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Open Issue –

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CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

Transmotion publishes 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* look for submissions that do any of the following:

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

The journal also accepts 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.

Transmotion is hosted by the University of Kent and produced in collaboration with California State University, San Bernardino, the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Vancouver Island University, Kennesaw State University, and the University of Dayton, under a Creative Commons license. All submissions will be double-blind peer reviewed, in a process reviewed by our editorial board.

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

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

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EDITORIAL

10.1 – Open Issue

The publication of Volume 10.1 of *Transmotion* represents a moment of both change and continuity at the journal.

We are both saddened and excited to announce a series of transitions in our editorial staff. First, we want to share that James Mackay (European University Cyprus), one of the founding editors of the journal, is stepping down from his role as he shifts his attention to other projects. It would be difficult to overstate James' importance to *Transmotion* over the past ten years. Besides being the source of the original idea to create the journal, James has worked in an enormous variety of ways to ensure its success. At various times he has overseen our book review section, done most of the heavy lifting in ensuring that the journal is indexed and archived, guest edited our special issues on "Transgender, Two-Spirit, and Nonbinary Indigenous Literatures" (Vol 7.1) and (with A. Robert Lee) on "Ralph Salisbury (Vol 6.2), and served in other capacities too many to list. James has also been a tireless advocate for open-source publishing, which represents one of the core values of the journal. *Transmotion* enters its tenth year as a stable, high quality academic journal with an international readership thanks in no small measure to his work. We will miss collaborating with him.

We have some other editorial changes (departure and arrivals) to announce as well. Effective with the publication of issue 9.2, Miriam Brown Spiers (Kennesaw State University) has stepped down as co-submissions editor, a role in which she has served since 2018. Miriam's support of the journal in this capacity over the past six years has been invaluable. She has been a thoughtful and generous reader of other scholars' work, and her dedication and doggedness has enabled us to continue to add to our diverse and talented pool of external reviewers. While Miriam will be greatly missed, we are excited to welcome Laura De Vos (Radboud University) to the editorial team as our new co-submission editor. Laura is an "alumnus" of *Transmotion*, in a sense, having won the Association for the Study of American Indian Literature's Beatrice Medicine Award for outstanding article in 2021 for her piece "Spiralic Time and Cultural Continuity for Indigenous Sovereignty: Idle No More and *The Marrow Thieves*," which appeared in Vol 6.1. On the copyediting and production side of the journal, we announce a few changes as well. First, we need to belatedly recognize that Shannon Toll (University of Dayton) began serving as production co-editor in Spring 2023, replacing Jake Barrett-Mills (University of East Anglia). With Issue 10.1 we also welcome a second new co-editor for production, Shellie Angelie Saggar (University of Cambridge Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology). With three editors now dedicated to this area, we anticipate even more efficiency in rollouts with our upcoming issues, and possibly other innovations in the presentation of our content.

Finally, reflecting the way the overwhelming majority of our users use our content, however, starting with Vol 10.1 we will begin publishing issues in PDF format only, except where embedded media makes an HTML version either desirable or necessary. The additional editorial labor involved in producing the HTML version of the journal has become a significant burden on our (all volunteer) editorial staff, which is another reason we deem this to be a necessary change. *Transmotion* readers will experience no discontinuities in their ability to access and use our existing content, as previously archived issues will not be impacted in any way.

Turning now from this inventory of changes, we are pleased to release Volume 10.1. While *Transmotion* regularly publishes special issues dedicated to discrete topics, with this volume we remind our readers that we always welcome stand-alone submissions and are excited to publish more loosely focused issues. Serendipitously, Volume 10.1 does include two essays focused on Inuk throat singer, author, and actor Tanya Tagaq.

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Erin Cheslow's "Sound and Form: Listening to Affective Forms in the Soundscapes of Tanya Tagaq's *Split Tooth*" reads that text in light of its investment in the soundscapes of Nunavut. Cheslow argues that Tagaq "writes with sound," and therefore she approaches reading Tagaq's multiform novel as a form of listening. In the process, Cheslow treats the performativity of sound as a potential counter to the way colonial speech acts "privilege reconciliation over meaningful relations and speech over careful listening." Brad Burkhalter's "Calling (Out) Contemporary Settlers: Tanya Tagaq's *Split Tooth* and 'Colonizer' as Trans-Media Indigenous Wonderwork" reads Tagaq's acclaimed 2022 album *Tongues* as a companion piece to her novel. Focusing on that album's closing track, "Colonizer," Burkhalter traces how Tagaq attacks the Canadian residential school system while highlighting audience complicity in the projects of their settler states. Looking both at *Split Tooth* and the music video for "Colonizer," Burkhalter considers Tagaq's foregrounding of the "other-than-human," in her treatment of the land and the northern lights, as instances of what Daniel Heath Justice has called Indigenous "wonderworks."

While the remaining three articles appearing in Volume 10.1 represent a diverse range of topics and approaches, there are also some interesting points of connection between them and the two essays on Tagaq. Chris LaLonde reveals an interest in multiple media in "awasi-- visual images in works from Kimberly Blaeser, Louise Erdrich, and Gerald Vizenor." Lalond's essay looks at the relationship between visual representations and kinship in those authors' works. He argues that Blaeser's photographs in her 2019 volume of poetry *Copper Yearning*, Erdrich's drawings in her memoir *Books and Islands in Ojibwe Country* (2003), and Vizenor's photographs in his mixed-genre *The People Named the Chippewa* (1984) complement and reenforce their written texts to articulate ways of knowing and being that are rooted in Anishinaabe worldview, culture, and history. In "Creating Shki-kiin, New Worlds: The Possibilities and Sustainabilities of Indigenous SF," Sarah Henzi looks at Simon Ortiz's "Men on the Moon" (1999), Richard Van Camp's "On the Wings of this Prayer" (2013) and Eden Robinson's "Terminal Avenue" (2004) as examples of Indigenous writers exploring contemporary environmental and sustainability concerns. Henzi argues that these publications are examples of intermedial wonderworks, which attest to the complexities both of textually representing traditions and concepts of kinship and of

creating alternative forms of political action. Finally, Shanae Aurora Martinez's "On Land Acknowledgements: Trans-Indigenous Storytelling Theory and Practice in the Neoliberal University" explores the potential (and complexities) of land acknowledgements as mechanisms for trans-Indigenous social justice worldmaking. Grounding her argument both in theoretical and historical engagement with the Zapatista movement and in personal reflection, Martinez argues that land acknowledgments are forms of storytelling that must be adapted to a multitude of contexts. Ultimately, she suggests that the Zapatista communiques provide a model for the transformative potential of land acknowledgments as anti-capitalist interventions while also suggesting ways of generating solidarity between Xicanx and Indigenous Peoples.

As a reminder to our readers, *Transmotion* remains (and always will remain) an open access journal: all content is fully available on the open internet with no paywall or institutional access required. We publish under a Creative Commons 4.0 license, meaning in essence that any articles or reviews may be copied and re-used provided that the source and author is acknowledged. We strongly believe in this model, which makes research and academic insight available and useable for the widest possible community. We also believe in keeping to the highest academic standards: thus all articles are double-blind peer reviewed by at least two reviewers, and each issue approved by an editorial board of senior academics in the field (listed in the Front Matter of the full PDF and in the "About" section on our webpage).

September 2024

David Carlson
Laura DeVos
Shelley Angelie Saggar
Steve Sexton
Bryn Skibo-Birney
David Stirrup
Shannon Toll

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

"Sound and Form: Listening to Affective Forms in the Soundscapes of Tanya Tagaq's *Split Tooth*"

ERIN CHESLOW

Floating on the ice, the unnamed narrator of Tanya Tagaq's *Split Tooth* (2018) stories her world in terms of a complex soundscape that, though ever-present, cannot be formally represented by language. Moving through domestic spaces full of loud music and drunken laughter, as well as nonhuman spaces that seem sublimely silent but are shown to speak in sometimes unpredictable ways, Tagaq's formally ambiguous text refuses to structure sound by representing it in textual forms like dialogue or mimesis. Instead, it builds a world filled with sounds that ask the reader to listen to not only the content—the actual words—but also the form, that which is not directly communicated. In one of her more surreal yet visceral descriptions of wandering on the ice, the narrator transforms a whiteout into a chaotic ecosystem of sound and, often violent, sensation. Cutting away her own flesh to eat, her naked body numbed by the extreme cold, she

gains strength and life through the experience of sound. Under a sun that "talks to my throat in recognition," she swims in an ocean that "is calling my name" (Tagaq 92). As she describes the speech of polar bears who come to swim alongside her, "It's an indecipherable language but I am aware they are attempting to comfort me" (93). She listens though she does not understand, signaling an affective relationship to form and sound. That which is indecipherable, unrepresentable in text, gains form relationally in the act of listening.

Using an approach that considers reading as a form of listening, I argue that the unrepresented soundscape of Tagaq's narrative refigures sound as affective form. By reading form—the modes by which a text represents the world and the human/nonhuman relations within it—not for what it *can* represent but for the ways in which it reveals the traces of what cannot be represented by human language, I view genre as an invitation to work through the layers of experience that are not readily available, the ways in which relationships that are not visible in the text are structured. These affective registers, the experience of closeness to the world in the text, are made available through an aesthetic rejection of speech that aligns with Sara Ahmed's elaboration of the "nonperformative," or "the failure of the speech act to do what it says" (105). For both Tagaq (Inuk) and Ahmed, speech is a liberal, settler ideal that ultimately negates action by standing in for it: "the nonperformative does not 'fail to act' because of conditions that are external to the speech act: rather, it 'works' because it fails to bring about what it names" (Ibid). In contrast to oral textual practices that participate in the structuring of actionable sociality—like Tagaq's throat singing or the use of sound and story in law or medicine—liberal speech is intentionally empty. Its failure is what makes it effective and allows it to dominate public discourse in neoliberal settler states like the United States and Canada, where ongoing occupation of Indigenous land and liberal ideals of freedom and inequality are in constant tension. Expressions of sympathy, solidarity, recognition, and (re)conciliation imbue personal speech with a false affect that makes it seem as if systemic change has occurred in the

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moment of expression. New forms—new ways of being, thinking, telling stories—become necessary to imagine otherwise.

As a settler scholar, I approach these forms with the intention of crafting new practices of being in relation. I work on the lands of the Peoria, Kaskaskia, Peankashaw, Wea, Miami, Mascoutin, Odawa, Sauk, Mesquaki, Kickapoo, Potawatomi, Ojibwe, and Chickasaw nations, land currently occupied by the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. My academic pursuits have routed me through the lands of the Kanaka Maoli of Hawai'i and Māori of Aotearoa New Zealand, where my research relations primarily lie. Grounded in these roots and routes, my research centers the situated contexts in which Indigenous communities have entered into (uneven) relationships with settlers. I work across different spaces of colonial encounter to develop an understanding of form that spans spatial, temporal, and colonial boundaries and opens space for settler modes of relation outside of extractivist and colonial ethics. I read, and listen to, Tagaq from this positionality and attempt to attend seriously to the epistemologies she offers as models for thinking and being in the world.

Within an Indigenous aesthetics that engages the landscape (and soundscape) "to imagine and create an elsewhere in the here" (Martineau and Ritskes iv), texts like Tagaq's use form and sound to reject easy decipherability and weave together ways of thinking and being that are always present but often invisible or ignored. They ask us to listen to what is not obvious instead of consuming based on what we already know. *Split Tooth* rarely offers overt depictions of sound like dialogue or onomatopoeia. Rather, soundscapes that cannot be directly experienced or even imagined by the reader permeate the spaces of the text. The reader must meet the text halfway, acting through listening, rather than taking the words themselves to be action. On its own, reading, or speaking, is treated as a form of performance, but one that is "nonperformative" in Ahmed's sense of the term. Both reading and speaking, along

with the text itself, "are not 'finished' as forms of action, as what they 'do' depends on how they are 'taken up'" (Ahmed 105). The nonperformativity of speech and text allows them to be seen as actions, but the two must be disentangled for speech to be once again actionable, to be "taken up" and acted upon. Ahmed writes specifically about the nonperformativity of antiracist speech, but her work fits into a longer tradition of colonial governance, in which sympathy permits violent conquest and reconciliation replaces economic, social, and political change.

Tagaq does not take up a politics directly concerned with forms of governance, granting primacy instead to the community and the landscape; nonetheless, it is this history of what Elaine Hadley calls "liberal cognition" that her aesthetics undermines. Although "liberal cognition" is grounded in the nineteenth century as a "practical politics" that "substituted character and progress, liquidity and persuasion"—in other words, the individual and *his* opinions—for local communities and social action, it is relevant here for its pervasive "development and management of an individualized opinion politics" through an "emphasis on opinion as a version of agency" (5). This form of governance uses speech to manage affect so that the expression of an opinion comes to stand in for action on the issue about which the opinion is expressed and continues to form the foundation for a modern politics of reconciliation and recognition as a response to Indigenous political action. Despite the century that separates the context of Hadley's work from that of Tagaq and Ahmed, current settler state relationships with Indigenous nations and communities continue in a tradition of liberal cognition that confounds opinion with agency to support industrialization and colonial occupation. Ahmed uses language eerily similar to Hadley's in her critique of the nonperformative when she writes, "speech acts do not do what they say[….] Instead, they are nonperformatives. They are speech acts that read as if they are performatives, and this 'reading' generates its own effects" (104). In other words, speech acts are emphasized as if they are a version of action. The public discourse that intends to respond to Indigenous claims to sovereignty, land, and security through

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reconciliation and inclusion mirrors liberal cognition's use of opinion, or empty acts of speech, to manage individual agency.

Relational Sound

In both her music and *Split Tooth*, Tagaq contends directly with these empty acts of speech through sound. Her aesthetics is located within a larger tradition that understands indigeneity and sound as radical alterity to colonial, liberal cognition. Because she makes sound visible through the relationships between her music and her writing, she also exemplifies the ways in which the "aesthetics of survivance" that Gerald Vizenor (Anishinaabe) identifies as linking diverse Indigenous creative practices is always already sounded. For Vizenor, survivance is Native presence, what might be read as not only physical presence on the land but also a specifically aesthetic presence that acts in opposition to colonial simulations of action. He uses the word "simulation" repeatedly to describe his own version of liberal cognition, what he calls "manifest manners" or the many images of and stories told about Indigenous peoples that replace presence and survival with absence and cultural dominance. The word "manners" separates Indigenous aesthetics of survivance from a colonial aesthetics of liberal cognition by situating the latter in relation to the nonperformative, or the outward expression of recognition as social behavior without action. In other words, manifest manners might be read as a form of liberal cognition in which simulation replaces social action. The aesthetics of survivance, then, undermines liberal cognition through radical presence. Presence becomes a form of action. In this sense, all Indigenous stories undermine empty speech. Importantly though, Vizenor's aesthetics also calls for the kind of reading Tagaq's text makes available.

All Indigenous stories participate in an aesthetics of survivance, but, for Vizenor, this aesthetics is also inherently sounded. What he initially describes as "a singular

sense of presence" created by Native storiers is quickly clarified as an "*aural* sense of presence" (1; emphasis added). While he engages Indigenous writers and oral storytellers alike, he continually reverts to sound, using it as both a metaphor and a literary practice to establish an alternative to manifest manners. He writes, "Ancestral storiers hunted their words by sound, shadow, ecstatic conversation and by the uncertainties of creation and the seasons. The native literary artist creates the metaphors of sound in silence, the imagic scenes of totemic transmutation and natural reason" (7). Tagaq makes clear that these "metaphors of sound" are not just metaphoric. They are present as complex soundscapes that require a listening practice that engages an aesthetics of survivance rather than a reading practice that looks only for what is easily discernable. Sound works against a politics of recognition or knowability by establishing presence without interpretability in the seemingly silent pages of written texts. This aural presence is, as Vizenor says, "not a mere reaction" (86) and, as such, requires an aesthetic reciprocity that Glen Coulthard (Dene) identifies as part of "an 'actional' existence, as opposed to a 'reactional' one characterized by *ressentiment*" (44). Where "recognition in its contemporary liberal form promises to reproduce the very configurations of colonialist, racist, patriarchal state power that Indigenous peoples' demands for recognition have historically sought to transcend" (3), the indecipherability of Tagaq's soundscapes requires careful listening and mutual action. After all, as Daniel Heath Justice (Cherokee) explains, "There are countless conversations taking place around us, in voices and languages of every imaginable form and frequency. Too often we don't hear them, and when we do we rarely understand them except perhaps in ceremony—or art" (87). Without easy understandability, soundscapes help translate experience through what Justice calls "imaginative empathy," an affect that is anything but empty, instead requiring action in relation with others.

It is not that speech is never actionable, but performative speech must be relational. As Justice puts it, "Story, song, poem, and prayer all serve to remind us of

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our connections to one another, human and other-than-human alike" (87). Where speech is mitigated by "the derisive signifiers of manifest manners" (Vizenor 5), nonhuman soundscapes offer the possibility of a listening practice that accepts discomfort and invites action. *Split Tooth* rarely represents human speech, allowing the focus to shift from what might be emptied out by liberal cognition toward the actional possibilities in sound. Dylan Robinson (Stó:lō/Skwah), in his theorization of the nonperformative and "hungry listening" as liberal and colonial practices, situates listening and speech in relation to state practices of reconciliation like the 2008 apology to residential school survivors in Canada.[1] Apologies and other calls for reconciliation have, for Robinson, "increasingly emphasized the necessity for settlers and Indigenous people to come together in dialogue as a form that is understood *in and of itself* as reconciliation;" yet, "such practices of social change elide the primary and substantive actions of restitution and redress" (17). Speech is action in this framework. For both Tagaq and Robinson, though, such "action" does not create equitable relations; it only imitates them, indicating the *feeling* of change without actual change. Rejecting this affective atmosphere, Tagaq instead engages dissonance, rage, howls, screeches, and what one reviewer calls "palpitating beats" in her most recent album, *Tongues* (2022; *bandcamp*). Sound, for her, is affective, but it rejects the listener's attempts to reconcile the literal and figurative dissonances of the music and of the experiences it deploys.

Tongues, like Tagaq's other work, is situated in relation to the discourse of reconciliation, but it is not simply a response to it. Released in conjunction with the discovery in Canada of the graves of hundreds of children near the sites of residential schools, it offers its own irreconcilable affect as a way of being in relation to such trauma, both historical and contemporary. As she said in an interview with *bandcamp*, "The reality is, I'm on stage, and I'm showing you what it feels like to be an indigenous

woman and it's not easy." As an experimentation with electronic noise, *Tongues* does not evoke ease; it is improvisational and chaotic. The pulsating beat of the opening song, "In Me," vibrates against synthesized sounds I am unable to identify—the buzzing scrape of what could be fingernails on textured plastic a synthesized lead-in to a sonically harsh invitation to "Eat your morals" (*Tongues*). Brief silences emerge as the repeated rhythm becomes louder and faster. Form mirrors content in this visceral calling out of the very act of listening or reading as consumption. The layering of manipulated breath and voice with electronic sound create an embodied affective experience, an action that is ontological, part of life as it is lived every day. Sound is an alternative to liberal speech, or the feeling of change, because it is embodied and invites listening without closure. In other words, it is not a response to singular events that can be felt and then dismissed as resolved; it is a way of living in the world in relation to ongoing processes of colonization.

As more than response, the dissonance and formal ambiguity of Tagaq's work, both written and performed, rejects what Robinson calls "hungry listening," which "privileges a recognition of palatable narratives of difference [and] takes part in content-locating practices that orient the ear toward identifying standardized features and type" (50). Such standardized content is hard to find in any of the music on *Tongues* and only becomes recognizable in brief moments that are quickly overlaid by discomfort. Those who listen hungrily for a difference that can be assimilated into the settler experience of assumed belonging enter into the music as strangers, and they will not be offered the closure of inclusion. Listening in this way is a start, but, for Tagaq, it cannot be a substitute for action; it is only a response, an attempt to "move beyond" the negative affect of colonialism through felt reconciliation without political action. New ways of listening are needed.

As a way of being and an invitation to listen differently, sound repairs—not through the feeling of change but through confrontation with what goes unheard. The death and burial of hundreds of children under the residential school system was not

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a bounded event to which *Tongues* responds. It is part of the ongoing lived experience of colonial violence that cannot be relegated to an already settled past. Tagaq enters into conversation with these structures, refusing apology and inviting not only acknowledgement of past wrong but also action against ongoing violence. She allows for the possibility that even her settler audience might be moved by her music, but, for her, shame is not enough: "I do not need to console you afterwards because it hurts you or moves you to witness. If you were moved so strongly, then you do something about systemic racism when you go home. Don't come to me and apologize" (Tagaq, *bandcamp*). She values the structures of desire, the move to witness, in this response, but action takes the place of speech, or particularly the empty speech of shame. As she chants in the title song of *Tongues*, "I don't want your shame/It doesn't belong to me/You can't have my tongue." The appropriation of the tongue, the need to be absolved through apology, is nonperformative. It imitates action within an affective atmosphere of shame and absolution. Tagaq's work, instead, calls for a localized doing, or way of living in relation that listens for the unpalatable, the modes of experience that are not readily available.

