred on her life in a coming-of-age narrative through which she confronts the trauma of longstanding sexual abuse. From the first page of the novel, this unnamed narrator provides an overview of the economical precariousness that haunts this peripheral arctic town. Amid this harsh arctic environment, she describes the house she lives in as made of "*[f]ake-wood* panel walls" (1, emphasis added). Although short as a description, it is possible to discern the critique that lies behind it. The fragility of the house walls speaks volumes about the uneven modernity produced in the logic of colonial and neo-colonial capitalism in Canada. In *Combined and Uneven Development* (2015), the Warwick Research Collective (WReC) reflect on the uneven nature of development and modernity brought about by capitalism in the (semi-) peripheries of core-capitalist countries. They contend that modernity in an economic logic of a combined and uneven development "is coded into the fabric of built space[s]" (148). In the novel, the fallacious character of the walls being made of "fake-wood panels"—instead of real wood which, as a natural resource, is hardly lacking in settler-colonial countries like Canada—provides a glimpse into the uneven distribution of wealth and the nature of development that a racially inscribed capitalism entails in the peripheries of these core-capitalistic settler-colonial countries

Tagaq depicts the tormented life of an Inuit child whose community is still plagued by longstanding colonial and neo-colonial traumas and their far-reaching psychological, social and economic repercussions. However, the novel focuses more on the traumatic impacts of the Canadian residential school policies among Indigenous Inuit communities, shedding light on the social ills of alcoholism, domestic violence, sexual abuse, and suicide among the youth. Indeed, Tagaq dedicates her novel "*[f]or the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, and survivors of residential schools*" (*Split Tooth* VII, original italics). Early in the novel, this traumatic environment, fuelled with alcohol and violence, is portrayed as the narrator's everyday life. The opening sentence reads: "Sometimes we would hide in the closet when the drunks came home from the bar. [...] Sometimes there was only thumping, screaming, moans, laughter" (1). From childhood, the narrator is exposed to persistent molestation and sexual abuse, both in public and domestic spaces. During a routine day at school, she describes "[t]he teacher squirming his fingers under my panties. / […] He looks around and pretends he's not doing it" (*Split Tooth* 4). Later, speaking of the school custodian, she declares: "Watch out for the old walrus. / The old man likes to touch young pussy. / [...] *I wonder why nobody kicks him out*" (4, emphasis added). In this way, the novel's first poem exposes the educational environment that, ordinarily, is meant to offer security and fulfilment for children. Yet, located in a peripheral town of a settler-colonial country infested by uneven-race relations, the school becomes another space where Inuit children encounter institutionally facilitated oppression and abuse that the rhetorical question illuminates.

Tagaq's critique of colonial capitalist modernity and the destructive "development" endured by the Inuit of "Canada" takes on other proportions when she addresses the ecological disasters provoked by resource extraction and global warming brought about by global capitalism and Canadian capitalist expansionism

in the arctic region. The novel highlights the ways in which environmental disasters and their anthropogenic effects find genesis in colonialism's ecocidal logics. In "On the Importance of a Date, or Decolonizing the Anthropocene" (2017), Davis and Todd contend that relating the Anthropocene to the beginning of colonialism allows it to be set as a critical project through which it is possible to consider today's "ecocidal logics" not as fatality or as something inherent to "human nature," but rather as the outcome of a constellation of attitudes that "have their origins and reverberations in colonization" (763). By linking the Anthropocene to colonialism, they demonstrate the way in which the emergence of ecological disaster is inherently tied to a western ideology that not only separates but also places the human above "geology and biota" (769). Indeed, Davis and Todd argue that colonialism and settler-colonialism "[were] always about changing the land, transforming the earth itself, including the creatures, the plants, the soil composition and the atmosphere. It was about moving and unearthing rocks and minerals. All of these acts were intimately tied to the project of erasure that is the imperative of settler colonialism" (770). The logic of the Anthropocene, they assert, resides in colonialism and contemporary petrocapitalism's severing of the bonds between "humans and the soil, between plants and animals, between minerals and our bones" (770). By relating the Anthropocene to colonialism, Davis and Todd concretely ground the concept in the current ecological and environmental crisis.

As an Indigenous wonderwork, *Split Tooth* captures the violence and the ecological impact of oil extraction in Nunavut through a mixture of phantasmagoria and anthropomorphism. Early in the novel, the narrator anthropomorphises "[g]lobal warming" through the use of active verbs, asserting that it "will release the deeper smells" and "coax stories out of the permafrost" (*Split Tooth* 6). Later, in an ominous phantasmagorical tone, she wonders "what memories lie deep in the ice? Who knows what curses?" (6). Addressing such issues in their work, the WReC

contributors argue that in literary works that register ecological failures induced by violent resource extractions, there is often a self-conscious recourse to—and appropriation of—"catachrestic narrative devices," fantastic tropes, and aesthetics of speculative fiction in order to "visualise spectral economies of oil and energy, hyper-commodity fetishism" and "to register the violent impact of petroleum extraction and reorganisation of socio-ecological relations" (*Combined and Uneven* 97–8). In the novel, the use of western aspects of phantasmagoria and the Gothic to register the destructive impact of global warming can be read as a subversive strategy whereby the author explicitly links the attacks on the arctic environment to colonialism in general, and to the Canadian neo-colonial policies of resource extraction in particular.

In other passages that touch upon the same theme, the narrator addresses the land directly. Yet, unlike "global warming," which is gothicised and anthropomorphised, the land is approached as a character *per se* through a conferred agency that is reflected in the novel's typography. In an interlude, the narrator enters in a direct conversation with the land as their gazes meet, "[b]lack eye on black eye" (64). She addresses the land as a human being with human organs using the second person pronoun "you" when she says: "Your mouth opens and emits a toothless scream" and "[y]our hair falls out" (65). This embodiment of the land reaches an apotheosis when the narrator corporealises the suffering it endures while being stripped of its oil resources. First, she compares it to bleeding and haemorrhaging when she describes the way in which "[o]il begins to seep from all of [the land's] orifices" (65). Afterwards, she equates the process of well-drilling with the skinning of a caribou: "This is happening to you with invisible hands, and then the skin reattaches itself so you can feel that same thing again and again" (65). Finally, the narrator considers the land as a traumatised body to which "[d]eath" would be "a thousand times more desirable than this" and for which she "will

always bear witness" (65). These passages register the stark differences that exist between Indigenous worldviews and western conceptions of space and the environment. Indeed, Smith argues that, for the west, space is regarded "as being static or divorced from time. This view generates ways of making sense of the world as a 'realm of stasis', well-defined, fixed and without politics" (*Decolonizing Methodologies* 109). She writes: "Land, for example, was viewed as something to be tamed and brought under control" (106). In fact, what is described in the above passages is precisely what Davis and Todd posit as the severed bonds between humans, other-than-humans, and the land caused by colonialism and later exacerbated by extractive capitalism.

As discussed above, the WReC contributors consider the mobilisation of fantastic tropes and speculative fiction aesthetics a deliberate and purposeful technique that endeavours to invoke the shock and violence entailed by "petro-modernity's blind dependence on oil and its unrelenting drive to expansion" (*Combined and Uneven* 109). Nevertheless, in the case of Indigenous wonderworks, the speculative and the fantastic are, as Justice puts it, "an extension of the possible, not the impossible" and, by extension, the real, not the unreal (149). He argues that such works depict "experiential realities" found in "most traditional Indigenous systems" that "don't always fit smoothly into the assumptions of Eurowestern materialism" (141–2). Being an Indigenous wonderwork, it would be inaccurate to consider the land's sentience in the novel as mere fantasy or fabrication because concepts of other-than-human personhood and agencies are inherent to those "experiential realities" of many Indigenous knowledge systems. The non-human agency with which the earth is endowed in *Split Tooth* is a deliberate technique on Tagaq's part to assert an Inuit perspective on the land and the environment, in which both are considered living beings with agency. In this way, Tagaq presents an acute critique of western colonisation's commodification of

Indigenous space through the oil industry—a commodification that is symptomatic of the destructive modernity lived by the Inuit as a direct result of the Canadian colonial and expansionist capitalism.

As with the trauma of the land, the protagonist's trauma is predominantly captured through narrative registers that pertain to the western Gothic and is conveyed in episodic free-verse poems that predominantly ignore the novel's overall linearity. It is worth noting that throughout the passages that describe scenes of sexual abuse, whether in the poetic or prosaic parts of the novel, the perpetrator is never referred to by name. Commenting on this namelessness in her review of the novel, M. Jacqui Lambert notes that "it could serve as a true function of the reality within the story where the narrator prefers to play it safe, rather than naming her uncle, a parent's friend or another man within the small community" (Lambert). If, as mentioned above, Tagaq's novel does contain portions of her memoir, then Lambert's statement is plausible. However, what is at stake here is the aesthetic value and impact that is produced by this namelessness, particularly in a second untitled poem where the narrator spectralises the perpetrator as a reflection on the haunting impact of living under the constant horror of abuse. She writes:

> Something is lurking […]
> Something imperceptible
> Something unseen
> Something war-driven
> Something obscene. (*Split Tooth* 35)

Here, the narrator depicts the rapist as a malicious presence, a menacing demon or ghost capable of concealing himself to better hunt her down and attack at a propitious moment. The rhythm produced by the anaphoric verses strengthens this phantasmagorical portrayal, such that it textually and aesthetically reproduces and reflects the narrator's constant and anxious anticipation of abuse. Moreover, in a

prosaic passage, she declares: "There are evil beings in the room near the ceiling waiting to take over the drunken bodies, Grudges and Frustrations slobbering at the chance to return to human form, to violate, to kill, to fornicate" (106). Here, the narrator spectralises drunkenness itself, comparing it to a demonic possession. The mobilisation of western gothic tropes in this Inuit literary text can, therefore, be read as a subversive strategy. On the one hand, it materialises Tagaq's endeavour to register a reality that, due to its extreme traumatic impact, cannot be embodied or grasped through a realist narrative register. On the other hand, doing so specifically by appropriating aspects of the western Gothic, she conceives the narrator's trauma and pain as, in one way or another, an aftermath of western colonialism, as well as the subsequent oppressive policies and the socio-political peripheralisation of the Inuit in the settler-colonial state of Canada.

Through references to human anatomy, as well as the intimacy of corporeality, Tagaq's *Split Tooth* captures the extent by which the deeply personal spaces of both the body and the home are violently intruded and encroached upon by the trauma of sexual abuse. Indeed, the use of spatiality—more precisely corporeal spatiality—is recurrent within the novel. Yet, in an untitled poem that captures another instance of rape, it is rather the *absence* of space that most profoundly registers that violence. The narrator states: "He keeps trying. / Pushing his hard thing. / Into a space that has no space" (22). The language of this poem furthers this corporeal violence by presenting the act of rape as an act through which a new, traumatic corporeal space is imposed upon the body. Indeed, the two mentions of the word "space" are not synonymous. In the first instance, it denotes a corporeal container, a space into which something can enter. In the second instance, however, "space" is both physiological and psychological; to possess "no space" during this moment is a violent image that registers not only the act of rape but specifically the rape of a child. Furthermore, it is a psychological construction

that, due to the narrator's age and lack of sexual maturity, does not yet possess a referent. The infringement here, therefore, far exceeds the corporeal and threatens the "no space" that is, for the narrator, still an unknown space and which is, through this especially traumatic rape, instantaneously created and then destroyed.

Capturing the traumatic impact of her longstanding exposure to sexual abuse and violence in another poem, the narrator states: "I only work from the waist up / Psychological epidural […] I was entered too young" (*Split Tooth* 41). These verses encapsulate the repercussions of the physiological and psychological intrusion and infringement discussed above and echoes precisely David Lloyd's definition of trauma as "violent intrusion and a sense of utter objectification that annihilates the person as subject or agent" ("Colonial Trauma" 214). Indeed, the impact of this traumatic intrusion is simultaneously physiological and psychological, both of which veer towards an annihilation of agency and subjectivity. On the one hand, by describing herself as someone whose lower body does not "work," the narrator seems to suggest a sense of dissociation, a loss of possession of that body part. On the other hand, this physical numbing is projected onto the psyche, conveyed here through the reference to an "epidural," a medical procedure entailing the administration of anaesthesia to numb the spinal nerves, usually deployed during childbirth. To use the metaphor of "epidural" here is, therefore, to denote an induced psychological numbness, registering the traumatic annihilation of the narrator's psychological agency and subjectivity, thus propelling her towards a path of substance abuse and, eventually, a suicide attempt.

Alter/Native Wor(l)ds of the Arctic:

As delineated above, Davis and Todd's parallel between the start of the Anthropocene and the beginning of western colonisation of the "Americas" indicates that, far from being speculative, Indigenous peoples have already gone

through its repercussions. Nevertheless, despite having faced countless anthropogenic scenarios that unfolded along with colonisation and extractive capitalism, Indigenous peoples, the authors assert, "contended with the end of their worlds, and continue to work to foster and tend to strong relationships to humans, other-than-humans, and land today" ("On the Importance of a Date" 773). In *Split Tooth*, it is precisely by striving to foster and tend to her relationships with other-than-human persons, and the natural environment of Arctic informed by Inuit worldviews and ways of knowing that the protagonist initiates her path of healing, and which takes the form of a journey of constructing and strengthening her psychological and sexual agency. This is articulated when, at a given moment during her adolescence, the narrator experiences a kind of astral projection during which her spirit leaves her body and is carried by the wind to the ocean shore, ending up a "large ice floe" that is "swept out to sea" by the shifting wind (92). As the water starts to heat up and the floe melts into small pieces, the narrator is "plunged into the water," stating that: "It is so cold that it burns. Treading water and feeling the life leave my body, I accept" (93). Suddenly, the small pieces that make up the ice floe morph into "miniature polar bears, dozens of them" and make "mewling noises" in an "indecipherable" language which the narrator understands as an attempt "to comfort [her]" (93). However, one of the small polar bears stands out. It grows and becomes massive, "his sphere of *reality* warming the ocean for [her]" (93, emphasis added). He gives her "his *corporeality*," she states, such that the ocean becomes "like a warm bath" (93, emphasis added). These passages reflect a multiplicity and fluidity of realities that are intrinsic to Inuit ways of knowing, captured here through what Anishinaabe scholar Grace Dillon calls in *Walking the Clouds* (2012) "Native Slipstream" (3). Dillon defines Native Slipstream as "a species of speculative fiction within the sf realm, [which] infuses stories with time travel, alternate realities and multiverses, and alternative histories" (3). In this way, the narrative concretises what Justice considers a multiplicity of forms and experiences

of reality that "bleed into one another" (124). Indeed, not only does the reality of the polar bear reach out to the narrator's, it does so through its "corporeality," endowing her with one its natural attributes: the ability to endure the cold Arctic waters.

Nevertheless, the respective realities of the narrator and the polar bear do not simply interact; they merge into each other, becoming one. This fusion is articulated through an act of erotic communion; she declares:

> I mount his back and ride him. [...] We are lovers. We are married. [...] He keeps me safe and I am drunk on his dignity. [...] My skin melts where there is contact with my lover. The ocean and our love fuse the polar bear and me. He is I, his skin is my skin. Our flesh grows together. [...] My whole body absorbs him and we become a new being. I am invincible. [...] I will live another year. (*Split Tooth* 93)

The polar bear, or Nanuq in the Inuktitut language, holds a special position in various Indigenous Inuit knowledge systems, regarded as a resilient and strong totemic ancestor, and often associated with hunting. In "Nanook, Super-Male" (1994), Bernard D'Anglure explains that, in "ancient times," the boundaries between humans and animals were permeable with the polar bear as "the closest to man of all animals: when it metamorphosed it was recognizable by the size of its canine teeth and its pronounced liking for fat" (170). D'Anglure writes that, "according to our informants, 'the bear is the ancestor of man and its flesh much resembles that of human beings in colour, texture and taste'. [...] It was said that the soul of a bear was very dangerous, that it should be treated like that of a kinsperson" (174). Accordingly, the above communion informs the novel's assertion of "kinship with the other-than-human peoples" present in "most traditional Indigenous systems" and reflected in Indigenous wonderworks (Justice, 141).

Nevertheless, the agency and subjectivity conferred on the bear—for he is presented as a character with whom the narrator has sexual intercourse that leads to their fusion into a "new being"—makes this passage a quintessence of the aesthetics of survivance. Among the neologisms that Vizenor presents in his works is the concept of "transmotion," an aesthetic strategy of Native survivance. In "The Unmissable" (2015), Vizenor explains that the prefix "trans" in transmotion "initiates a sense of action or change, a literary and unitary motion, and a wider concept of the motion in images and words" (64). As an aspect of survivance aesthetics that celebrates Indigenous ontologies, "transmotion" entails a representation of transformation that, according to Madsen, includes "the interchangeable transformations of the human into animal and animal into human" ("Tragic Wisdom and Survivance" 4). "Native transmotion," Vizenor writes, "is survivance, a reciprocal use of nature, not a monotheistic, territorial sovereignty. Native stories of survivance are the creases of transmotion and sovereignty" (*Fugitive Poses* 15). Tagaq's aesthetics of transmotion not only informs the natural motion of the narrator towards the ocean in a spiritual form, but also captures the transformation she undergoes after merging with the totemic animal. This fusion creates a "new being", after which the narrator acquires a sense of dignity and invincibility.

In *Split Tooth*, the narrator's journey of reclaiming her psychological and sexual agency culminates when, in physical form, she walks to the sea for a second time. Lying on the ice, her spirit "find[s] the smallest crack and slip[s] into the Arctic water below" (111). Now in spiritual form, the narrator explores the bottom of the Arctic water, which she describes as "a stadium event of Life" form which her "Spirit" drinks (112). Feeling her "Body" slipping away, the narrator travels back to the surface and regains possession of it: "It takes a monumental effort to wiggle my toes and open my eyes after the Exploration" (112). Interestingly, the words

"Body," "Spirit," "Life," and "Exploration" are capitalised in this passage, asserting the relationship that the Inuit have with life, corporeality, and spirituality. Indeed, Justice underlines the significance of such capitalisation in Indigenous literatures which, he contends, affirms the status of subjectivity and agency (6). This is expressed, for example, when the narrator declares that "Body give[s] Spirit permission to leave" and "Spirit moves through it [water] differently than Body does" (111). Here, the Body, the Spirit, and the Life of the narrator are characters in their own right, capable of exerting influence on the course of events. Accordingly, this expresses Tagaq's assertion of an Inuit specificity, according to which the relationship to these aspects extends beyond the material and utilitarian—indeed, beyond mere possession and objectification.

This process of the separation and then reunion of body and spirit that the narrator calls "Exploration" triggers a crucial event in her journey of healing. As her body and spirit reunite, she declares:

> The Northern Lights have descended upon me during my spirit journey. […] Light leaves Time and takes on physical form. The light morphs into faces and creatures, and then they begin to solidify into violent shards. This energy is not benign like that of the ocean dwellers; these are the Masters of Law and Nature. (113)

Again, the capitalisation of "Northern Lights" and their designation as "Master of Law and Nation"—which are, in turn, also capitalised, is not innocuous. In Inuit worldviews, the phenomena of the Northern Lights (Aurora Borealis), known as "Arqsarniq" in Inuktitut, is believed to be the embodiment of the spirits of ancestors. In *Firebridge to Skyshore* (2009), Siobhan Logan explains that one of the most common traditional stories among the Inuit is that of the "realm of spirits" that could only be reached by the ravens and the dead (10). According to these stories, Logan adds, spirits of those who succeed to reach this realm are called "sky-

dwellers." When the Northern Lights appear in the sky, these spirits are understood to be playing a football-like game using a walrus skull (10).

In *Split Tooth*, the narrator contrasts the "Northern Lights" with the "ocean-dwellers"—a reference to the polar bears—stating that the energy of the former is more powerful. In yet another erotic scene, she lets the "Lights" penetrate every orifice of her body and fill her womb. Afterwards, she declares:

> I have felt renewed after the night on the ice. My tendons are thicker, my thoughts quicker. I am more capable. Fear is learning to run from me, not the other way around. I am not afraid anymore, as if meekness is slinking away into the deeper corners where it cannot dominate my psyche. The night with the Northern Lights changed my whole life. […] This is where my lesson was learned: pain is to be expected, courage is to be welcomed. There is no choice but to endure. There is no other way than to renounce self-doubt. It is the time of Dawning in more ways than one. The sun can rise, and so can I. (121–2)

Similar to her sexual communion with the polar bear, the narrator's erotic encounter with the Northern Lights empowers her physically and, more importantly, psychologically. Yet, while the former is provisional and allows her to "live another year," the latter "changed [her] whole life" (93; 122). Indeed, not only does she rebuke fear, she also ironises it by appropriating its very quality of "fright." Here, "fear" is metaphorised and depicted as a sentient being that no longer possesses control over her psyche. Moreover, her interaction with what she calls "the Masters of Law and Nature" embodied by the Northern Lights instils traits in her psyche that had been annihilated by psychological and sexual trauma. Though she states that "pain is to be expected, courage is to be welcomed," the narrator asserts her resilience and resistance as an imperative to confronting the pain of her trauma

(122). Through the capitalisation of the word "Dawning"—used here in its gerund form—the narrator parallels the quotidian victory of light over darkness. This is embodied by "the dawn," with the need for an active and permanent sense of survival, resistance, and resilience in the face of the pain inflicted not only by a traumatised environment plagued by centuries of oppressive colonial policies and their far reaching traumatic impacts, but also by her own exposure to violent and cumulative sexual trauma.