By aligning the palatable and the nonperformative, Robinson and Tagaq show that reconciliation politics is a form of liberal cognition, and the individual's expression of shame is part of the governmental speech acts that seek to replace systemic change with feeling. The 2008 apology for residential schools and the audience members' expressions of shame attempt to refigure the discomfort of confronting experiences that are unfamiliar or cannot be represented fully by familiar forms as forgiveness, or at least recognition. Their ability to create the perception of shared affect in order to elide the unequal conditions through which they (we) maintain power lies in the transformation of social change into empty speech "acts" that mimic that change without enacting it. The continuation of settler power and comfort, then, relies on

reconciliation to make palatable colonial violence and dispossession.

Empty Speech, Liberal Cognition

Tongues and *Split Tooth* each contend with a contemporary politics of reconciliation that responds to already enacted colonial power structures, but Tagaq's work also recognizes the ways in which colonial expansion has always been liberal. Each text comes into conversation, intrinsically or extrinsically, with not only the ongoing structures of feeling that emerge as graves are discovered and new violences committed toward the "Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls" to whom *Split Tooth* is dedicated but also the burials and violences themselves. "Tongues" might end with the denial of settler appropriation of the tongue, but it begins with, "They took our tongues" (Tagaq, *Tongues*). The denial of both Indigenous and settler agency in the process of colonial dispossession—the taking of the tongue—is placed in the past, almost as if complete and without material and affective consequences in the present. The past tense might imply that reconciliation is not the same as the taking of the tongue since it is happening in the present, but Tagaq then qualifies, "They *tried* to take our tongues" (emphasis added). The attempt was not complete; it is part of the ongoing processes that include reconciliation. The taking of the tongue accompanies both the violence of killing children in residential schools and the apology that came over a hundred years later. In other words, reconciliation is not only a response, an attempt to make right; it is a necessary structure of feeling that makes colonialism possible in the first place.

Even in the nineteenth century, as the British Empire rose to its fullest force, liberal cognition was intrinsically tied to imperial expansion. In an earlier work on liberal thought and empire, Uday Singh Mehta writes,

> To contain those differences [encountered in the colonies] or to mediate them through a prior settlement that fixes on reason, freedom, ethics, internationalism, multiculturalism, the universality of rights, or even democracy,

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> is to deny 'the occult,' 'the parochial,' 'the traditional,' in short the unfamiliar, the very possibility of articulating the meaning and agentiality of its own experiences. (23)

The denial of agency to the unfamiliar echoes Tagaq's lyrics. The settler, in order to contend with difference and its violent assimilation into colonial governance, must deny their own agency, and that of the colonized, through the expression of sympathy with or recognition of the universality of human affective experience. This kind of cognition invests in nonperformative speech, espousing ideals like democracy and freedom even though, as Hadley points out, it sought to "slow the country's [in this case, England's] progress toward democracy" by replacing social action with opinion, or speech. Precisely because they employ a politics and philosophy invested in the recognition of individual thought as a way to delimit the social parameters of politics, projects like reconciliation in Canada and the United States perform decolonization while perpetuating colonial governance through speech.

Tagaq explores a possible corrective to this history of empty speech in sound. Her soundscapes reimpose indecipherability to prompt a form of listening that contends with complexity as possibility. This kind of listening deploys kinship as what Kim TallBear (Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate) terms "being in good relation" (25). She contrasts kinship, or "caretaking relations," with the American dream, which deploys desire for an ideal state toward the elimination of Indigenous peoples from the land on which that state relies (24). Once again identifying empty speech as intrinsic to settler colonialism in both past and present, Tallbear writes, "Indigenous genocide is the genesis of settler states. Yet it is incomplete. Indigenous people must be de-animated if the appropriations are to continue and if settler states are to maintain dominion" (29). The settler state and reconciliation politics, in this framework, can only find possibility in the homogeneous, the dream of a better future that negates change in the present.[2]

This dream is a nonperformative. It speaks without listening, de-animating Indigenous practices and peoplehood through nonperformative "acts" of sympathy or recognition transforming individual responsibility in the relationship into a (liberal) cognitive exercise, rather than a practice of what Robinson calls "listening-in-relation" (51). The expressed affect is enough to assuage the guilt of the settler and, as such, the perceived need for change disappears as well.

Tagaq's ways of listening, on the other hand, are an engagement with the indecipherable, an alternative aesthetics grounded in the kind of kinship that is constantly negotiated within relations of responsibility and care—in other words, listening that happens in relation to others. By listening-in-relation, we listen as respectful guests and enter into relation with other knowledge systems without seeking to extract them or apply our own (Robinson 51). Affective forms are needed to reopen the possibility for action by conducting thought through aesthetic traces of that which is present though not readily available. The text can no longer be seen as, itself, action; it must invite action in the traces it leaves. Tagaq's soundscapes, in this sense, invite complexity through attention to forms of being in relation that are not readily available but, nonetheless, structure possibilities for change.

It is through the chaotic soundscapes of *Tongues* that Tagaq demonstrates the kind of listening that might be possible in *Split Tooth*. Four of the songs on *Tongues* take their lyrics from the novel, overlaying the act of reading with the act of listening. The opening track, and one of the last poems in *Split Tooth*, "In Me," transposes throat singing and synthetic echoes of electronic sound and vocalizations to emphasize each syllable, turning even the abstractness of "morals" into onomatopoeia. Much more than a reading of written text, the repetition of the opening line "Eat your morals" slowly shifts into a throat-sung growl of consumptive desire (*Split Tooth*, 178/*Tongues*). Eating is enacted, heard, more than the abstractness of language, a trace of a possibly unfamiliar soundscape. For Tagaq, the text contains these sounds, but they must be listened for. Listening itself becomes an unfamiliar action. Rather than construct a

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feeling of change through palatable narratives of shame and redemption or reconciliation, a listening that is not hungry seeks to restructure relations, to act rather than speak. The consumption that is both expressed through language and heard in Tagaq's soundscapes is not simply a rejection of settler morality through a command to eat the apology that cannot sustain Tagaq; it is also the action of eating, internalizing the morality that is externalized through speech. As Tagaq continues, "I am in you/then/You are in me/You are now me" (178/*Tongues*). The relation—between colonizer and colonized, person and shame, government and speech—becomes embodied, intertwined through shared frameworks of action and change that are more than felt. Experiences that are not readily available remain unpalatable, unconsumable, but listening makes possible relations across experiences without assimilation. Kinship is given primacy, taking the absence of shared experience as a given.

This aesthetics of absence structures *Split Tooth* as a palimpsest, which bars the reader from certainty in the relationship and, as such, invites active and affective engagement with layers of experience and agency that may be indiscernible. Robinson attends to the palimpsest as a "more-than-representational frame," an affective embodiment of form that occurs in the act of listening (45). Without representation, absence "prompts an ethics of listening that somewhat paradoxically seeks to hear the indiscernible and the absent" (59). Listening, however fragmented, happens in the experience of form, an aesthetic relationship to the silences that reveal what may not be present audibly. Rather than construct a world through description and storytelling, sound as affective form evokes an incomplete experience of the world narrated, prompting the reader to listen without the need for understanding. Soundscapes do not construct a knowable world, one both controlled and contained, but invite an affective relationship with sound worlds that are felt rather than known. Immersed in unknowable sound, listening becomes action—not the kind of action that

is ultimately passive, a speaking for, but action in the form of building relations and developing alternatives to colonial systems of thought.

In *Split Tooth*, sound is an invitation to act in relation, to listen. The soundscape is absent from the representational space of the text, yet it is constantly present as that which is indecipherable and experiential for the narrator. The structure of the narrative—which defies easy generic categorization through the interweaving of poetry and prose, storytelling and description—develops as an alternative form of knowing in relation to that which is unknown. Unlike dialogue and other oral forms made present in writing, the palimpsestic layering of sounds in *Split Tooth* that may include, but are not defined by, human speech invites a felt relationality. Sound is made present without being expressed as form, producing an affective aesthetic through which sound becomes action and silence requires careful listening. Attention to affect in the experience of form, alongside the meaning found in the content of a narrative, allows for a different kind of reading, one grounded in relational listening practices and not the consumption of static meaning. Speech is transformed from an action in itself that is then passively experienced or appreciated to one part in an emergent soundscape that invites ongoing and active listening. Through its visceral language, and with limited dialogue or other expressions of speech, *Split Tooth* rejects an aesthetics of passive speech to deploy listening as relational action.

Landscapes and Sound Worlds

Sound pervades the icy worlds through which Tagaq's narrator moves. The narrator lives in an unspecified town in Nunavut, the northernmost territory of Canada, and everything beyond the town is a seemingly endless expanse of white, "the sea ice" (Tagaq, *Split Tooth*, 54). This environment is anything but empty: The narrator hears polar bears sing, and even light evokes sound as an absence in the text that makes listening in specific relationships possible. But, these landscapes remain indistinct in their alterity. The increasingly sparse descriptions of both town and tundra that do little

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to distinguish one piece of ice from another construct an almost homogeneous, singular image of a presumably diverse landscape. The buildings of the small town of 12,000 human souls become the only visible contrast in an environment that, though never described as uniform, is visually indistinct, a "treeless expanse [that] lends itself to illusion" (25). Even those areas that are described, or at least named, apart from the town or the ice are brought into the space of the town by the objects scattered across them. At a "smallish pond" where a boy almost drowns, "[t]here are blue Styrofoam pieces lying around, wind-blown from construction sites from the last building season" (7), and "[t]he bog is littered with pieces of plywood blown by the fierce Arctic wind from various construction sites" (18). At Nine Mile Lake, quite distant from the town, the narrator does describe a number of distinct features like seagulls' nests and small pools of baby trout, but even this lively space contains bits of plywood, as well as the chip bags they drop on their way. Distinction in the visual landscape comes with the town and, moreover, with the few summer months.

The summer is when most action becomes possible: "The freeze traps life and stops time. The thaw releases it" (Tagaq, *Split Tooth*, 6). Construction crews must work 24 hours a day, and children "run the dusty streets looking for adventure" (7). Description, the representation of the visual landscape in human language, and action come together to paint a picture of human life and activity that seems to happen almost on its own. It is contained by the easier summer months and by childhood, specifically the childhood of the narrator. The poems that intersperse these descriptions introduce sexual violence and fear, yet there remains an optimism to the stories about playing on the lake with friends or experiencing relationality with a newt who stays warm inside the narrator's mouth. Even the soundscapes of the summer are identifiable. There are no singing polar bears in this landscape, but there is country music and kids "running and screeching with joy" (29). Not all of these sounds are happy ones, but they are

recognizable, distinctly human and tied to the town, just like the plywood and chip bags littering the thawing waters of the bogs and lakes. As sirens sound and laughter rings out, the narrator reflects, "we are simply an expression of the energy of the sun" (12). The knowable, the human, is found in the summer, a manifestation of sunlight. Sound mixes into a visible landscape. It is there, but it does not require careful listening—not until winter sets in.

Unlike the more detailed summer landscapes, the tundra in winter is still part of the experience narrated but it is visually nondescript. The distinctive landscapes of the summer months are transformed into complex soundscapes. Sound is very present in the early scenes, but it is part of the detailed descriptions that do not invite the same kind of affective engagement. It is already knowable, describable, palatable. The settler reader can read, and perhaps listen, hungrily for those welcome tropes of children thriving and express sympathy for scenes of violence that are painful but, nonetheless, all too familiar. Here the familiar is also the visible; the sounds we can hear align with what we can see, what is described by the narrator. As Robinson notes, "One […] way that settler positionality guides perception is by generating normative narratocracies of experience, feeling, and the sensible" (39). He calls this process "the action of 'settling' perception," one that disallows us from hearing what is not already considered normative, what is not visible (40). The describable realism of the narrator's childhood experiences can be read through settled perception, constructing a palatable narrative that, while far from erasing Indigenous presence, does some work to negate difference and make more active forms of listening unnecessary. The landscape is representable and, as such, recognizable or seemingly knowable. The soundscapes of winter are not.

The more limited description of the ice in winter constructs a landscape that is unknowable in its irrepresentability. It reveals the complexity of even the town's soundscapes; what appeared palatable begins to break apart, sending the narrator out onto the ice, where the polar bears sing. Winter begins, in *Split Tooth*, with the violence

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of cold: "Wind sings but carries an axe instead of a note" (Tagaq 36). The soundscape has changed. The wind might be the same, the path from her house to the school the same, but its song is no longer an invitation to familiarity. It will reveal itself to be, instead, an invitation to listen. Even the people have become unfamiliar. They are hungry. Instead of laughter, the air echoes with lonely footsteps in the snow, the only human sound left outside the houses where country music blares. The music, like the cold, is dangerous. The people inside the houses listen hungrily, ready to consume the energy that numbs fear and shame. As the narrator consumes the butane she uses to enter "this world where nothing exists" (42), familiar faces consume her body, entering her room as the music swells through the momentarily open door. People she knows become "an unnamed man […] a shape, a shadow" (46), and listening becomes impossible, unimaginable, as the soundscape shifts to subtle but violent "squeaking springs and mewling sounds" (47). The next time the narrator hears the music, she will not go home, choosing the violence of winter over the hunger of those consumed by shame.

Fear is inherent to these winter landscapes for Tagaq. As difficult as the scenes of rape and violence are, they are not scenes of blame. Hunger comes from the residential schools that "have beaten the Inuktitut out of this town in the name of progress, in the name of decency" (Tagaq, *Split Tooth*, 50). It is a product of guilt and shame, anxiety and fear. For the narrator, "outward faces and words are usually so different from their true selves and vulnerabilities that people like to hide" (51). It is these vulnerabilities that create the faceless, the unfamiliar. They are also, then, an invitation to listen-in-relation. There is no escape from fear in the "immensity of the Arctic Ocean" (54), but there is an opportunity "to force action, to change what caused the anxiety." It is an opportunity tied directly to listening: "We never like to listen to ourselves, even when we know we have to. We plod on ignoring what we must be,

what we are meant to be. We are taught to fear our instincts. We must hunt down and fall in love with Fear, therefore defeating our self-doubt every day. This is followed by joy" (51). In fear is an invitation to listen, to live in relation with the unknowable, to force action. The country music serves to cover up the unknowable soundscapes of a whited-out landscape. It also calls the narrator onto the ice, where "sound is its own currency" (55).

By defying description in the text, the winter landscapes are revealed to be complex in the diverse and extensive sound worlds that both make visible the false optimism of the summer months and foster affective relationships through the invitation to listen. Unlike hungry listening, which seeks the recognizable and the absolution of shame, the listening solicited by affective forms like Tagaq's soundscapes is a listening-in-relation with the indecipherable. Robinson writes, "we must paradoxically engage a listening that does not reduce what is heard [or felt] to the knowable, that resists a multicultural categorization of one cultural sound among many, that understands sounds in its irreducible alterity, and that moves beyond our recognition of normative […] protocols. Such listening would understand that not all sound can be translated to equivalent analogies" (64). This kind of listening happens in the face of absence, the trace of what may be inaudible even in its presence. The visceral language that reveals the presence of sound does so as a palimpsest of that which cannot be translated. The layers of sound are present as traces, but they are not represented or described. They are an idea, part of a complex soundscape in which relationships with the indecipherable become possible, even necessary.

During the whiteout, when the narrator listens-in-relation with the polar bears, the landscape becomes unknowable—whited out. Amidst this alterity, there is no description of the sounds the polar bears are making, only the idea of sound. The sun talks, the water calls, but "It's an indecipherable language" (Tagaq, *Split Tooth*, 93). It cannot be represented on silent pages, but it is also irrevocably present. Earlier, in her first encounter with the Northern Lights, the narrator lies on the ice and thinks of the

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legend that "says that if you whistle or scream at them, they will come down and cut off your head" (55). Sound is emphasized, taking primacy over the visual brilliancy of the lights. Ocean, ice, and sky come together in the addition of sound to the landscape, the scream that brings the light to the land. What little description there is evokes sound; even the Lights, a visual experience, are described as "roaring green thunder," not lightning, weaving the traces of sounds that cannot be heard into the landscape. The song she then sings to the Lights becomes a part of that soundscape but an ephemeral one. Like the indecipherable language of the polar bears, the song is only an idea of sound, a nondescript possibility of relationality. The narrator thinks, "Maybe some sound will coax the Northern Lights out of the sky? Sound can only help beckon them" (55). Between the screams of the legend and the song she hums, the sound can be anything and cannot be translated into the kind of descriptive language that might allow the reader to share the experience. It remains unheard on the ice, engaging a kind of listening-in-relation.

The emphasis on sound in text belies any attempt to read for an easily recognizable world; instead, the reader must listen in relation to the knowledge systems in which the text is located, ones in which protocols are established by the Lights and the ice and must be followed as an act of both respect and survival. The lights offer what Robinson calls a "form of attentiveness" that the narrator must then put into conversation with her own forms to enter into a relationship with the unknowable otherness of the Lights. There is no knowing the Lights in themselves, only a relationship that emerges in an active listening for what we cannot hear. Access to experience in the text is given through affect: the bite of the cold, the vibrations of sound in the throat, the feeling of thunder.

The narrator joins with the Northern Lights by leaving the soundscape of the town and entering into that of the tundra. As she sings, she meditates at length on the

power of sound as affect, an invitation to listen:

> Sound is a conduit to a realm we cannot totally comprehend. The power of sound conducts our thoughts into emotions that then manifest in action.
>
> Sound can heal.
>
> Sound can kill.
>
> Sound is malleable. Sound can be a spear or a needle. Sound can create the sound then stitch it. Sound can cauterize and materialize. No one can hear my song but the Northern Lights. (Tagaq, *Split Tooth*, 55-56)

Only she and the Northern Lights can hear the sounds themselves. Descriptions of sound are replaced with the visceral—the wound from a spear, the prick of a needle, the weaving of thread into skin or the flame that seals the wound. Listening happens in the wake of feeling conducted by sound. Sound becomes affect, and action manifests when sound, or its trace, is conducted, when it is listened to or for. Sound, including speech, becomes performative, the opposite of Ahmed's nonperformative, in the relationship—the act of listening-in-relation.

These affective forms, visceral yet lacking the kind of detail or mimesis that makes them recognizable, are an invitation to listen, in Robinson's sense of the term. The silence in which sound might coax the Lights from the sky requires careful listening and attention to the text as palimpsest, a carrier of unrepresentable sound. Only in the experience of affect, when no speech is present to replace action, can listening become action, an active entering into relation with the unknowable. The tundra landscape becomes distinguishable from the town as a layered sound world, a space for change. The town is its own sound world, but one limited by its seeming knowability. Where the tundra invites complex relationality through the act of listening, the laughter and loud music at home promote listening as a form of protection. It is a toxic sound world, one in which "[t]he thumping is metronomic but the screeches and whoops of the listeners are chaotic. […] Going home is never a good idea under these circumstances" (Tagaq, *Split Tooth* 54). In either environment, listening is an *act* of

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engagement through which different actions are made possible. The idea of sound, the evocation of that which is present but without representation, is made available as affective form, which requires careful listening.

Sound and the Nonperformative

Sound that invites listening through its traces in affective forms provides an alternative to colonizing forms that promote speech as action. In the less visceral, more descriptive early scenes of the narrator's childhood in summer, the detailed realism performs a kind of optimism. The seeming effectiveness of language in representing the landscape, as well as the experiences of the narrator, occludes the kind of listening invited by the soundscapes of winter. Words, spoken or written, do not manifest in action in the way that sounds that "conduct our thoughts into emotions" do. Lauren Berlant draws a connection between realist, descriptive forms and an affective involvement in fantasies of the "good life" (1). She might identify the optimism of the representable summer landscape as a cruel one: On the surface, it imagines the availability of liberal fantasies that locate agency in representation. While there is little or no sense that the narrator imagines any particular change for her community, the formal reliance on description, the ability to make decipherable, enters into a history of liberal nonperformativity by inscribing possibility in the ability to speak, or in this case to narrate, the world. Yet, it is quickly made clear that speech cannot be considered indistinguishable from action. Liberal, colonizing forms that rely on Robinson's hungry listening for recognizable narratives fail to engage in the affective possibilities of listening as relational action.