Nonetheless, the narrator's path to healing does not end here. The lesson that the Northern Lights want to teach her has only just begun. Soon after this night, the narrator notices that she does not menstruate and begins to feel a "flipping in [her] belly" (132). She states: "All I know is that I am not alone anymore; I am protected now. [...] I have the twins in my belly. I speak with the twins every day, a boy and a girl" (132–3). Strikingly, the spiritually conceived twins recall the divine conception of Jesus by the Virgin Mary, as recorded in Christian scriptures; yet the former subverts the latter in a number of ways. Unlike the biblical figure of Mary, the narrator's pregnancy is the result of a consensual and welcomed sexual intercourse which empowers her both physically and psychologically. In addition, rather than a single male child, the narrator is expecting fraternal male-female twins, to whom she refers as her elders and not her children. She declares: "My elders are in my tummy. I *respect and admire* them. They know so much more than I do. [...] They are not my children but my equals and my leaders" (133, emphasis added). Moreover, the narrator asserts that she can "communicate freely" with them by "leav[ing] [her] consciousness and com[ing] to them into [their] *spirit world*" (133, emphasis added). This passage explicitly asserts an Indigenous Inuit vision of life and death and the unique understanding and conceptualisation of the relationship between the living and the dead.

Indeed, the Northern Lights in Indigenous Inuit worldviews are the embodiment of ancestors and the spirits of the dead. As discussed above, one of the aesthetic qualities and specificities that Justice attributes to Indigenous wonderworks is their ability to register the flexible and permeable relationship between the realms of the living and the spiritual worlds. According to this vision, respect and veneration extend to the dead, for they are "ancestors with continuing relationships with the living" (Justice124–6). In *Split Tooth*, it is precisely within this logic that the narrator's twins are presented; the narrator she considers them her elders and leaders, whom she respects and admires, for they have deeper and greater knowledge than she does. Indeed, the narrator is soon imbued with the knowledge the twins embody, allowing her to understand not only the nature of her pain and trauma, but also the nature of healing and the way in which it can be fulfilled. When the narrator gives birth to the twins, whom she names Savik and Naja, she describes Savik as "pointed, brooding" making people "cry in mourning or in grief" if they hold him in their hands for a long time (156). She states: "Savik eats up the agony, and seems to grow stronger when he bears witnesses to suffering. [...] Forcing out that agony leaves an open wound, it leaves people depleted. I notice that those who spend too much time with him grow ill and radiate a *grey pallor*" (156, emphasis added). Naja, on the other hand, is "bright," "calm and soft" with a voice that "heals anxiety" (158). Unlike her twin brother, Naja "inhales trouble and exhales solutions like a filtration system. She cleans people. […] I saw her healing my mother's cold on a molecular level" (159). Accordingly, the narrator comes to understand that her twins represent pain and healing respectively, with the ability to affect her and her entourage.

Tagaq plays with the motif of colours to provide a material manifestation of trauma and healing in her novel. While Savik makes people sick and radiate that grey pallor, Naja "brings sheen to people's hair and glow to their cheeks" (163).

After some time, the narrator notices that Savik grows bigger than Naja, realising that "[t]here must be an imbalance of pain in the world" (159). The repercussions of this imbalance begin to impact the people around her, starting with her uncle, an alcoholic, who slowly dies from liver failure. Indeed, Savik's ability to inflict and bring out pain eventually targets the narrator herself. While breastfeeding, he bites his mother's breast, "biting off the end of [her] nipple" (177). Here, the narrator notes that "there was no room for him on this earth" (177). She states: "I knew he would only grow stronger and his prey would not only be restricted to the old or sick, to the malevolent or weak. I knew his prey would become Love" (177). It is precisely this fear that forces the narrator to kill Savik by returning him to "the frozen ice" (180). Instead of dying, however, Savik transforms into a seal. In a violent scene of metamorphosis, his "neck hardens into a solid, boneless mass […]. He builds a wall of protection around his heart […]. My hands are burning, the bones in my hands are burning and there are a thousand boiling blisters where I am holding him. […] he is mutating", becoming a seal that then "flops into the crack in the ice" (181). Intertwined as they are, Savik's contact with the Arctic waters impacts Naja as well, and she dies of hypothermia in her mother's arms. Deciding to release Naja's body into the water, the narrator finds that Savik "absorbs her flesh and they are one. She is he and he is she. Finally they are whole […]. The seal looks up at me with love and hatred, death and life. It looks at me with the *Knowing*. Then the seal swims away" (181, emphasis added). Tagaq's choice of the "seal" is not fortuitous. Kristen Borré explains in "The Healing Power of the Seal" (1994) that for many Inuit communities

> Seals and seal hunting have intrinsic social value [...] seal maintains the physical, mental and spiritual health of the individual, the social well-being of the community, and confidence in Native power relations to maintain self-determination in the national and international world which is vested in the body politic. 1

In the context of Tagaq's novel, the seal embodies that very same "physical, mental and spiritual health" to which Borré refers, and through which the novel grounds its processes of physical and psychological healing. Indeed, the seal *is* evidence of a healing that, the novel seems to be suggesting, is attainable only through a balance between pain and recovery. There is a lesson here to be learned—one which the Northern Lights intend to impart upon the narrator. If she had once believed that her healing is dependent on letting go of her pain, here she learns that this is impossible. There can be no healing without achieving the balance between Savik (who imparts pain and trauma) and Naja (who provides solace). Their union is, therefore, the novel's final aesthetic statement about the representation of a path of healing and survivance that is grounded in Inuit epistemologies, ontologies, and worldviews.

Conclusion / Introduction:

The relationship between colonialism and Canadian petrocapitalism, and environmental destruction in the Arctic region is aesthetically registered not only through a panoply of narrative registers in which non-human agencies that pertain to Inuit worldviews and knowledge systems are mobilised, but also through a subversive appropriation of the Gothic and phantasmagoria. In parallel, aspects of the western Gothic are also deployed as a subversive strategy to capture the protagonist's trauma of sexual abuse and rape that is implicitly equated with the colonial encroachment and environmental destruction in the Arctic. Yet, it is precisely within the worldviews and knowledge systems that inform Inuit perspectives and visions of the natural environment and landscape of the Arctic that the protagonist inscribes her path of healing. Indeed, in the second last poem of the novel, she states:

I do not forgive and forget
I Protect and Prevent
Make them eat shame and repent
I forgive me. (188)

By rejecting entrapment in a traumatic compulsion, while also resisting the victimising label of passive survivor of a traumatic history, the novel can be read in line with what Coulthard calls "Indigenous anticolonialism as a resurgent practice of cultural self-recognition" (*Red Skin, White Masks* 26). To explain this Indigenous anticolonial formulation, Coulthard draws on Fanon's "theory of anticolonial agency and empowerment" in which personal and collective self-determination lie entirely within the colonised subject's striving for their "freedom and self-worth" and working through their "alienation/subjection against the objectifying gaze and assimilative lure of colonial recognition" (43). Coulthard further explains this decolonising process, stating that the colonised subject must first acknowledge "*themselves* as free, dignified, and distinct contributors to humanity" (43, original italics). Central to this decolonising project, he explains, is the imperative of a personal and collective reconsideration of culture and identity that "could serve as a source of pride and empowerment" (43–4). In *Split Tooth*, it is precisely the empowering virtues of identity, culture, and, by extension, the land that allows the narrator to confront the trauma of rape and sexual abuse and derive her agency and her self-determination.

In addition, healing in the novel is not presented as linear and finite; rather, it is conceptualised as an ongoing process. This is reflected in the closing poem of the novel where the narrator declares: "Cleanse me. Wash the blood off. I am still working. I survive still. I am stronger now. / Worship me. I am boundless. I stood up. I am worthy. / *Start again*" (189, emphasis added). These closing lines reflect a need for a continuous survival, resistance, and self-determination to allow for an escape

from the cyclical nature of trauma. In ""What to do when you're raped,"" Wieskamp and Smith explain that a rhetoric of survivance challenges the Euro-American linear temporality of trauma and its assumed traumatological timeline (80). Indeed, they state that, by resisting restriction to the past, present, or future, a rhetoric of survivance reflects what they call "infinitive' temporality", which allows past, present, and future to flow together and "embraces the role of one's past to influence one's present and future" (81). As such, Wieskamp and Smith argue that survivance in the face of trauma conceives survival/resistance as an ongoing process that, in contrast to the Euro-American traumatological timeline, does not assume a "a trajectory towards brighter future, but presupposes surviving as a constant action" (81). In doing so, they assert, a rhetoric of survivance expresses an Indigenous "temporal sovereignty by rendering Native experiences visible and actionable" (81). In *Split Tooth*, it is precisely this non-linear and ongoing sense of healing that is formally and aesthetically registered in the novel, thus presenting itself as a narrative of survivance.

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This Planet Knows my Name: Cosmologies of Emancipation Against Ecologic Collapse

FERNANDO PEREZ-GARCIA

In the times of Reconciliation, more and more voices are challenging the myth of Canada as a benevolent nation towards racialised and Indigenous communities, despite its celebrations of cultural diversity. Controversies like those surrounding the TransMountain pipeline expansion or the Taseko Mines trial reveal the contradictions of the settler nation-state in its relations with Indigenous peoples. Especially since the approval of Bill C-45 and its changes to Canada's Navigable Water Act, the Indian Act, and the Environmental Assessment Act, the mobilization of Indigenous Peoples galvanized on platforms such as Idle No More has increased exponentially to confront an extractivist worldview of the colonial Canadian Government which is antithetical to an Indigenous way of knowing and relating to the land. The resurgence of the extractivist model and the economic dependence of the colonial governments on these activities that degrade the environment and perpetuate the dispossession of natural territory have shown their consequences via the increase in pandemics, climate change, or the 2020 wildfires in Australia. Faced with the neglect of colonial governments and the narrow-mindedness of progressive movements, it would be advisable to recognize Indigenous forms of intelligence and patterns of life in order to adopt sustainable economic models and avoid ecological collapse. These communities have been at the forefront of ecological collapse, territorial dispossession, and the cultural, economic, and spiritual consequences of land degradation for centuries due to settler colonialism.

These concerns are also reflected in the growing presence of Indigenous writers of fantasy, science fiction, and what Anishinaabe scholar Grace Dillon calls

Indigenous Futurism. These genres explore the capacities of science fiction to envision possible Native futures, hopes, and to make sense of the present moment, expanding the expectations of Indigenous writing beyond "reservation realisms" and surpassing the tropes of science fiction. Speculative fiction has often been regarded as a genre disconnected from the material reality we know in everyday life. This take ignores the genre's orientation towards the present rather than the future and its potential to express concerns, fears, raise questions, and reflect on the world from different perspectives informed by race, sex, or nationality. The genre's potential for conceptual disruption allows it to pose more open questions that are apparently detached from reality. In turn, this allows one to imagine the future that the material conditions of the present will bring us if taken to their final consequences. This potential can be seen in the growth of critical scholarship addressing cultural and political phenomena through the analysis of Afrofuturism, Indigenous Futurism, and post-colonial speculative fiction and fantasy (see: Dillon; Eguibar-Holgado; Hopkinson and Mehan; Lavender III; McLeod; Perez-Garcia; Rifkin).

In this article, I explore the potential of such Indigenous Futurism stories as representing a domain for the expression of collective self-recognition through relationships established based on the reciprocity between human and non-human forms of life and also to give meaning to new futures. This article addresses Cherokee and Scots-Irish author Celu Amberstone's Indigenous Futuristic novella "Refugees" to explore the possibility of articulating decolonial politics, exploring new forms of sovereignty in decolonization, and interconnection with the land versus the impending ecological collapse and fiduciary gridlock exercised by the Canadian neoliberal and settler-colonial state.

To carry out this analysis I will deploy a conceptual framework based on Indigenous modes of knowledge and resurgence from Indigenous authors such as Zainab Amadahy, Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg scholar Leanne Betasamosake

Simpson, and Yellowknives Dene scholar Glen Sean Coulthard. I will also include input from geographer Doreen Massey's sociology of space. From the positions raised by these scholars—especially by Coulthard—the fight against climate change, ecological collapse, and the extractivist cosmology that generates these patterns in settler nations must be approached from an anti-colonial perspective, not just an anti-capitalist one.

Coulthard's approach stems from the Marxist theses of the historical processes of primitive accumulation to propose colonialism as a form of structured dispossession. According to these theses, the birth of capitalism is linked to colonial practices that sought to dispossess non-capitalist societies and communities of their means of production and subsistence through whatever means were necessary—conquest, enslavement, robbery, murder. This dispossession would be a condition of possibility for capitalist accumulation and the reproduction of capitalist relations of production. In the process, it would obliterate Indigenous and non-capitalist societies by stripping them of their land and life. From the colonial point of view, sectors of the territory that were collectively held by Indigenous societies were divided up and privatized, and natural resources were also privatized. In the long run, this would contribute to including these societies in the labour market under the auspices of their survival in the new regime. Coulthard, however, makes some adjustments to Marxist theses to adapt them to the Indigenous reality of continuing colonialism and land dispossession. Mainly, he rejects Marx's idea that primitive accumulation is only a historical phenomenon confined to a particular period—a preliminary, transitional stage to the next stages of capitalist development. According to Marx, economic relations mark the dominance of the capitalist over the worker. Coulthard switches the Marxist emphasis on the capital relation to the colonial relation, showing that the oppression of the worker takes a temporal dimension (the theft of time) while Indigenous peoples experience oppression on a

spatial dimension (the dispossession of land), and this is a continuing process that structures Indigenous-settler state relations.

The response to inequality in social relations of production or the response to combat climate change and environmental deterioration, divorced from the framework of colonial relations, could be formulated based on a progressive political agenda that would leave the colonial structure unaltered. This answer could propose an economic and territorial redistribution and return the commons. However, it would simultaneously ignore the close relationship of Indigenous First Peoples with their land that has been taken. Apart from economic subsistence, the commons (or land in Indigenous gnoseology), plays a fundamental role in Indigenous modes of knowledge and in maintaining reciprocal and interdependent relationships with the natural world, human, and non-human forms of life. Without paying attention to these particularities and the central role of territorial dispossession, we run the risk of trying to mitigate the environmental problems derived from extractivism by maintaining the same colonial structures exerted on Indigenous peoples. Or, in the worst case, trying to negotiate the inclusion of Indigenous peoples in the extractivist system as intermediaries or lucrative participants in the extraction of resources from their lands.

On her part, Simpson affirms the direct experience of what capitalism and extractivism can do. After millennia of living in sustainable societies outside the framework of capitalism, the few centuries of direct experience of extractivist capitalism and territorial dispossession have shown Indigenous people an apocalyptic devastation of land, animals, and plant life-forms. Faced with an extractivist model that is non-reciprocal and based on relations of domination and exploitation of the land—in addition to the displacement of former inhabitants—Simpson advocates recovering a stewardship relationship that recognizes the relationship of interdependence between human beings, the natural space and non-human forms of life, caring for regeneration so that life can continue.

According to Nishnaabeg intelligence knowledge is relational and comes from the spirits channeled through the land (Simpson, *As We Have Always Done*). Knowledge originates in the spirit world and is received through dreams, visions, and ceremonies. It is given by the spirits and ancestors that inhabit the earth, land, and where the spirits of humans, plants, and animals interact. Therefore, to achieve knowledge it is necessary to be aligned with these forces through ceremony and the embodiment of the teachings that a person already has and to be able to generate supportive relationships. This is why environmental collapse and pollution have such devastating impacts on Indigenous peoples. Simpson calls for a change in the cycle through resurgence to create new forms of sustainable life and economy. She advocates turning to Indigenous knowledge and escaping from the cycles of Indigenous victimhood that reinforce the structures of settler colonialism and its terms of exploitation. For example, in her acclaimed essay "Aambe! Maajaadaa! (What #IdleNoMore Means to Me)," Simpson proclaims:

> I support #idlenomore because I believe that we have to stand up anytime our nation's land base is threatened—whether it is legislation, deforestation, mining prospecting, condo development, pipelines, tar sands or golf courses. I stand up anytime our nation's land base in threatened because everything we have of meaning comes from the land—our political systems, our intellectual systems, our health care, food security, language and our spiritual sustenance and our moral fortitude.

Amadahy and Mi'kmaq scholar Bonita Lawrence also insist on the idea of interdependence and reciprocity in the Indigenous understanding of the land.

They highlight that

> probably the most fundamental principle of many Indigenous cultures is human interdependence with other life-forms in non-hierarchical ways. Creation Stories, for example, emphasize the interdependence of two-

> leggeds (human beings) with the plants, animals, sun, moon, and the land itself (116).

The ramifications of these cosmologies have implications for all human beings at the levels of governance, economy, education, land tenure, and ecological sustainability. Embracing these teachings of Indigenous resurgence would imply valuing ecosystems for their intrinsic existence, reciprocity, and interdependence rather than valuing them for the resources we can extract from them (Amadahy, "Interview").

Stemming from the framework of colonial and Indigenous relations with the land, we can attend to the role played by territorial dispossession—extractivism and ecological collapse—in the economic perpetuation of the colonial structure. We can analyze the consequences this force has for Indigenous ways of life and knowledge, and finally approach from positions such as Indigenous resurgence and grounded normativity. That is, the ethical principles generated by the relationship with a particular place, with space, with the land through Indigenous knowledge and gnoseology—a series of ethical potentialities capable of reversing the colonial structure in favour of a more sustainable and humane socio-political and economic order.

Celu Amberstone's "Refugees" tells the story of Qwalshina and her Indigenous community. In the story, Qwalshina recounts how a race of lizard-like aliens called Benefactors have been populating the planet Tallav'Wahir with Indigenous fosterlings to save them from the ecological collapse and destruction of the Earth. The Qwalshina community—rooted Natives who follow an Indigenous, community-centric, and land-based pattern of life—have inhabited Tallav'Wahir for more than seven generations and revere the Benefactors as their saviours. The second generation of humans (known as fosterlings), however, were rescued before the supposed collapse of Earth. They are mainly urban Indigenous peoples from

Vancouver, BC, disconnected from Indigenous forms of knowledge, and they manifest problems with adapting and express distrust towards the Benefactors.

Amberstone's narrative shows how Qwalshina's initial trust in the Benefactors begins to crumble as she questions ideas of belonging on this foster planet and the problems of fully connecting with it. From the beginning of her story, Qwalshina shows the difficulties to connect with this foster planet, which she does not come to consider as her true home. At the beginning of the novella, Qwalshina performs a ceremony at the Mother Stone, above the knoll of her village. This ritual involves shedding her blood on the Mother Stone as a seasonal offering to Tallav'Wahir, so the planet will know her. However, her blood is red, "an alien color on this world and "Tallav'Wahir is kind, but there is something in this adoptive environment that is hard on us too. We aren't a perfect match for our new home, but the Benefactors have great hopes for us" (161;163). Nevertheless, Qwalshina and the rooted Natives make efforts to evince an ethic of grounded normativity on this planet. They are attuned to the life patterns and Tallav'Wahir cycles of life, seasons, food, and non-human forms of life.

At the beginning of the story, the Benefactors convey the destruction of the land to Qwalshina's group, explaining that they have to quickly relocate the fosterlings within the collective:

> Today our Benefactors confirmed our worst fears. Earth is now a fiery cloud of poisons, a blackened cinder. When it happened, our ancient soul-link with Earth Mother enabled us to sense the disaster even from this far world across the void. Tallav'Wahir felt it too. But we told our foster planet mother that our life patterns were sound. Our Benefactors would help us. Such a tragedy would never happen here. There was a great outpouring of blood and grief at the Mother Stones all over the world. The land ceased to tremble by the time the ceremonies ended. (162)

Qwalshina's words infer—and later explore more thoroughly—that this collapse is due to greed and poor human decisions, supported by a cosmology of extractivism and sustained development that led to the environmental collapse of Earth: "Our Benefactors teach us that technology must never interfere with our communion with the Mother, lest we forget the Covenant, grow too greedy, and destroy our new home" (165).

Relying on the notion of Indigenous intelligence conveyed by Amadahy and Simpson, the collapse is due to the lack of what Coulthard calls grounded normativity and Indigenous sense of place-based on reciprocity with nature (13). Grounded normativity in this case pertain to the ethical principles generated by the relationship with a particular place, with space, with the land through Indigenous knowledge and gnoseology (Coulthard 13; Simpson *As We Have Always Done;* Simpson & Coulthard 22). These Indigenous forms of knowledge and practices inform the construction of Indigenous reality and the forms of interrelation and interdependence experienced alongside other non-human life forms, people(s), nations, and natural spaces. Grounded normativity abounds in the idea of complex networks of interrelation between human and non-human beings, so the balance of these relationships influences the proper functioning of Indigenous societies. This system of balance requires a spiritual, emotional, and social connection that fosters and, in turn, depends on the interdependence, communion, and self-determination of the individuals who act in the community. For this reason, the well-being of individuals affects that of families and communities. When an individual is going through a difficult time or a traumatic process, the impact is felt throughout the system, and it is necessary to respond to it to safeguard one's own well-being and that of the larger community. Indigenous education and relationships with the physical and spiritual world are a lifelong process and, although each member of the community acquires the skills and wisdom to ensure their own survival, their existence depends on the interrelationships of reciprocity, humility, and respect for

the rest of the elements of creation and non-human forms of life (Simpson, *As We Have Always Done*). For this reason, pollution and deterioration of the environment are deeply negative for Indigenous peoples, their knowledge structures, and their physical and spiritual survival beyond the economy.

The implication, in the case of "Refugees" and Qwalshina, is that humans must live in harmony with the land, human, and non-human forms of life on the foster planet, or else they will condemn this planet to the same fate. On the other hand, embracing grounded normativity and Indigenous senses of place has allowed the rooted Natives to adapt with relative ease to the cycles and environment of Tallav'Wahir. This could be due to the perspective of Indigenous resilience described by Laurence Kirmayer et al:

> Aboriginal notions of personhood root identity in a person's connections to the land and environment. […] Thinking about the person as fundamentally connected to the environment dissolves the opposition between nature and culture. The human predicament then becomes one of working with powerful forces both within and outside the individual. Approached with respect, the natural environment provides not only sustenance but also sources of soothing, emotion regulation, guidance, and healing. (88-89)

However, a fundamental issue in the story is the role of the Benefactors and Amberstone's veiled analyses of colonial power relations. Although the rooted Natives of Qwalshina and the urban fosterlings try to settle and develop ties in Tallav'Wahir under an ethic of grounded normativity, we cannot ignore that they have been rescued—or brought in by force—by the alien Benefactors. Ultimately, they are confined to a planet by a race of aliens who control transportation in and out, and who further establish the terms of existence on that planet. Some of the fosterlings want to leave the planet and check if the earth has truly been destroyed by ecological collapse. After trying to take the Benefactors' ship by force, they are annihilated. Ultimately, Tallav'Wahir becomes a metaphor for an Indian reservation,

or a representation of the fiduciary gridlock exercised by the Canadian government as a ward of Indigenous peoples in Canada.

The Benefactors claim to have the best intentions for the humans. Nonetheless, they keep them held in a space other than their own, enclosed. The Benefactors also control the means and mechanisms of transportation and Tallav'Wahir's economy, and they will ultimately decide if the Qwalshina's people deserve to die as penance for the rebellion sparked by the fosterlings and some rooted-natives. In addition, the language used to refer to humans is similar to that of eugenics or agriculture; they speak in terms of seeding, bringing new humans to reseed the population of Tallav'Wahir or even implying the need to cross-breed them with new, compatible life-forms (Amberstone 170;181). The biopolitical and extractive turn of the Benefactors reaches the heights of implanting alien technology in the rooted Natives and fosterlings to be able to communicate with them in the language of the Benefactors. This serves to echo the imposition of western languages in the colonization of Turtle Island and the processes of eliminating worldviews and Indigenous cultures contrary to those of the settler.

In Canada, federal policies aimed to "assimilate" the Indigenous, to eliminate the "Indian" part of the peoples and their cultures, to turn them into "people" in the eyes of the colonizing government. The main tool for accomplishing that task was the Indian Act of 1876, a law that applied to all Indians who, under section 91 (24) of the Canadian constitution, were the responsibility of the federal government. Instead of being considered citizens or members of a Nation, Band or Tribe, the Indian Act made all "Indians" wards of the State under the supervision and administration of the government:

> As Indian Act Indians, we were considered legally incompetent until such time as we enfranchised and became full citizens of Canada, at which point we were no longer recognised as Indigenous and, consequently, lost our

> political voice within our Nations, lost access to, or ownership of, any lands we shared an interest in on reserve, and so on. (Raybould-Wilson 32)

Although life in a kind of community isolation in Tallav'Wahir has allowed the maintenance of Indigenous culture and traditions, there is a degree of dependance upon the tutelage of a Benefactor, assigned as an agent to maintain control of the community and ensure that they adapt to the planet. Also, the isolation affects the economy of Qwalshina's group. They produce crafts like weaved blankets and ceremonial capes that are highly prized by the Benefactors, some of whom "pay high prices for our artwork on their Homeland" (Amberstone 168). This, on the one hand, could place Qwalshina in a captive reservation economy in which her group has no power to set prices since the Benefactors are the only buyers. On the other, it could be a form of economic subsidy outside the subsistence economy of the rooted Natives, in a similar mode to that proposed by Coulthard as a possible alternative to the Indigenous resurgence economy. Alternatives deriving from anti-capitalist Indigenous political economies based on the sustainability of specific territories can include the reinforcement of traditional subsistence practices and local manufacturing, renewable resources through activities such as hunting and fishing, and combining these with other contemporary economic activities, or cooperative structures led by Indigenous people. In the case of Coulthard's own Dene Nation, this would revitalize the traditional mode of production, emphasizing the harvesting and gathering of local and renewable resources, and partially subsidizing these activities by other economic activities on lands communally held and managed by the Dene Nation.

This adaptability to the environment, despite its reservation-like character, underscores practices rooted in respect for land in the foster planet of "Refugees," embracing land-based relationality and a survival based on sustainability and reciprocity rather than extractivism or economic gain. Survival and habitability come from respect for the planet and the lands they inhabit. In a confrontation between

Sleek—a young female fosterling who reminds Qwalshina of her daughter—and Qwalshina, the latter tells Sleek that they do not live following traditional customs out of obligation, but because it is the best for them and the planet:

> We know about the high technologies,"I told her quietly. "We use what you would call computers, air cars, and other technical things too. But to help you make the repatterning, we decided that a simple lifestyle would be best for all of us for a time. There is no shame in living close to the land in a simple way, daughter. (165)

It is also important to consider the perspective of the story's fosterlings, urban Indigenous peoples who grew up separated from Indigenous forms of knowledge, grounded normativity, and relationship to the land. Qwalshina and the rooted Natives were relocated to the reservation-planet of Tallav'Wahir seven generations ago, allowing them to develop and preserve Indigenous epistemologies and a sense of cultural identity. However, the fosterlings only know urban, western culture and epistemologies and what they have received from the settler culture in Vancouver. The change is traumatic for them and forces them to abandon all the memories and belongings they had from their previous life on Earth. This connection with their previous home prevents them from adapting to Qwalshina's group, producing a profound imbalance throughout the broader collective. This point reflects the efforts made by the settler state to assimilate those Indigenous worldviews that contradict or question settler primacy. By eliminating Indigenous worldviews through its absorption in western gnoseology, territorial dispossession, and the exploitation of resources in Indigenous lands can be perpetuated.

Both Simpson (*As We Have Always Done*) and Lawrence (*Real' Indians and Others*) agree on the importance of establishing links between urban Indigenous peoples without access to land-based knowledge and rural Indigenous peoples to keep Indigenous knowledge and intelligence alive. The effectiveness of any Indigenous resurgence model will be largely conditioned by the success in

addressing Indigenous dispossession from the reserve and land-based perspective, but also from the urban perspective of those Indigenous peoples who do not have access to land-based knowledge. It is necessary to organize around the conditions of poverty and social inequality in urban and reserve communities as different manifestations with an aligned political cause. Lawrence advocates for a reconceptualization of Indigenous identity and nationality that takes into account urban in addition to reserve-based realities. This drive includes overcoming colonial divisions that contributed to the separation and reactive essentialization of identities through policies such as enfranchisement. Although it is possible to establish or reproduce Indigenous traditions in an urban context, Lawrence draws on her work and her own life experience to argue for access to land as an essential condition that must be agreed upon (232) Both communities are Indigenous on Indigenous land, so trying to strengthen relations between urban and reserve-based Indigenous peoples is a necessary step to build a movement capable of taking effective strides towards decolonization.

As the levels of tension and distrust expressed by the fosterlings and some rooted Natives towards the Benefactors increase, Qwalshina's group begin to believe that the land has not been destroyed and that they are part of a cruel alien experiment. This theory is never evidenced one way or the other, and we might well wonder if there really has been an ecological collapse or rather if the Benefactors keep the humans in this reserve as an experiment while they exploit the remaining resources on Earth. In any case, when the authority of the Benefactors is questioned, the answer is swift and violent; the human rebels die. Once the revolt is quelled, the Benefactors meet to decide the future of the rooted Natives peoples: some claim they are genetically flawed and should be destroyed whilst others believe they should be interbred with other species. Although humans are not allowed to participate in the deliberation over their own destiny, faced with the possibility of annihilation Qwalshina returns to the Mother Stone of the planet to

continue with the blood offering, in order for the planet to recognize her. However bleak the chances, she still carries out the ritual and keeps the Native traditions alive in any way she can: "Blood. The old people say it is the Carrier of ancestral memory and our future's promise […] My blood is red, an alien color on this world." (Amberstone 182)

If we understand the existence of Qwalshina and the rooted Natives as Indigenous peoples in a system of reservation or cultural recognition for as long as they do not gainsay the Benefactors, their vigilantes, and those who hold power, we can extrapolate this to gesture toward the current colonial reality of settler states like Canada. In both cases, tolerance or recognition is negotiated in terms established by the side who has power—that is, Benefactors or settler government—and is predicated on following colonial prerogatives of capitalist overexploitation and extractivism, with the condition that Indigenous worldviews do not threaten those interests. In a Foucauldian sense, settler-colonial rule, as structure, functions as

> a relatively diffuse set of governing relations that operate through a circumscribed mode of recognition that structurally ensures continued access to Indigenous peoples' lands and resources by producing neocolonial subjectivities that coopt Indigenous people into becoming instruments of their own dispossession. (Coulthard 156)

Contemporary colonialism, then, does not operate through coercive methods that limit freedoms, but through the very appearance of freedom, changing the cage of domination for a chain. Despite granting more movement and management capacity, freedom continues to be held, offered, and withdrawn by the hand of the settler state. The liberal "politics of recognition" as an approach to reconcile of Indigenous peoples' sovereignties with the sovereignty of the Canadian settler state focus on accommodating identity-related claims by Indigenous people in the negotiation of agreements on land, self-government, and economic development.

However, scholars like Taiaiake Alfred (Kahnawake Mohawk), Coulthard, and Patrick Wolfe maintain that this approach does not entail a substantial change for the lot of Indigenous peoples. Their relationships with the settler state only change superficially since structures and practices of land dispossession continue to function unabated, and the self-determination of Indigenous peoples is denied.

And yet, when the legitimacy of colonial authority is materially questioned or subject to direct action—such as the riot of the novella's fosterlings, or roadblocks to impede access to Indigenous lands and prevent resource extraction—we see the emergence of explicitly violent countermeasures, with the deployment of snipers, dogs, and RCMP commandos to expel activists and resume the extraction of resources that maintains the settler state's economy. The extractivist production model requires the settler state to maintain stability and its authority over territory if it is to attract capital and investments that perpetuate the expansion of capitalist accumulation. In this sense, land-based protests such as blockades and other Indigenous practices to reaffirm sovereignty weaken the image of the settler state, its control of the population, and sharpen the acrimonious state of its relationship with Indigenous peoples. The chances of attracting investment in a climate of protest are limited. The blockades, then, represent a spatial practice to ligate the power of the settler state, preventing it from accessing Indigenous territories over which it does not have sovereignty, dealing a double blow—both material and symbolic—to the state.

Without the backing of grassroot activists and members of Indigenous communities and their allies risking their safety through mobilization and direct action, negotiations with the state would lack an element of critical mass to support compelling words and arguments. Without activists and land-based actions, there would hardly be any negotiations over Aboriginal rights and title in B.C. through the land claim process. Nor would there be any meaningful Royal Commission on

Aboriginal Peoples without the massive mobilizations of Indigenous communities across Canada, including the Haida of Haida Gwaii.

These mobilizations impose a blockade of the circulation and extraction of resources and merchandise that seeks to affect the bases of the capitalist economy in settler states. The roadblocks of access to Indigenous lands are anti-capitalist attacks and signs of resurgence for Simpson since:

> While the mainstream media might focus on the blockade aspects of these actions, which are important in their own right, there is also a taking back of space in that the communities that maintain the blockades are often reinvigorating Indigenous governance, ceremony, economic systems, education, and systems of caring. These are bubbles of resurgent life. (*As We Have Always Done* 242)

One recent and high-profile incarnation of discontent with the state's denial of Indigenous territorial sovereignty occurred with the establishment of Unist'ot'en Checkpoint. Raised on the unceded territory of the Unist'ot'en clan of the Wet'suwet'en First Nation peoples in northern B.C., this checkpoint was created to block the construction of pipelines and industrial infrastructures. The forced entry of the RCMP in January 2019 and again in 2020 to enable the construction of infrastructure resulted in several people being arrested and visible protests in B.C. and Canada, questioning the genuineness of the Canadian government's overtures toward the implementation of Reconciliation policies.

Indigenous sovereignty and antithetical worldviews to that of colonial capitalist extractivism, as we have seen, are sources of knowledge and life patterns to avoid ecological collapse. Yet they encounter strong opposition at the same time, due to the same character that questions the legitimacy of the economic model which depends on the settler state. Any sincere and committed negotiation would demand the settler state renounce the pillars of its sovereignty as understood in the Westphalian sense. That is, renounce the absolute and uncontested authority

of the state throughout its demarcated and internationally recognised borders and the construction of homogeneous national identities coterminous with the state's territories. Indigenous claims to sovereignty and land that challenge the extractivist economy also challenge the prerogative that the settler state is the sole source of authority. The western liberal-capitalist worldview—in which the earth is a commodity owned and exploited by man—clashes with Indigenous worldviews whereby peoples belong to the earth and are connected by relationships of reciprocity and interdependence, and mutual sustainment. From this clash, it could be possible to offer an approximate definition of Indigenous sovereignty and how to mobilize it to short-circuit ecological collapse using alternatives embedded in an ethic of grounded normativity.

The notion of Indigenous sovereignty is not state-centric, nor is it considered a conferral from an absolute sovereign power (Alfred). Indeed, it is often not deployed with the western connotation of original and supreme power over people and territory, rejecting its hierarchical character and maintenance by force (Corntassel 105-112). Indigenous sovereignty has a decolonizing dimension since it seeks to recover and restore the legitimacy of Indigenous models of organization and governance in the face of colonial political structures and forms (Clavé-Mercier 99-119). All this means that Indigenous sovereignty does not necessarily focus on the state form as an ideal and seeks to detach itself from the domestic colonial state that tries to define its scope, its content, and the rights and identities linked to it. Lastly, Indigenous sovereignty is based on deep relationships with the land, which is considered —alongside the community—to be the source of its power. For this reason, the relationship of the people with the land is central in the exercise of sovereignty, and this explains why Indigenous sovereignty is often considered on a reduced scale, closely bound with a sense of locality. In the western imagination, sovereignty is the concept that is closest to expressing this type of relationship with the land that goes beyond a simple property right, thus explaining

its mobilization by Indigenous peoples to fight for political self-determination. Indigenous sovereignty, then, clearly emphasizes interdependence between the human world, the natural world, and even the spiritual world.

Similar visions can be seen in Qwalshina's praxis in Tallav'Wahir, guaranteeing the sustainability of relations with the land with human and non-human forms of life. Specifically, Qwalshina's final gesture, making a blood offering of communion with the foster planet primes the preservation of Indigenous traditions despite the uncertainty of their fate. This reflects the Indigenous resurgence approach that Indigenous scholars like Simpson, Coulthard, and Alfred aver, based on self-recognition and the generative refusal of colonial systems of recognition. Both Alfred and Simpson encourage Indigenous communities to abandon the prospects of liberal reformism of recognition policies and seek to revitalize Indigenous political values and traditional practices to build a national liberation movement. They call for the people to seek Indigenous decolonization on their own terms, "without the sanction, permission or engagement of the state, western theory or the opinions of Canadians" (Simpson *Dancing on Our Turtle's Back*, 17-18).

Decolonial approaches from the perspective of Indigenous resurgence, rebuke the idea that more ethical and egalitarian relationships can be established with non-Indigenous peoples and with the land through Indigenous participation in the capitalist economic system. This system is based on the accumulation of capital and sustained development through ecological exploitation and racial-, sexual-, and class-based models of inequality. The inclusion of Indigenous people in this system would only benefit the system itself and the owners of the means of production. Simpson points towards a deployment of Indigenous political thought and land-based epistemologies to revitalize sustainable local economies:

> People within the Idle No More movement who are talking about Indigenous nation-hood are talking about a massive transformation, a massive

> decolonization"; they are calling for a "resurgence of Indigenous political thought" that is "land-based and very much tied to that intimate and close relationship to the land, which to me means a revitalization of sustainable local Indigenous economies. ("Aambe!")

The transformation of the political economy is a key element in the reconstruction of Indigenous communities beyond the parasitism of capitalism. Even profit redistribution policies that do not dismantle the capitalist structure will continue to hinge on the ongoing dispossession and exploitation of natural resources and people. On the other hand, Coulthard dedicates several chapters to developing anti-capitalist and anti-colonial Indigenous alternatives, based on the experiences of the Dene peoples to seek a sustainable Indigenous political economy that guarantees Indigenous sovereignty. Such an approach to resurgence would see Indigenous people reconnect with their lands and land-based practices on either an individual or small-scale collective basis. This includes refamiliarization with landscapes and places that give Indigenous peoples' histories, languages, and cultures their shape and content. It involves engaging in sustainable land-based harvesting practices like hunting or fishing and/or cultural production activities like hide-tanning and carving, all of which also assert indigenous sovereign presence on their territories in ways that can be profoundly educational, empowering, and not contingent from settler state recognition.

These sustainable alternatives would pose a threat to capitalist accumulation and would promise ecological sustainability for several reasons. In the first place, these activities reconnect Indigenous people with land-based cultural and economic practices and forms of knowledge based on relationality and sustainability, values which are antithetical to global capitalism and the extractivist cosmology. Second, they offer means of subsistence and self-sufficiency through the local and sustainable production of material resources and food, eliminating dependence on the capitalist market. Finally, an Indigenous approach to contemporary economic

activities could improve decision-making regarding economic sustainability, equitable redistribution of resources and benefits in Indigenous communities, and political and economic empowerment for those Indigenous peoples who want to pursue livelihoods in the economy outside of the Canadian Bush.

However, Coulthard warns firmly against placing all hopes on approaching negotiations with the settler state apparatus. Furthermore, he calls for overcoming rights-based/recognition-oriented mobilization of Indigenous movements in favour of "resurgent politics of recognition that seeks to practice decolonial, gender-emancipatory, and economically nonexploitative alternative structures of law and sovereign authority grounded on a critical refashioning of the best of Indigenous legal and political traditions" (Coulthard 179). To weave the alliances necessary to press for Indigenous sovereignty requires the efforts of resurgent indigeneity and political activism. In an interview, Amadahy invites us to embrace decolonization as a learning process of Indigenous relationships to land. It is land, rather than bloodlines, ethnicity, or cultural heritage which becomes central to indigenization, to be Indigenous to a place:

> To be Indigenous is to take direction on how to live from a specific place (a bio-region) where all of life-forms model sustainability, interdependence, and "good mind" in relation to how to live well in that area […] Fundamentally, it would involve a huge shift of mindset because if you can't understand and imagine an alternative to the current dysfunctionality of colonial society, then you can't transform it. […] This doesn't mean, by the way, that everyone has to "become Indian." You keep your stories and identities but everyone's culture is modified to fit what is sustainable on this land. I think that is healthier and more desirable—in fact, it's more survivable than modifying culture to fit the colonial Canadian or U.S. mythologies. (*Feral Feminisms*)

From this perspective, we can incorporate Massey's relational idea of the sense of place to advance a sense of Indigenous space in the way advanced by Amadahy

and theories of Indigenous resurgence. According to Massey's body of work on a sense of place, places are contingent on the relational processes that create, sustain, and dissolve them. The coexistence of multiple spatialities and worldviews in places undermines a unitary, and simplistic sense of place. This does not mean that there is no hegemonic conception or configuration of relationships and structures that contingently give meaning to a place. Against this hegemonic sense, social agents such as Indigenous peoples are mobilized through direct anti-colonial and anti-capitalist actions, whether via are blockages to capitalist extraction flows or through the preservation and active practice of Indigenous traditions and ways of life.

If we start from this understanding of a sense of place and geographical thinking and apply it to the formation of the state, we cannot consider it as an immutable essence. The formation of the state must be seen as the fluid result of the processes of construction of places, in which the different moments of the relationship with nature, production processes, social relations, technologies, mental conceptions of the world, and structures of daily life intersect in a world full of borders to turn a fluid entity into a solid "permanence" of social power. This relational construction of the state helps to free political imaginations and energies to re-examine what is the optimal form of political-territorial organization of human societies, such as Indigenous ones, in order to achieve specific socio-ecological objectives (Harvey 310-311).

In this article, I have tried to provide an approach to Indigenous knowledge and epistemology that can contribute alternatives and forms of intelligence to face the climate challenge. Given that the economies of settler colonies like Canada rely heavily on the exploitation of natural resources and the territorial dispossession of Indigenous peoples to perpetuate themselves as a colonial authority, I have drawn from the Indigenous resurgence methodologies of Glen Coulthard and Leanne Betasamosake Simpson. In their approaches to the resurgence of worldviews

antithetical to capitalist extractivism, and the rejection of recognition as a tool that perpetuates primitive accumulation through dispossession, we can learn and adopt alternatives to environmental collapse that imply a difficult change in the sovereign model.

The role of literature, especially Indigenous Futurism, is essential in providing, on the one hand, Indigenous meaning to past and ongoing colonial experiences, and on the other, projecting an Indigenous presence and epistemology into the future on its own terms. In such texts we can find tools to critique the present and project the future, rewriting prevailing power dynamics and finding liberation in terms of Indigenous modernity. To imagine an alternative future to the present of settler colonial society and ecological collapse is the first step to transform it. Indigenous resurgence, Indigenous sovereignty, and Indigenous Futurism aim to reverse the appropriation of colonial sovereignty by rewriting the content of the concept from the perspectives of distinct worldviews, the possibilities of their contexts, and their ultimate objectives. The future will tell us if Indigenous struggles will lead to true sovereign reformulations and if, indeed, we are in time to achieve a paradigm shift that can avoid collapse.

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"The Future That Haunts Us Now": Oblique Cli-Fi and Indigenous Futurity

KYLE BLADOW

This article assesses how recent literary depictions of futurity coincide with grassroots activism in the Upper Midwest that aims to affirm treaty rights and to protect land and water. These efforts that have been ongoing for centuries are finding new iterations in current resistance to settler colonial resource extraction in such forms as camps, tours, partnerships, and local food initiatives. For instance, ceremonial water walks occur regularly around the Great Lakes, food sovereignty programs continue to emerge with support from tribal governments and local nonprofits, and creative responses to proposed extraction have been undertaken, like the Lac Courte Oreilles Harvest Education Learning Project, which in 2013 established a camp in northern Wisconsin to affirm Ojibwe rights in ceded territory and against a proposed open-pit iron ore mine. These actions also take a long view, informed by Anishinaabe teachings that foreground obligations to life beyond one's immediate generation, demonstrating potential affinities with future-oriented speculative fiction.