While the summer landscapes are much more visually distinct than the winter ones, they are nonetheless present in the text at what Berlant considers the impasse of cruel optimism. She defines the impasse as "a stretch of time in which one moves

around with a sense that the world is intensely present and enigmatic, such that the activity of living demands both a wandering absorptive awareness and a hypervigilance that […] coordinate the standard melodramatic crises with those processes that have not yet found their genre of event" (Berlant 4). The impasse occurs, formally, in the absence of that which can be represented. As seen in the soundscapes that invite listening, much of the narrator's world is both "present and enigmatic," sometimes familiar yet without a definable genre. Tagaq's text is aesthetically ambiguous, neither a novel nor a poetry collection. The more novel-like sections are interwoven with poems that do a different kind of affective work. The descriptions of landscape and adventure are framed in relation to scenes of fear, indifference, and violence. Like sound, these scenes cannot be represented effectively in the more descriptive formal spaces of the text. They take form at the impasse between the familiar and "those processes that have not yet found their genre of event." While these impasses are often painful, they also introduce an alternative to speech as action. The unrepresentable requires listening-in-relation to open up space for healing and future action. Speech alone does not serve as agency, while listening acts in relation.

Berlant refers to that which is without genre as a "process." Rather than a containable, recognizable action or speech that takes the place of action, the relationship that occurs in the act of listening, even when what is heard cannot be translated or understood, is ongoing action. It is a way of taking responsibility. Sophie Mayer, in an essay on Indigenous modes of poetics, describes affective forms in terms of "a particular, recurring invocational figure whereby the poem invites the world and the world opens to the poem" (235). While she is referring to an actual figure in a performance, a figurative understanding of invocation in form recognizes the ways in which listening is a recurring act. It responds to absence as a trace that may not be reducible to understanding and, yet, is irrevocably present. The narrative opens itself to the world as an invitation to a relationship. The soundscapes of Tagaq's text do what speech cannot. They reveal their own absence in the affective forms that serve as

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palimpsests. They cannot be mistaken as action because it is only in the reciprocal act of listening that action becomes possible.

The impasse of liberal fantasies of representation and the indecipherable requires alternative forms that both respond to the liberal, settler ideologies that underpin ongoing colonization and invite possibilities for relationality. The affective forms of *Split Tooth*, which comprise little description or human speech, make traces of the unrepresentable present to structure engagement in terms of emotion that manifests as action. Sound is transformed from that which can be heard and understood into an invitation to listen as relational action. Returning home from her time on the ice singing with the Northern Lights—"Ice in lung, Ice on chest, Ice in heart"—the narrator is asked where she has been. In one of the few instances of speech in the narrative, she replies, "Out walking," and immediately retreats to be alone (Tagaq 57). Speech is emptied of its ability to manifest as action. It takes the place of the relationship, standing in for any affective engagement. This ending to an intense and deeply felt encounter leaves something wanting. The Northern Lights are still in her head, but the moment of speech takes only a second of her attention and ends in further detachment from others. Speech becomes passive, while action becomes possible in the traces of sound that invite us to listen.

Notes

[1] The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was established in Canada as part of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement to collect testimonies from the survivors of Indian Residential Schools and establish a plan of action to address the government's role in this more-than-120-year history of forced removal and assimilationist policy. Residential schools operated in Canada into the 1990s and continue to affect those who attended the schools and their families. Prime Minister Stephen Harper issued a public apology on June 11, 2008, before the work of the TRC began. The US has not yet done even this much to address its own residential school history.

[2] Lauren Berlant makes a similar argument in *Cruel Optimism*, with the American dream in this case being a sort of optimism that keeps dreamers tied to the cruel inequalities that de-animate in the present.

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

"Calling (Out) Contemporary Settlers: Tanya Tagaq's *Split Tooth* and 'colonizer' as Trans-Media Indigenous Wonderwork"

BRAD BUCKHALTER

Split Tooth (2018) is the first published work by award-winning performer, recording artist, and Indigenous activist Tanya Tagaq (Inuit). Part prose, part poetry, part memoir, part fiction, *Split Tooth* reflects its author's Inuit heritage while refusing easy genre definition. Tagaq describes the work as a diary of ideas from her early childhood to *her* forties (*Split Tooth* – Tanya *Tagaq* 1:29). In that spirit, one reviewer has called the work Tagaq's "mythobiography" (Sterdan). I refer to it here simply as the "Text." Labels aside, the Text invites various readings. One of those is as a meditation on how Indigenous ways of knowing and relating to the other-than-human differ from the instrumentalist epistemologies of Western settlers in the High Arctic of what is now Canada.

In many ways, Tagaq's acclaimed 2022 album *Tongues* is *Split Tooth's* companion piece. Released four years after *Split Tooth*, *Tongues* takes portions of the

Text for its lyrics. More important, it pointedly contests the settler project in the Canadian Arctic. The music videos supporting *Tongues* animate Tagaq's decolonial message with striking images, creating a sound- and video-scape for Tagaq's ideas, many of which have been carried over from *Split Tooth*. While at least one scholar has connected aspects of *Split Tooth* to Tagaq's prior musical output (Preston), little if any scholarship exists linking *Split Tooth* and *Tongues*.

In this article, I examine the ways Tagaq's decolonial project manifests in both *Split Tooth* and *Tongues*, specifically how the music video for *Tongues*' track, "Colonizer" (the "Video") amplifies the Text's decolonial themes. One of the ways the Text advances Tagaq's project is by foregrounding other-than-human elements like land, water, ice, and the northern lights. For Tagaq, these elements are not inanimate objects lacking sentience and self, as settler logic would dictate. Instead, they are lively and agentive, a foundation of Inuit society and culture. The land and the northern lights in particular play key roles in the Text. Like the Text, the Video represents the land and the northern lights as lively and agentive. In depicting them this way, Tagaq invokes Indigenous knowledge and traditions that starkly contrast with settler programs bent on conquest, exploitation, and elimination of Indigenous spaces and cultures. In this, the Text and the Video are instances of what Daniel Heath Justice (Cherokee Nation) calls Indigenous wonderworks.

Drawing on Justice's theories around Indigenous wonderworks, I argue that the Text and the Video speak to one another across forms of artistic expression. As a result, they become what I call a trans-media Indigenous wonderwork. Here, the "trans-" in "trans-media" gestures toward what Chadwick Allen (Chickasaw ancestry), in his important work on trans-Indigenous methodology, identifies as the ways Indigenous writers and artists often work in and across more than one artistic genre or form in advancing their creative and political projects ("Decolonizing Comparison" 385). Reading the Text and the Video as juxtaposed forms of artistic expression—in close proximity to one another both artistically and politically— shows how the Video's starkly

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decolonial music, images, and lyrics underscore and bolster the decolonial message of *Split Tooth*. The resulting trans-media Indigenous wonderwork pointedly indicts settler audiences for their complicity both in the history of settler colonialism in Canada's High Arctic and in the continuing effects of the colonial project in the contemporary settler state.

Indigenous Wonderworks

The Indigenous wonderwork as a genre traces its origins to Grace Dillon's (Anishinaabe) influential edited collection, *Walking the Clouds: An Anthology of Indigenous Science Fiction* (2012). There, Dillon explores forms of Indigenous science fiction, collectively naming them "Indigenous futurism." According to Dillon, this genre challenges the boundaries of settler-colonial science fiction (3). It allows Indigenous artists to "discard[ ] the emotional and psychological baggage carried from [colonialism's] impact, and recover[ ] ancestral traditions in order to adapt to [the] post-Native Apocalypse world" (10). For Dillon, then, Indigenous futurism is a decolonial expressive form aimed at cultural recovery (10-11).

Dillon's theories, however, have not gone unchallenged. For instance, while acknowledging the importance of Dillon's work, Miriam Brown Spiers interrogates Dillon's choice to label texts that reflect Indigenous traditions and worldviews, particularly older Indigenous texts, as a form of "science fiction." By doing this, Spiers explains, Dillon risks "trivializing Native voices and communities, . . . reducing lived experiences to primitive superstitions," or to something "simply fantastical" (xvi). Spiers reasons that readers unfamiliar with Indigenous culture may misunderstand Indigenous futurism as "a fascinating but naïve interpretation of reality" that ultimately causes them to "dismiss and disregard Indigenous cultures" (xvi). For Spiers, such readings could end up reinforcing the same colonial models Dillon seeks to resist (xvi).

Daniel Heath Justice, on the other hand, sees Indigenous futurism as "a major

site of production, engagement, and analysis" (Justice, "Circle" 150). In his view, "some of the most vibrant interventions in the field are in these diverse speculative forms" (150). Justice expands on Dillon's project, particularly as it has to do with recovering Indigenous traditions through decolonization. As a way of foregrounding this, he incorporates Dillon's focus on "'Native conditions in Native-centered worlds'" (Justice, "Indigenous Wonderworks"). In this way, he helps expand thinking about Indigenous cultural production, underscoring how it represents ways of living in the world that differ from those prescribed by settler culture (*Why Indigenous Literatures* 155). This move reduces the risk settler readers might misunderstand Indigenous texts as myth or fairy tale.

Although the Indigenous wonderwork is related to genres like speculative fiction, imaginative literature, and fantasy, it departs from them in important ways. Those genres, Justice explains, rest on Western, dualistic presumptions of what is real and what is only imagined. Moreover, they are "deeply entangled in settler-colonial logics of dead matter, monolithic reality, and rationalist supremacy" ("Indigenous Wonderworks"). Western forms of "realism" serve Indigenous authors no better, as they require the artist to work within "a very limited and often pessimistic range" of representational strategies ("Indigenous Wonderworks"). Unlike those Western fictive genres, the Indigenous wonderwork recognizes and describes the many ways Indigenous authors create worlds attuned to their peoples' traditions and ways of knowing. These forms of knowledge differ, often radically, from Western epistemologies. This is due, in part, to the fact the Indigenous wonderwork arises from and reflects the lands, histories, and experiences of Indigenous peoples and their ways of knowing and relating to the world around them. The wonderwork deploys these ways of knowing for "Indigenous, decolonial purposes" ("Indigenous Wonderworks"). It makes "space for meaningful engagements and encounters [that are] dismissed by colonial authorities" but that, nonetheless, are crucial for recovering Indigenous culture ("Indigenous Wonderworks").

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At least one other scholar has read *Split Tooth* as an Indigenous wonderwork. Abdenour Bouich (Amazigh/Berber) looks to Justice when analyzing what might appear to settler readers as fantastical elements of the Text. Like Bouich, I read the Text as an Indigenous wonderwork. Unlike Bouich, however, I analyze *Split Tooth* and the Video as a hybrid article of cultural production, as a single, trans-media Indigenous wonderwork. This novel way of interpreting the projects of Indigenous artists like Tagaq suggests how different, yet complementary, forms of media may combine to amplify the message of their makers' larger decolonial projects.

Split Tooth – The Other-Than-Human as Family

In *Split Tooth*, Tagaq depicts the agentive force and the liveliness—the ensouled nature—of other-than-human elements like land, water, ice, and the northern lights. One could argue that in doing this Tagaq simply crafts symbols and metaphors from inanimate objects, the standard fare of literary representation. Or one could argue *Split Tooth* is a work of fantasy, magical realism, or the like. Readings like these, however, reduce Tagaq's engagement with the other-than-human to little more than fiction in the Western tradition. They privilege Enlightenment notions of the "rational" human, a being distinct from flora, fauna, and the elements of the planet. They disregard Indigenous understandings of an other-than-human realm that acts with agency, that is more than merely symbols or metaphors, or fantasy or science fiction. Such readings are inadequate to understand Tagaq's project and those like it. Instead, *Split Tooth* is best understood as an Indigenous wonderwork.

My reading of the Text as wonderwork considers how Tagaq engages two elements of the other-than-human: the northern lights, Arqsarniq in Inuktitut, and the land of the Inuit, located in what is now the territory of Nunavut in Canada's High Arctic. I trace the ways Tagaq depicts the northern lights and the land as lively, agentive members of Inuit society. This is central to understanding the Text as Indigenous

wonderwork. Through the lens of the wonderwork, we see Tagaq resist settler culture by reclaiming and deploying Indigenous ways of knowing and relating to the other-than-human. In this way, Tagaq challenges the rationalist Western logic underlying settler colonialism, past and present.

Split Tooth's narrator has many encounters with the northern lights, but I focus on one in particular: it comes at the end of a school day in the dark Arctic winter, when the narrator avoids her parents' drunken party by walking out onto the sea ice. Lying on the ice and breathing the frozen air, the narrator beckons to the northern lights, calling them down from the sky: "Arqsarniq. I sing for you," she intones. "Humming shakily at first, thin tendrils of sound. The trepidation dissolves and a throbbing vibratory expulsion of sound emerges" (55). The lights respond, treating the narrator to a dazzling auditory-visual display. They descend near her and join her song with a "high-pitched ringing mixed with the crackling snap of electricity" (56). Communing with the Lights, the narrator sees into the future, viewing her unborn children. She looks into the past, "weep[ing] at the majesty of [her] ancestors," but upon awakening, she is shaken and realizes she had been having a "dangerous dream" (57). At that, she leaves the ice, running home to the "now comforting" sounds of Johnny Cash playing loudly at her parent's party (57).

The narrator's encounter with the Northern Lights shows the imaginative reorientation central to the Indigenous wonderwork. To begin, it is important to note a matter of grammar: Tagaq capitalizes the common noun "northern lights," so it appears as "Northern Lights." This strategy "assert[s] the relationship that the Inuit have with life, corporeality, and spirituality" (Bouich 94-95). Or as Justice explains, converting common nouns to proper nouns transforms their referents from objects conceived as "exploitable commodities" into "subject[s] with agency" (*Indigenous Literatures*, 6).[1] With this grammatical move, the Text enters the realm of the wonderwork, where both the narrator and the Northern Lights have agency. They communicate in a way that melds human with other-than-human: the sound of the narrator's human voice calling

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out and the Lights responding, visually and auditorily. This merger prompts the narrator's vision of ancestors and descendants. It evokes what Kyle P. Whyte describes as "spiraling time" (229). This way of conceiving time, Whyte explains, aims to capture Indigenous understandings that humans "liv[e] alongside future and past relatives simultaneously" (229). Here, in a spiraling time that shows the generational simultaneity Whyte describes, Tagaq reclaims Inuit culture while representing the Lights themselves as a portal to the narrator's family.

All of Tagaq's moves in this scene—the narrator's dream state, call-and-response dialogue, communion and merger between narrator and Lights, visions of ancestors and descendants witnessed in spiraling time—evoke the ceremony, ritual, and dream that are key elements of Indigenous wonderworks (Justice, *Indigenous Literatures* 152). The fact Tagaq locates the narrator's encounter with the Northern Lights within a dream state is crucial. The dream state, Justice explains, is an important space in Indigenous culture. It rejects "certainty over what is real and unreal, true and false, legitimate and delusional" (153). Binary conclusions like these are for the waking world of Western rationalism. The dream and the wonderwork, instead, privilege the "uncertainty, curiosity, and humility" that reside in what Indigenous peoples often call the "Great Mystery" (153).

Thus far, Tagaq's moves are clearly non-Western. The narrator's communion with the Northern Lights challenges Western rationality, particularly the long-imagined gulf between human and other-than-human. Spiraling time unsettles Western notions of strict linear temporality. The narrator understands these things: she knows her engagement with the Northern Lights, though occurring in a dream state, is "dangerous" (57) for its decolonial potential. It kindles, or re-ignites, traditional Indigenous ways of relating to the natural world as family. It has the potential to unsettle her youthful understanding of the contemporary, capitalist society in which she moves.

If carried forward into adulthood or activism, such thinking can unsettle colonial logic on larger scales. Settler states know this. That is why they have worked intently to erase Indigenous knowledge, if not entire Indigenous civilizations. Near the end of this scene Tagaq shows the narrator's Indigenous ways of knowing coming up against the epistemologies of the settler world she inhabits. The narrator flees the site of her dream, running from the ice to her parents' home where she meets the "comforting thumping of Johnny Cash's bass" (57). The presence of Johnny Cash is telling. It reminds the reader that even in spaces of Indigenous wonder, settler logic—here in the figure of an American country and western music icon—asserts itself as a normative space of "comfort" for the Indigenous person.

Like the narrator's encounters with the Northern Lights, the Text describes her relationship with the Land of the Inuit.[2] With these scenes, Tagaq encourages the reader to see Indigenous ways of knowing and being with the Land as alternatives to the binary, instrumentalist modes of settler Land use strategies. I limit my reading to one example that underscores the protective and regenerative power Land holds for Inuit peoples. In it, the narrator speculates at length about the disposition of body and spirit after death:

> What happens to the energy once it leaves our body? Does it leave us or does it start vibrating at an unknown frequency? Does it cast itself into the wind and leave our vessels lonely? Do our spirits travel with the wind? Do our spirits retain our value and ascend into the Knowing or are we demoted with our bodies decay? Are we as worthy while we rot? How many layers of consciousness are there? Are we still giving? Is being inanimate really a lesser state? (131)

Ultimately, the narrator concludes the place to look for this knowledge is to the Land, "Land always answers these questions for me," she explains. "Land protects and owns me. Land feeds me. My father and mother are the Land. My future children are the Land. You are the Land" (132).

As with the scene of the Northern Lights, Tagaq's moves here are decidedly non-

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Western. By having the narrator turn to the Land as family, Tagaq rejects Western, settler binaries like "reality" and "fantasy," or "truth" and "falsehood." She encourages the reader, instead, to see Inuit ways of knowing and ways of being in the world. She describes the relationship between Land and the narrator in terms of human generations and the care they give to and receive from one another. As elder, the Land answers the narrator's questions, giving guidance born of prior generations' lived experiences. As father and mother, the Land "protects and owns" the narrator. It "feeds" her, giving her the shelter and the care parents and family provide children and relatives. As "children," the Land looks to her and other human relatives for loving attention and care. This scene opposes rationalist, Euro-normative conceptions of the other-than-human. It reclaims Inuit cultural forms and ways of knowing as the proper way to relate to the Land, and to the other-than-human more generally.

Tagaq not only represents Land as a relative. She once again shows family existing in non-linear, "spiraling time." She shows how the Land binds the narrator to her family, her ancestors, her father and mother, her unborn children, all at once. The narrator's links to the Land cause her to exist alongside multiple generations of living, dead, and unborn relatives while also living alongside the Land as immediate, ensouled family. What's more, we, the readers, become part of this family. "You are the Land," Tagaq writes to us. With this move into and out of the second person, Tagaq draws the reader into the spiraling generational cycle of human and other-than-human relations. She reminds us that we, the readers, are directly related, as family, to the other-than-human realm settler logic so often imagines as distinct other.

These ways of understanding and relating to the Land reject Western paradigms of property ownership and Land use grounded on rationalist, instrumentalist logic. Western logic views Land as private property, as inanimate and distinct from humankind, as something to be owned and used. In this way Land becomes an

"exploitable commodity" (Justice, *Indigenous Literatures* 6), the highest and best use of which is to be enclosed, improved, and developed. As Amitav Ghosh writes, this epistemological violence of European colonialism led to "the emergence of a new economy based on extracting resources from a desacralized, inanimate Earth" (38). It supported ways of thinking that bred understandings of the other-than-human as "'brute' and 'stupid' and hence deserving of conquest" (36). This thinking allowed colonizers to treat Land merely as a source of wealth and profit (36). Tagaq's narrator rejects these paradigms. Instead, she invokes Inuit understandings of a Land that guides, protects, feeds, and reproduces her and her people. These are not relations of extraction or exploitation. They are relations of respect, kinship, and family.

The Indigenous Land relations Tagaq describes frustrate the efforts of colonizers, settlers, and corporations to control Land.[3] As Patrick Wolfe explains, these efforts reflect the nature of settler colonialism as "an inclusive, land-centered project that coordinates a comprehensive range of agencies . . . with a view to eliminating Indigenous societies" ("Settler Colonialism" 393). Settler expansion depends on a range of eliminatory strategies. For instance, it seeks not only to physically alienate Indigenous peoples from their Lands. It also seeks to reprogram the ways they conceive of and relate to the Land. "[O]ne central way of doing this," Justice and O'Brien write, "was by attacking the relationships that tied people to the land" (xv). Tagaq understands this history of alienation and reprogramming. She opposes it by representing the "specific relationship[ ]" (Justice, *Indigenous Literatures* 154) between the narrator and the Land of the High Arctic, a relationship with its own deep history in Inuit traditions, cosmologies, and knowledge. In doing this, she "ground[s the] wonder" (154) embodied in *Split Tooth* in the lived realities of the narrator and the Inuit people and, specifically, their ways of knowing and relating to the Land . With each of these moves, she makes an Indigenous wonderwork.

By depicting the Northern Lights and the Land as vital, with life and agency, as the narrator's family, Tagaq affirms Indigenous ways of knowing and relating to the

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other-than-human. At the same time, she implicitly contests both the legacy and the contemporary effects of settler colonialism in the High Arctic. She invokes "wonder" as an alternative to the logic of alienation and enclosure underlying settler colonial relations to the Land. In doing so, she fashions an Indigenous wonderwork. Although she implies the culpability of readers in the continuing settler project, and invites them to reflect on their complicity, Tagaq never makes that link express. In the music and the videos of the album *Tongues*, however, this connection becomes explicit.

Tongues, "Colonizer," and Contemporary Settler Complicity

With the album *Tongues*, Tagaq has much to say about the Canadian settler state, particularly the troubled history of its residential school system. In that regard, one reviewer muses "Pope [Francis] may have said he's sorry [for the involvement of the Catholic church in the Canadian residential school system], but *Tongues* is a furious assertion of debts yet to be paid" (Decter 29). Tongues not only contests the legacies of residential schools; it challenges ongoing settler processes in Canada, like occupation of Indigenous lands and Indigenous language loss. As popular music scholar Alexa Woloshyn points out, Tagaq's musical decoloniality is an effort to enact a "deliberate strategy of cultural and political self-determination" for Inuit peoples (4). Consistent with that, Woloshyn continues, Tagaq refuses "to merely affirm the settler fantasy or reinforce one-dimensional stereotypes of Inuit" (10). Rather, as *Tongues* illustrates, Tagaq's work is nuanced and multi-dimensional, exploring varied historical and contemporary forms of colonial oppression and a range of Indigenous responses to them.

This section analyzes the video for the track "Colonizer" as an Indigenous wonderwork that pointedly attacks the Canadian residential school system and the colonial logic underpinning it. The Video does this by using three distinct semiotic modes: aural (musical), visual (video), and textual (lyrics). Aurally, the track begins as a

distorted, repetitive, three note synthesizer riff atop propulsive percussion, all at a brisk tempo of 150 beats per minute. The time signature, alternating between measures of 5/8 and 3/8 time, accents unexpected beats—not the backbeat of pop and rock, the syncopated beats of jazz, or the downbeat of Western classical forms. Rather, the propulsive, off-kilter cadence results in something like a lopsided waltz, subtly mocking that staid European form of composition.

The structural elements of tempo and time signature establish an agitated, uneasy mood. Layered onto these elements is a foreboding soundscape made up of synthesizers and Tagaq's voice. The synthesizers are a crucial part of the track's aural effects. As one reviewer writes, their constant presence lends the album "a buzzing undercurrent of electronics that turn analog performance into inventive digital music" (Pearce). On "Colonizer" the opening synthesizer riff continues for the track's duration, its notes descending three steps then returning to the starting point every other measure. The synthesizers sizzle and hum, dissolving over and over with the falling the three-note riff into what sounds like the static of a mis-tuned radio dial, adding to the track's sense of foreboding.

Tagaq enters early on, vocalizing alongside the synthesizers in a form of throat singing called katajjaq in the Inuit language Inuktitut. Katajjaq is an ancient form of vocal game traditionally played between pairs of Inuit women while men were away on a hunt. Its purpose is "to influence the spirits of animals to surrender their lives, [by] imitating surrounding environmental sounds (e.g., breaking ice, animal grunts)" (Stevance 50). Banned for years by the Canadian settler state, in recent times katajjaq has become an important element of Inuit cultural resurgence. Though a skilled practitioner of katajjaq, Tagaq has never observed its rules strictly (Woloshyn 4). Instead, she learned katajjaq alone, and performs it without the traditional second singer. Moreover, whereas katajjaq is traditionally performed a cappella, without musical accompaniment, Tagaq most often performs with backing musicians, using her katajjaq voice much like a musical instrument in exploring a broad spectrum of sounds.

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By ignoring katajjaq's formal rules while retaining its decidedly non-Western character, Tagaq makes novel Indigenous art. As Chadwick Allen explains in a different context, because musical forms like Tagaq's "use . . . recognizably customary sound elements, patterns, and techniques" they exhibit "'aural empathy' with customary practice" (154). Given its aural empathy with traditional Inuit katajjaq, Tagaq's form of katajjaq can be seen as "'trans-customary' work that is neither 'hybrid' nor 'caught between' traditional and modern forms" (153). Rather, it is its own distinct form of Indigenous expression. In "Colonizer," Tagaq uses it to convey her own distinct, decolonial Indigenous message.

Tagaq's trans-customary katajjaq is at the center of "Colonizer's" soundscape. Throughout the track, Tagaq alternates between expressive breath sounds in a high register and tones in a much lower, more guttural register. As a matter of mechanics, Tagaq explains, these alternating sounds are "'a conglomeration between flapping your epiglottis and using your nasal cavities with the deep growling sound. You can either make deep sounds going in and out or higher sounds going in and out, or any combination. It's like sculpting, but with sound'" (Dickie). Just as Tagaq alternates between sounds in high and low registers, she likewise alternates between non-linguistic and linguistic sounds. Non-linguistically, Tagaq often vocalizes in "Colonizer" with grunts and growls. This form of vocalization, music scholar Sophie Stevance posits, "violates Western musical sound conventions through [making] 'primitive sounds'" (54). As a result, Tagaq's "markedly rough sounding throat singing . . . could be deemed ugly and strange or even disturbing to the untrained ear" (54). Tagaq's first linguistic utterance in the track is the word "colonizer." She growls and snarls this one word repeatedly in the deep lower register of katajjaq. In doing this, she invests the word with significance as the track's title and as the Video's object of attack. At the same time, she defamiliarizes it. Using the foreboding timbre of the grating, grinding lower

katajjaq register to unnerve those listening with "untrained ear[s]" (Stevance 54), Tagaq holds the word up for inspection. Spoken in the colonizer's language but voiced in menacing katajjaq, she subverts and Indigenizes it, loosening it from its mooring in English and turning it to decolonial ends.

Working in tandem with its aural elements, the Video's visual elements are critical in conveying its decolonial message. As in *Split Tooth*, the Video deploys images of the Arctic Land and the Northern Lights as symbols of anticolonial resistance to the "logic of [Indigenous] elimination" (Justice and O'Brien xviii) at the heart of the settler project. It opens with computer-generated aerial images of sea ice and tundra, presumably the same Land Tagaq writes of in *Split Tooth*. Though considered terra nullius by the settler state, and thus subject to settler Land claims, this Land was never vacant. Rather, it is home to Indigenous peoples and to the other-than-human elements on which they have depended since time immemorial.

The images of Land soon cut to a view of three human figures sculpted from ice. One is a man wearing vestments and holding a cross. Another is a woman dressed in simple clothing. Between them on a pedestal stands a third figure, that of a man in formal clothing and a cape in the style of the eighteenth or nineteenth century. The figure holds a roll of official-looking papers in its right hand while a sword hangs at its left hip. The first two ice figures—a priest and a nun—suggest the Catholic church that staffed and ran the residential schools. The third figure is especially suggestive. In fact, this figure is the image of a famous statue of Canada's first prime minister, John A. MacDonald.[4] "For many Indigenous peoples, MacDonald was the chief architect of the residential schools who engineered their cultural genocide" (Stanley 89). In the context of the Video, the roll of papers in MacDonald's hand hints at treaties and laws, the authority by which the Canadian government consigned Indigenous children to residential schools and dispossessed Indigenous peoples of their Lands and cultures. The sword at his hip can be read here as a reminder that if the law failed, the government would use violence to affect its intent. These three figures appear

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throughout the Video from a variety of angles, but always atop the hill overlooking the Land. This elevated position suggests the colonial gaze and the settler's effort to project power over the Land and its people.

The next series of images alludes to the differences between Indigenous and settler understandings of Land relations. For almost an entire minute the Video shows overhead images of Arctic Land. They initially scroll past slowly, depicting uninhabited Land, lakes, and rivers. As the images gain speed, the Land abruptly transitions into segmented parcels. This jarring shift from undisturbed, open Land to segmented lots suggests parcelization and enclosure. Divided into rectangles and squares, the Land is bounded. Boundaries like these, and the corresponding right to exclude others, define Western regimes of private property. As Justice and O'Brien explain, "the privatization (and subsequent alienation) of collectively held Indigenous territories has been—and continues to be—a fundamental mechanism of settler colonial domination and displacement across Indigenous homelands on a global scale" (xii). The Video suggests these "dispossessive processes" (xi), as the tundra symbolically transforms from collective Indigenous Land to segmented private property.

The Northern Lights as a decolonial force appear at the 1:40 mark, throbbing against a starry sky. As the perspective shifts downward, the Lights seem to descend onto a tower topped with a cross. The structure on which the tower sits is in flames. While the Northern Lights hover over the burning building, the field of vision pans across a sign reading "Thunderchild Indian Residential School – St. Henri – Delmas." This image refers to an actual residential school that operated from 1901 to 1948 outside what was to become Delmas, Saskatchewan, near the Thunderchild Reserve (Thunderchild). It explicitly evokes the residential schools that sought to destroy Indigenous social and cultural systems. In what perhaps was an instance of decolonial struggle in its own day, the Thunderchild school was destroyed by a fire reportedly set

by four Indigenous students (Thunderchild). The Video suggests this event, underscoring Tagaq's decolonial message by highlighting historical Indigenous resistance to settler oppression. The presence of the Northern Lights at the burning school, too, is significant. In *Split Tooth*, Tagaq shows how the Lights hold deep meaning for Indigenous peoples of the High Arctic. There, they represent ancestors and descendants and thus the past and the future of the Inuit people. Here, the Lights underscore past Indigenous resistance to settler forces and presage ongoing resistance to contemporary settler projects. They suggest that the Indigenous ancestors and their resistance at the residential school exist together in spiraling time with contemporary Indigenous descendants.

After leaving the burning residential school, the Video returns to fast-moving overhead images of segmented Land. The images blur as they gain speed. Tagaq enters here with lyrics. As discussed above, she repeats the word "Colonizer" in the guttural lower register of her trans-customary katajjaq (2:18) before shifting to a taunting, sing-song repetition of "Oh, you're guilty" (2:32). As the Video nears its denouement, the Northern Lights appear to descend onto the head of the ice figure of MacDonald. Gazing imperiously—or wistfully—at the Land, the figure begins to melt as the Lights hover over it and Tagaq gutturally repeats the lyric "Colonizer" (2:48). At the 3:04 mark, Tagaq's lyrics shift into direct address: "You colonizer." The timbre of her voice changes from deep katajjaq to repeated shouts of the same words, ending in a high, echoing scream that fades into the track's ever-present, buzzing synthesizers. The Artic sun breaks the horizon. All three ice figures melt as Tagaq sings, liltingly, tauntingly, "Oh, you're guilty" (3:32). The melting hastens until these symbols of settler state and church disappear completely. Returning to liquid form, the figures run downhill through crevices in the rocky Land, where they join a clear body of water shimmering over a bed of rock (4:02 – 4:20). With that, the Video ends.

The Video's three semiotic modes—aural, visual, and textual—are deeply Indigenous and decolonial. Aurally, Tagaq privileges Indigenous forms of vocalization

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over vocal conventions of Western music to tell a story both of past settler violence and of the complicity of her settler audience in the continuing settler project. Moreover, in the distinctly contemporary way Tagaq arranges, performs, and produces her trans-customary katajjaq, she asserts the contemporary relevance of Indigenous arts like her own while repudiating settler efforts to consign Indigenous peoples to the past, an effort that is central to the settler logic of elimination. Tagaq's music and soundscapes not only honor Inuit customs. They also point toward Indigenous survivance and futurity while embodying her own contemporary decolonial agenda. As one reviewer has commented, the soundscape Tagaq creates on *Tongues*, centering trans-customary katajjaq, is "what the process of decolonization can sound like in practice" (Przybylski).

Visually, beginning with overhead images of unsegmented tundra that transitions into divided parcels, the Video suggests the gulf between settler and Indigenous understandings of Land. The settler state sees Land as empty space calling out to be enclosed and improved as private property or developed for resource extraction. Indigenous peoples, on the other hand, view Land as collective, as family, as directly participating in, even defining, their culture. As the ice figures melt—including the figure meant to suggest the architect of Canada's residential school system–the Land receives their liquid forms and returns them to the Arctic sea. With this move, the Land symbolically collects then disposes of the settler project and its violent processes like the residential school system. This return to the elements connotes the impermanence of a Western culture that imposes itself on Indigenous life-worlds that have existed on and with the Land and the other-than-human for millennia; it points to the survivance of Indigenous peoples and cultures. With their presence at the burning residential school and at the scene of the melting ice figures, the Northern Lights likewise symbolize settler culture's impermanence: they affirm the

power of both other-than-human and of Indigenous culture, all while resisting colonial ideologies.

With respect to the Video's lyrics, Tagaq has explained how she fashioned the track with the express intent of calling out settler audiences for their complicity in the settler project. Speaking about the difficulty of conveying the truths of Indigenous existence in Canada to settler audiences, Tagaq explains: "There is no winning. [With 'Colonizer'] I thought fuck it, might as well just clobber them over the head with it because they're either not going to hear you or dismiss you. I would rather be dismissed as someone angry than be dismissed as someone kissing their ass, you know" (Cuthand). Elsewhere, she has stated about "Colonizer" that she refused to let the settler audience "wear blinders anymore. I'm just going to rip those off for you because it's better to see than to have blinders on. So that's why 'Colonizer' came out the way it did. Everybody is guilty and everybody has to take responsibility to repair the damages so that we can live" (Krewen). For Tagaq, settler culpability is clear. She knows that at the same time settler viewers consume her "powerful sonic messages" (Woloshyn 11) of decolonialism, they dwell on Indigenous Land and live off the fruits of a colonized continent. Her lyrics confront this reality head-on.

With its soundscape, its images, and its simple but strident lyrics, the Video deals in the mystery and the wonder so vital to the Indigenous wonderwork. It rejects the "rationalist supremacy" of settler logic and its detachment from the natural world (Justice, *Indigenous Literatures* 152). It affirms Indigenous ways of knowing as something "*other* and *otherwise* . . . outside the bounds of the everyday and mundane" (153, italics in original). Like the Text, the Video deploys the Land and the Northern Lights as lively, agentive elements of the other-than-human. In this alone, it is an Indigenous wonderwork. But it goes further than the Text, depicting the Land and the Lights as expressly decolonial. Unlike the narrative of Split Tooth, the Video pointedly indicts settler audiences and their complicity in settler projects, past and present.

Split Tooth and "Colonizer"– A Trans-Media Indigenous Wonderwork

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The Land of the Inuit and the Northern Lights are at the core of the ways of knowing Tagaq represents in *Split Tooth* and the decoloniality she advocates in the Video. Looking closely, one can see these other-than-human elements cross boundaries from *Split Tooth* to the Video in ways that reinforce the decolonial message of the Text. Following Chadwick Allen, one way of bringing this trans-media conversation into the light is by purposefully juxtaposing the Text and the Video. Etymologically, the term "juxtapose" combines the Latin juxta, or "close together," with the French poser, or "to place" (Allen *Trans-Indigenous*, xvii-xviii). Allen looks to this etymology in describing what he calls "Indigenous juxtapositions"—those that "place diverse [Indigenous] texts close together across genre and media, aesthetic systems and worldviews, technologies and practices" (xviii). As theorized by Allen, trans-Indigenous methodology involves juxtaposing texts by different makers from distinct Indigenous traditions. That methodology does not strictly apply here, where I read two texts made by a single artist. Nevertheless, reading the Text and the Video as forms of Indigenous artistic expression placed close together helps show how they function as a single, trans-media Indigenous wonderwork. Something new and exciting happens when, as Allen's work suggests, one takes the Text and its Indigenous ways of knowing and juxtaposes it with the blunt decoloniality of the Video.

The fact the Text and the Video speak to one another across media should come as no surprise. In addition to their underlying thematic parallels, Tagaq took many of the Text's poems as *Tongues*' lyrics.[5] Moreover, both works are part of Tagaq's larger creative and political project. This is evident in the ways each of them represents the Northern Lights and the Land as family that acts with and on behalf of human relatives. For instance, in the way the Northern Lights bridge generations of family—dead, living, and unborn—they remind *Split Tooth*'s narrator of her heritage and show her the future of her people. They play similar roles in the Video, where they represent Indigenous

pasts and futures, ancestors and descendants overseeing the destruction of the residential school. As symbols of past and future Indigenous resistance, they preside over the destruction of the ice figures that represent settler authority. The Lights watch as the figures melt, return to the Land, and flow into the Arctic waters, where they are diluted into insignificance.

Like the Northern Lights, Land resonates across media. In *Split Tooth*, Tagaq challenges settler logics of enclosure and improvement by depicting Land not as private property but as family. In declining to lay claim to Land, *Split Tooth*'s narrator refutes settler logics. Consistent with Indigenous ways of knowing, she makes clear the Land owns her. In this way, Tagaq builds a community of human narrator and Land, one based on reciprocal duty and respect. She braids the Land into the narrator's family group, both human and other-than-human. Land is not a commodity, is not something to be seized or enclosed or developed or sold. Rather, for the Inuit narrator, the Land is living, agentive, and familial. These themes recur in the Video. There, the images of Land changing from open tundra to bounded parcels invoke the allocation regimes and enclosures that typify settler colonialism. This is Land as commodity, not as family. By the Video's end, however, the Land sheds colonial encroachments. No longer bounded and segmented, it receives the dissipated ice figures and channels them, as water, into the Arctic sea. As protector of its Indigenous family, it routes these artifacts of the settler project through and across itself, away from Indigenous spaces, just as it ultimately will reclaim all humans and their systems, institutions, and artifacts.

Made evident by the "focused juxtapositions of . . . distinct Indigenous texts" (Allen *Trans-Indigenous*, xvii), this trans-media conversation sees the Video bolster *Split Tooth*'s rich decolonial allusion. For instance, after her powerful communion with the Northern Lights, the narrator flees the ice and her "dangerous dream" to return to the safety of the party and the "comforting thumping of Johnny Cash's bass" (57). The reference to Johnny Cash gestures toward settler culture as a normative force. As a form of decolonial protest, this allusion is complex, subtle. Similarly, when the narrator

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declares the Land "owns" her, she alludes to the long, conflicted history of Indigenous and settler understandings of Land use. Read with historical understanding, the allusion rebuts settler notions of Land and property ownership. Lacking that historical context, however, the allusion's subtlety risks obscuring its message.

Split Tooth's allusions, though artful, might be less helpful for Tagaq's decolonial program than a more direct attack. This is especially true to the extent Tagaq seeks to inculpate the Text's readers in the projects of their contemporary settler nations by reminding them that—regardless of their origins— they, too, are direct beneficiaries of the settler project; that settler invasion is not an historical fait accompli but, rather, a structure that continues to advantage them daily in direct and tangible ways (Wolfe 249). Here is where the Video, placed close together—juxtaposed—with the Text becomes the Text's partner, working across media to reinforce and supplement *Split Tooth*'s decolonial message. Like *Split Tooth*, the Video holds up the Land and the Northern Lights as vital members of Inuit culture and family. More clearly than the Text, however, the Video challenges Euro-normative rationality by showing the Land and the Lights as other-than-human beings with agency to oppose colonial forces directly. The Video's visual medium makes these moves more overtly than does the Text. The images of Land segmented then finally channeling the melted ice figures into a shimmering body of water are forceful. The same is true of the images of the Northern Lights presiding over the burning residential school and the melting colonial icons, including none less than the architect of Canada's residential school system.

Though powerful, the Video's images of the Land and the Northern Lights do not work alone. Tagaq's lyrics pointedly inculpate the settler. The six words— "Colonizer," "Oh, you're guilty," "You colonizer"— declare not only that the song targets settler colonialism as a historical project that sought to clear entire continents of Indigenous inhabitants so settlers and their descendants could flourish. The lyrics also

name the audience, regardless of their opinions about their own complicity, as participating in an ongoing coloniality. As white Australian scholar Patrick Wolfe explains: "in a structural sense, in terms of the history that has put me where I am and Indigenous people where they are, my individual consciousness, my personal attitude has got nothing to do with this. I am a beneficiary and a legatee of the dispossession and continuing elimination of Aboriginal people in Australia. As such, whatever my personal consciousness, I am a settler" (Interview 237). Through its "logic of elimination," Wolfe teaches, the settler project is a continuing process that operates to this day in the settler state (249). By using traditional Inuit forms of katajjaq in a non-traditional way—coupling pointed English lyrics with Indigenous sounds—Tagaq directly confronts residents of settler states with a contemporary Indigenous cultural form that names their complicity in six short words. In the Text, she leaves the reader to infer his or her complicity. The Video speaks that fact loudly, bolstering the Text's muted message. In doing so, it places settler audiences on notice they have been charged as participants in the settler project.