Such actions further espouse interdependent, reciprocal relationships between humans and the more-than-human world, the type of relationship often featured in representations of Indigenous lifeways. However, as Kyle Whyte argues, it is also important to attend to the *qualities* of these relationships. For Whyte, qualities are properties, such as trustworthiness and ecological redundancy, "that make it possible for a relationship to have wide societal impact by motivating the discharge of responsibilities" ("Food Sovereignty" 356). Through this approach, Whyte's analysis

avoids superficial platitudes about reciprocal relationships while further offering a model for examining trans-Indigenous climate justice. Comparing the state of qualities as they appear in varied global contexts offers more granularity and possibly more opportunities for intervention. For instance, the context of global climate change offers no shortage of opportunities to compare degrees of what Whyte terms "ecological redundancy"—the ability to repeat and maintain interactive processes like gathering food within environments—given that climate change is everywhere affecting or even dismantling the conditions for such redundancy.

Stories help reinforce these relationships and illuminate their qualities. This article focuses on Louise Erdrich's novel *Future Home of the Living God*, which in part imagines promising opportunities for a reservation community in an otherwise dystopian narrative. Despite what appears as a harrowing dismantling of biological reproduction and evolution, Indigenous characters in the novel find renewed purpose as adapting to the situation revivifies traditional practices. Although rampant environmental devastation threatens lifeways and bonds of reciprocity, Erdrich demonstrates how those responsibilities were never predicated upon fixed, unchanging environments but instead dynamically respond to them as characters seek right relationship with other beings.

Stories, including narrative fiction, further reinforce relationships, enriching audiences' affective engagements and relational commitments by exercising these capacities through their vicarious experiences of characters and plot. Advocates for arts and humanities education, particularly literary studies, have long cited studies suggesting that reading builds empathy. Broadening the sense of attachment and care beyond the exclusively human, studies in cognitive and empirical ecocriticism have considered the potential for readers to become more responsible toward places and the beings inhabiting them. In considering whether fiction can affect readers' political

attitudes and actions, "the empirical evidence is so far inconclusive, but the studies that exist suggest that reading fiction does enhance theory of mind and empathic capacities while reducing outgroup prejudice" (Weik von Mossner 574). For dystopian climate fiction in particular, empathy might be one affective response observed alongside readers' engagement of anxieties about climate change and may further elicit exploration of newer emotive phenomena such as solastalgia (Albrecht).
These inquiries into affective and ecological dimensions of dystopian fiction frequently must account for the genre's sociocultural underpinnings, particularly EuroAmerican Christian eschatology, and the degree to which writers recapitulate them. Indigenous writers of speculative fiction overwhelmingly rebut this Western temporal structuring of apocalypse and dystopia via reference to violent settler colonial histories. Their consistent reframing of the present as already postapocalyptic radically upends dystopian literature's dramatic force of imagined imminent catastrophe. Such a claim can be found in Grace Dillon's resonant introduction to *Walking the Clouds: An Anthology of Indigenous Science Fiction*, and the point has since been reiterated by scores of creative writers and scholars. This recurrent idea in Indigenous futurist art invigorates possibilities for speculative fiction by decentering its settler colonial influences and advancing Indigenous storytelling amidst contemporary global climate change.

While literature may not provide direct solutions to climate-related crises, its power to frame these issues and elicit emotional engagement matters. Narratives afford imaginative spaces for assessing the state and strengths of relationships affected by climate change. Analyzing contemporary Native American novelists in New England, Siobhan Senier notes, "Sustainability requires political will and policy decisions around carbon emissions, certainly; perhaps more profoundly, however, it requires *cultural* and collective negotiations of reciprocal relationships with skies, trees,

plants, and waters" (116–7). Senier's point is consonant with Daniel Heath Justice's finding that "story makes meaning of the relationships that define who we are and what our place is in the world… It also highlights what we lose when those relationships are broken or denied to us, and what we might gain from even partial remembrance" (75). These capacities for story suggest literary versions of Kyle Whyte's arguments about relationship qualities, suggested when Justice articulates that authentic kinship requires the quality of attention, of putting "that relatedness into thoughtful and respectful practice" and fulfilling the responsibilities they demand of us (86). Speculative fiction imagines transforming qualities of relationships in response to climate change, even when climate change is not a central or explicit theme.

Future Home of the Living God can be read alongside other postapocalyptic Indigenous novels (e.g., Cherie Dimaline's *Marrow Thieves*, Waubgeshig Rice's *Moon of the Crusted Snow*) as "oblique cli-fi," novels whose catastrophes are not primarily figured as climate change but whose contemporary readers cannot help but consider them in this light, given the pervasive framing of climate change as catastrophe. However, any motivation to read *Future Home* as cli-fi should not lose sight of its singular nature as a departure from Erdrich's "standard" literary fiction, not to mention the novel's political significance both as a response to the 2016 US presidential election and in its calls for reproductive justice and land restoration. *Future Home* received mixed critical reviews, but as one of the most experimental and speculative works in Erdrich's oeuvre, it should be celebrated as an example of transmotion—"an original natural union in the stories of emergence and migration that relate humans to an environment and to the spiritual and political significance of animals and other creations" (Vizenor 183)—that flouts American literary expectations while imagining Indigenous futurity. As oblique cli-fi promotes broader climate awareness, environmental grassroots activism likewise can advocate for climate justice even while

campaigns may have other specific goals. Local organizing draws power from being "rooted in site-specific struggles" and is less constrained by the political limitations other environmental organizations experience (Bevington 37); such rootedness attunes activists to climate change impacts in their region. Like cli-fi, grassroots activism also utilizes linguistic strategies to persuade audiences, what Tamar Katriel calls "defiant discourse," including speech acts "in which social actors renegotiate and reshape the social value systems of their societies" (109). Demands for action on climate are especially apparent in contestations over nonrenewable energy projects. Resistance to these projects consistently underscores the connections between energy extraction, greenhouse gas emissions, and climate destabilization.

Among the environmental concerns Indigenous nations of the Great Lakes and Upper Midwest have faced thus far in the twenty-first century, few if any have gained as much attention as infrastructure projects for transporting and refining petroleum and natural gas. The construction and operation of pipelines and refineries through Indigenous lands poses risks to waterways, species habitat, and human health. Fossil fuels, from their initial extraction to their consumption, degrade and threaten Indigenous lands, lives, and lifeways (in one example, with suspected associations between industrial operations and elevated cancer rates among the communities of Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation and Mikisew Cree First Nation to aberrant birthrates at Aamjiwnaang First Nation). Of course, these projects also contribute significantly to anthropogenic climate change throughout their construction and operation and the ultimate burning of the fossil fuels they transport—fuels that are themselves less energy efficient than conventional crude oil—an increasingly central point made by their opponents. Among many instances of resistance in recent years, the Standing Rock encampments against the Dakota Access Pipeline brought considerable public attention to the effects and risks of these projects, informing a great deal of scholarly

inquiry as well. Humanities scholarship has likewise registered growing attention to energy infrastructure's effects on Indigenous communities. Anne Spice compellingly critiques and reappropriates the rhetoric of pipelines as "critical infrastructure," noting how "the language of infrastructure itself can work to legitimize 'modern' assemblages like pipelines while rendering invisible the living assemblages that would strengthen Indigenous sovereignty and lifeways" (48). Winona LaDuke and Deborah Cowen have applied Anishinaabe cultural teachings in their figuring of nonrenewable energy infrastructure as essential to the functioning of "wiindigo economics," writing, "At the center of the Wiindigo's violence and destruction is infrastructure's seemingly banal and technical world. *Wiindigo infrastructure* has worked to carve up Turtle Island, or North America, into preserves of settler jurisdiction, while entrenching and hardening the very means of settler economy and sociality into tangible material structures" (244). In addition to tangible material structures, these projects effect the harder-to-trace impacts of accelerating climate change.

Energy infrastructure can seem nearly invisible in the public sphere—as oil and gas companies no doubt prefer it—until there's a spill or accident. Extending the concept of "petromodernity" (LeMenager, *Living Oil*), scholars in the energy humanities have considered the pervasive inescapability of petroleum, which can render it difficult to even perceive in everyday life. Petroleum's extensive material presence and use also conditions art. Roman Bartosch describes the phenomenon of a "petroleum unconsciousness": "The ubiquity of oil and its utter elusiveness as an object of aesthetic contemplation and narrative concern have combined to hinder recognition of petroculture and petrofiction" (118). At the same time, shifts in energy production and demand alongside growing calls for climate justice have rendered nonrenewable energy projects more visible. Movements like the Standing Rock encampments and others bring further attention to the erstwhile "petroleum

unconscious." Pipeline activism, ceremonies, and fiction bring pipelines into wider public attention: for instance, the figure of the black snake used in reference to pipelines brings these projects imaginatively and alarmingly to life.

The associations of the black snake with prophecy invites consideration of broader timescales, since part of what makes it captivating to public audiences is how it figures a past foretelling of these projects and the ethical choices they would pose. Examining infrastructure projects invokes similar temporal considerations. Remarking on the aspirational nature of pipelines, Anne Spice notes how they "anticipate the circulation of certain materials, the proliferation of certain worlds, the reproduction of certain subjects. But, sometimes, their bluster hides their tenuous nature, and their future focus creates an opening in which other possibilities can assert themselves" (50). It is within such indefinite spaces that alternatives might be negotiated and achieved, recognized by water protectors in their direct action and by others in their repudiation of the "destructive teleology of settler petro-futures" (52). Such potentiality motivates frontline activism, and it also aligns with directions in Indigenous futurisms and speculative fiction, echoed for example in Leanne Simpson's assertion that Indigenous stories "have always talked about the future and the past at the same time… A lot of what science fiction deals with—parallel universes, time travel, space travel, and technology—is what our Nishnaabeg stories also deal with" (201).

Oblique cli-fi, fiction that addresses climate in an elliptical manner or that uses other crises and catastrophes partially to convey climate concerns, serves Indigenous futurisms with its capacity for complicating narrative structures. Some scholars have aimed to distinguish cli-fi from postapocalyptic writing, a helpful move in many cases. However, oblique cli-fi recognizes how enfolding narratives of climate change within or alongside depictions of different crises enables further formal innovations and other possibilities, as *Future Home of the Living God* shows.

Unsettling Dystopia

Future Home is an epistolary novel taking place between one August and the following February in the near future, a series of diary entries chronicling the pregnancy of twenty-six-year-old narrator Cedar Hawk Songmaker, an adopted daughter of white Minneapolis liberals who reconnects with her Ojibwe birth mother and family. Soon after the reunion society begins swiftly falling into disarray, as evolution appears to go haywire, causing panic about the viability of human reproduction. Amidst the chaos a new theocratic government is installed, the Church of the New Constitution, which begins detaining pregnant women. Cedar goes into hiding, moving between Minneapolis and the northern reservation where her birth mother lives.

Cedar decides to write the diary to her unborn child as "a record and an inquiry into the strangeness of things" (62). This indefinite "things" registers the multiple sorts of strangeness Cedar encounters: the intimate wonder of fetal development, conveyed in the periodic factoids about the baby's growth; the radically transforming social and biological conditions surrounding her; the revelations of her newfound family; the mysteries presented by her Catholic faith; and, amidst it all, the environmental weirding of climate change.

While the precipitating calamity of the novel's dystopic conditions is "biological confusion" more than it is climate change (5), awareness of the latter is threaded throughout and can appear equally vexing. Early in the book, while enjoying a pleasant dinner with her parents, Cedar observes how "all of this is terminal. There will never be another August on earth, not like this one; there will never be this sort of ease or precision" (61). The comment certainly alludes to the present reproductive crisis, but it also evokes climate change in the way it is set amidst comments about unusual weather and other hints, like the fact that "maples here no longer produce" (60). After

the dinner Cedar spends the night; leaving early the next morning, she notices the power is off on the street. The disquieting stillness creates for her a sense of "the muted perfection of a 'before' disaster photograph," as she cannot help but feel that "instead of the past, it is the future that haunts us now" (63).

This observation concludes an entry filled with considerations of time (at the dinner, Cedar and her parents discuss geologic time and millennia of human development). If the concerns about evolution unraveling prompt these considerations, they are nevertheless reminiscent of discussions about anthropogenic climate change and its deformations of experiencing time—the blurring of seasonal changes, the whiplash of conceptualizing epochal timescales alongside appallingly short projected deadlines for reducing carbon emissions—references that attest to the novel's suitability as oblique cli-fi. Erdrich's linking of "biological confusion" and "the strangeness of things" to climate change carries through to the end of the book, a passage imagining the end of snowfall on a warming planet, creating narrative space in which readers might well recognize and engage their own anxieties about climate destabilization.

The novel reinforces allusions to *anthropogenic* global climate change with its references to transnational capitalism, whose material expenditures are conspicuously absent in the products it manifests. In Cedar's entries, Catholic miracles and the wonders of evolution are contemplated alongside the dazzling productions of global trade, which is thrown into sharp relief by the prospect of its imminent undoing. Descriptions of mundane items acquire an artifactual feel in the light of the book's social upheaval, becoming objects to marvel at (akin somewhat to the sacramental Coca-Cola can in Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*). Early in the novel, Cedar lays out some of the food she purchased while stocking up on supplies in anticipation of commercial shutdowns: "At home, I set my treats out on my desk. How long, I wonder,

will there be a snack like this to eat—cheese from a cow milked in Italy, crackers packaged in New Jersey, fruit squeezed in Florida, an apple from the other side of the world?" (70). The complex, sprawling operation of globalized markets required to conjure the goods on the desk becomes more astonishing because of its anticipated disappearance. Later, as Cedar's situation has grown more precarious and she is on the run, having escaped from "female gravid detention," she first hides at a waste and recycling center, where she has time to decorate the notebook in which she records her story with scraps from the facility: stickers, labels, and wrappers highlighting global trade, "mementos of the curious world" for posterity (171). These moments of global consciousness preface the book's concluding passage, which also scales out to the global by reflecting on the earth's final snowfall. While each of these moments initially seems to suggest endings in a standard dystopic manner, Erdrich's work ultimately frustrates any simple linearity.

Describing the future as the thing that haunts, *Future Home* upends simple teleological versions of dystopian fiction. Indeed, the "biological confusion" becomes a matter of perspective: Cedar is not acutely distressed by the changes to species around her, and this would-be apocalypse does not situate her at the outset of a dystopic afterward; she sees herself not "at the end of things, but a beginning" (92). This quiet but growing assurance remains with Cedar through even her most harrowing moments of capture and coercion by the authoritarian government. Her confidence can seem irrational given her circumstances, yet it helps refuse the conventional terms of a dystopian plot and may help inspire a degree of tempered optimism in readers or even Erdrich herself, who like Cedar sees herself not at the end of a linear trajectory, but amidst a cycle. The summer after *Future Home* was released, Erdrich posted a letter to the mailing list for Birchbark Books, her independent bookstore, which begins, "Have you ever known a time when things seemed to be moving backward?" Erdrich

identifies such a regressive time in the year following the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the US, particularly with George W. Bush's reinstatement of the global gag rule blocking federal funding to non-governmental organizations providing funding or referrals for abortions. Identifying this sociopolitical context occurring in the months she first began writing Cedar's story, Erdrich clarifies her choices for the novel's plot and themes. She describes setting the manuscript aside for years; when she returned to it in 2017, she felt as though she has "circled back" to 2002, given the incoming administration's revival of the global gag rule. Erdrich addresses these political moments to underscore the gendered effects of the rule and the severe consequences it will impose on women's bodies and wellbeing, effects largely invisible beyond the political spectacle of the rule's implementation.

Erdrich writes at the end of her letter that Cedar "evolves toward faith in the natural world even as the world irrevocably changes shape around her." Cedar's disposition thus suggests her ability to reorient to changing circumstances and to attend to the changing qualities of her relationships, and it also defies common expectations for characters in dystopian narratives (whether toward detachment or despair). I turn next to some of the critical reception of *Future Home* in order to further highlight its selective engagement with dystopia and its alignment with other Indigenous futurist art.

Critical Misses

Patterns in the criticism of *Future Home* reveal expectations aligned with prominent versions of dystopia in Anglophone fiction, observations at the level of genre whose examination helps distinguish the features of this text as Indigenous futurism and oblique cli-fi. The general critique from reviewers of the novel is that its plot seems rushed and that it fails to fully realize its speculative world-building potential. Some of

the same reviews that find fault with this apparent haste cite Erdrich's letter discussing how the book originated in 2002 partly in response to the Bush administration's reinstatement of the global gag rule. Thus, even if the novel seems rushed, it took fifteen years to develop, appearing in different versions and as a short story before Erdrich returned to it after the 2016 US presidential election. And while the book was indeed rushed to publication after this point, this speed further testifies to its purpose as a political response.

This recurrent criticism of the book's hastiness pairs with another repeated complaint that it is inexplicably vague (Schaub), "unclear and oddly derivative" (Winik), "incomplete" (Greenblatt), containing "too many unexplained absences and leaps in the plot" (Scholes). Clearly, reviewers sought a greater degree of exposition pertaining to the changes in evolution and subsequent societal collapse and were frustrated when such details were not forthcoming. However, these observations should be regarded less as a failure in craft than a deliberately selective adoption of conventions of dystopia; in other words, *Future Home* is less an attempt to tell a great dystopian story than it is an attempt to redirect the energies of that genre. Instead of imagining in minute detail the dissolution of US democracy into theocratic totalitarianism, Erdrich focuses instead on Cedar's experiences. This constrained perspective arguably accomplishes more verisimilitude for human reactions to crises than some of the histrionic depictions in other dystopias. Throughout the novel, mundane moments persist alongside the extraordinary events: watching her family laying sod, Cedar remarks, "This is how the world ends… everything crazy yet people doing normal things" (25). Reviewer Anita Felicelli commends the novel's frequently quotidian depictions for "captur[ing] the flavor of our Trumpian reality perfectly." Erdrich herself states in her letter that "writing this work of speculative fiction felt like writing a form of truth." Indeed, despite the copyright page's disclaimer that "nothing in this book is

true of anyone living or dead," the novel reflects the very real situations of those facing reproductive injustice, state violence, and environmental degradation. Meanwhile, the commingling of the extraordinary and the mundane also suggest the novel's exemplifying the "everyday Anthropocene," an affective state Stephanie LeMenager argues novels are well suited to convey, conveying the experiences of living "through climate shift and the economic and sociological injuries that underwrite it" ("Climate Change" 225). As oblique cli-fi, *Future Home*'s foregoing of extensive apocalyptic exposition better enables readers to consider the myriad, shifting circumstances of intensifying climate change.

The first-person diaristic form also inhibits the possibility for a more precise rendering of the social collapse. The limited perspective of Cedar's entries resists an omniscient overview. Reviewer Michael Schaub laments the fact that the novel "never really comes close to getting off the ground," but his metaphor misses the fact that it intentionally remains quite close to the ground, chthonic even: a central scene midway through the book occurs within one of the sandstone caves beneath and near the Twin Cities, literalizing Cedar's going underground to evade state surveillance and capture. Later, she learns, "They're calling in drone strikes on the basis of voice and facial recognition, so people are holed up anywhere there is a tunnel system" (222). The use of less-detailed exposition suits Cedar's own delimited understanding of the events in her world, dramatizes various needs for dissimulation, and strengthens focus on the characters and their relationships. This interpretation aligns with Silvia Martínez-Falquina's finding that "[t]he lack of detailed information about the changing natural and political contexts is a strategic element in the narrative, expressed both explicitly and through literary subtlety" (167). Martínez-Falquina finds the lack of detail helps portray Cedar's uncertain future as an expectant mother while inviting readers' sympathy, given their own uncertain futures. This feature additionally captures the tone

and realities of activist organizing today, with the need for secrecy given the surveillance and infiltration of activist groups and legislative attempts to criminalize them.

The novel's epistolary form, with diary entries written directly to Cedar's unborn child, emphasizes relationships over situational details. While a dystopian narrative precisely detailing its given catastrophe may be imaginative or accomplished, such detail may also serve to assuage readers' anxieties by affording a sense of distance, oversight, or control, aligning with the same kinds of environmental technocratic salvationist fantasies that environmental justice scholars critique for continually overlooking social inequities. Cedar's narration instead suits the call, in Giovanna Di Chiro's words, "to imagine and build a new paradigm of care" (310). Reading Cedar's entries and motives with an eye toward this possibility, rather than critiquing a lack of details, invites opportunities for prioritizing relations.

In sum, Erdrich undertakes dystopia as a means, not an end. Reviewers overwhelmingly associate the novel with Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*; however, it makes sense to compare it with Cherie Dimaline's *The Marrow Thieves*, which received similar critiques about inadequate dystopian world-building. Dimaline, Erdrich, and other Indigenous writers disrupt notions of dystopia as radically new or impending, instead emphasizing how surveillance and social collapse and reconfiguration permeate colonial histories. As Kyle Whyte remarks, "Like dystopian narratives, we [Indigenous peoples] find ourselves in a time our ancestors would have interpreted as a portrayal of our societies with dramatically curtailed collective agency" ("Indigenous Science" 228). Whyte draws on Indigenous futurist scholars such as Grace Dillon and Elizabeth LaPensée to assert different conceptions of time at work in Indigenous speculative fiction, such as slipstream or what he calls "spiraling time," which "supports and guides [Indigenous peoples'] plans and future-oriented actions"

(232). Incorporating these keen observations on time would refine reviews of Erdrich's novel, showing how her plot and narrative choices rework more than conform to generic expectations.

Indigenous speculative fiction consistently resituates hegemonic EuroAmerican notions of apocalypse as already occurred or ongoing rather than futural. *Future Home* incorporates elements of both, but even as calamity falls, it offers new possibilities, especially for its Ojibwe characters. Erdrich suggests this most clearly through Eddy, the partner of Cedar's birth mother, who transforms from a melancholic intellectual tribal councilman and gas station attendant to a motivated leader as the evolutionary crisis advances. When Cedar escapes a birthing detention center and is ferried to the reservation in the latter half of the novel, she is reunited with Eddy, who says to her, "We're gonna be self-sufficient, like the old days… I never knew I had it in me, Cedar. I'm surprised. I think about seventy percent of my depression was my seventeenth-century warrior trying to get out" (227). Eddy presides over a meeting showing the progress in reclaiming and consolidating the tribal land base and planning for a redoubled population as urban relatives return north. Cedar writes, "He plots strategies. Thinks of survival measures, ways to draft our young people into working for a higher purpose… He wants to make the reservation one huge, intensively worked, highly productive farm" (226). Enfolding such moments into the plot, Erdrich further reveals her use of dystopian conventions not as a mere whim nor as an attempt to dash off a lucrative potboiler, but instead to develop a story that engages real-world concerns while imagining and affirming Indigenous persistence.

Characters like Eddy demonstrate the work Whyte sees accomplished by Indigenous speculative fiction. Early in the novel, Cedar asks Eddy what they will do about the shifts in evolution. Eddy says:

"Indians have been adapting since before 1492 so I guess we'll keep adapting."

"But the world is going to pieces."

"It is always going to pieces."

"This is different."

"It is always different. We'll adapt." (28).

Though Eddy's first line would seem to conform to a linear colonial timeline, his words here reflect a way of being that is not solely reactive to such a temporality. Eddy's resolve matches the broader tone in the novel—elicited elsewhere by Cedar's own equanimity and faith—a tone at odds with dystopia's typical melancholy, one that is less mournful of a perceived lost past because of a different orientation to time. Eddy's transformation over the course of the novel is not the result of a nostalgic longing for a return to the past so much as it is an awakening to the fullness of his present. As Elizabeth LaPensée states in a cautionary note, "Indigenous Futurisms reflects past, present, and future—the hyperpresent now. It is not merely 'Indigenous science fiction' nor is it in relation to Western ideas of space and linear time." *Future Home* doesn't simply imagine a possible future but instead champions characters' adaptability and their stances towards mystery that spring from this hyperpresent now.

As such, works like *Future Home* are instructive for imagining responses to apocalyptic crises readers may themselves encounter. While its central crisis is not climate change, as oblique cli-fi it models possibilities for responding to the emergency that climate change presents. Cedar's story emphasizes kin-making, both through her relationships with her family and the camaraderie she finds with other captured women, medical staff, even her mail carrier. As the book depicts different kinds of relationships, both domineering and reciprocal, it also offers ways of thinking about their different *qualities*: it frightfully imagines a disruption to evolution, but it also imagines adaptability. Above all, it shows that no relationship is static or inevitable.

Time's Up

These values are borne out in contemporary grassroots activism in the Upper Midwest, where environmentalist and Indigenous rights activists have long experienced similar adversities in terms of surveillance and cooptation to those imagined in the novel: corporations and agencies have frequently surveilled land and water protectors, and private security operatives have also infiltrated their groups (Brown); oil company Enbridge has fronted a pseudo-grassroots pro-pipeline group (Vardi). Despite these challenges, groups work to build coalitions and solidarity. Erdrich herself has called for climate action beyond her fiction. On December 11, 2020, she and her daughter joined a resistance camp in Palisade, Minnesota, to demonstrate support for water protectors resisting construction rerouting Enbridge's Line 3. She later published an opinion column in *The New York Times* reflecting on the visit, writing, "This is not just another pipeline. It is a tar sands climate bomb; if completed, it will facilitate the production of crude oil for decades to come." She explained findings that the ultimate carbon output resulting from the pipeline's operation would completely undo Minnesota's attempts at reducing emissions.

While nonrenewable energy projects continue to pose threats to both Indigenous lands and to climate mitigation plans, narrative and activism alike suggest that remaining attentive and adaptive to the qualities of relationships offers other possibilities. LaDuke and Cowen point out how "despite the severity of the situation, the future is not foreclosed" (244). From innovative legal approaches (e.g., according rights of personhood to wild rice), to cultural practices and storytelling that recenter Indigenous temporalities (e.g., prophecies motivating direct action), these responses guide and enact the continued unfolding of cosmovisions within what might be recognized as LaPensée's hyperpresent now, Whyte's spiraling time, or Leanne Simpson's call for an embodied present. Each of these concepts suggests an

orientation to climate change not wholly compatible with linear narratives about apocalypse or dystopia, and each affords a deeper grounding for Indigenous activism. Simpson writes that, for Indigenous peoples, "The generative and emergent qualities of living in our bodies as political orders represent the small and first steps of aligning oneself and one's life in the present with the visions of an Indigenous future… We then become centered in our Indigenous presents, rather than centered in responding to the neoliberal politics of the state" (192).

Or, as Cedar writes in *Future Home*, "Stop thinking about the future. *Now* is all we have, I tell myself" (69).

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Urgency, Action, and Grounded Aesthetics in Warren Cariou's Tar Sands Texts

ISABEL LOCKHART

Since the turn of the twenty-first century, extraction in the Alberta tar sands has expanded at an alarming rate in spite of frequent lapses into unprofitability and countless predictions of the industry's demise. Unlike the easier, cheaper, and more "conventional" drilling of crude oil, the "tough" or "unconventional" process of bitumen extraction is so expensive that tar sands multinationals run at a loss whenever global oil prices fall. Yet, too big to fail, this zombie industry has been repeatedly kept alive by the Canadian state and tenacious shareholders, not to mention conservative efforts to rebrand the sands as "more ethical" than other sources of oil.[1] The projected growth of the tar sands over the next twenty to thirty years contradicts Canada's professed climate goals, as the economies of the Western provinces are deeply dependent on bitumen. Each revival of the tar sands amounts to a classic case of "dithering"—to use novelist Kim Stanley Robinson's term for climate inaction in our historical moment—in which the profound reach of fossil capital punctures political resolve, over and over again (*2312*).

In response to Canada's tar-motivated withdrawal from the Kyoto Protocol in 2012, Warren Cariou's "Tarhands: A Messy Manifesto" (2012) is an urgent attempt "to make visible the physical reality of the Athabasca oil sands mining developments in Canada, a reality that has been occluded by corporate and governmental disinformation as well as by citizens' unwillingness to face the consequences of their actions and their inaction" (17). In its formal heterogeneity, "Tarhands" is a microcosm of Cariou's work as a whole. Since his 2009 documentary film *Land of Oil and Water*, he

has dedicated much of his academic and artistic attention to the tar sands, exploring a range of forms and genres to better convey the stench, the sight, and the feel of bitumen extraction. Like many other tar sands texts, "Tarhands" is interested in a logic of visibility and, at least at first glance, the accompanying hope that visibility might lead to citizen revolt and a shift in the status quo. Visibility, afforded by various artistic modes, might buttress science to appeal to our environmental sensibilities and generate a counter-force to a seemingly immortal industry. Somehow, even, the tenor of urgency held in tar sands media might trickle down to policy makers, causing them to become suddenly alive to the enormous, "external" costs of the operations: irreparable damage to the local ecosystem and global climate change.

This is a visibility optimism shared by arguably the most prominent tar sands' artist, Canadian photographer Edward Burtynsky, whose 2009 TED Talk evinces a desire to reach a critical public and raise awareness. He uses photography to share this "unseen" oil world and to "deal with what I think is probably one of the most challenging issues of our time, how to deal with our energy crisis" ("Photographing" 00:00:09; 00:02:45). Followed by images of pipelines, refineries, highways, gas stations, parking lots, trucker's jamborees, derelict automobile plants, tire piles, and scrapyards, the tar sands are one of the originary horrors at the start of Burtynsky's *Oil* series on the lifecycle of petroleum. The emphasis is on the shock-power of revelation: on making something invisible visible, on bringing something hidden to light.

The question of "visibility," and its relationship to political action, is a concern of much petrocultures scholarship. Although Marxist aestheticians have addressed the problem of representation under late capitalism, theorists of petrocultures suggest that there is something especially problematic about petroleum.[2] For Amitav Ghosh, in his provocative contemplation on "petrofiction" in 1992, the multi-lingual and multi-sited character of the "Oil Encounter" between the United States and the Middle East make

it an especially difficult object for "much of modern culture" (30-31). The form of the novel in particular is resistant to oil's "slipperiness" (30). According to Ghosh, this is why, "when there is so much to write about," this encounter has "proved so imaginatively sterile" (30). In response to Ghosh, a number of scholars argue that global oil encounters are in fact *everywhere* in culture, but not necessarily as legible objects. Oil's pervasiveness in culture, and its material pervasiveness as fuel for everyday life in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, requires different excavational reading practices.[3] Even when the petroleum industry is, clearly, at the thematic center of the text, the assumption is that it has been revealed to a public for whom oil infrastructures, although everywhere, are generally obscure, or obscured—"receding into spaces made deliberately invisible by private and state interest," as Jeff Diamanti and Imre Szeman put it ("Nine Principles" 140). Whether explicitly "about" petroleum or not, petrocultural objects operate within a field of invisibility. Oil hides in plain sight.[4] Meanwhile, Ghosh's initial observations about petroleum's slipperiness to fiction, and culture broadly, are still relevant to tar sands texts however intentional they are about bringing oil to visibility: how to communicate the sheer scale of extraction, the global reach of the bitumen economy, the tangle of pipeline networks, the bodily effects of toxic exposure, and the largely peripatetic workforce?

For many photographers and filmmakers, the answer is to meet scale with scale. As the narrator of the tar sands documentary *Petropolis: Aerial Perspectives on the Alberta Tar Sands* (2009) tells us, the birds-eye view presents a "new perspective of a landscape we cannot comprehend from the ground" (00:36:20). Attempting to capture the horrifying magnitude of the extraction processes, aerial photography and film have emerged as dominant tar sands forms. To most spectators, in fact, the tar sands are *only* seeable as such. A cursory Google image search of the "Alberta tar sands" or the "Alberta oil sands" reveals page after page of Burtynsky-esque aerial shots—

breathtaking, fascinating, and dreadful. Aerial photographer Louis Helbig aptly named his collection on the tar sands *Beautiful Destruction* (2014) to capture the apparently antagonistic affects evoked by these kinds of images. There is something synecdochic at work here, as the extravagance of the tar sands gesture to objects even larger and more abstract: petroleum dependency, climate change, and the "human epoch" of the Anthropocene.[5]

In this article, however, I investigate Warren Cariou's more grounded aesthetic across written and visual media—a "from below" mediation of the tar sands, literally positioned and produced in proximity to the material of bitumen. The question of visibility, for Cariou, is really a question of how to make tar fully sensible to an imagined audience presumably located far away from the site of extraction. I am interested both in Cariou's experiments towards visibility, or sensibility, and in his ambivalence about the capacities of art to effect action along a "revelation" logic. More and better representation is all very well, but how this might lead to material change is a persistent problem or frustrated hope across his projects. The diversity of his work—comprised of short stories, documentary films, manifestos, academic scholarship, photographs, and "petrographs"—would itself seem to suggest a preoccupation with representational possibilities and limits, a restless searching for the form most suited to the task of communicating environmental destruction.

Cariou's work is also "from below" in the more typical social sense, in that his task of representation is not just about making sensible the impacts of industry but also Indigenous presence against the settler social relations that underpin extraction in the region currently known as Alberta, on the ancestral lands of the Cree, Dene, and Métis peoples.[6] Akin to oil, settler colonialism might be thought of as another phenomenon hiding in plain sight—everywhere and nowhere at once, letting die and making live, highly visible to its variously dispossessed and racialized while generally invisible to its

beneficiaries.[7] Yet settler colonialism cannot be included unproblematically as just *another* phenomenon to represent *alongside* fossil fuel capitalism, since this does not get at their inseparability. Moreover, the long timeline of settler colonialism in Alberta puts pressure on the register of urgency that dominates representations of, and responsive action to, the tar sands and climate change more broadly. In grappling with the dual and co-constitutive conditions of petromodernity and settlement, I argue that Cariou's proximate, grounded aesthetic carries an alternate politics of action that refocuses from representation *of* bitumen to relationships *with* bitumen. By intervening directly in the use and meaning of bitumen, Cariou's practices offer us an alternative to the terms of urgency, visibility, and action that so often frame climate art.

A Messy Manifesto

Tough or unconventional extraction is a key feature of late fossil capitalism. Despite prognoses pointing to "Peak Oil" in about 2005, petroleum production has continued apace. This can be ascribed to the development of unconventional processes to compensate for the increasing scarcity of accessible crude. Such unconventional processes include hydraulic fracturing, deep-sea mining, and tar sands extraction. In an effort to conceal the Alberta tar sands' unconventionality, the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers insists that the tar sands should be referred to as the "oil sands." The term tar sands is "incorrect," the website chastises, "because bitumen and tar (asphalt) are different compounds" ("What are the Oil Sands?"). The industry is not insensible to the rhetorical advantages of referring to the sands as tar sands if you want to convey something of their nastiness, and the advantages of referring to the sands as oil sands if you want to convey something of their conventionality.

Even relative to the nasty world of oil, the tar sands are *unusually* and *unconventionally* nasty. The extraction process is highly mechanized and emits three to

four times more greenhouse gases than conventional oil extraction. Tar sands deposits are typically a mixture of bitumen, sand, clay, and water, and a huge amount of water is required to "liberate" the bitumen, approximately three barrels of fresh water to every one barrel of oil output. Meanwhile, bitumen oil is more viscous and acidic than crude oil, making it more likely to leak from a pipeline and considerably harder to clean up.[8] The Alberta deposits consist of three major reservoirs—Athabasca, Peace River, and Cold Lake—together underlying about 55,000 square miles of boreal forest, part of a unique sub-Arctic biome.[9] In Alberta, approximately twenty percent of mining is open-pit and eighty percent is in-situ. Deposits lying greater than seventy meters from the earth's surface require the in-situ method, involving the injection of hot steam down a well-pipe to loosen the bitumen. Deposits lying less than seventy meters from the surface can be mined directly using the open-pit method. Canadian activist Naomi Klein dubs the process "terrestrial skinning," where the "overburden" of trees, topsoil, muskeg, and animal habitats are stripped away to access the tar (qtd. in Wenzel "Overburden"). On top of this, both in-situ and open-pit methods suck up vast quantities of water from the Athabasca River at one end of the cycle, and unleash spews of toxic liquid into tailings ponds at the other end.

Cariou became interested in the tar sands when the oil companies started drilling not far from his hometown of Meadow Lake, Saskatchewan. As he explains in the opening scenes of his documentary *Land of Oil and Water* (2009), he had never thought of his home as being connected to the tar sands activity in the neighboring province of Alberta (00:01:35). This changed when the companies realized that the bitumen deposits "extended well into Saskatchewan" (00:02:20). To get a sense of what might soon befall his community, Cariou, who is Métis, travels to the majority Indigenous hamlets of Fort McKay and Fort Chipewyan, respectively 38 miles and 170 miles from the boomtown of Fort McMurray where open-pit mining operations hug the

Athabasca's edge and rely on its water supply. All open-pit mining in Alberta occurs just north of Fort McMurray: Fort McKay is right in the center of the tar sands industrial area, while Fort Chipewyan sits downstream. There, Cariou talks to Cree, Dene, and Métis people daily having to weigh up the huge environmental costs of extraction against tar sands jobs they have little economic security to refuse. As one resident of Fort McKay puts it, "pretty much they stripped our land and fed everybody money to keep their mouth shut" (00:20:36).

Cariou's creative essay "Tarhands: A Messy Manifesto" plays with the etymology of its form, *manus festus*—hand struck. One of its epigraphs reads as half of an imagined dialogue: "Have you noticed anything about your hands? I mean, I didn't want to say anything at first, but I couldn't help seeing it, and… what are friends for, right? If you had guacamole in your teeth, I'd say something. If your fly was down… not that it is! Nothing like that. But still, I just thought I should ask: have you noticed?" (17). Like the epigraph, the whole manifesto is written in this second person address to an imagined "Canadian" who needs to be shocked into seeing the tar dirt on their hands. The speaker, an emissary from the Tarhands Institute "stink-tank," is exasperated: "something is already rotten in the petro-state, and NOBODY SEEMS TO NOTICE" (21). Since appeals to reason have failed, the manifesto targets shame as an emotion that might prompt its reader to action, comparing the complicity in, and complacency about, petro-capitalism to other scenes of everyday shame, like getting guacamole stuck in your teeth or forgetting to do up your fly, or going in to shake someone's hand and noticing "too late, that yours was dirty" (25). Then, beyond shame, the manifesto moves to abjection as a mobilizing force: the "milk you drank at lunch" is contaminated with particles of tar from your hands (27). If the separation from waste is a signal fantasy of modernity, as Cariou posits in "Wastewest" (2011), then the reminder that

petrochemicals mix with milk and circulate in our bloodstream appears suddenly in the manifesto as body horror.[10]

The response of an imagined reader to these reminders is presumably not that of a Futurist. Above the guacamole epigraph is an epigraph from Filippo Tommaso Marinetti's 1909 "Manifesto of Futurism": "Look at us! We are not out of breath, our hearts are not in the least tired. For they are nourished by fire, hatred and speed!" (qtd. in "Tarhands" 17). In its glorification of industry and violence, the Futurist Manifesto is a highly sensory text, reveling in the roar of automobiles, the taste of ditch water, and a series of misogynistic and misogynoiristic images as Marinetti and his cohort hunt the streets "like young lions" guided by smell more than sight (Marinetti 12). If the Futurist Manifesto represents the dark embrace of petroleum, slipping seamlessly from a love of speed to a love of war and death, then Cariou's Messy Manifesto sets out the stakes for its reader: either you respond with revulsion or adoration to this technology and its waste products. Adoration, as Walter Benjamin theorized of the Futurists, would equate to consumption of fascist aesthetics, a degree of self-alienation such that mankind "can experience its own destruction as an aesthetic pleasure of the first order" (Benjamin 195). To his imagined Canadian addressee—a liberal southerner coded not so subtly by that guacamole—Cariou suggests that a moderate, measured, equivocal response to the tar sands is a kind of appeasement to the fascist glorification of war.

Framing his Messy Manifesto against the terms of the Futurist Manifesto, Cariou links petrocapitalism to war. Not just war in the sense that petroleum in the twentieth and twenty-first century has fueled global militarism, nor just in the machinic aesthetic sense of the Futurists, but also war in the sense that the tar sands region is a *warzone*. This is a word used by one of Cariou's Fort Chipewyan interviewees in *Land of Oil and Water*, and the language of war is a recurrent feature of Cariou's tar sands works

(00:35:27). Indeed, of the sixteen photographs in the manifesto, only six appear to have been taken from the ground. The others mainly consist of aerial shots of the tailing ponds. Underneath one of the ground shots (of a Syncrude security fence), we learn that the conditions on the ground jeopardize their own documentation:

> What I remember most about the tar sands is the stink. We stood there with our cameras, trying to capture a record of that obliterated landscape, but I could hardly even see. The fumes were like hammers: sulfur and benzene and diesel and something else—a dead smell, a charnel residue on the back of my tongue. I had a migraine in half a dozen breaths. I breathed into my shirtsleeve, trying not to retch. How could people work in this, day after day? How could the Cree, Metis and Dene people of Fort Mackay live in it? (20)

This is warzone reporting from the heart of petromodernity, reminiscent of Kristen Simmons's account of the 2016 #NoDAPL struggle at Standing Rock, "a warscape of heavy military equipment and smoke" ("Settler Atmospherics"). While Simmons's article describes violent attacks on protestors by police and security forces, Cariou's manifesto zeroes in on slower forms of bodily harm; yet both are different incarnations of what Simmons calls "settler atmospherics," the "normative and necessary violences found in settlement—accruing, adapting, and constricting indigenous and black life" ("Settler Atmospherics"). If these are warzones, then they are "structural, not eventful," as Audra Simpson puts it (*Mohawk Interruptus* 154). The structure of settler colonialism doesn't throw up occasional, exceptional wars, but it *is* itself total warfare. The land is in "a state of continued expropriation" and its peoples are "in their own constant state of historical emergency" (154).

Cariou's ground shots and accompanying text draw attention to the conditions of artistic production and the embodied presence of the photographer. If resources, as

Stephanie LeMenager suggests, can be understood to possess aesthetics—or if aesthetics are our experience of the world, "a relationship with matter as such"—then Cariou wants to interrupt the smoothness, the pleasure, the facility, and invisibility of petroleum culture, where energy can be delivered into the home, as if by magic, thousands of miles from the site of extraction (LeMenager "When Energy"). He does this in part by reminding us that the manifesto and its photographs were produced in toxic conditions. Further, like all good manifestos, the Messy Manifesto offers its readers a program to follow: "Join us. Together we can make visions that shudder a billion eyes, make a stink to awaken the nostrils of the world!" (32). This is its method of conversion: to jolt others into acknowledging, and then acting on, their entanglement in both petroleum production and a state of permanent settler war. What the action is remains obscure, but the process of political education is, first, a form of petro-sensory overload set to undermine both the bourgeois forgetting of, and the fascistic pleasure in, violence.

Not long after publishing the Messy Manifesto, Cariou began experimenting with a photographic process he calls "petrography." As Cariou explains, petrographs are "contact prints made with a mixture of bitumen and lavender oil applied to a polished metal plate. After about 13h of direct sun exposure, a kerosene developer is poured over the plate and the finished petrograph emerges: a highly reflective surface in a distinctive golden hue, imprinted with an elusive monochrome image" ("Portfolio" 253). If Messy Manifesto is a project in defetishizing the commodity of petroleum by revealing the degree of our bodily entanglement in sites of extractive violence, then petrography intensifies this appeal to the body of an imagined viewer. By "using the bitumen to show what bitumen mining has done to the earth," Cariou illuminates the inescapable character of petroleum in the twenty-first century (253).