Juxtaposing the Text and the Video—placing them close together and reading them carefully near to one another—shows them conversing across boundaries of artistic expression. They bind themselves to one another as a trans-media Indigenous wonderwork in the way other-than-human elements function similarly in both works: as family with agency to act on behalf of human relatives; as representatives of Inuit histories and futures; as symbols of Indigenous resistance. Joined with the Text, the Video amplifies the message of *Split Tooth* with sound, images, and lyrics. The lyrics in particular highlight the culpability of the contemporary settler. Even more than the Text, the Video's simple, pointed lyrics stress how contemporary settlers are complicit in the colonial project. Taken together as a trans-media Indigenous wonderwork, the Video amplifies *Split Tooth*'s subtle, implicit message of audience involvement in and responsibility for ongoing settler colonialism.

Conclusion

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As Indigenous wonderwork, *Split Tooth* is decolonial at its core. Despite this, it does not directly implicate the settler reader in the contemporary settler project. Instead, it tells stories of Indigenous relations with the other-than-human from which the reader may infer his or her culpability. For an author with a decolonial project like Tagaq's, however, this strategy risks uncertain ends. Settler populations are adept at sidestepping or ignoring their own culpability, in what Tuck and Yang call "settler moves to innocence" (10). Given this, the Text's allusion and metaphor may be insufficient to prompt audience self-reflection.

Juxtaposed—placed close together—with *Split Tooth*, the Video amplifies the Text's muted message of audience complicity. Its lyrics address the audience directly, in the second person. "*You* colonizer," Tagaq names them (italics added). "*You're* guilty," she tells them (italics added). Settler colonialism, she shouts, is not past. It exists today. It is happening now, and you—audience—are guilty. If you reap the benefits of Indigenous Lands, she declares, you are a settler just as those who first dispossessed Indigenous peoples of Lands and cultures and removed Indigenous children from families for forced assimilation in church-staffed residential schools in Canada and elsewhere. The Video's direct address resonates with the notes Tagaq strikes in the Text, of Land and Lights as family, as Indigenous pasts and futures, as symbols of Indigenous resistance. But the Video's lyrics, coupled with its unsettling soundscape and decolonial images of Land and Lights, lays blame squarely on the settler audience.

Juxtaposed with *Split Tooth*, the lesson of the Video crosses media to the Text. There, it magnifies the Text's implicit message of settler complicity. It amplifies *Split Tooth*'s allusion and metaphor with soundscapes and images and visceral shouts of blame. This is an example of how the trans-media Indigenous wonderwork can function: creating distinct forms of cultural production grounded in Indigenous ways of knowing and causing them to amplify one another's decolonial messages. With this

hybrid form, the Indigenous artist heightens the urgency of her decolonial message. And, perhaps, the audience comes that much closer to acknowledging its culpability in the ongoing colonialism of their own settler state.

Notes

[1] This essay will follow Tagaq's convention of capitalization throughout.
[2] Following Tagaq's convention, I will capitalize Land as a proper noun throughout.
[3] The territory of Nunavut, where *Split Tooth* is set, reflects these entangled histories. Inhabited by Indigenous peoples for millennia, the region that would become Nunavut saw European contact in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries with the coming of the Hudson's Bay Company ("HBC") and its fur traders. A quasi-colonial "company state," with hybrid commercial and sovereign roles, the HBC was chartered by the English government in 1670 (Phillips and Sharman 125). Two centuries later, the region came under the control of the Canadian settler state when in 1869 the HBC transferred its claims to the region to the Government of Canada (126). After extensive Land claims negotiations between Indigenous peoples and the Canadian government, Nunavut was created as a territory for independent Inuit government in 1999. Both before and after that date, the settler project has continued in the region, as corporate interests seek the mineral wealth of the Inuit Land (Bernauer).
[4] The statue on which the ice figure is based was located at the MacDonald Monument in Montreal until August 29, 2020, when it was toppled and decapitated (British Broadcasting Corporation).
[5] In an interview shortly after the release of *Tongues*, Tagaq described how she came to incorporate portions of *Split Tooth* as the album's lyrics. As she explained, she never intended the Text's poems as lyrics. But when she was asked to record an audiobook version of the Text, she thought "'Well, this would be a lot fucking better if there was some crazy music behind it'" (Pedder). With urging from her producer, who recognized Tagaq wanted to use *Split Tooth*'s poems as lyrics, Tagaq "went into the studio with a 'dog-eared copy of the book' and recorded the vocals with no rehearsals" (Pedder).

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

"*Awasi*-: Visual Images In Works From Kimberly Blaeser, Louise Erdrich, And Gerald Vizenor"

CHRIS LALONDE

Our aim is to shed light on the relationship between visual representations and kinship, connection, and worldview present in work by three Indigenous literary artists: White Earth Anishinaabe band members Kimberly Blaeser and Gerald Vizenor and Turtle Mountain Chippewa [Anishinaabe] Louise Erdrich. All three deploy words in multiple genres articulating another way of knowing and being rooted in Anishinaabe worldview, culture, and history. Small wonder then that they also deploy Anishinaabemowin, the language of the people, in their works.[1] Blaeser's photographs in her 2019 volume of poetry *Copper Yearning* and elsewhere, Erdrich's drawings in her memoir *Books and Islands in Ojibwe Country* (2003), and Vizenor's photographs in his mixed-genre *The People Named the Chippewa* (1984) complement and reinforce

their words, and vice-versa. Building on Vizenor's thinking regarding fugitive poses, Blaeser notes that "photographs have the ability to bend and refract dominant stories" ("Refraction and Helio-tropes"184). Drawings done by Indigenous artists can do the same. Explicitly signaling liberation from the damning representations created by non-Indigenous visual and literary artists, as Blaeser does, indicates how high the stakes are for her, Vizenor, and Erdrich, for the Anishinaabeg, for all Native American and First Nations peoples. We would do well to look first at two telling photographs, each anchoring a revealing newspaper article published on June 30, 1936 in order to see what is at issue and at stake.

Picture, then, this: after a quick glance at the front page of the day's *Minneapolis Tribune* a reader cracks open the paper to its centerfold and, schooled to read left to right and tending to be drawn to images, the eye lights on a head-and-shoulder photograph of Frances Densmore accompanying a five-page article announcing that the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) would be hosting a luncheon that day in her honor. [fig. 1]. Born in Red Wing, Minnesota and educated at the Oberlin College Conservatory of music, Densmore was by 1936 a well-established and accomplished fieldworker and ethnographer, or what we now term an ethnomusicologist, known for her collection and study of Native American music and songs from a host of different Indigenous nations as well as for her work on Native American customs and cultures more generally.

Over across the centerfold is a headshot anchoring another five-paragraph article. This photo is of Clement Vizenor, whose murder was front-page news the day before in the three major Minneapolis dailies of the time, including the *Tribune*. [fig. 1] The front-page coverage of the slaying was pretty much the same, although the *Minneapolis Star* saw fit to sensationalize the murder to a greater degree. Each paper highlighted the violent nature of the killing, its location, and the death of Vizenor's brother Truman early in the month; each gave Clement's age and occupation, and

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noted, variously, that he was “part Indian,” “quarter Indian,” “a half-breed.” He hailed from White Earth. Gerald Vizenor is his son.

Two photographs across from each other on 30 June: one, a formal studio portrait; the other, a smiling snapshot; one a noted scholar; the other, victim. Two articles of roughly the same length, articles that could not be more different: one containing a recognition and celebration of a person's body of work to date; the other, offering questions without answer and the silence that comes with death. That silence resounded twenty-five years later when Gerald Vizenor sought answers concerning the murder and subsequent investigation. The murder unsolved, it resounds still today.

Fig. 1

The five-paragraph article devoted to the DAR's honoring tea for Densmore notes that she was fresh from fieldwork in northern Minnesota, up around Cass Lake, and that Chippewa arts and crafts she had collected were on display in a monthlong exhibit at the Walker Art Gallery in Minneapolis that had opened the previous day. Although the *Tribune* did not cover the opening, its article on the 30th did include the title of Densmore's address: "The Influence of Nature on Chippewa Art." The topic had

occupied Densmore for at least a decade—she published *Chippewa Customs* in 1927—and would continue to do so after 1936.

Densmore's 1936 gallery talk seems never to have been published, but the Minnesota Archaeological Society included in its August 1936 *Bulletin* a summary of a talk on the handicraft and art of the Chippewa that Densmore gave to the society, headquartered in a lower floor of the Walker Gallery at that time. It is unclear if the Archaeological Society talk and the exhibition opening address were one and the same, although it is plausible given that they share the same subject, but either way, the 1936 summary and an address from her in 1941 entitled "The Native Art of the Chippewa" make clear Densmore's assertion that Chippewa art either imitates or interprets nature. Whether Chippewa art was initially imitative and then interpretative or vice versa, and therein lies the contradiction between the two addresses, Densmore holds that the art was in decline: the 1936 account notes "This state was when the Indians had too many beads, etc. to work with and was the beginning of the downfall of Indian Art" (1). This is consistent with her position in *Chippewa Customs*. There she writes,

> It appears that in the development of Chippewa design an interpretation of nature through conventional flower and leaf forms preceded an imitation of nature. It appears further that the spirit of real art decreased as the imitation of nature increased until the floral patterns in use among the Chippewa of to-day have no artistic value. (*Chippewa Customs* 186)

While Densmore holds that the early patterns were marked by their veracity, she stated that "the chief characteristic of modern Chippewa art is its lack of truth and its freedom of expression" (*Chippewa Custom* 189). This, for Densmore, marked the art's decline.

More than a decade later, the conclusion of the 1941 address is especially damning:

> The native art of the Chippewa cannot be "revived," for it was part of the life of the wigwam—the old life of simple pleasure and clear thinking.

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> The birchtrees still stand on the hillsides but the native art of the Chippewa is gone forever. (681)

For Densmore, then, while the natural world remains, Anishinaabe art connected to nature has vanished. While not often a wordsmith, to my ear at least, with double vowels and consonants, with soft endings, most tellingly for all save “stand,” and “art,” Densmore’s closing move tacitly asks, and answers, can the *indian*, to deploy Vizenor's term capturing the construction created and perpetuated by the settler-colonial society, be far behind?

Densmore implicitly asked and explicitly answered what was for her and others that rhetorical question well before 1941. Her 1915 "The Study of Indian Music" concludes both by stating that "the songs of a vanishing race must be preserved" and that the "Indian" would be better understood through a study of the music. Then in her enumeration of the four reasons for studying "Indian music" an astonishing emplacement: "Too much has been said and written about the tragedy of the vanishing race. We need to be reminded that the Indians were a race of warriors and knew how to face defeat. There was no self-pity in the heart of the Indian and he asked no pity from others" (197). Here Densmore admonishes her readers to cease dwelling on the tragedy of the vanishing indian because the indians recognize and accept that they have been defeated. Thus cleared from having to bring up the "tragedy" and in doing so cleared from at the very least acknowledging the role played by the dominant settler-colonial society, Densmore and her readers can now rest easy with the claim that the vanquished "deserve to be honored" and that she and they do them that honor by accepting, and studying, the gift of their music, a cherished possession that "Today they are willing to give to us" (197). Thirty years later, Densmore calls on her readers to find "old Indians," take them to town, and record them singing their songs "before the opportunity is gone" for "Nothing is lost so irrevocably as the sound of song, and

among the Indians, as with many other peoples, music was an important phase of native culture" ("The Importance of Recording Indian Songs" 639).[2]

That same dying fall is captured in the Minnesota Archaeological Society's summary of Densmore's 1936 talk and, according to the Society, her emphasis on "the beginning of the downfall of Indian Art." It should come as no surprise, then, that the June 30,1936 *Tribune* article devoted to the murder of Clement Vizenor across the way from the piece on Densmore closes on a dying fall as well when it notes that Clement's brother Truman met "a violent death" falling from a railway bridge at the beginning of the month. The article offers a trace of the natural world, noting that Truman's "body was found in the Mississippi River." Still, rather than undoing the same old story of death, of the always already absent fervently wished for by the dominant society, the *Tribune* update, like Densmore's readings of nature and Anishinaabe art, reinforces it.

Two photographs, then, two still images: the subject of each in its own way connected to the same old *indian* story, one told and retold in words and pictures as the cornerstone of the national narrative of the nation and the dominant settler-colonial society. It is fitting rather than fortuitous happenstance that the photograph of Clement Vizenor is across the sheet of *Tribune* newsprint from the photograph of Frances Densmore, for by 1936 Densmore had been taking photographs as part of her fieldwork for nearly thirty years. In fact, her first professional fieldwork in 1907 included both songs and a revealing photograph of Flat Mouth, hereditary head of the Pillager band of the Anishinaabe, taken a day after his passing at Onigum on the Leech Lake reservation east of the White Earth reservation. Densmore had arrived at Leech Lake as members of the Midewiwin, or Grand Medicine, Society were ministering to the elder and she looked on as they attempted to heal him with medicine, chant, and song. The day after Flat Mouth's death, Densmore was given permission to photograph his body. Her report to the Smithsonian Institution's Bureau of Ethnology (BAE) of what she had heard and seen at the two reservations helped her to secure her accompanying request for funding. With equipment purchased with some of the one hundred and

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fifty dollars she received, Densmore traveled north again in September to record Anishinaabe songs and music.

It is fitting that Densmore captured Flat Mouth in state with her camera, for, as she had written to the BAE when requesting funding, she desired "to record Indian customs before they disappeared forever" (Archabal 101). What better way to drive home that point, drive home the urgency, than with Flat Mouth's corpse. Once again, the *indian* is consigned to a narrative of inevitable loss. While the image is revealing, it tells only a part of the story of what Densmore appears to have desired concerning her photographing of *indians*. Equally revealing is a story Densmore recounts in her papers of photographs she did not take. In his essay on Densmore's photographs of Natives in Minnesota, Bruce White notes that Densmore longed to take pictures of her *indian* subjects without their knowledge; she wrote, "I had been inspired by tales of taking pictures unbeknownst to primitive people and thought I would try it" (qtd. in White 321). Her phrasing is telling, with "primitive" locating the *indian* on one side of the uncivilized-civilized binary and "unbeknownst" locating Densmore and her profession on the other.

Densmore's description of her sole effort to photograph *indians* in such a way replicates the binary:

> With my camera I went to an Indian ceremony that was to take place in an enclosure surrounded by a high board fence. There were knotholes in the fence and I thought it would be a good stunt to stand outside the fence and take photographs through a knothole. Having established myself in location I was ready for a fine afternoon, until an Indian found me. It is not necessary to tell what followed, but I never tried to take pictures in that way again.
>
> (qtd. in White 321)

The barrier is as much figurative as literal—*indians* on one side, anthropologists on the other—for as White points out, Densmore, as was true of her contemporary anthropologists, was interested in the *indian* of and in the past, "showing little interest in the complete contemporary lives of her subjects" (White 341). No wonder, then, that it was "not necessary to tell what followed," for to have done so would have meant giving voice to the native, their thinking, and likely their emotional response to yet another member of the dominant society coming to take something vital to the people. For all Densmore's commitment to *indian* song and singing, here the native must be silent.

In *Fugitive Poses: Native American Indian Scenes of Absence and* Presence Vizenor invokes silence as well, but in the name of resistance, writing,

> Natives posed in silence at the obscure borders of the camera, fugitive poses that were secured as ethnographic evidence and mounted in museums. That silence could have been resistance to the mummers of camera dominance. Eternal poses are not without humor, but the photographic representations became the evidence of a vanishing race, the assurance of dominance and victimry" (155).

Against the emplacement constructed for the *indian*, native artists create moving images that go beyond the rupture, cleaving, and deracination produced and perpetuated by the dominant society: in Anishinaabemowin the word is *awasi-* (a preverb): beyond, over across.

There is more than a trace, more than an inkling, of Vizenor's transmotion in the deployment of *awasi-*, for both prefix and preverb signal movement, a change of position, going beyond. We need only go to Vizenor's "The Unmissable: Transmotion in Native Stories and Literature" in the inaugural issue of *Transmotion* to register that native transmotion, the "visionary or creative perception of the seasons and the visual scenes of motion in art and literature," is "directly related to the ordinary practices of survivance, a visionary resistance and sense of natural motion over [the] separatism,

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literary denouement, and cultural victimry" we see at work in Densmore's thinking and images (69, 65).

In an essay on Indigenous photography, including her own work, White Earth Anishinaabe writer, scholar, and photographer Kimberly Blaeser writes of finding in her "Indigenous Indices of Refraction, Brussels 2012" what Vizenor terms "an elusive native [not *indian*] presence" (*Fugitive Poses* 156): her image as she triggers the shutter. [fig. 2] For Blaeser, "Out from that noticing [Indigenous] eye and tiny instrument of aperture and mirror opens the entire scene—an interactive image of refracted light, shadows, and imaginative connections" ("Refraction and Helio-tropes" 184). As is true of the "actual family images" (*Native Liberty* 165) invoked by Vizenor that go beyond the painfully easy simulations of absence that are *indian* images, going beyond thanks to the native stories connected to them, Blaeser's "Indigenous Indices of Refraction, Brussels 2012" goes beyond the stereotypes created and perpetuated by the dominant society thanks to the "imaginative connections" that Blaeser identifies. The photograph is an example of what Blaeser labors to create: in her words, "my own photographs or picto-poems aspire to create or invoke a kind of cultural or transcendent nexus of connections, regardless of the subject. They enact a process of sometimes unexpected associative links" ("Refraction and Helio-tropes" 183). What holds for "Indigenous Indices of

INDIGENOUS INDICES OF REFRACTION, BRUSSELS 2012

Fig. 2

Refraction, Brussels 2012" holds for more than that creation or even the rest of her oeuvre, as Blaeser knows and makes clear by noting in her essay's conclusion, "Working amid a complex history and hive of Indian images, Native photographers choose various paths to liberate Native representation, offering new slants or angles of sight, casting cultural light, inviting vision **beyond** the frame" ("Refraction and Heliotropes" 188; emphasis added).[3]

At a glance, both the first and the last photograph in Vizenor's *The People Named the Chippewa* might seem to consign the native to death. The cover photo of the paperback edition is followed by *The People Named the Chippewa* standing alone on the first page seen upon opening the book. [fig. 3]

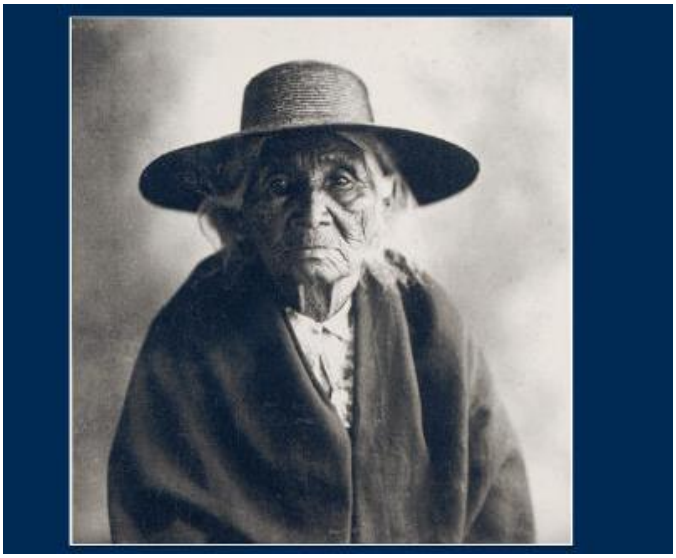

Fig. 3

A turn of that page reveals the same photographic image as frontispiece, over across from which is the full title page, including the text's subtitle, the name of the author, the publisher, and place(s) of publication. Crucially, then, the design of the book emphasizes title as well as image, priming us to see a gap opening between the Anishinaabe and the dominant culture's positioning of them in the latter's terms—the people **named** the Chippewa (emphasis added)—a positioning that here and throughout his career Vizenor has taken pains to both point out and undo.

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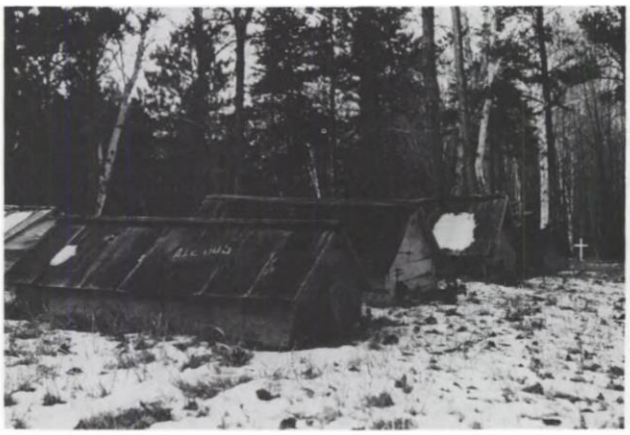
We see and then see again the image of an Anishinaabe adult woman of indeterminate age with weathered and wrinkled facial skin, slumped shoulders, her upper body seeming to sag or settle down and in, her face partially shadowed, studio lighting coming from in front of and from her left as she faces the camera. She looks… In the spirit of Blaeser's efforts to conjure "cultural or transcendent nexus of connections" and "associative links," stop the sentence there, resist the impulse to ascribe to the photographed woman a physical and/or emotional state. Look instead at the image's date stamp: "about 1890." What is it about 1890? The closing of the frontier. Wovoka. The Ghost Dance. The massacre at Wounded Knee on a bitterly cold late December morning. The photograph is about 1890, no doubt about it, about the desire of the settler-colonial society to capture the *indian* inexorably and inevitably passing away.