This ouroboros of representation, the conflation of the medium and its object, is not a novel innovation but, rather, an homage to the very first photograph. Cariou was inspired to experiment with petrographs when he realized that Nicephore Niepce had used something called "bitumen of Judea" to create "View from the Window at Le Gras" in 1826. Like "View from the Window," Cariou's petrographs are impossible to misconstrue as transparent windows onto the reality of the tar sands, but nonetheless "give us new perspectives on the pervasiveness and the symbolic potency of petroleum in contemporary culture" ("Petrography"). Even as petrographs capture tar sands landscapes and infrastructure, the bitumen itself—the viewing medium—is what is most emphatically revealed to the viewer. Whether it's the angle of sunlight on the plate or the corpse of a fly that got stuck in the bitumen as the petrograph was developing, the bituminous medium insistently asserts its presence (see Figures 1 and 2). Meanwhile, the reflective metal plate "means that viewers see not only the image itself, but also darkened, petroleum-coated reflections of their own surroundings, and even their own faces" ("Petrography"). In Cariou's petrographs, the tar sands do not exist "over there," but also, with each viewing event, the tar sands exist wherever the viewer is situated.

Figure 1. Cariou, Warren. "Syncrude Plant and Tailings Pond Reflection." 8 x10 inches Petrograph on Aluminum. V.1, 2014. Images © Warren Cariou - only to be reproduced with the artist's permission.

Figure 2. Cariou, Warren. "Strip Mine Horizon to Horizon (detail)." 4 x 6 inches Petrograph on Stainless Steel. V.1, 2014. Images © Warren Cariou - only to be reproduced with the artist's permission.

An Elder Brother Story

Even though commercial bitumen extraction in Alberta did not begin until 1967, the presence of bitumen has long informed colonial relationships in the region. Following independence from the British in 1867, Canada purchased "Rupert's Land," encompassing the Athabasca region, from the Hudson's Bay Company in 1870. This led to a comprehensive assessment of the newly incorporated territory and its resources by the Geological Survey of Canada (GSC). Naturalist John Macoun led the first GSC expeditions over the course of the 1870s, referring to the tar sands as "the ooze" with possible commercial value (qtd. in Pinkus 45). Macoun's GSC successors, geologists Robert Bell and Robert McConnell, confirmed this impression in reports that

greatly influenced, as Hereward Longley puts it, "southern imaginings of the Northwest, and made the expense and obligation of a treaty with the region's Indigenous peoples look minimal" (Longley 18). Bell's report told a thrilling story of a material occurring in "enormous quantities" with "practically no limit to the quantity which may be obtained for the digging" (Bell 34). This enticing prospect of petroleum, combined with the rush of settlers migrating north for Klondike gold in the mid-1890s, led the federal government to begin negotiations for Treaty 8. The treaty was signed in 1899, in quick pen-work "extinguishing" the "rights, titles and privileges" of its Indigenous signatories from the Dane-zaa, the Cree, and the Chipewyan (Denesuline) nations, among others ("Articles").[11]

Treaty 8 cleared the way for more settlement in the region, and the first half of the twentieth century was a period of enthusiastic knowledge production about the tar sands. In 1913, the Department of Mines delegated mining engineer Sidney Ells to map, document, and conduct experiments in the region, which he did for the next thirty-two years. By his own account, he was "enthralled" by the sands (*Recollections* 2). In 1962, as commercial production began to look like a possibility, Ells proselytized with a vision of the resource he had dedicated much of his life to: "Where now the almost unbroken wilderness holds sway, industrial plants may arise and tall stacks dominate the landscape. Few will then pause to consider what these developments represent, but success will be the reward of those who had a part in the undertaking" (100). Indigenous nations are conspicuously absent from such surveys, their lands and livelihoods swept away by the rhetorical force of "wilderness." In 1967, the Great Canadian Oil Sands plant opened in Fort McMurray.

Now, in the twenty-first century—the decades that have so far witnessed the most aggressive expansions of the tar sands industry—conditions on the ground include: elevated levels of rare cancers, headache-inducing air quality, contaminated

food sources, caribou population decline, tailings-polluted ground water, dangerously low river water, and acid rain.[12] In "Wastewest," Cariou says that the struggle for Indigenous communities in the tar sands is a "struggle to ensure that they don't become *waste*, that they don't become wasted lives" (00:35:30). And yet if the tar sands are a site of intensified violence in the total warzone that is settler colonialism, then the Cree, Dene, and Métis peoples who live there are neither helpless victims nor heroic resistance fighters. As Cariou documents in *Land of Oil and Water*, the situation is far from uncomplicated, and communities are often divided as to whether they should participate in or resist the tar sands boom. Jobs in the industry constitute one way to survive the hostile living conditions created by the industry itself and colonialism more broadly, which restricts Indigenous access to traditional territories and foodways. "While conducting the interviews for my film," Cariou writes, "I routinely encountered a sentiment among Indigenous people of the region that there was nothing they could do to stop oil development in their territories, and so the most they could hope for was to make the best of a very difficult situation" ("Oil Drums" 586).

In official public relations communications, the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers *cares* for Indigenous peoples, working *with* Indigenous groups "to seek ways to mitigate impacts and to share the benefits of resource development" ("Indigenous Relations"). This is a dynamic that Cariou names "neoliberal reconciliation," which describes the way that corporations sell industrial "development," job creation, and corporate-funded essential services as the most effective means of colonial redress ("Oil Drums" 583). In reality, Indigenous peoples provide a valuable source of precarious labor. Their involvement as laborers also carries symbolic surplus value, as the stereotype of the Native-as-environmentalist lends "an appearance of responsible environmental practices," effectively "redwashing" extraction (589).[13] Moreover, images of Indigenous peoples laboring in the tar sands

implies community consent, giving the "impression that they accept and even condone these developments" (589). In other words, the use of Indigenous peoples as symbolic capital is central to the PR production of a social license to operate.

Cariou's Elder Brother story, "An Athabasca Story" (2012), could be read as an allegory of this complex of settler colonial relations of production in Alberta, a context that confounds homogeneous reports of Indigenous resistance as much as it confounds the industry's account of a consenting, enriched community and labor force. In his study of the function of Elder Brother stories in Cowessess First Nation, Robert Innes explains that the values that guided practices historically for the Cree, Ojibwe, and Métis are "embedded in the stories of Elder Brother" (8). Elder Brother stories involve the character of Elder Brother, a trickster or cultural hero known as Wîsahêcâchk and Nanabush to the Cree and Ojibwe respectively, who regularly finds himself in some (often amusing) difficulty. How he navigates this difficulty, and whether his actions result in positive or negative outcomes, models behavior for the listening or reading audience. This is "relational guidance" not just for human interaction, but also informing "how humans should relate to nonhumans, be they animals, land, or spirits" (30). If the manifesto and the petrography both operate within a logic of political action prompted by an embodied recognition of the realities of petroleum extraction, then "Athabasca Story," as an Elder Brother story, complicates what is meant by action.

"Athabasca Story" begins with Elder Brother walking westward over an unfamiliar land, looking for warmth, food, and any relations who might provide for him. He is so hungry that his stomach is "like the shrunken dried crop of a partridge" that rattles inside him as he walks (70). Eventually he smells something, a noxious smoke that he hopes might mean warmth. Following the scent, "worse than his most sulfurous farts," he finds its source in a big house surrounded by land totally empty of "trees, of muskeg, of birds and animals" (70). He also sees "enormous yellow contraptions that

clawed and bored and bit the dark earth and then hauled it away toward the big house" (70). Although he has a bad feeling about all of this, he doesn't want to spend the night cold and hungry by himself. So he walks into the empty land and solicits conversation with a man working one of the earth movers. Misidentifying Elder Brother as someone from Greenpeace, or just someone looking to be a nuisance, the worker threatens to call Security on him. Before moving aside, Elder Brother just wants to know one thing: "what are you doing with all that earth?" (72). The man answers:

> It's very special dirt, this stuff. We dig it up and take it over to the big house, as you call it, and we mix it around in there and after a while it's ready to burn. Fuel to heat your house, if you have one which I doubt. Gas to power your car. Diesel to move this big rig here. All of it comes right out of the ground. You can tell by the smell of the air around here. Just like napalm in the morning! (72)

The reference to napalm, and the Vietnam war film classic *Apocalypse Now* (1979), situates Elder Brother in a warzone. As a highly flammable and dangerously sticky substance made of gelling agents and petrochemicals, napalm is not a metaphor so much as a material relation of bitumen. Like Marinetti and the Futurists, the worker relishes the smell of death. But, once again—as in the Messy Manifesto—the war encoded here is the permanent war of settler dispossession. The worker tells Elder Brother that the land doesn't belong to him, and his presence on the land is interrupting the project of resource extraction and wealth accumulation.

Motivated by damaged pride, resentment, and cold, Elder Brother decides to dig for some of this "special dirt" himself. Throughout, "Athabasca Story" assumes an audience more in the know than Elder Brother, and this dramatic irony is a chief source of the story's wry humor. The moment Elder Brother starts digging into the tar, we know where this is going. "I imagine you can guess how that worked out," the narrator

laughs with us at Elder Brother's expense: "Elder Brother was stuck fast in that Athabasca tar" (74). After two days of being stuck in the tar, Elder Brother gets extracted by one of the earth movers and dumped in a pile of the special dirt, the tar pressing "into his nostrils, his ears, his mouth, even into his clenched bum" (75). The earth mover then carries him to the refinery, where "he was made very warm indeed" (75).

So it ends very badly for Elder Brother. By negative example, there are some possible lessons to glean from his behavior. First, even though the worker complacently informs him that burning the dirt is warming the planet so that "the winter never comes back," Elder Brother, thinking only of his coldness, interprets this as a good thing (72). Second, he tries to take more of the special dirt than he needs for immediate warmth. He dives in as deep as he can go to gather enough of the dirt to last him for decades, and this is how he becomes stuck. Third, he doesn't listen to the voice of the dirt when it cries out, "Elder Brother, you're hurting me!" (73). His failure to respond to the dirt means that the dirt doesn't respond to *him* when he calls out, "Help me! I'm sorry I didn't listen to you. I'll leave now without taking anything at all" (74). Like many Elder Brother stories, Elder Brother is cosmically punished because he gets too greedy or fails to act in reciprocity.[14]

At the same time, it is not clear that Elder Brother had many other options available to him, and the story is as much about his struggle as it is about his foolishness. Cariou portrays him as someone negotiating extremely difficult circumstances in a land of few relations, a land conditioned by "failed settler kinship," as Kim TallBear names it ("Failed Settler Kinship").[15] He knows from the beginning that he should have turned away, but "that would mean spending the night by himself, freezing and chattering and rattling, and he couldn't bring himself to do it" (71). He tries to hail the worker as a "dear relation" and thus enter into reciprocity with him, but

the worker "talked as if he had no relations at all" (72). Under these blighted conditions, what would resistance have looked like? If the example of Elder Brother is supposed to serve as a deterrent, what is the recommended course of action instead? Sean Teuton states that the "oral traditional trickster reminds us through his hasty and unself-aware behavior that we should reflect before diving in for our desires, for what we truly need might be right in front of us" (qtd. in Innes 29). Although Elder Brother is hasty and lacks foresight, it is not clear that what he truly needs is right in front of him. He needs warmth, and the special dirt appears to be the only available source.

The story stages the profound way that the tar sands industry, and the long history of settler colonialism in the region, work to restrict Indigenous economies, foodways, and kinship relations—a mechanism that fuels Indigenous participation by force of necessity. This situation problematizes any anti-extractive "action" that does not consider settler colonialism, or does so only as a matter of fleeting inclusion. As Andrew Curley and Majerle Lister argue, "extractive industries have helped assuage some of the longstanding impacts of genocide, violent displacement, and forced assimilation," but "[c]limate change is a politics largely ignorant of Indigenous peoples' complicated relationship with extractive industries" and "the depth of colonial entanglements is not well understood or accounted for within political proposals" (260; 258). If the tar sands industry were suddenly to collapse, Indigenous peoples would be among the first to suffer from this boom/bust cycle, replicating the decline of the fur trade and successive resource frontiers.[16] Situating the current ecological terror of the tar sands in the long timeline of settler colonialism changes both how we narrate the contemporary moment and the politics we use to address it. This is not a remedial gesture that would simply *include* settler colonialism in an account of the tar sands. On the contrary, a reading of "Athabasca Story" shows how settler colonialism is the structuring condition of possibility for the tar sands, creating a fraught terrain of

entanglements such that "action"—if art could be relied upon to prompt political action—must take anti-colonialism or decolonialism as its constitutive framework.

As numerous Indigenous studies scholars have explained, the idea of the Anthropocene—in its governing discursive formation, at least—fails to consider European settler colonialism as a terraforming project responsible for deep-time planetary impacts and climatic change since its beginnings in the sixteenth century, while also effacing the uneven distribution of environmental risk along the divisions of race, class, and gender intrinsic to capitalism.[17] These erasures, as Potawatomi philosopher Kyle Powys Whyte argues, contribute to "epistemologies of crisis" that experience and narrate the present as unprecedented and urgent (53). Epistemologies of crisis are central features of settler colonial power, in which the crisis object—in this case, climate change—is leveraged to conceal or justify injustice, furthering appropriations of Indigenous lands and waters for the "common goods" of conservation, carbon sequestration, renewable energy infrastructure, etcetera. As an alternative to the dangerous urgency of epistemologies of crisis, Whyte emphasizes "epistemologies of coordination" that "organise knowledge through the vector of kinship relationships," responding to change without compromising responsibility to diverse human and nonhuman others (62). Although much of Cariou's tar sands work is pitched to the tenor of urgency, it also holds incipient forms of non-urgent action sensitive to the interrelationships of a local ecosystem and distinct from a model of action based on artistic consciousness-raising. I explore these forms of action in the final section below.

Storying Bitumen

On a surface reading, Cariou is very explicit about the urgent project of making the tar sands visible or sensible to critical publics. This is the motivating premise for both the

Messy Manifesto and his petrography. Yet his work also expresses an ambivalence about the capacities of art to effect action. There is a desperation to the tone of the manifesto that conveys a sense of exhausted options. Even as the manifesto recruits "irrational" affects like shame and disgust to reject the toxicity of the tar sands, it also includes instances of normalization: underneath the paragraph about the horrifying stink of the tar sands, Cariou quotes a security guard who says he "used to smell it, too" but "after a week or two you don't notice a thing" (20).

If, however, we pay attention to what Cariou is *doing* with his tar sands work rather than adjudicate the efficacy of his representations, then we arrive at a different angle on the question of action. In his portfolio of petrography, Cariou writes that,

> While I started out with a representational goal—using the bitumen to show what bitumen mining has done to the earth—my art practice has gradually become at least as much about my own relationship to the bitumen I use in the process. This project requires a level of intimacy with petroleum that is sometimes fascinating but is also troubling: creating a petrograph is a messy, smelly, and somewhat dangerous business […] However, as I spent more time with the bitumen I came to understand it not only as a source of potential danger but also as a creative collaborator, helping to reveal new ways of seeing the world. I also think of the bitumen as a kind of medicine, one that can cause damage if used improperly, but one that can also provide valuable gifts if it is approached with the proper respect. This is why I leave an offering of tobacco or sweetgrass wherever I gather the bitumen I use in my petrography, in keeping with Métis cultural teachings about reciprocity, gratitude, and maintaining good relations with the land. (253-4)

This is not the first time that Cariou has used the word "intimacy" with respect to energy materials. In a short keywords essay on "Aboriginal," Cariou describes *energy intimacy* as a kind of energy ethic in which "every community member necessarily has direct and personal relationships with the sources of their energy" (18). This opposes extractive energy logics, "which by its very definition is about taking energy out of its context, turning it into a commodity that can be circulated in a global economy wherein its value is guaranteed by virtue of its sameness, its uniformity" (19). Even though Cariou is not using the bitumen for energy in his petrography, he is nonetheless enacting an intimate relationship to bitumen in its local context and derailing its circulation in a global market. The *pace* of petrography likewise contravenes an extractive energy system based on speed at every level of the production-consumption cycle—from efficiency of extraction and processing, to the necessarily rapid delivery of the fuel to a global market, to the pace of living that petroleum has made possible, most grossly celebrated by the speed credo of the Futurists.[18] Petrography, by contrast, requires a huge amount of work and patience to produce a single print.

Over the course of his experiments with bitumen, Cariou begins to relate to the substance as a kin-relation, just as Elder Brother was unable to do. Taking it from the land requires care and reciprocity, otherwise "nature withholds further gifts from the transgressor and his or her community" (Cariou, "Aboriginal" 19). And using it in this way, as something other than commodified energy, echoes the use of Athabasca bitumen by the Cree and Dene to caulk their canoes (Cariou, "Tarhands" 23). Although the material reality of naturally-occurring bitumen can appear monstrous, Cariou's alternative use of bitumen emphasizes that monstrosity is not intrinsic to the substance but the way that it has been put to use under capitalism. While harvesting the bitumen for petrography, Cariou is "amazed to see that this undisturbed bitumen habitat was teeming with lush plant and bird life […] and I realized then that the bitumen has

another side: it can support life and can even be a source of life-affirming energy if it is left in its natural state" ("Portfolio" 254). Ironically through bitumen, Cariou is able to see the tar sands region beyond its warzone status. This offers a glimpse of the region *after* the tar sands, one markedly distinct from the industrial promise of "reclaiming" or "remediating" the land. Tar sands "reclamation" zones are attempts to clean up the waste products of extraction and return the land to its previous state. Reclamation, however, is principally governed by the extraction companies and has been met with Indigenous refusal.[19] As continuations of settler colonial business as usual, the rapid and solutions-oriented process of reclamation is a signal example of a crisis epistemology at work. Compare this to the slow temporality of Cariou's kinship building with bitumen.

In the monograph *Fuel: A Speculative Dictionary* (2016), Karen Pinkus wonders whether her dictionary "can help scramble our thinking about fuel […] to open up potential ways of interacting with substances (real and imaginary), by wrenching them out of narrative (violently in some cases), and placing them into the form of an idiosyncratic dictionary so they could eventually be replaced by users into new narratives" (6). I read Cariou as doing similar work via different methods, scrambling the dominant narratives about bitumen (as either magical energy or demonic toxin) and making it available for new narratives. Cariou's art practices seem to model a different kind of "action" to the "revelation" economy of action that depends on an unveiled horror. "Athabasca Story" holds this alternate action ethic too, in the final paragraph addressing its audience directly: "sometimes when you're driving your car and you press down hard on the accelerator, you might hear a knocking, rattling sound down deep in the bowels of the machine. That's Elder Brother, trying to get your attention, begging you to let him out" (75). Set in mythic time, this Elder Brother story culminates by revealing the source of the rattle in a petrol engine. In the context of the story,

however, it adds to the understanding of bitumen as kin, this time in the form of Elder Brother asking you to help him out.[20] In one reading, the story could be promoting more conscious consumption—*pause before you fill up your gas*. But in another, it is promoting a relationship with bitumen outside of the extractive energy relation altogether. "Letting Elder Brother out" could index something quite radical, a reorganizing of relationships to matter that disrupts settler capitalist social relations. The act of storying bitumen in this way, as a kin relation, is a form of asserting Indigenous relationships on and with the land.

I began this article with the logic of visibility in the tar sands—that is, an investment in the urgent communication of the tar sands to those who simply have not seen the true reality of the extraction project yet, and the hope that the more that is revealed, the greater the critical mass required to shut down the industry. I read Cariou's grounded aesthetic as crucial to making the tar sands more "visible," or available to the senses. Cariou seems undecided, however, as to whether mediated exposure to the sensory realities of the tar sands prompts political action. He is also sensitive to the nature of such action in the context of settler colonialism. I therefore track an alternate ethic of action modeled by his artistic practices. In "Nine Principles for a Critical Theory of Energy" (2020), Jeff Diamanti and Imre Szeman critique a political approach predicated on "unveiling," since unveiling "presupposes that seeing things for what they are, as opposed to what they appear to be, disposes with the sedimentation of material and discursive histories in bodies and landscapes: a debunking, rather than a sifting through" (154). Although Cariou seems invested in engendering shock in his representation of the tar sands—an economy of urgent action dependent on "unveiling"—he also practices a slow, grounded "sifting through" of bitumen's other meanings, potentialities, and relationships.

Notes

[1] A powerful movement to claim Canadian bitumen production as ethical emerged in 2010 with Ezra Levant's *Ethical Oil*. The idea of ethical oil was enthusiastically taken up by Stephen Harper's conservative government and the tar sands were pitched to U.S. markets as a guilt-free, secure, humane, democratic alternative to Middle East reserves. There are approximately 120 tar sands projects owned by corporations like Chevron, Shell, BP, Syncrude, and Suncor (the latter two specialize in the tar sands). In 2019, the sands were producing 2.6 million barrels a day, most of which was sent straight to refineries in the U.S. as diluted bitumen. (These figures are taken from the 2019 *National Geographic* article on the tar sands, "This is the World's Most Destructive Oil Operation – and It's Growing.") The tar sands struggled with the 2020 plunge in oil prices due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but high-profile investor Warren Buffett held on fast to his shares in Suncor. This reflects a long-term faith in the tar sands industry, which at this point would be more expensive to shut down than keep afloat. Another harbinger of doom for the tar sands was U.S. President Joe Biden's 2021 executive order to revoke the border permit for the Keystone XL pipeline. Rail transportation is much more expensive than pipeline transportation, and so the tenability of the tar sands depends somewhat on its pipeline network. Yet Biden's order didn't make a significant impact on Suncor's climbing share price and 2021 path to market recovery.

[2] In "Cognitive Mapping," Fredric Jameson describes the effect of global capitalism on subjectivity and the implications of a "dispersed" subject for representation: "You should understand that I take such spatial peculiarities of postmodernism as symptoms and expressions of a new and historically original dilemma, one that involves our insertion as individual subjects into a multidimensional set of radically discontinuous realities, whose frames range from the still surviving spaces of bourgeois private life all the way to the unimaginable decentering of global capital itself. Not even Einsteinian relativity, or the multiple subjective worlds of the older modernists, is capable of giving any kind of adequate figuration to this process, which in lived experience makes itself felt by the so-called death of the subject, or, more exactly, the fragmented and schizophrenic decentering and dispersion of this last" (351).