Anishinaabe grave houses,
Leech Lake Reservation.
Photo by the author.

Fig. 4

The last photograph in *The People Named the Chippewa*, the twenty-third, would seem at first glance to sound the same old story, proclaiming the inevitable end for a person and a people: Anishinaabe grave houses on the Leech Lake Reservation [fig. 4]. The photograph is Vizenor's, one of nine taken by him that are included in the text, and by the time one arrives at the last photograph the reader should recognize that it needs to be read in light of the other eight taken by Vizenor and against the same old story of the vanishing *indian*. Vizenor's photographs include a smiling Jerry Gerasimo standing amidst a cluster of

young students captivated by a camera at the Wahpeton Indian School in 1969; an Anishinaabe probation officer sitting at ease atop a three-foot high stump beside a building in some disrepair; students at the Indian Circle School on the White Earth Reservation; Dennis Banks in profile wearing an AIM beret and again in regalia with Kahn-Tineta Horn at a tribal dance; AIM members in Minneapolis at the Bureau of Indian Affairs in 1968. In a word, these are contemporary natives, not anachronisms. The photographs of children are especially telling, for they harken to the needs of future generations. They also resonate with many of the archival images from the Minnesota Historical Society in the book, for six of the first eight of those images are of Anishinaabeg families.

One sees kinship and community on display both in the selection of historical photographs ranging from the 1890s to 1945 featuring families and multiple generations of community members and in Vizenor's photographs of children in educational settings. The last two photographs in the volume, both taken by Vizenor, highlight the importance of traditional cultural practices and place to the people: the former an image of an honoring ceremony for John Ka Ka Geesick held in the Warroad, Minnesota high school gymnasium and the latter the image of traditional Anishinaabe grave houses built low and peaked against the elements in a clearing of a mixed hardwood-coniferous forest.

Given that Vizenor, in his words, "create[s] imagic scenes... in narratives and stories," the use of photographs from the Minnesota Historical Society and those that he has taken is not surprising (*Native Liberty* 5). Nor is it surprising that many of the photographs in *The People Named the Chippewa* feature families, for, again to quote Vizenor, "some photographs of ancestors are stories, the cues of remembrance, visual connections, intimations, and representations of time, place, and families, a new native totemic association alongside traditional images and pictomyths" (*Native Liberty* 179).[4] Vizenor recognizes that "The *Anishinaabe* pictomyths, transformations by vision and memory, and symbolic images are totemic pictures and [while] not directly related to

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emulsion photographs; yet there is a sense of survivance, cultural memory, and strong emotive associations that bears these two sources of imagic presence in some native families" (*Native Liberty* 180).

Louise Erdrich's relationship to her daughters, particularly to eighteen-month-old Nenaa'ikiizhikok, and to motherhood and family are foundational to *Books and Islands in Ojibwe Country*, so it is unsurprising that her illustrations in the text include drawings of the child Erdrich bore after she turned forty and of mother and child together. Named for one of the four spirit women tasked with watching over the world's waters, Nenaa'ikiizhikok is rendered by Erdrich as the child explores her immediate surroundings first at the Lake of the Woods and then at Rainy Lake, as a loon paddles close to check her out, with her father Tobasonakwut, and as Erdrich nurses her. Images of family rightly capture our attention, but Erdrich's first two illustrations ought capture our attention as well, for they accentuate the link between word and image, between sheets of paper and sheets of water, between narrative, kin, connection, and community.

The first drawing (4) is of books on and indeed partially in the water with hardwoods growing from the covers of two volumes [fig. 5]. Sharp lines of demarcation give way to an image that accentuates connections and interconnectedness as the line between water and book is blurred, or rather, as water and book, natural world and text, merge. Moreover, just as with words and images complementing each other Erdrich's text makes clear the connections between books and islands, both and water, all and the

Fig. 5

natural world, so too does *Books and Islands in Ojibwe Country* highlight the connection Anishinaabeg have with water in general and her partner Tobasonakwut's band has with the Lake of the Woods in particular.

Fig. 6

The second drawing (15), that of her favorite tobacco to give as gift, reminds us of the connection between self and others here on turtle island and between the corporeal and the spirit world that are key features of traditional Anishinaabe worldview [fig. 6]. The image highlights family with *Nokomis* prominently featured, the word translated into English is my grandmother, but the word also orients us to Anishinaabemowin more generally, which is to say to the place from which the language springs. In Erdrich's words, Anishinaabemowin, "is adapted to the land as no other language can possibly be. Its philosophy is bound up in northern earth, lakes, rivers, forests, and plains... it is a language that most directly reflects a human involvement with the spirit of the land itself" (*Books and Islands* 85). Her words echo Vizenor's here, as he notes in *The People Named the Chippewa* that "the words the woodland tribes spoke were connected to the place the words were spoken" (*The People Named the Chippewa* 24). In such a constellation of connections and interconnectedness kin and kinship go beyond blood to encompass all our relations.

Such an understanding is radically opposed to the ideology of acquisition, possession, and extraction traditionally and typically governing settler-colonial society and the West, for all the words and actions to the contrary that countries and global multinational corporations tout as evidence of a green sensibility and mindset, words too often merely lip service and actions too often questionable at best. Thus, while highlighting kinship and connection and another way of being in and with the world, Erdrich's second image makes clear how this other way is transgressive insofar as *Nokomis* and all it signifies breaks the frame on the label meant to contain it.

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Together, the first two images contextualize and knit together the third image (17), that of Erdrich reading as Nenaa'ikiizhikok nurses at her breast. [fig 7]. The child is settled into the crook of her mother's left arm and Erdrich's left hand is cupped around the side of her daughter's head. Erdrich's right arm is also bent at the elbow in order for her to clasp with her right hand an open book at reading distance. Vizenor holds that the eyes and *hands* of "wounded fugitives" captured in photographs taken in service of the dominant society can nevertheless be "the sources of stories, the traces of native survivance" (*Fugitive Poses* 158, emphasis added). Fittingly, then, in Erdrich's third drawn image the nursing blanket is drawn so that mother, her hands, child, open book, and sustenance merge. What comes with that merging is nothing less than, to deploy Vizenor's language again, the "traces of native survivance." So ends the volume's first chapter. The third image's emphasis on connection will be repeated in the text's final image, presented to the reader after Erdrich returns on the text's last page to the question she wants to answer, is driven to answer, and with which she opened *Books and Islands in Ojibwe Country*: "Books. Why? (4, 141). We are prepared for the answer when it comes at text's end: "so that I will never be alone" (141): which is to say, so that she will be and stay connected, so that she will recognize and nurture connections. We are also prepared for the final drawing (141) where books, driftwood, rocks, and shore are all rendered together to close a text that opens our eyes to connection not separation [fig. 8].

Fig. 7

Fig. 8

Coming roughly a third of the text after the drawing of mother and child and reading, her drawing of the pictograph of the Wild Rice Spirit on a shoreline rock wall of an island in the Lake of the Woods helps to link people, place, and worldview for the

reader. Standing before the pictograph on Painted Rock Island, Erdrich writes that she was "trying to read it like a book" but that she did not "know the language" (51). After Tobasonakwut utters the figure's name, *Manoominikeshii* or, in English, wild rice spirit, the pictograph resolves, for "Once you know what it is, the wild rice spirit looks exactly like itself. A spiritualized wild rice plant" (51). Spirits of things have, Erdrich tells us, "a certain look to them, a *family* resemblance" (51, emphasis added). The emphasis on family, on representation, and on reading is concretized when Tobasonakwut, knowing the year's wild rice crop is destined to be abysmally poor because the provincial government saw fit to raise the lake's water level against the protest of the First Nations peoples and in the process ruin thousands of acres of wild rice beds (52), likens the failed harvest to parents who had no children, for lines of kinship are broken both for present and future generations. All our relations suffer.

Erdrich offers her drawing of two pictographs paired and read together on a Lake of the Woods rock face in order to show what the familiar phrase all our relations means for the Anishinaabe. At the base of the rock, which is to say closest to the water by turns still, lapping, rolling, pounding against it, an image of a *name*, a sturgeon, “floats” above the image of a divining tent (76-77). The rendering includes spirit lines emanating from the lake sturgeon. Here, then, we are encouraged to see the connections between sturgeon and humans and between the physical world and the spirit world. Beyond being a rendering of those connections, the pictographs also proclaim a desire to see and maintain the link between worlds and between human and other-than-human persons via the representation of the divining tent. It is fitting, then, that the drawing of those pictographs is the penultimate one in the section of *Books and Islands in Ojibwe Country* devoted to the Lake of the Woods, to be followed by the drawing of daughter atop her father’s shoulders, for the former image resonates and informs the latter, and vice versa, helping us to see.

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Erdrich's drawings of mother and child stand in telling and welcome contradistinction to one of the three pictures of Clement Vizenor from the June 1936 newspapers. The headshot used by the Minneapolis Journal is cleaved from the last photograph taken of father Clement and son Gerald together [fig. 9]. To invoke Vizenor on photographs, the Journal photograph is "not the real," it and the other headshots of Clement are "not the actual representations of time or culture" (*Native Liberty* 165). Indeed, all three headshots are doubly disconnected—severed both from their original genres—family and personal photographs—and from the lived experiences of native people. If "the stories of photographic images create a sense of both absence and presence: simulations are the absence, and stories of actual family images are an obvious sense of presence" (*Native Liberty* 165), the headshots of Clement William Vizenor offer us only absence, particularly the one published in the Minneapolis Journal.

Fig. 9

That last photograph adorns the dust jacket cover of *Interior Landscapes*: *Autobiographical Myths and Metaphors* (1990) and serves as the volume's frontispiece. The text includes both the narrative of Vizenor's effort to get the police records of his father's unsolved murder and his poem of the *Journal* headshot, entitled "The Last Photograph." That poem situates Clement and others from White Earth in the Twin Cities: "reservation heirs on the concrete / praise the birch / the last words of indian agents / undone at the bar" (30-31). Imagine those last words—you'll have support there, there will be work, housing, promise, a future—words lost in the reality of a "crowded tenement" where "our rooms were leaded and cold / new tribal provenance / histories too wild in the brick / shoes too narrow" (31). The poem culminates with the last photograph opening the final stanza, father holding son, a young man who "took

up the cities and lost at cards" (31). While for Densmore, the birch trees are a vivid reminder of what is no more for the people, an image of what has been lost, Vizenor's poem indicates that such need not necessarily be the case. Despite the last words of the indian agents, the birch can still be praised, and Vizenor has long suggested that doing so is both an act and instance of *survivance*.

For Vizenor, the "natural motion in literature and art," the theory of transmotion, is connected to "the original scenes of cosmoprimitive art, or the actual portrayals of native motion and visionary images on rock, hides, ledger paper, and canvas" (*Treaty Shirts* 115, 114). Those visionary images are rooted in specific native cultures and worldviews. Here, praising the birch sounds a connection to material culture and traditional practices: particularly birchbark canoes (fittingly seen in one of the archival photographs Vizenor includes in *The People Named the Chippewa*) and *Midewiwin* scrolls. The archival image shows multiple generations of a family around and, in the case of the youngest, atop a canoe overturned on the shores of Cass Lake, which, again fittingly, is one of the places in northern Minnesota where Densmore did her fieldwork and collecting. The photograph bears the title "Anishinaabe family on the shore of Cass Lake, about 1900." Read in light of and in the spirit both of Vizenor's thinking and of Blaeser's efforts to create with her photographs and picto-poems a nexus of connections and the possibility for unexpected associative links for her audience, the image is about 1900, before and after, insofar as it highlights kin and connection as foundational to individual, to family, and to community identity and survival.

In the same light, Blaeser writes "Poetry is connections" in the Preface to her first collection of poetry, *Trailing You* (1994), and dedicates the book to those to whom she is connected by blood and history:

> for the Blaesers, Bunkers and Antells
> for you who carry those names in your blood
> for you who carry those names in your spirits. (n.p)

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Given the dedication and Preface, it makes sense that the volume's frontispiece consists of thirteen snapshots of multiple generations of her family, the photographs overlapping arrangement stressing connection [fig. 10].

[Image overleaf]

Fig. 10

What is more, the overlapping layout of photos "invites [our vision] [to go] beyond the frame" ("Refraction and Helio-tropes" 188). We are encouraged to see not hard and fast boundaries but rather a fluid borderlands featuring family: twelve of the thirteen photographs are of more than one person and at least seven of those twelve include

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multiple generations in each shot. The sole photograph of a single person is of the poet herself, positioned such that we see what she "sees": kinship and connection.

Blaeser says that she situates her photographs in the tradition of Anishinaabe dream song, and that in so doing her images offer pathways that "invite a moment of transcendence or enlightenment" ("Refraction and Helio-tropes" 179). Her photograph for the cover of *Copper Yearning*, entitled "Where Amber Light Spills," uses reflection to signal to the reader the role it will play the poems to follow while also sounding the primacy of connections and offering us an invitation to enlightenment. Rooted in Anishinaabe worldview, the invitation offered by the photograph is to a moment of eco/ontological enlightenment concerning the connections between the various layers of the cosmos as understood by the Anishinaabe—sky, the earth on turtle's back, and the world that lies beneath.

Still images, Blaeser's photographs picture her attempt to "insinuate the animate, the cyclical, the eternal—not necessarily motion in the photo, but the sense of possibility suggested through visual vibrations or photographic gesture" ("Refraction and Helio-tropes" 178). The cover image insinuates motion, starts to become a moving image, with both its title and the faint trace of radiating concentric circles on the water's surface. A trick of light? the after-image of a panfish after it has kissed the surface? the dream of a water body? all? something else? No matter, the trace of motion carries over and across to the other Blaeser photograph in the volume and the picto-poem "Dreams of Water Bodies *Nibii-wiiyawan Bawaadanan*" (6-7) opening the section "Geographies of Longing" [fig. 11].

Image, English, and Anishinaabemowin come together in the picto-poem to recast *Wazhashk* so that it is no longer "belittled or despised / as water rat on land." Rather, *Wazhashk* is recognized for who it is,

hero of our Anishinaabeg people *ogichidaa Anishinaabe*

in animal tales, creation stories	*awesiinaajimowinong, aadizookaang*
whose tellers open slowly,	*dash debaajimojig onisaakonanaanaawaa*
magically like within a dream,	*nengaaj enji-mamaajiding*
your tiny clenched fist	*gdobikwaakoninjiins*
so all water tribes	*miidah gakina Nibiishinaabeg*
might believe.	*debwewendamowaad.*

(*Copper Yearning* 7)

Blaeser's photograph highlights motion and repetition as an overhead shot and a side shot of a swimming *Wazhashk* are each repeated twice: moreover, the overhead shot become three in the image is oriented so that *Wazhashk* swims toward the viewer while from the side the image in triplicate reveals *Wazhashk* swimming from right to left, which is to say against the grain with which the West's eye is schooled to read. Invited to see from another perspective, from an Anishinaabe perspective, we can begin to see "this good and well-dreamed land *minwaabandaan aakiing maampii*" (7), and with it begin to see the importance of sacrifice as well, reciprocity, thinking for the many rather than simply for the self, thinking and acting for all our relations. From there it is a small step back to the volume's dedication "...For the Water Protectors– *ogichidaakweg* / who walk for health of *nibi*..." (*Copper Yearning* n.p.) and ahead to its Envoi where Anishinaabe water drums sound and the "frayed history" of a land and a people "we patch / with the patient pitch of story" (*Copper Yearning* 141).

[Image overleaf]

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Fig. 11

For Blaeser, the both-and nature of photographs opens rather than forecloses possible illuminations, because, made up of both presence and absence, photographs "simultaneously invoke the material and the immaterial, the known and the unknown" (181). One sees this in a picto-poem not included in *Copper Yearning*, although the verse portion serves as the volume's proem, "Wellspring: Words from Water" [fig.12].

Fig. 12

"Wellspring: Words from Water"
A White Earth childhood water rich and money poor.
Vaporous being transformed in cycles–
the alluvial stories pulled from Minnesota lakes
harvested like white fish, like *manoomin*,
like old prophecies of seed growing on water.
Legends of Anishinaabeg spirit beings:
cloud bearer Thunderbird who brings us rain,

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winter *windigo* like Ice Woman, or *Mishibizhii*
who roars with spit and hiss of rapids–
great underwater panther, you copper us
to these tributaries of balance. Rills. A cosmology
of *nibi*. We believe our bodies thirst. Our earth.
One element. *Aniibiishaaboo*. Tea brown
wealth. Like maple sap. Amber. The liquid eye of moon.
Now she turns tide, and each wedded being gyrates
to the sound, its river body curving.
We, women of ageless waters, endure:
like each flower drinks from night,
holds dew. Our bodies a libretto,
saturated, an aquifer–we speak words
from ancient water.

The image articulates the both-and nature of still photography and the both-and nature of Anishinaabe cosmology and a layered universe where lines separating the physical and the spiritual, for instance, are often blurred. Water, mist, sky merge in the image such that not far out beyond the dock it become difficult to see where sky and water meet. A tree-lined shoreline on the left at an indeterminate distance merges with mist and sky as our eye follows it from the left edge of the frame toward the middle of the photographic field. We have no idea where the far shore is out past dock's end. Even the near shoreline is figuratively blurred, as lake water rides over the dock's deck.

The photograph plays with time as well, which is in keeping with Blaeser's desire to "disrupt a sense of temporal reality" in and with her images. Not knowing the camera's orientation to the sun, it becomes difficult to determine whether it is morning or evening (Blaeser "Refraction and Helio-tropes" 178). Time of year is also at least to

some degree indeterminate: not winter, obviously, but late spring, early summer, mid-summer, late summer, early fall before the leaves turn? An example of Blaeser's effort to "privilege photographic feeling over fact, spiritual intuition over physical data" ("Refraction and Helio-tropes" 178), the photograph invites us to feel comfortable in and with indeterminacy, to see connections both physical and spiritual, to get our feet wet.[5]

Here, then, poem coppers word and image, enabling the picto-poem to resonate beyond this particular moment "*in-not in*" time and space. The connections captured in the photographic image magnify to include in the one-stanza verse *Mishibizhii* and the Thunderers, winter windigos, earth and moon, Anishinaabe creation stories, women, mother and daughter. Thunderers balance Misshepishu, and vice versa, reminding us of the need to have and maintain balance within, with, and between all things. Windigo, gone mad due to a combination of appetite and excess, serves to caution us to take care and not to take too much. "copper" is an inspired and telling choice of words, for it serves to connect picto-poem to the homeland of the Anishinaabeg and to their own native literary history and tradition. As Anishinaabe William Warren's *History of the Ojibwe People* (1885) tells us, Anishinaabeg considered copper sacred and used it for "medicinal rites," in Midewiwin ceremonies, and, in at least one instance, as the "sheet" upon which with "indentations and hieroglyphics" was marked a family's history through the generations (89).

Stories of spirit beings copper narrator to a network of balance because, remarking connections and interdependencies, those stories are a pathway to enlightenment and healing. What might seem a picture of ruptured connections, lake water washing over dock surface, is anything but, for at times just beneath the surface of our awareness and understanding is the truth of connection, the firm platform upon which, once recognized, we can stand.

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This recognition pictured in the image, articulated in its accompanying verse, resonates forward and backward in time. In 1998, with deep loss threatening to rive, solace:

> Mother, Auntie, Grandma, Marlene,
> we believe you inhabit these lands.
> Your spirit embedded here
> blowing like Bass Lake breezes
> across our fish-wet hands.
> Pushing up moccasin flower shoots
> along the Tamarack trails.
> Casting before us scents
> we know to be our relatives
> cedar, pine, and sweetgrass.
> Etching story words and pictures
> in white-gray birch bark patterns.
> Calling names in the language of birds
> *Nay-tah-waush*, *Mah-no-men*
> Gaa-waababiganikaag. (AI 48)

Back as well as forward: child to mother, mother to child, throughline made explicit via words and water: "Rills," "*Aniibiishaaboo*," "Amber." Amber Dawn, Blaeser's daughter.

As was often her wont, Densmore's close to "The Study of Indian Music" gives the reader the *indian* dead and gone. At the same time her close imagines that careful attention to the music, song, and other elements of material and symbolic culture gathered thanks to the acquisitive impulse of ethnographers committed to collecting and persevering and the generosity of native sources affords one the chance to "find [in the collected materials] some trace of kinship, some new reason that, as we stand

beside the grave of the Indian, we may say 'Here lies my brother'" (197). Some kinship that: it is easy enough to imagine a connection with what you have cast as other once they have been dead and buried, but it is no comfort to those erased.

Birch trees to birch bark: Densmore to Blaeser, Erdrich, and Vizenor. In "Literary Transmotion: Survivance and Totemic Motion in Native American Indian Art and Literature," Vizenor describes Densmore as "the honorable recorder of Native songs and ceremonies" and she deserves our thanks for her labors, for all that she collected over the course of her long career (18). We are the richer for her efforts. Still, it bears remembering that, according to Michelle Wick Patterson, when Densmore was asked what led her to collect and study Native American music, song, and material culture, her answer was nearly always the same: she recalls that as a child in Red Wing, MN"'I heard an Indian drum'" as she settled into bed for the night and drifted toward sleep (Patterson 29). "Unconsciously," she wrote, the sound of distant drumming "called to me, and I have followed it all these years" (Patterson 29). Taken together with the story of Densmore's attempt to take photographs of natives without their knowledge and, according to Patterson, her efforts from first to last to approach the study of Native American cultures with "scientific detachment," the sound of a distant drum becomes an instance of distancing, and with that distancing a separation between Densmore and her informants comes into focus (Patterson 44). From such a distant vantage point it is easy for Densmore to picture the people as objects, as *indians*. Stephen Smith notes that "while Densmore's commitment to preserving Indian culture was progressive for her time, she still harbored many of the common American prejudices about Indians. She viewed them as a childish race with a 'native simplicity of thought'." Moreover, he explains that, "Over time, Densmore's attitudes about Indian character hardened. As she grew more scientific and less romantic in her analysis of Indian music, her view of contemporary Indians grew astringent.” According to Smith, "Densmore spent her adult life working among Native Americans, but not with them. She erected

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an imposing, patronizing personal barrier that permitted few—if any—Indians to get past."[66]

Over against the isolation, emptiness, and loss Densmore inscribes in 1941 with the stark image of birches standing on a hillside, one sees the recognition of presence over absence and of connections over separation articulated by "Etching story words and pictures / in white-gray birch bark patterns" (*Absentee Indians and Other Poems* 48); by a bookstore and publishing house named Birchbark Books in the spirit of *mazinibaganjigan*, a word used "to describe dental pictographs made on birch-bark, perhaps the first books made in North America" (*Books and Islands in Ojibwe Country* 5); by a recognition that "The Anishinaabeg drew pictures that reminded them of ideas, visions, and dreams, and were tribal connections to the earth. These song pictures, especially those of the Midewiwin, or the Grand Medicine Society, were incised on the soft inner bark of the birch trees" (*The People Named the Chippewa* 26).

awasi- signals movement, as does transmotion. Vizenor makes clear that the latter is not just any movement; rather, the "literary portrayal and tropes of transmotion are actual and visual images across, beyond, on the other side, or in another place, and with an ironic and visionary sense of presence" ("The Unmissable" 69, emphasis added). Back then one more time to the beginning that we might move forward and in doing so continue to go beyond the *indian*. "Our aim" opens the essay, and together those two words sound the critical importance of the group rather than the individual and invoke the spirit of collective action to protect and to right wrongs from which arose the American Indian Movement on the streets of Minneapolis in the 1960s. Whether one agrees with AIM's leadership or is critical of it, or both, the call to join and to act in the name of and for the betterment of many resounds.

Back then, too, with Blaeser, Erdrich, and Vizenor to the beginning, the Anishinaabe creation story and the earth on Turtle's back. Basil Johnston's rendering

in *Ojibway Heritage* makes clear the dynamic nature of what Kitche Manitou beheld in vision and then created—a world of both change and constancy: nothing immutable, nothing static. No wonder then that in his first novel Vizenor made clear that terminal creeds are terminal diseases. What is more, restoring the earth after it was flooded in response to man's foolishness necessitated collective acts of kindness, generosity, and sacrifice. Turtle offers its back to an exhausted Sky Woman so that she might land and rest, waterdivers one after another dive deep reaching for the bottom, failing again and again to surface with a bit of earth until finally, *Wazhashk*, least of all, at last succeeds. And so the earth on Turtle's back comes to be. Erdrich offers us her drawing of a snapping turtle, remarking literally and figuratively the link between the number of plates that comprise its shell and human females and motherhood. Blaeser's image of *Wazhashk* links Copper Yearning's opening proem "Wellspring: Words from Water," the "Dreams of Water Bodies" following it, and the Anishinaabe creation story and in doing so offers a gentle admonition that we view muskrat and so much more in a different light.

Like Erdrich and Blaeser, Vizenor would have us see differently. Like *Wazhashk*, his efforts are timeless. Vizenor has long advocated for continental liberty. Indeed, it is enshrined in the Preamble of the Constitution of the White Earth Nation, a document for which he served as the principal writer:

> The Anishinaabeg of the White Earth Nation are the successor of a great tradition of continental liberty, a native constitution of families, totemic associations. The Anishinaabeg create stories of natural reason, of courage, loyalty, humor, spiritual inspiration, *survivance*, reciprocal altruism, and native cultural sovereignty. (Constitution)

Fittingly, Vizenor links continental liberty, families, and totemic associations that include human and other-than-human persons. There are small triumphs in the spirit of continental liberty. Land bridges and safe passage corridors have been created. Dismantling dams and constructing water ladders to bypass those blockages that

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cannot be removed has enabled the return of *nameh* to waters from which they had long been absent; they have now more and more the freedom of their traditional range.[7]

Still, there are painful truths. As I type this sentence, 8 December 2023, the news in the *Star Tribune* this week included word of a cougar roaming in the north suburbs of Minneapolis-St. Paul; that story was followed two days later with an account of the cougar's encounter with a moving Humvee. The cougar had no chance. Nor did Clement Vizenor years before, his blood spurting from a fatal neck wound long before any urban birdsong welcomed a Sunday dawn. Just shy of four weeks earlier Truman Vizenor fell to his death from a train bridge, arrow straight parallel rails and uniform cross-ties leading nowhere, save trouble. In contradistinction to the image of those rails and where they lead, Vizenor's *Interior Landscapes: Autobiographical Myths and Metaphors* offers not the Lake of the Woods or Rainy Lake in the northern borderlands but a sheet of water on the White Earth Reservation, "small, round Vizenor Lake" (17). The sheet is small, to be sure, if not round, precisely. The description is revealingly apt nevertheless: round invokes circles, cycles, continuity, connectedness, connections, dare we say a seamless whole, and in doing so sounds a fuller, wiser notion of kin.

Envoi[8]

Back as well as forward, forward as well as back; beyond, over across; words and water: *awasi-*; moving images. A *dibaajimowin* then, a story from memory: in the land of the Anishinaabeg, an easy evening paddle south with Kim Blaeser, Bob Black, and a group of college students, returning from a visit with the North Hegman Lake pictographs.

We let the students find their pace and rhythm. They ease on until they are some ways in front, leading us home as the setting sun casts evening glow that makes for

telling reflection. We had lingered long on the water with the pictographs, offered tobacco, sketched, taken photos, talked quietly between canoes, no matter that it will mean a portage uphill through a shadow-darkened stand of red pine.

But that is still to come. It is a fine evening for paddling, not a breath of wind. Then, up ahead, voices of young women lift in song, carry over Northwoods water.

A blessing
Nagamon
Sing

[To hear the complete poem, visit: https://www.ttbook.org/interview/benediction-song-giving-back]

"A Song for Giving Back"

"Sing, spirit of water," Blaeser writes, recites, and in a public performance of "A Song for Giving Back" encourages her audience to proclaim. In *Chippewa Customs*, Densmore included the stories of the spirit of water and the spirit of the woods in a section entitled "Pastimes for little children" as examples of the "simple means devised for entertaining little children," many of which have been forgotten" (Chippewa Customs 62). Blaeser has said that native people don't educate their children, they story them, and from that perspective the spirit of water is not an entertaining pastime to help children while away the hours; it is not something from a past time, but rather is a reminder of an animate and interconnected world, one full of humans and other-than-human persons, a world of flow and flux, of change and constancy. It is a world in motion, a world rendered and enriched by "stories of native survivance [that] are instances of natural motion, and transmotion, a visionary resistance to cultural dominance" (Vizenor, "The Unmissable" 65) one finds in the words and images offered by Blaeser, Erdrich, and Vizenor.[9]

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Coda

In the spirit of connection and community, of a generation giving to those that follow, a collection of moving images.

Gerald Vizenor with his son Robert at the marker of a distant relative on Madeline Island

Vizenor at the opening of the Oshki Anishinabe Family Center, created "to celebrate the idea of tribal families and communities" (Interior Landscapes 221)

[Image overleaf]

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Louise Erdrich at a gathering for young readers and writers in Buffalo N.Y. 2016 (photographs by Bruce Jackson).

In-Na-Po "is a community committed to mentoring emerging writers, cultivating Indigenous literatures and poetics, supporting tribal languages and sovereignty, and

raising the visibility of all Native writers" (https://www.indigenousnationspoets.org/). The video of "Poems for a Tattered Planet" can be found at the In-Na-Po website by clicking on the 2023 Retreat link under the Events header.

Kimberly Blaeser and the 2022 Indigenous Nations Poets (In-Na-Po) Fellows in Washington D.C.

A Poetry Out Loud event honoring first-place winner Amber Blaeser-Wardzala (center) and runner-up Alexa Paleka and featuring a reading by Kimberly Blaeser as the Wisconsin Poet Laureate.

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Notes

[1] I do not speak Anishinaabemowin. I have relied on Nichols and Nyholm, *A Concise Dictionary of Minnesota Ojibwe*, the *Ojibwe People's Dictionary* from the University of Minnesota [online], and the kindness and generosity of those who know the language. That said, any errors are mine and mine alone.

Beginning with *awasi-* in the title serves both to sound the connection between language and place and to emphasize the efforts by Blaeser, Erdrich, and Vizenor to go beyond the othering representations created and perpetuated by the settler-colonial society. Following their lead, in the essay Anishinaabemowin in general and awasi- in particular sound a rhetorical move, invoking the language of the people as a supplement to the othering representations succinctly captured by Vizenor with the lower case and italicized *indian* which is deployed throughout the essay to indicate the construction created and perpetuated by settler-colonial society. In the spirit of Vizenor, I also italicize his critical term survivance. As we will see below, Erdrich and Vizenor make clear that the language of the people is intimately connected to their traditional homeland. Fittingly, the first Anishinaabemowin words in *Books and Islands in Ojibwe Country*, *mazina'iganan* (books) and *mazinapikiniganan* (rock paintings), help sound the connection between language and place. Erdrich adds that *mazina* is "the root for dozens of words all concerned with made images and with the substances upon which the images are put, mainly paper and screens" (Books and Islands 5) and stresses the connection between Anishinaabemowin, identity, and writing as well when she shares that the meaning of Ojibwe she likes best stems from the "verb '*Ozhibii'ge*' which is 'to write'" (*Books and Islands* 11). For a rich examination of Anishinaabemowin, the place from which it originates, and the ends to which it is deployed see Margaret Noodin, Bawaajimo*: A Dialect of Dreams in Anishinaabe Language and Literature*. For careful readings of the importance of Anishinaabemowin and place in the poetry of Blaeser and Noodin, readings which utilize Noodin's scholarly insights, see Brill de Ramírez, "The Anishinaabe Eco-Poetics of Language, Life, and Place in the Poetry of Schoolcraft, Noodin, Blaeser, and Henry." For work that highlights the relationship between language and place in Vizenor's work see, for instance, LaLonde, "Being Embedded: Gerald Vizenor's Bear Island: the War at Sugar Point;" for an analysis of the role played in and by borders and borderlands in Vizenor's work see, for instance, LaLonde "Continental Liberty, Natural Reason, Survivance: Gerald Vizenor's Sojourning in the Borderlands;" for the relationship between writing, being, healing, and place in Books and Islands in Ojibwe Country (which does not attend to the text's images, however), see LaLonde, "Louise Erdrich's Books and Islands in Ojibwe Country: Writing, Being, Healing, Place;" for an early attention to place in Blaeser's poetry see

LaLonde, "Place and Displacement in Kimberly Blaeser's Poetry;" for more general work focusing on the importance of place-centered readings and criticism when teaching Native American and First Nations literatures, see LaLonde, "Addressing Matters of Concern in Native American Literatures: Place Matters."

[2] Whether from the 1910s or the 1940s, Densmore's elegiac closing move effectively elides the deracination suffered by the Anishinaabe, and indeed by so many of the first peoples of North America. Often a physical uprooting—think the Trail of Tears, think the Long Walk, think the efforts to have Minnesota Chippewa move to reservations, and so on—it was and is also a social and cultural one. In Anishinaabemowin the word is *biigobijigaazo*, a person torn or ripped—in this case torn or ripped from place, people, language, culture by the dominant society.

[3] The display behind the Brussels shop window in Blaeser's photograph is worth a moment of reflection, for the dozens of carefully placed figurines are a picture of excess even as they also speak to labor, to the construction of cultural identity, and—with the columns of cast miniature soldiers marshalled together beneath the Belgium flag—colonialism. Elizabeth A. Povinelli's "The Urban Intension of Geontopower" begins with a description of what W.E.B. DuBois saw in his visit to the Belgium park and palace at Tervuren just outside Brussels in 1936: "One can hear DuBois's heels clicking against the polished paving stones and see, as he saw, the copper architectural adornment of elite Belgian institutions as he absorbed the full monstrosity of colonialism (para. 1). Povinelli then quotes Benjamin on the Brussels shopping arcades, "a recent invention of industrial luxury" (Povinelli para 1) to make clear the link between class, capitalism, and colonialism. It is precisely this damning link that with words and images Blaeser, Erdrich, and Vizenor would have us see and see through.

[4] Grounding her argument in Vizenor's thought regarding fugitive poses, Hearne notes that the moving and still images from the late 19th- at least through the mid-20th century serve as a visual archive available for "indigenous repurposing" (308). Whether knowingly or not, The Minnesota History Center's current two-year exhibit "Reframing Our Stories" [running October 2023 to October 2025] resonates with Vizenor's thinking and Indigenous repurposing with the proclamation "From a decades-old box of photographs simply labeled 'Indians,' came the idea for a powerful new exhibit. // Inside the box were dozens of pictures of Native community members, organizations, activities, and events that are relevant today. Now in the hands of indigenous community members, those photos have new meaning." [https://www.mnhs.org/historycenter/activities/museum/our-home/reframing-our-stories]

Opening concurrently at the Minneapolis Institute of Art, Target Gallery, is the exhibit "In Our Hands: Native Photography, 1890 to now" featuring "more than 150 photographs of, by, and for Indigenous people." It "encourages all to see through the lens held by Native photographers." [https://new.artsmia.org/exhibition/in-our-hands-native-photography-1890-to-now].

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[5] Getting our feet wet invokes Blaeser's poem "Where Vizenor Soaked His Feet" and Vizenor's "shadow presence" throughout Anishinaabe country and in Blaeser's work. More than simply repeating her literary forebearer, Blaeser unites images and words, storying the image and imaging the story so that photograph and text function in a reciprocal relationship.

[6] See the following documents connected to the Minnesota Public Radio documentary on Densmore's life entitled "Song Catcher: Frances Densmore of Red Wing": https://americanradioworks.publicradio.org/features/densmore/docs/authorintro.shtml

[7] Continental liberty must also hold for the continents and the earth's waters. Povinelli's "The Urban Intensions of Geontopower" is a part of a larger collaborative effort to voice and address critical questions concerning the past, present, and future of fresh water as a public resource under threat. A photograph heading the essay shows Natives and non-natives standing with Standing Rock against the Dakota Access Pipeline project behind a simple declaration writ large: WE ARE WATER.

[8] Our "Envoi" is offered as complement to Blaeser's "Envoi" in *Copper Yearning*, grounded as the former is in the "spirit echoes" of pictographs located in the "homelands" (141) of the people.

[9] Nenaa'ikiizhikok in her mother's arms is a vital image of connection, one that stands in contradistinction to the *Minneapolis Journal's* crop separating father Clement from son Gerald. The clip from Tiffany Deater's "Against the Ruins" showing the photograph rent and a black space opened between father and son is painfully remindful of the terrifying black space of a South Africa diamond mine in *Austerlitz*, a book Erdrich describes reading during her travels to the lakes and islands of the Minnesota-Canada borderlands and that she finishes the night she and Nenaa'ikiizhikok return home to Minneapolis [*please visit html version of this article for Deater's video: the last image, from Trailing You, offers Blaeser's Grandpa Antell holding her youngest uncle, Emmett*]. Erdrich sees and would have us see the connection between the blackness produced by resource extraction (call it what it is, a gaping wound) the Holocaust (call it what it is, genocide) and what has happened to the Indigenous people of North America: the *biigobijigaazo*, the "lightlessness" come of "nine of every ten native people perished of European diseases, leaving only diminished and weakened people to encounter" the horrors of government policies, missionaries, and boarding and residential schools in both the U.S. and Canada (*Books and Islands in Ojibwe Country* 134-135). For all that, against all that, against all odds, in her infant daughter, asleep beside her, there is "a light" (Books and Islands in Ojibwe Country 135).

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

"Creating Shki-kiin, New Worlds: Bending Possibilities and Sustainabilities in Indigenous SF"

SARAH HENZI

Since its beginnings, science fiction has sought to anticipate the future, which "apparently consists of both external encounters—technological marvels (and horrors), aliens, and outer space—and internal tensions—the mysteries of the human mind and body" (Pinsky 2003: 13). Science fiction has also been, however, a vehicle for "often distorted and topsy-turvy references to colonialism" (Rieder 22). In other words, the relationship between the literary genre and colonial history is, to say the least, complicated. If colonialism and industrialization can thus be seen as "external forces" that have resulted in many "internal tensions," such as intergenerational trauma,

cultural genocide, and loss of language, pedagogies, and ways of life, what is it about SF[1] as a literary genre that interpellates Indigenous writers? How are these impacts translated into Indigenous storytelling? Tellingly, a number of works[2] and anthologies[3] of Indigenous SF have appeared over the last several years, exploring these very questions. SF is useful for thinking about colonial history and projecting better futures. "Indigenous SF"[4] may be thought of, to borrow from Cherokee, Hawaiian and Samoan scholar Jason Lewis, as "counterfactual narratives that re-imagine historical events, often to create more positive contemporary and future realities for Indigenous people" and as a process that allows us to "engag[e] with the infrastructure of the present *to bend it* in a direction more conducive to Indigenous ontologies" (2016: 44; emphasis added).[5] Specifically, what interests me here is this idea of "bending" infrastructure, genre, and literary expectations, so as to reimagine a sense of place and belonging in a damaged, wounded world, but a world in which love and beauty are still possible—as otherwise suggested by Anishinaabe scholar Grace Dillon, to "recover ancestral traditions in order to adapt in our post-Native Apocalypse world" (10). To the proposed definition by Lewis, I add Cherokee scholar Daniel Heath Justice's key concept "wonderworks" ("Wonderworks", *Why*). "Wonder," writes Justice, "is thus not a *generic* experience, but a *relational* one. It offers other possibilities than the template. It gives us possibilities" ("Wonderworks" n.p.; emphasis added). In other words, "wonder" allows for stories of resurgence to be explored by way of different kinds of relationships and perspectives, "of other ways of being in the world" (*Why* 152). It questions how

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individuals within a society are informed to function in a certain way, based on the 'normativity' of these interrelationships. Moreover, "wonder," which I read in a similar way to Unangax scholar Eve Tuck's call for a research practice based on desire, rather than damage (2009), invites readers—and protagonists—to explore what *is* wonderful and desireful through story, thereby offering new ways for encounter and engagement with(in) the text, its purpose, and its teachings.

Although some might suggest that Indigenous SF is a more 'recent' phenomenon—perhaps due to the institutional (late) arrival of Dillon's anthology only in 2012—the publication dates of the pieces I have chosen reveal that the trend is not, in fact, that 'new'[6]; rather, it is a sustained, conscious, and embodied literary practice that has built upon and around the rhetoric of SF, while also embracing the concerns and specificities of Indigenous communities of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Acoma Pueblo writer Simon Ortiz's "Men on the Moon" (1999), Dogrib Tlicho author Richard Van Camp's "On the Wings of this Prayer" (2013), and Haisla/Heiltsuk novelist Eden Robinson's "Terminal Avenue" (2004) are three strong examples of Indigenous writers exploring contemporary environmental and sustainability concerns, including those collectively shared, and more justly distributed and inhabited spaces within the context of settler-colonialism, through the malleable modus operandi of SF. These examples have inspired me to consider how Indigenous writers have been and are using tropes, imagery, ideas, and narratives that might be identified as something

analogous to SF, but without bearing the baggage and expectations that a reader/viewer/consumer of generic SF might bring to it.