[3] In her introduction to *Fueling Culture* (2017), Jennifer Wenzel writes that while compiling counter-examples is one way to "challenge or update" Ghosh's claim, a "more significant methodological curiosity is in identifying protocols of reading and modes of inquiry that can perceive the pressure that energy exerts on culture, even and especially when energy is not-said: invisible, erased, elided, so 'slippery' (as in

Ghosh's account of oil) and ubiquitous as to elude representation and critical attention" (11).

[4] The phrase "hiding in plain sight" crops up frequently in petroleum criticism. See Stephanie LeMenager's *Living Oil* (2014) and Imre Szeman and Maria Whiteman's photo essay "Oil Imag(e)inaries" (2012) (66; 55).

[5] The term Anthropocene was popularized by ecologist Eugene Stoermer and chemist Paul Crutzen in 2000, designating the epoch of human impact. Since then, a flurry of counter-terms—like capitalocene and plantationocene—have emerged to more accurately describe the human systems responsible for climate change and ecological damage (rather than just humanity in the general).

[6] I borrow this "dual social and spatial" sense of "from below" from Jennifer Wenzel's "Planet Vs. Globe" (2014): "This version of 'from below' is not only subaltern but also subatmospheric: imagining from the earth, from the ground, rather than the satellite or 'bird's eye,' atmospheric, or aerial view" (20).

[7] "Letting die and making live" is a paraphrase of Michel Foucault's formulation of biopower as the state management of life and death, differentially optimizing life for some while hastening death for others by force of neglect (*"Society Must Be Defended"* 241).

[8] This information is gathered (respectively) from: Phil McKenna's 2016 *Inside Climate News* article; Stephen Leahy's 2019 *National Geographic* article; and Andrew Prince's 2012 *NPR* infographic.

[9] "If Alberta, with its population of four million people, were a country, it would be the fifth largest oil-producing nation. While it produces conventional oil, most comes from the Alberta oil sands, the world's third largest proven oil reserve at 170 billion barrels" (Leahy).

[10] Cariou often associates bitumen with the subject-disturbing forces that feature prominently in Julia Kristeva's theory of abjection: the corpse (the "charnel residue on the back of my tongue"); feces (the fart smell in "Athabasca Story"); and milk. As Kristeva explains, an abject thing is something that has been rejected from the subject in order to constitute the boundaries of the self, but it is also, as the radically banished "not I," central to the self: "It is something rejected from which one does not part, from which one does not protect oneself as from an object. Imaginary uncanniness and real threat, it beckons to us and ends up engulfing us" (4).

[11] Like Canada's other numbered treaties, Indigenous title was extinguished in exchange for guaranteed usufructuary protections around hunting, trapping, and fishing, and various additional agreements. Though the federal government reserves the right to dissolve such "tracts" if they "may be required or taken up from time to

time for settlement, mining, lumbering, trading or other purposes," it can only do so in proper consultation with the peoples affected ("Articles"). Of course, this leaves much open to opportunistic interpretation, and "consultation" occurs fleetingly if it occurs at all. But for many Native communities, Treaty 8 has become a tool of resistance. Recourse to Treaty 8 violations and neglected obligations can be leveraged against tar sands expansion in Alberta.

[12] This information on conditions in the tar sands is gathered from the Indigenous Environmental Network (https://www.ienearth.org/what-we-do/tar-sands/) and an *Al Jazeera* profile of Chief Allan Adam of the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation, following an attack on him by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) on March 10 2020 (https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2020/7/15/chief-allan-adam-on-being-beaten-by-police-and-indigenous-rights).

[13] "Redwashing" is a term of Melanie Yazzie's, quoted by Cariou.

[14] See the Wîsahêcâchk story involving a huge number of geese, an ill-timed nap, and a bare ass. There is a recording of Cariou telling it here, in "Wastewest": https://archive.org/details/CariouPollination (starts 26:55). Cariou credits Cree storyteller Louis Bird for this version.

[15] TallBear describes failed settler kinship in the build-up to what is known as the U.S./Dakota War of 1862: "The whites did not know how to do kinship. This took the Dakota a long time to understand. The Dakota had already been living with French fur traders for decades whom they had been able to inter-marry with, trade with, incorporate into their societies, although this was not always a bed of roses. Kinship never is. But these new settlers, English and German speaking, only knew how to evangelize, appropriate, and suppress. They had no interest in engaging in kinship relations. They had no interest in learning from Dakota people. They would make treaties in order to get what they wanted, and then renege on their obligations. The Indian must either adapt to their partitioning of the world—the partitioning of lands, communities, forms of love and kinship, resources, and knowledges—into categories that would either discipline the Indian into being a Christian citizen, or would result in their death. The settler state has been very poor kin indeed" ("Failed Settler Kinship, Truth and Reconciliation, and Science").

[16] In "Oil Drums," Cariou quotes Chief Jim Boucher of the Ft. McKay First Nation: "With the decline in fur demand around the planet, it had a very drastic effect on the area in the sense that we were left without an economy. So we had to change, and that change was brought about with regards with [*sic*] some discussion in the community saying we need to embrace a new type of economy" (Boucher qtd. in "Oil Drums" 587). Following this, Cariou reflects that "the chief's invocation of economic erasure

after the decline in global demand for fur indicates the profound sense of crisis and vulnerability that can come to an Indigenous community when it has tied its economy to a capital market that then collapses" (587).

[17] See Heather Davis and Zoe Todd's "On the Importance of a Date, or Decolonizing the Anthropocene" (2017); Kyle Powys Whyte's "Indigenous Climate Change Studies: Indigenizing Futures, Decolonizing the Anthropocene" (2017); and Andrew Curley and Majerle Lister's "Already Existing Dystopias: Tribal Sovereignty, Extraction, and Decolonizing the Anthropocene" (2020).

[18] "Petrosubjects inhabit a petroculture of quickened time and expanded space that requires oil to make it flow. That flow feels awfully good (for the most part), or if not good, then certainly like the given" (Diamanti and Szeman 143).

[19] See Tara Joly's article "Reclaiming Nature? Indigenous Homeland and Oil Sands Territory" (2017).

[20] See Zoe Todd's article "anthropology of environments: what I learned from the horseshoe crabs" (2019) for another meditation on petroleum as kin that complements "Athabasca Story": "My home province in Canada is built on marine remains. This long and powerful history, in part, is what gives us our petro-wealth. The bodies and traces of ancient creatures both plant and animal have transformed into geologic wealth that fuels every aspect of the Alberta economy. It is a petro-ontology or paleo-ontology that weaves our breath, thought, hubris, and movement today with the bodies and memories of creatures who existed millions of years before us" ("anthropology of environments").

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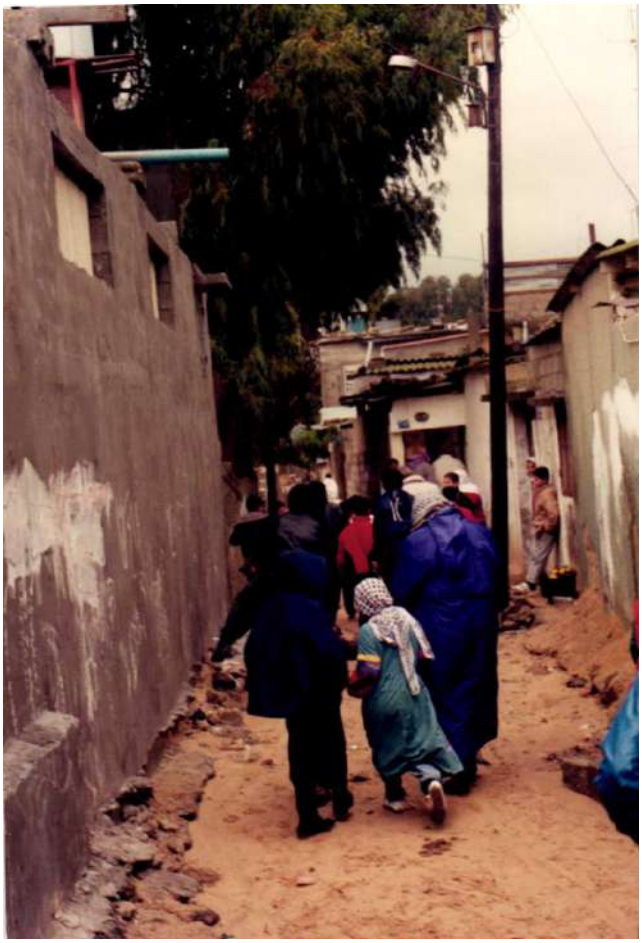
David Groulx. *From Turtle Island to Gaza*. Athabasca University Press, 2019. 70 pp.
ISBN: 9781771992626.
https://www.aupress.ca/books/120284-from-turtle-island-to-gaza/

When I look at a map of the Gaza, she, the land, resembles the body of a woman lying on her side, facing the Mediterranean Sea. Her head has long ago been buried in the sand as if someone is trying to snuff out her memories of an open, borderless sky.

Writing this book review has caused me to search through my memories and photographs of my first visit to Gaza in December 1992. The weather was unseasonably cold. Most days, Gaza's 25-mile-long coastline moderates the temperatures, but today it's bitter cold. I'd traveled 100 miles by bus from Amman, Jordan to Gaza on the coast. In the uplands, snow blanketed the earth and was in danger of freezing the region's fruit trees.



LeAnne Howe (on the right, in purple) walks with Palestinian children on a neighborhood street in a refugee camp in Gaza, 1992.

In the picture above, I'm wearing two coats, a purple raincoat, two pairs of socks to keep my feet warm, and a wool cap covered with a Palestinian keffiyeh. Yet, many of the Gaza children are wearing only a light jacket, no socks. I came to the region in 1992 on a Middle East study tour two weeks before Christmas. I loved everything about the trip to Gaza except riding on the bus with American Christians who would frequently break out into songs, such as "Onward Christian Soldiers" and "Blessed Redeemer." (At the time, I wrote in my journal, "I want to strangle them all especially the man in the Yankees' ballcap. These are the same people, cut from the same cloth, that build churches and highways over the sacred sights of Native peoples in the United States.")

While on that tour, I didn't know if I would ever return to the Middle East region, but the next year, my husband, who had lived in Lebanon and Syria for nine years and was fluent in Arabic, received a Fulbright-Hays Scholarship. We moved to Amman for a year in 1993-94. In 2011, I would receive a Fulbright to Jordan and live in Amman for another year. In 2013, we returned again to the region.

What I learned while on that first 1992 tour was that Gaza has been held captive since 1967 by the Israelis, but her history of abuse is much longer. Her earliest settlements were at Tell El Sakan and Tall al-Ajjul, two Bronze Age sites. The Philistines occupied Gaza territories until she was captured by Alexander the Great in 332 BCE. The history of Gaza reads like a Biblical account of begetting, one war begat another war. During the seventh century she, Gaza, the land, was passed back and forth between the Byzantine Empire and the Persians like a gang rape victim.

Gaza today is a vast refugee camp of nearly 800,000 people on the eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea. She borders Egypt on the southwest and Israel on the east and north along a 51km border. It is through this lens of bordering colonizers, war and reprisals, and the broken bodies of men and bird wings that David Groulx (Ojibwe Indian and French Canadian) drew inspiration from in his collection of 54 poems, *From Turtle Island to Gaza.* He wrote the book some years after meeting an unnamed Palestinian man at a poetry reading in Harborfront, Toronto.

"We both knew we shared that long execution – that distance, religion, education could not beak what we shared, said Groulx in his introduction for *From Turtle Island to Gaza*. Some years later, he decided to write poems about Gaza, but not exactly Gaza; rather, the poems are about contested lands, the places Indigenous people recognize, bordered, and meant for keeping Native people out and keeping invading settlers in.

Groulx takes us on an embodied journey in his poems about Ojibwe and Palestinians, often comparing, and contrasting landscapes; yet he resists the impulse to imply these two places and their histories, Native and Palestinian, are the same. Rather he braids his poems with the powerful imagery of oppression and mercy:

> I know not
> To cry
> while the rockets
> bluster
> and the snow
> gruff and deep.
> This fine white garment
> clothes the earth. (2.2)

Some of the poems are in the voice of an indifferent tour-guide. Even as matter-of-fact as a real estate developer:

> This place was called
> Ayn Hawad
> Now it is Ein Hod
> the settlers
> live there now
> painting pictures
> writing stories
> our lives are
> silent (5.2)

"Only in Israel do they celebrate the building of a concentration camp, writes Gideon Levy of *Haareta*, an Israeli news organization. "Only the skies of the ghetto are somehow still open, and that is in a limited fashion too. Coming soon, the next devilish invention of the defense establishment: A dome of iron, a huge ceiling over the skies of Gaza. The head of the 'border and seamline' administration is already working on it" (2021).

I taught *From Turtle Island to Gaza* in a graduate course this past year at the University of Georgia, and I will teach it again. The class talked about Groulx's poems in the collection as wreaking havoc on our ability to speak casually about Gaza and Gazans. I am grateful to Groulx for reminding me that we must re-train our eyes to see the continual dirty work of removal and erasure by the colonizers amongst us.

Groulx leaves us with an enduring lesson:

> Where should we go?
> You and I
> Where can we go?
> We. Refuge
> Refuge *refuse*
> From the occupied (6.2)

David Groulx is the author of nine poetry books and his work appears in over 160 publications in 16 countries. After receiving his BA from Lakehead University, where he won the Munro Poetry Prize, he studied Creative Writing at the En'owkin Centre in Penticton, B.C., where he won the Simon J Lucas Jr. Memorial Award for poetry. His book *From Turtle Island to Gaza* is not a celebration but an elegy. I highly recommend it, but not as bedtime reading.

LeAnne Howe, University of Georgia

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Matthew L.M. Fletcher. *The Ghost Road: Anishinaabe Responses to Indian Hating*. Fulcrum Press, 2020. 201pp. ISBN: 9781682752333.
https://fulcrum.bookstore.ipgbook.com/the-ghost-road-products-9781682752333.php

The title of Matthew Fletcher's newest book is dark and a bit scary, as is the cover image. It tackles "ancient" and "modern" forms of Indian hate in the United States, aptly creating a distinction from past and present. Situating Indian-hating in the past would lead a reader to think that past forms of hate aren't still informing the daily lives of Indigenous peoples (they are) and that in contemporary times there are "simple repetitions of the older examples of Indian-hating" (170). This is central to the message this book conveys: Indian-hating is past and present, but it need not be future.

The Ghost Road: Anishinaabe Responses to Indian Hating is profoundly different than Fletcher's previous publications, both in style and content. While much of Fletcher's work could be classified as being of service to the discipline of law, namely in bringing clarity to Federal Indian law and to Tribal Courts and legal systems, this new work infuses storytelling, historical recounting, and Anishinaabe philosophy into topics of Indian policy and law, crafting for us a very readable text. In many ways, this is a significant departure for Fletcher, but also a return home to Anishinaabe storytelling and its ultimate purpose—to get us to think! The narrative form he uses is accessible, straightforward, and also witty, whilst avoiding the citational crutch. Fletcher carefully chooses spaces in which to take "judicial notice" (which some might call social commentary) about the state of affairs leading to Indian hating in the US, both in the past and present.

The Anishinaabe stories that bookend concisely written chapters are thoughtfully chosen to reflect the issues engaged in each chapter, and they provide such memorable imagery that many of those stories stayed with me long past the chapter, allowing me to engage more deeply with the content. Fletcher starts the book with this statement: "Indian-hating is a murdering giant that must be defeated" (xi). His main characters include judges, Nanaboozhoo, Snapping Turtle, an ambassador to France, congressmen and presidents, Andahaunahquodishkung, jeebiwaag, Betosegay, Nokoqua, authors, Indian agents, manidowaag, abenoojiaag, journalists, property owners, tribal citizens, scholars, Mashos, windigo, and the Old Toad-Woman to name a few—with a brief shout out to Homer Simpson on page 50.

I quickly understood and fell in love with Fletcher's approach – tell an Anishinaabe story at the front of your chapter. Make it interesting and compelling. Offer different versions and nuances without confusing the reader or prescribing what they are to understand or

how they are to understand it. Give them agency, but help them. Respect that Anishinaabe stories have levels of complexity. Do not force an interpretive lens on your reader. Circle back at the end of your chapter and hint to the reader why you think the story is relevant to this particular subject (note that he does this with the book's overall structure as well). It's brilliant. It's also inherently Anishinaabe. For example, when an issue arises and you seek the advice of an Elder or a Knowledge Keeper, they will often respond with a story. There may be moments in time when you're listening to the story where you wonder to yourself, "what could this possibly have to do with the issue at hand?" So, while you are listening (reading), you are also thinking about why this story was introduced. This activates your brain, your spirit, your cultural knowledge, your humility. So often, when I read, I forget to engage. I read passively, and I need to remind myself to analyse. I really appreciate how Fletcher wove this story methodology into his new book in a way that draws in the reader and gives them a responsibility to be thinking while reading. He is applying what many Anishinaabe scholars have written about and practiced in their work, in a variety of disciplines. He also frames the stories in the pillars of the seven grandfather and grandmother teachings and the mino-bimaadiziwin as the foundation of Anishinaabe inaakonigewin (law), and he reminds of their importance throughout.

Being a scholar of Canadian constitutional law relating to the "Aboriginal peoples of Canada," reconciliation, and of Indigenous laws and legal orders (especially relating to lands and waters), I initially wondered if a book about Anishinaabe responses in the US context would be relevant. Let me tell you that it is: Fletcher paints a compelling picture about historic hate as being largely based in theories of superiority, with an underlying objective of acquiring land, displacing Indian people from their territories (this is the kinder version of what might be called genocide), and exploiting the land, water, and everything on, in, and over it.

When I finished the book, I looked back at the cover. I felt unsatisfied at the promise that Anishinaabe "responses" would be central. I didn't come away from it thinking that I now had the answers or solutions to the modern problems that were perpetuating the Indian hate Fletcher had detailed throughout the book. I was disappointed. And then I thought to the stories Fletcher told, and to the fact that Anishinaabe people have continued to thrive and survive according to law and practices, despite these attempts at dispossession and eradication. The traditional stories and how they are told reflect a deep Anishinaabe philosophical approach to problem "understanding" rather than problem "solving" as the single objective.

It also occurred to me that the need to stop Indian hating is not the responsibility of Anishinaabe people. It's up to settlers and their institutions, states, and all who benefit from the results of Indian hate (what Fletcher refers to as "paper entities"). I think this book is for them. In the absence of sitting them down with an Anishinaabe Elder who would school them and provide them with guidance through story, listen, and help, this book starts to open the door for thinking about Indian hating not as an Indian problem, but as a non-Indian problem which requires responses. It's a challenge of sorts. And I think that if we are to take reconciliation seriously, and also to think about how to come out of the climate change crisis that is upon us all, we need to repair relationships. Understandings from this book are a good place to start.

While I was reading the book, I thought about emailing Fletcher to ask why or how he chose the title of *Ghost Road*. Is it a link to the story that he tells in the conclusion? About the need to keep moving forward despite the ghosts of Indian hating that follow Indian people everywhere, and the tools we can pick up along the way? Maybe it's that the chibay-mikinaa is about the importance of spirit—the journey we make when we leave our bodies—maybe it's a statement against anthropocentrism? Maybe he is encouraging us to return to spirit? Maybe he sees that the end of capitalist societies as we know them are on the brink of collapse? Maybe it's a reflection of a journey we need to take, and the choices that will be before us, some of which are irreversible? It might also be that regardless of which version of the story we take up, the moral is that the Anishinaabe carry forward; maybe looking back, maybe only forward. Maybe. I'm not sure about my interpretations. I'll keep thinking about it. So should you.

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Toni Jensen. *Carry: A Memoir of Survival on Stolen Land.* Ballantine Books, 2020. 304 pp. ISBN: 9781984821188.
https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/608247/carry-by-toni-jensen/

Carry: A Memoir of Survival on Stolen Land by Toni Jensen is a poetic and creative memoir about a present-day Métis woman's life as she moves across the US for her academic pursuits. Jensen uncovers historical place-based revelations to show that these mundane places are not always what they seem, nor are they as simple as the words on a sign describe. In fact, these places *carry* a broken story that, if truly confronted by the visitors and inhabitants of these places, they would undoubtedly awaken to the historical and continued violence across the US.

Jensen shows how people living in the same place do not all share the same story. She exposes how Indigenous stories have largely been erased in an effort to favor a more desirable story of American exceptionalism. She repeats the theme of uncovering the hidden and unspoken stories of violence against Indigenous peoples as she takes readers along her journey in academia, as both student and teacher, across several locations during her undergraduate and eventually her completed PhD studies, over years of travel for her studies and employment.

Jensen's constant connection to place-based violence is interpreted through her love for words and language. She references and grounds her understanding in language by noting *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* throughout the text. Jensen defines the most seemingly trivial of words and phrases, only later to reveal the connections to a more complicated historical interpretation that helps to explain the present expressions of violence in society. Jensen shows this historical messiness in the over-simplification of a place by pulling multiple stories together to tell the history and story of a place.

The complicated and parallel histories of place tied together through violence is part of Jensen's mission while telling her family and personal story, though with less focus on the family. While some family details are shared, this is not central to her memoir. Instead, it is her pursuits in academia that bring the reader to most locations. At one point, Jensen locates herself at the University of Arkansas and describes a slew of interwoven events ranging from the legal right for people to *carry* a handgun on campus to an overall critique of the American campus as having inherent contributions to the stolen land of Indigenous peoples. Jensen revisits many institutions of higher education

which formed her academic career, with the point of showcasing their complicities in the land grab.

As she jumps from location to location in each chapter, Jensen seeks to understand the chaos of local violence that usually manifests in omnipresent awareness. These perceptions of violence range from the quietly maintained violent tendencies within individuals to the ghastly obsession with maintaining intimacy with violence. One such example is in the form of a placard on the door notifying motel guests they are sleeping in the exact room Timothy McVeigh stayed in while in Kingman, Arizona. Of course, Jensen knows Timothy McVeigh's notoriety and involvement in what is often referred to as the worst domestic act of terrorism in US history. Yet she easily finds examples, such as the Greenwood Massacre and the 8,700-17,000 Indigenous peoples who died during the Removal Era, as comparable acts of domestic terrorism in the same place now called Oklahoma. The hypocrisy of memorializing violence is revealed with McVeigh's name appearing like a miniature Hollywood Walk of Fame with gold stars surrounding the placard outside the motel room that Jensen finds herself in at one point.

Her cross-country travels present new opportunities for making sense of the local historical violence that has occurred. These historical references to violence also serve as a warning of continued, unexpected violence at the same place due to historical amnesia. She does this as she pursues teaching as a career and eventually earns a PhD while periodically referencing her family, friends, and children who make up her personal world and upbringing. Her cross-country academic pursuits make it hard to feel grounded in the story, given the quick tendency to pack-up and move on very soon.

Jensen engages the misleading simplicity of US violence through her love of language. She details the passive language that exists within the official records on the Indian Removal Act, which indicate Indigenous peoples "were removed" from their homelands. She notes that the passive phrasing of "were removed" gives no semblance of coercion or violent action from soldiers' bayonets or the presence of thousands of armed US soldiers (59). Violence seems inherent to most interactions across her cross-country experience. At times, the thread to violence is rooted in land, those who exploit it for economic gain and those who have Indigenous ties to it.

Her memoir is less of an Indigenous-centered storytelling and more of a person observing layered violence within their local communities while also being of Indigenous ancestry; this third point allows for a more nuanced consideration of how violence is embedded within places. She avoids a linear timeline and allows each of the fifteen

chapters to transport the reader to a new time and place, avoiding a sequential order altogether. Instead, place and relevant historical violence to that particular place are the focus of each chapter.

Jensen covers many types of violence, including domestic violence, dating violence, gun violence, campus violence, colonial violence, and domestic terrorism, all while revealing the American hypocrisy of simplistic understandings to violence. For example, the overly simplistic US interpretations of race classify her as white, while her nephew is read as Black, when neither of them are *just* that. She is keenly aware of the ongoing erasure of their Indigenous identities occurring simultaneously with a phenotypical understanding of them both as either white or Black, which is another act of violence.

She maintains the pulse of present-day violence with current references to COVID-19 and George Floyd's murder through the media and the public's obsession with mass shootings and our subsequent comfort with them (257). Jensen seeks to disrupt this comfort through sense-making and local ties that explain the inherent violence of life in the US. The intended audience would be interested in making sense of the fundamental presence of violence across the US through the life story of a Métis woman who possesses a knack for drawing out meaning in the mundane normalcy and regularity of US violence. This is a quick read with references to violence that leave a reader to contemplate their own relationship to local violence in a more nuanced way.

Deanne Grant, Fort Lewis College

Sy Hoahwah. *Ancestral Demon of a Grieving Bride*. University of New Mexico Press, 2021. 64 pp. ISBN: 9780826362216.
https://unmpress.com/books/ancestral-demon-grieving-bride/9780826362216

In a poem aptly named "Biography," Sy Hoahwah writes, "As a child, father told me I hatched out of a pearl partially dissolved in wine. // Mother always reminded me, I reminded her of father, / and I made the milk curdle in the stomach of other newborns" (2). Here, we find the troubling combination of the inherited and the unfamiliar. Like Hoahwah's previous collection *Velroy and the Madischie Mafia* (2009), the speaker in *Ancestral Demon of a Grieving Bride* maintains multiplicitous identities—Indigenous, Southern, monstrous. In this place-oriented collection, Hoahwah forces the reader to reconcile the blurring of assumed borders between natural and unnatural, life and death, and more as he defines the hybrid body/bodies of the speaker against and within liminal landscapes: "I sat here long enough / to become an altar / where the abandoned monsters come to pray" (24). Pulling from epic and Gothic traditions, Hoahwah's new collection of poetry allows us brief visions of an impossibly shifting narrator—one we must trust fully as we follow the speaker to the outskirts of town, down a logging trail, and into Hell itself.

Threaded through this collection is the juxtaposition and blending of un/natural spaces and objects. Disturbing boundaries we often perceive as concrete, Hoahwah creates the uncanny:

> In these lands, there is no difference
> between a star and thrown car keys.
> Chicken nuggets hatch from the eggs of eagles.
> I grow dirty while bathing in bottled water. (12)

The land here—beside a fort in the "Hinterlands" as the poem's title tells us—forces reader discomfort. These hybridities contrast land-alternating human products and supposedly natural objects, and the landscape becomes monstrous in its indefinable form. But, as Hoahwah notes in the collection's first lines, the mountains where he so often sets these poems, the Ozarks, "are where defeated assassins, the unholy, / and monsters come to retire" (1). These poems, just like the mountains, contain the undesirable and the rejected. "The more one cries the more one prospers… / O ancestral demon," the speaker calls out, "may my lamentation become verbal sorcery" (12). Hoahwah's speaker claims a purpose when speaking to the ancestral demon, undermining another boundary while offering a "tone between poetry and backward prayer" (2). The language itself in this poem resists strict definition, much like Hoahwah's uncanny objects.

Hoahwah's preoccupation with liminality starts with physical space in these poems. Often centering landscapes with a long history of American-sanctioned violence against and the genocide of Indigenous peoples, as with the Ozarks, Hoahwah's poems are transgressive in their boundary-crossing:

> Line of barbed wire
> marks the boundary
> between this world
> and the next. (3)

"This world," acting as both realism and metaphor, contains the multiplicities that firmly ground this collection in speculative genres. In the epic tradition of Alice Notley's *Descent of Alette* (1996), Hoahwah's *Ancestral Demon of a Grieving Bride* evokes Dante's *Inferno*; similar to Alette's and Dante's descent into their versions of Hell, Hoahwah's poetry collection centers landscape, transcendent objects, and an afterlife journey. Hoahwah writes, "I'm a dazed underworld hero fleshed and rubbed down / with my own tongue and brains" (11). Liminal landscape plays a pivotal role in this recreation of epic narration, both in the hellscape and Hoahwah's description of semi-familiar earthspace where a demon can be "steeped in cornbread philosophy […] as he kneels down to the priest and holy water" (1). Much like Dante's exploration of Hell, Hoahwah's speaker looks back to known dead: "I don't even have ashes of dead saints / to rub into my eyes" (11). Virgil guides Dante, and a skeleton who "got scared and held my hand" (42) acts as a semi-guide for Hoahwah's speaker.

There's something more, though, than linked narrative content to this form in Hoahwah's collection. Epic poetry has a long history of hybridizing historical information. The Mayan *Popol Vuh* combines and treats as equal Quiché mythologies about the earth's formation and their recorded history under Spanish colonization. In *The Lusiads*, Luís Vaz de Camões attempts to cement Portugal's status as an imperial powerhouse by calling on both Catholic and Roman deities, an unusual move in which he compares his country's power to that of ancient Rome, hoping to solidify nationalism for Portuguese readers. Hoahwah's *Ancestral Demon of a Grieving Bride* is similarly working to establish a complicated identity and cultural memory: "There is no sanctuary in the subdivisions we edge closer to / with our bowstrings cut" (9). Hoahwah's collective *we* reappears across poems to establish the contemporary memory of Indigenous voices while critiquing American suppression of Indigenous culture.

Hoahwah's speaker—the repeating / and collective *we*—is part of this tumultuous liminality, this shifting landscape, appearing often as one of the many objects placed in the natural versus synthetic existence. Hoahwah writes, "We've all been chased to this

genocidal beauty once or twice, / surrendering at a fast-food table with free Wi-Fi" (9). In these two lines, Hoahwah twists together the inevitable capitalist value of the space alongside historical stamps on the physical land—specifically Fort Hill, an Oklahoma military post known for its currently operating Artillery School, but more importantly as the site of violence against Indigenous peoples before, during, and after the Plains Wars. Among it all, of course, is the speaker, witness to the genocide and the restaurant chain. This spatial awareness is reminiscent of Rachel Zolf's new poetic/theoretic book, *No One's Witness: A Monstrous Poetics* (2021), which theorizes the poetics of witnessing excess from the position of the oppressed, the non-subject, *No One*. Citing Paul Celan's famous line, "No one / bears witness for the / witness" (62), Zolf's work cites the im/possibilities of witnessing. Hoahwah's poetry attempts to do just this: *Ancestral Demon of a Grieving Bride* calls attention to the witnessed blending of collected memory, history, and current realities.

This witnessing strikes me as indicative of Hoahwah's intensive and extraordinary genre play. Merging Gothic tropes of madness, hybridity, and haunted landscapes, Hoahwah speaks to the purpose of writing monstrosity: to reveal the cultural value of the monstrous body. In her blurb for *Ancestral Demon of a Grieving Bride*, Heid E. Erdrich writes, "Sy Hoahwah has perhaps invented Comanche goth." I see the truth of this claim in Hoahwah's integration of human and nonhuman elements, heightening the uncanny experience for the reader. The speaker recalls a "decapitated head" with natural, nonhuman matter attached: "Lightning / tied to its hair, / / jagged teeth glow" (Hoahwah 7). Hoahwah's blending of the body with natural imagery, especially lightning, is reminiscent of Natalie Diaz's "The First Water is the Body" from *Postcolonial Love Poem* (2020). Diaz writes, "The Colorado River is the most endangered river in the United States— / also, it is a part of my body" (46). This nonmimetic bodily description encompasses Hoahwah's and Diaz's work, cementing the speakers as parts of the landscape and firmly defining the body as an object in the scenery, as both a critique of abject oppression and a method of reclamation. So often, landscapes in Gothic literature include unwanted "monsters" (Hoahwah 1), who are always under threat of ejection. Working within this genre's lineage, Hoahwah's speaker, a character defined by multiple identities, is both invisible and hypervisible against the landscape, reflecting and critiquing the way America has historically attempted to conceal Indigenous peoples, physically and culturally—and Hoahwah clearly reports on the im/possibility of this blurring and his own witnessing.

Hoahwah's poetry collection promises a continuance of this liminality—this combined hypervisibility and invisibility against both natural and synthetic landscapes. He describes

the collection's speaker as a "Christian, Oklahoma-shaped and melancholic, / caught at the entrance of a ditch / as the best breath of me tornadoes into the next county" (28). Not only is the proposed afterlife a place of undeniable liminality but so are the gaps between human-created land divisions. This collection imposes an unbelonging that forces movement, a movement that forces unbelonging. The body in Hoahwah's work eventually becomes liminal itself, an object inciting unexpected fear it its sudden visibility: "Monsters," Hoahwah writes, "hatch fully grown from their eggs" (28).

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Deborah A. Miranda. *Altar for Broken Things: Poems.* BkMk Press, 2020. 110 pp.
ISBN: 9781943491261.
https://bookshop.org/books/altar-for-broken-things/9781943491261

We're looking for a river. We're looking
for an incredulous current, sand soft as a kiss,
a hover of trout circling the kettle.
"Looking for a River"

Alter for Broken Things is a lyrical pilgrimage for devotion and integrity in which the land itself is the site of worship. Miranda's poetry takes an encompassing view of the ways that perception and intent intersect with faith. An altar, the reader is reminded, takes its name from elevation. As these poems guide the reader, it is made clear that altars abound. The currents of these poems move in the territory of the sublime, but the abiding faith and beauty of the speaker's telling is an unimpeachable guide.

In "Questions About Lightning," the speaker ponders: "what if / this land and her body / bear the same jagged scripture?" (36). The connection between land and self underpins the deep empathy of these poems. Alter, one comes to understand in this collection, is both noun and verb. High places of faith and dignity abound as do the vicissitudes of violent alteration and the necessity of rumination.

Keen attention is paid to the way experience imposes itself on the skin of the land and its people. Scars call out from the lines, but the use of the imagery of scarring vaults over the expected metaphors of trauma and healing and become something much more compelling—small alters on the skin itself. Impositions of violence, colonialism, and the traumas of a life lived show up on the skin in these poems and allow each being's lived experience to become a place of worship and an invitation to beatitude. Places of faith with all their complications, harms, and comforts show themselves in astonishing ways in these poems. In "Scar," the perspective moves from creature to creature:

> A Red fox tucks himself
> Into a cedar hollow,
> Watches me flash past.
>
> Bullets of yearning,
> Red-tailed hawks scout
> From the tops of pines,

Feathers groomed
To a sharp crease. (26)

Healing becomes an iteration of cleansing and thus an office of faith. Like the body healing around trauma, these poems envelop to contain and protect.

Disunity and wholeness turn and turn in this collection. The titular broken things are given due honor as the poems show that the oak within the acorn requires rupture. Repeated images of cradling and embracing—earth, water, cocoons, acorns—show the way the world makes space for a cycle of creation and rupture. In "Corazon Espinado," the spare lines hint at the toll: "Here, God / is a seed / sewn by chance. / Here, rock is womb" (35).

Birth and generational joy seem to flourish in these tender envelopments. The moments of delicacy and protection carry deeper power for their juxtaposition within the ruptures of colonialism and interpersonal violence. In "Ursa Major," on the star-cast prairie, the tone is one of tender imploring to the land for the safe delivery of a grandchild.

The delights of wonder and love come with unexpected guides. In "My Crow," the speaker frankly states, "I know I'll travel to heaven in the guts of a crow—" (24). Land is the steady grounding, but it is every bit as wily and powerful as the humans walking its skin. It is in these moments of delightful current and unexpected juxtaposition that the reader can feel Miranda's deep well of perspective and poetic skill.

This collection examines language and colonization with ranging interrogations of history. There is a sureness that makes it feel as if the poet is speaking late into the night with the past and the present, ready to tell the future about it come morning. This authorial voice is one of clarity and empathy—it allows the reader to move through the rapids of the poems reckoning with the legacies of imperialist violence with a sense of clear-eyed imperative. In "26 Ways to Reinvent the Alphabet," language is a snare: "Alphabet, you came for me / with a colonizer's awful generosity" (81). The violence of a past is rendered academic to the colonizing mind in "When My Body Is The Archive":

When my body is the archive,
Strangers track ink all over
My grandmothers' language,
Blot out the footprints of a million
Souls from the edge of the continent;

Stolen land stays stolen
Even when thieves pluck
Our Ancestors' names
From mission records,
Sell *Tutuan* and *Malaxet*
Online to those who want
All the blessings,
None of the genocide. (99)

Journeying and transfiguration lend a beatific and epic tone to these poems. The power of the divine rests in alters inside of oysters. In "God's House," the arresting imagery of the alter in a sand dollar pierces the eye:

Imagine the inside of a sand dollar:
arches rising to a peaked roof, light
streaming in through tiny holes /

Turtle Woman looks for that cathedral
Everywhere. (57)

The figure of Turtle Woman is a point worth noticing. In "All One," the iterations of Turtle Woman show what it is to love a wounding and wounded world. The cascade of images creates a gentle fortitude. Endurance and devotion are palpable in the poems. The long dedication to loving a difficult thing is thoughtfully rendered in "When You Forget Me":

The past is a poor broken basket,
Woven by hands that had no muscle, no song.
When you forget me, every word we spoke together
Just before or after slow first light, lips still wet,
—*doe, heron, stone, prayer*—erases itself
from every language, as if never spoken. Extinct. (63)

Because the book's tone of intense desire to recognize beauty and connection is so honestly earned, moments of violent disruption are all the more profound. Violent ruptures of destruction and weaponry, American shootings and mass murders fueled by hatred appear with the stunning frank pain that they do in life. One moves from a poem of the land's delicate web of comforts to a recounting of a hate-fueled shooting in the

manuscript much as a person lives the experience. In "Almost Midnight," the reader is confronted with these juxtapositions:

> We're all walking on bones
>
> Some of us are walking on more bones
> than others. Breathe. Back to the body
>
> Little one. The human word is broken,
> but so beautifully. (78)

The poems in this collection create a riparian mosaic meandering through the land of faith, love, degradation, and healing. Fragmentation is a form of breaking, but it also facilitates perspective. It takes a worthy guide to facilitate the movement from shock to engagement. Miranda manages to balance urgent and searing images with gentle imperatives, allowing the reader to hold what is dear, even when it is ruptured. As Miranda writes in "How to Love the Burning World": "You aren't required to love the flames. / But love the burning world. / You owe her that."

Laura Da'

jaye simpson. *it was never going to be okay*. Nightwood Editions, 2020. 114 pp.
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there is a sacredness in cutting old hurt out
a sanctity in naming *it*, the ways i've been taken,
a sacrifice holding *it*, gently & firmly:
the old ways always lead us to new ways
new waters, new healings, new learnings.
it hurts in the moment,
but feeling uncomfortable

is a necessary part of growing.

jaye simpson, *it was never going to be okay*

jaye simpson's (they/them) debut poetry collection, *it was never going to be okay*, is comprised of strikingly powerful affective complexities from beginning to end, which extend beyond comfortability to, ultimately, grow. they explained to David Ly in their interview with *PRISM international* that "As a foster kid I was told hundreds, if not thousands, of times that it was going to be okay, and then I came across this comic series and one of the lines was 'it was never going to be okay,' and with that realization the protagonist came into their own power. Me realizing that it wasn't going to be okay allowed me the ability to cope and then heal" (June 2021). simpson is an Oji-Cree Saulteaux Indigiqueer from the Sapotaweyak Cree Nation and uses the imposed colonial language to describe themselves as a Two-Spirit, trans, queer, non-binary woman ("Queering and Reclaiming"). *it was never going to be okay* is a remarkable addition to trans Indigenous literature that ingeniously navigates hope, love, trauma, and growth.

The collection is sectioned into four parts with an intentional sequencing to move the reader through the various informative moments and experiences, all of which are interwoven with intricate affects. The composition—specifically the arrangement of their words and lines throughout the pages—of simpson's poetry is strikingly dynamic. While the prose throughout their collection might have been inspired by necessity for their spoken word performances, it skillfully encourages thoughtful engagement of the reader

throughout the entirety of the collection. simpson's poetry examines the traumatic effects of the settler foster care system historically, intergenerationally, and individually, and specifically speaks to the impacts of childhood sexual abuse by a non-Native foster mother as a young, trans Native child. These experiences produce "her," which is what simpson names dissociation in the early poems "her. (i.)" and "her. (ii.)". their poems move through (dis)connected relationships with their biological family of origin as well as those that are romantic, sexual, and platonic. simpson writes devastatingly beautiful queer, trans erotics in various poems which fortunately adds to the literature of Indigenous eroticism as specifically trans and queer. Moreover, in this significant debut collection, simpson references their experiences of queer polyamory and trans sex work as an Indigiqueer non-binary woman. Tremendously, though, *it was never going to be okay* emphasizes (queer) Indigenous ways of trauma healing that tenderly encourages queer Indigenous kin to persistently cope and heal from (colonial) traumas.

simpson explains in an interview with the University of Victoria's independent newspaper, *Martlet*, that they dedicated *it was never going to be okay* to "all the queer NDN foster kids out there" because they were raised to believe, by settler colonial foster systems enacting a logic of Native elimination, that they were the only queer Indigenous foster child to exist (Wolfe). "To think that you're alone, in that sense, is one of the biggest acts of violence that can be done onto you" simpson observes (Feb. 2021). To be made to feel alone, isolated, and alienated, especially when experiencing historic, intergenerational, and mezzo- and micro-systemic types of traumas, is arguably also an act of violence. Throughout simpson's poetry, they skillfully provide a type of descriptive reflection for queer Native youth to recognize their experiences and themselves through such affectively powerful prose. There needs to be a realization of one's own experiences before someone can ever metabolize or even heal from them (Menakem).

In "/ /" there is enough ambiguity in their specificity that many other queer Indigenous kin might also be able to impose and recognize some of their own experiences for what they are, painful and valid:

came back in pieces

what have you done?

came back in pieces

where did you go?

came back in pieces

when did this happen?

named every crack & fault line
cried out to them
told you when the break
//
broke open,
how much inside came outside—
called it fun
called it family
called it anything to justify the means.

came back with barely enough
to know it was me,
grew comfortable
in the quiet between what was left
& what was taken.

i
can't recall
when i wasn't.

(40)

simpson's use of space in their stanzas and throughout the page as well as the presence of italics necessitates the reader to critically engage with the words and their ambiguously interpretive meaning. As the italicization prompts the reader to invoke a

different voice than the speaker, or of their own as the reader, the oscillating dynamics of the poem has the potential to instigate the reader's own experiences of shame, pain, stress, and potentially trauma throughout readings of the poem. Incredibly, I find that each time I read "/ /," often repeatedly before continuing further along simpson's path in their collection, I am able to superimpose various layers of narrative detail to this poem that refocus certain moments of pain and trauma that I have come to know personally and through the shared experiences of others that I care for. simpson's incredible ability to foster resonating feelings throughout this entire collection creates remarkable opportunities, particularly for queer Native foster children: to recognize themselves and their experiences as well to feel validated and in relation with other (queer) Indigenous kin, all through poetry.

When jaye simpson was asked in their interview with Christopher Driscoll if writing *it was never going to be okay* was a form of catharsis for them, they adamantly stated that "It's less about a catharsis of exorcising trauma, that kind of puts the onus on the speaker, and what i'm doing is saying that this has happened to me because of someone else, look at… the one who is enacting that. It is not about it me…" (Feb. 2021). It is seemingly their decentering of self throughout their collection that provides an opportunity for queer Native foster children to recognize themselves through simpson's poetry. If catharsis is the process of releasing strong or repressed emotions, then simpson certainly provides a collection of poetry that might be the cardinal catalyst of it for queer, trans Native youth, potentially amongst innumerable others.

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