In creating alternative possibilities and spaces for wonder, I argue that these stories enable a relational quest, between humans and other-than-humans, and across times and spaces. I thus read them as, on the one hand, restorative of Indigenous bodies, nations, and epistemologies, at the very centre of and through narratives of resurgence and, on the other hand, as artistic interventions, that are not only generative of change, but call for respectful, consensual, and critical forms of engagement. That said, rather than attempting to apply theoretical or interpretative genre analyses—however these might themselves seek to upset preconceived or anticipated normativities—I want to return to one of the most foundational ideas in the study of Indigenous literatures: that stories are, in themselves, theory. To extrapolate theory, or rather teachings, from the stories themselves, is more in line with Stó:lō writer Lee Maracle's affirmation, as it is with Indigenous literary nationalists: in that in their specific, contextual, and unique perspectives, these stories actively challenge and expand the mainstream critical definitions of genre(s) and ask their readers to reconsider that "*story* is the most persuasive and sensible way to present the accumulated thoughts and values of a people" (Maracle 7; emphasis in the original). In other words, my reading practice is about adapting existing scholarship(s) to similar Indigenous artistic interventions—which, in turn, borrow from/are inspired by SF studies, affect theory, queer theory, etc.—so as to consider, on the one hand, the complexity of the lived,

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experiential processes of textualizing or otherwise materializing storytelling traditions and concepts of kinship and, on the other hand, the creation of alternative forms of political action, social transformation, and direct healing. For, to paraphrase Maracle, there seems little point in "presenting the human condition in a language separate from the human experience: passion, emotion, and character" (9)—and, if I might add, the impact(s) of said experience.

Indeed, Robinson's piece was written in 1993, as her response to the Oka Crisis, initially slated to appear in her 1996 short story collection *Traplines*; Ortiz's piece is a reflection on lunar discovery/conquest/colonization following the launch of Apollo 11 back in 1969; and Van Camp's story offers an atemporal warning of the harms caused by the tar sands, a form of petroleum deposit, the commercially profitable extraction of which has continuously increased since the mid-1970s. Thus, while attempting to stay within the adapted frames that combine speculative fiction, dystopia and erotica, I am interested here in looking at these literary interventions as generic alternatives and creative processes that enable a fluidity and provide their creators with numerous opportunities for slippages and crossing/negotiating boundaries, without having to answer to any of them. In other words, these intermedial creative approaches reflect on how what may seem generically 'new,' 'contemporary' and 'alternative' is actually part of a larger, ongoing storytelling tradition that reflects interrelationality, adaptability and, perhaps more importantly, shared responsibility and care for all

beings—that is, if we do not wish to "carry on in fever" (Van Camp, 2013: 173).

Knowledge, Dreams, and Teachings

In Acoma Pueblo author Simon Ortiz's short story "Men on the Moon," we are introduced to the lead character, an Elder, named Faustin, who is visited by his daughter and grandson on Father's Day and is gifted a television set. Among the cacophony of images, programs, and ads, Faustin's attention is caught by "an object with smoke coming from it… standing upright." "'What is that?' Faustin asked. His grandson replies, "'Men are going to the moon... That's *Apollo*'" (Ortiz 88). Faustin is, again, confused. He asks his grandson, "'Are those men looking for something on the moon, Nana?'" To which his grandson replies, "'They're trying to find out what's on the moon, Nana. What kind of dirt and rocks there are and to see if there's any water. Scientist men don't believe there's life on the moon. The men are looking for knowledge.' Faustin wondered if the men had run out of places to look for knowledge on the earth" (88). That night, Faustin had a dream. He dreamt of a Skquuyuh mahkina, a "great and powerful" entity "but of evil origins" (85): "Its metal legs stepped upon trees and crushed growing flowers and grass… It walked over and through everything. It splashed through a stream of clear water. The water boiled and streaks of oil flowed downstream. It split a juniper tree in half with a terrible crash. It crushed a boulder into dust with a sound of heavy metal. Nothing stopped the Skquuyuh mahkina. It hummed" (90-91). Faustin's dream protagonists, Anaweh (Flintwing Boy) and Tsushki the Coyote,

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are terrified of this unknown destroyer and, facing east, cornfood in hand, they begin to pray to the great spirits: "We humble ourselves again. We look in your direction for guidance. We ask for your protection. We humble our poor bodies and spirits because only you are the power and the source and the knowledge. Help us, then. That is all we ask" (91). Flintwing Boy readies his bow and says to Tsushki: "You must go and tell everyone. Describe what you have seen. The people must talk among themselves and learn what this is about, and decide what they will do. You must hurry, but you must not alarm the people. Tell them I am here to meet the Skquuyuh mahkina. Later I will give them my report" (91). Tsushki turns and runs to warn the others. And this is the moment when Faustin wakes up.

The dream has a crucial role here, for not only does it parallel a Pueblo story from oral tradition with the contemporary fear that technology threatens to destroy the integrity and sanctity of the environment, it also comes to Faustin—and inevitably to Ortiz's readers as well—as a warning of the destruction that may ensue. After the spacemen return to earth, Faustin asks his grandson if they are alright, to which he responds that they first must go into quarantine to make sure they have not brought anything back to earth that could be harmful. Faustin is confused because his grandson had said that they thought there was no life on the moon; but, if they had brought back a disease, then there may well be the tiniest bit of something. "Faustin figured it out now. The Mericano men had taken that trip in a spaceship rocket to the moon to find

even the tiniest bit of life. And when they found even the tiniest bit of life, even if it was harmful, they would believe they had found knowledge" (95). In this way, not only does the dream serve as a tool for obtaining knowledge about the destruction of lands through capitalist and 'enlightened' development, it can also be seen as an awakening, as a form of resurgence, that is designed to rectify the state of imbalance in which we have come to live. In *Dancing On Our Turtle's Back*, Anishinaabe writer Leanne Betasamosake Simpson explains the importance of dream, or vision, as such: "the act of visioning… is a powerful act of resurgence, because these create Shki-kiin, new worlds" (Simpson 2011: 146). The potential for new, alternative ways of being, seeing, and relating is made clear; however, Simpson warns that such re-imaginings come with a responsibility: "in terms of resurgence, vision alone isn't enough… [It] must be coupled with intent: intent for transformation, intent for re-creation, intent for resurgence" (147). In other words, without intent or responsibility, there is no change, only unfulfilled potential; the recipient of the vision or dream must act upon what s/he has received, because it *is* knowledge. That said, and in the spirit of the necessity to consider, first and foremost, an author's specific, contextual, and unique perspectives (in this case Ortiz's as Acoma Pueblo), I find that Simpson's words, although rooted in an Anishinaabe perspective, do allow for some insight into Ortiz's story and the crucial importance of dreams. Indeed, in his dream, Flintwing Boy instructs Tsushki: "People *must* talk among themselves and learn what this is about, and *decide* what they will do" (Ortiz 91; emphasis added). Similarly, Faustin instructs his grandson, "It's a dream, but

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it's the truth," to which his grandson responds, "I believe you, Nana" (94). This not only acknowledges both story and dream as valuable, but also confers such value upon them as undeniable sources of knowledge, highlighting the need for its protagonists to engage with what is presented to them as knowledge, and its validity. On a larger scale, "Men on the Moon" also compels the reader to question what 'knowledge' is and from where it is acquired, which itself warrants a necessary change in worldview and a reflection on a past of colonialism and the direct link to a contemporaneity of imperialism.

Dogrib (Tlicho) writer Richard Van Camp follows a similar trope in his short story "On the Wings of This Prayer." Objectively, the narrative provides direct and indirect metaphors connected to land stewardship and environmentally destructive projects, particularly the Alberta tar sands. The last words of the story are "Now wake up" (173): the story is the reader's dream, "a message [that] comes from the future, from [the] Dream Thrower" (171). The narrator of this dream comes to know through dream as well; conceptually, Van Camp offers his readers layers of dream worlds, through both content and context, embedded in one another. As a result, the multiplicity of voices makes for a dizzying, nightmarish reading and ultimate message: the zombies are coming. While "Men on the Moon" is, as Dillon notes, in essence "quietly resolved… [by realigning] the practiced way of living and knowledge that sees far more accurately the oil-slick refuse left behind by advancing, trampling space age science" (7), "On the

Wings of This Prayer" is a message from one of the last survivors of the "zombie-pocalypse," warning us, the ancestors, of the danger of the Tar Sands, which will not only "bring cancer to our Mother," but "unleash them" (173).

Set in the future where the Shark Throats, Hair Eaters, and Boiled Faces—a.k.a. zombies—have suppressed humanity, the story begins with a woman who, along with her family, lived "in the way of the Tar Sands" (164). One day, "[stepping] on teeth in the ice and muskeg. The jaws of an old man, a trapper, had thawed enough to bite her… The woman got very sick: buttons of pus boiling through a body rash, the paling, her hands hooking to claws… She said something was coming through her. Something starving" (164). She pleads to be killed; when left unattended, she disappears. "They think she was the first and they say she is still here as their queen, that she gives birth to them through her mouth. Hatching them through her over and over. More and more. The Boiled Faces" (165). The teeth likely came from an old man who lived in the area of the development and refused to move despite the monetary allures made by the industry; "so they built and dug around him" (165). Eventually, he stops going into town, and withers away in his health; "he had gone to white and had eaten his own lips and fingers. He had stepped in bear traps spiked to the floors on purpose" (165). He pleads to be killed and that his limbs and body be separated, burned and buried. "They did everything he asked them to, but the land was uncovered and turned for years by excavators, tractors and the curiosity of men. We think those machines must have moved the heavy rocks that covered his limbs. [We think they didn't burn his heart to

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ashes]… We think his fingers were able to crawl back to the torso and legs and head" (165).

Graphic as these excerpts may seem, Van Camp makes use of them as vehicles for empathy, to cause a reaction, to commend his reader's engagement—whether it be disgust or amusement, a characteristic of horror narratives is to emulate the protagonist's fear and anguish onto the reader. From the perspective of Indigenous horror, however, the story also contains important teachings in sustainability: for instance, "how to [properly] stop the Boiled Faces with the old ways" (166).[7] These include the use of the Tlicho language: "it slows them when you sing or talk to them or chant in the first tongue" (166). The traditional drums, too, will "stop their mewling cry, turn in to ice their throats" (167). Finally, we are told, "The Boiled Faces are terrified of butterflies. They run screaming—as if set to flames—when they see a butterfly" (167). Thus, as in "Men on the Moon," readers are taught that "the old ways" are not regressive and can play an important role in addressing social and environmental problems.

Often times in the corporate environmental narrative, the solution to climate change—or any other environmental concern—is often linked to the progress of technology to save the day; we can continue with resource exhaustive projects because geo-engineering techniques will (somehow) be able to mitigate global warming and its effects. Unfortunately, finding more sustainable solutions through different ways of knowledge are all too often left out of the picture; as noted by Jeff Corntassel and

Cheryl Bryce, "the revitalization of land-based and water-based cultural practices is premised on enacting indigenous community responsibilities, [which] entails sparking a spiritual revolution rather than seeking [or waiting for] state-based solutions that are disconnected from indigenous community relationships" (160). Like Simpson's call for the coupling of awareness and responsibility when searching for knowledge—in this case, forms of knowledge that might help restore broken food chains and ecosystems—revitalization projects cannot be carried out without the necessary support for and belief in those who undertake them. We might consider the rallies held by "Defend Our Climate, Defend Our Communities" in 2013, or the protests that took place at COP25 in Madrid in 2019, which sought to draw attention to the detrimental effects of long-term oil extraction in Northern Alberta. Eriel Deranger (Athabasca Chipewyan), the executive director for Indigenous Climate Action, shared that

> The largest tar sands mine on the planet is being proposed in my peoples territory right now [and] it will impact the woodland buffalo—the last remaining wild whooping cranes on the planet—and many of the animals my people rely on for food… Aside from the detrimental impacts it will have on my people's food security, treaty rights and water, it will add 6.1-million megatonnes of carbon annually to the atmosphere" (qtd. in Heidenreich n.p.).

Are such testimonies not of the same alarming value as the short story's final quote, "Now wake up"? Is this the type of "spiritual revolution" to which Corntassel and Bryce invite us? What is the difference between the short story and the direct quotation by

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Deranger, other than one is fiction and the other not? These are not questions in fact, but rather may act as realizations: if we do not awaken, if we do not challenge the present-day issues, then we will end up like the protagonist at the end of the short story: witness to the disappearance of the "caribou, moose, bear, fox, wolf, bison, buffalo and everything under the earth here," left with only "roots [to eat] pretending they are what we used to love" (171), and hiding from "humans [who] are farming other humans and making deals with the Hair Eaters" (172). "The future," we are warned, "[will be] a curse" (173). Thus, much like "Men on the Moon," readers are left with a somewhat dire urgency to learn from and to acknowledge the validity of stories—whether from the past or the future—and that the ongoing, continued, and current status quo, is no longer an option: immediate, if not urgent, action is required.

Van Camp's story also contains teachings about a history of colonization, ongoing land dispossession, and exploitation, and calls for an adherence to contemporary social and environmental responsibility by connecting us to the voices of future generations who are living the consequences of our inaction. In the short story, the zombies have eaten all of the land animals, and the people have to live on roots and imagine it as real food. If we consider how the Athabasca River today is contaminated by oil sands pollution, and flows directly towards the community of Fort Chip, the Tar Sands—like the metaphorical zombies—are having detrimental impacts on people in neighbouring areas and on the food and water systems. Co-producer of *One*

River Many Relations (2015), a documentary that explores the Athabasca Oil Sands from the perspective of the communities that live downstream, Stéphane McLachlan, in "Water is a Living Thing" (2014), lists how many of the fish, ducks, bison, and moose have been found with lesions, tumours, and deformities, and how about seventy percent of the supermarkets are stocked with imported frozen foods. Junk food is the most affordable item on the shelves, with fruits and vegetables as the most expensive—a melon being sold for twelve dollars, for example, and tomatoes for five to seven dollars (McLachlan n.p.). In other words, an entire way of life is disappearing, including hunting practices and traditional diets, because of the carcinogens found in the wild animals. If we return to Van Camp's story, once again, we are being warned of what is to come: starvation, being hunted, terrified. Much like "Men on the Moon," Van Camp's short story explores the potential for disaster should our obsession for exploring the unknown and its ultimate consumption—whether that be of the land, of food, of stories—get away from us; because otherwise, all we shall be able to do, too, is to "carry on in fever" (173). In this sense then, the trope of a zombie apocalypse fits perfectly well as a parallel for the detrimental effects of colonization and exploitation. As noted by Hupa, Yurok, and Karuk scholar Cutcha Risling Baldy, "as a culture we become obsessed with this end of the world as if nobody has ever had that experience, but there's lots of Native people who can speak to an experience where they lose everything in these massive waves of destruction" (qtd. in Mullins n.p.).[8] That said, and perhaps because of this history, surviving the apocalypse is not only a possibility but also a reality. There is

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hope. And the narrator of Van Camp's story tells us exactly that: "You *can* change the future" (173).

Reimaginings, Recoveries, and Reclamations

Over the summer, a federal-provincial panel ruled that the oilsands project was in the public interest, even though it could fundamentally cause harm to both the environment and to Indigenous people. The panel offered recommendations for mitigating harm to wildlife, tracking pollutants and for consulting with nearby First Nations.

- *Phil Heidenreich, "Indigenous Activists Protest"*

How, then, do we imagine changing the future? How do we imagine a better future? A future that is more just, more equitable, more caring, more reciprocal, more respectful? Media and governmental responses often paint a rather bleak response to such questions, as the quotation above suggests. However, I would like to return to the concepts of wonder and desire, and explore how these might provide for, once again, alternatives towards resurgence. One of the epigraphs to Leanne Betasamosake Simpson's collection *Islands of Decolonial Love*, excerpted from an interview with Junot Diaz, asks "Is it possible to love one's broken-by-the-coloniality-of-power self in another broken-by-the-coloniality-of-power person?" (Diaz & Moya n.p.) Set in a near dystopian future, Haisla/Heiltsuk author Eden Robinson's "Terminal Avenue" explores this very concept and its possibilities amid dark, hyperbolic representations of systemic racism, discrimination, and exploitation. Published in 2004 as part of the *So Long Been*

Dreaming: Postcolonial Science Fiction and Fantasy anthology, the short story was, however, written in 1993, "the third anniversary of the Oka Uprising," and during the salmon wars in British Columbia when "television helicopters were scanning the Fraser Valley looking to catch native fishermen 'illegally' fishing" (Hopkinson & Mehan 62).[9] Of the delayed publication of "Terminal Avenue," originally slated to appear in her 1996 collection *Traplines*, Robinson says that it was quickly excised. It was my spec fic, bondage, aboriginal response to Oka and the Fraser River salmon wars. After *50 Shades*, I think it probably would have been the title piece, but back in the mid-90s, bondage porn didn't belong in a serious fiction collection" (qtd. in McKenzie n.p.).

Aside from the "bondage porn" aspect of the story, clearly its political intent (and related anxieties) needs to be highlighted as well. As Dillon notes in her introductory piece to the reprint, the story

> implode[s] this future tale with the traditional Heiltsuk sense of parallel worlds appearing on the horizon, so that the historically forbidden potlatches of the 1880s, the severe crackdown on Native practices in the 1920s, and the military-peace-keeping restrictions at Oka of the early 1990s literally "reappear" at Surreycentral [Vancouver]… Robinson offers a snapshot of violent oppression glossed by reflections that reveal the colonized state of mind (Dillon 206).

This "reappearance" is crucial for, as suggested by Stó:lō scholar Dylan Robinson, "everyday encounters with popular culture and new media" largely take place "in landscapes where Indigenous history is erased by markers of state authority" (n.p.). In

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effect, Ortiz's and Robinson's stories both address this erasure, but circumvent it as well by having at the core of their narratives the ever-present cultural, contextual knowledges that the protagonists make sense of through their experiences. The accepted regime of state authorities is put to the test and readers are invited to think about the stakes of resilient continuance and presence.

Much like Robinson's novel *Monkey Beach*, the short story pieces together memories and flashbacks, carefully stitched together with the present (future) reality of Wil's adult life. Indeed, as the editors have noted, "Terminal Avenue" "explores a future Canada where First Nations peoples face an increasingly apartheid life" (Hopkinson & Mehan 61). Wilson Wilson (Wil), the main protagonist of Robinson's short story, grew up during a time when Potlatches are once again outlawed, feasts are set up under camouflage nets, and singing and dancing are forbidden. He recalls how, as a young boy, he was "embarrassed, wishing his father were more reserved," not understanding "what his father [was] doing, the rules he [was] breaking, the risks he [was] taking, and the price he [would] pay on a deserted road, when the siren goes off and the lights flash and they [were] pulled over" (69). Indeed, Wil's father chose to thwart governmental policies by bringing the entire family to Monkey Beach, where they would sing and dance and feast, ahead of their departure to Vancouver. Standing at the stern of their speedboat, "he does a twirl… He dances, suddenly inspired, exuberant" (69). His mother smiles, "looks like a movie star," while Kevin, Wil's big

brother, "is so excited he raises one arm and makes the Mohawk salute they see on TV all the time" (68). This snapshot moment of bliss, pride, and peace, carefully stitched into the fabric of the short story, acts as both a framework for the narrative and a memory to which Wil can escape for solace and inspiration. For indeed, much like his father, Wil will develop his own means for resisting the regime set in place by "the Adjustment"—unlike Kevin who eventually joins the Peace Officers. As a male "real living Indian" performer in a very exclusive, white-only S&M club, Wil is a "novelty item" (67), a chosen, dangerous occupation that suggests the protagonist's resilience at finding and capitalizing on alternative interventions as the product of his redefined, yet liminal existence. And, although he "has a morbid fear of becoming dead like his father"—that fear of becoming "a living blankness" (67), someone who "didn't want to stay alive" (66), like his father, after the brutal attack on their way back from Monkey Beach—the connections and friends Wil makes selling cigarettes and sweetgrass provide him with just enough solace, so as to keep those fears at bay, while he travels back and forth from the Vancouver Urban Reserve #2 to the downtown core.

Outside of work, Wil "lives inside his head, lost in memories" of his parents and family, Kitimaat, the Douglas Channel, and Monkey Beach. He only becomes "really alive" (67) once he steps into his lover's club, *Terminal Avenue*, a place where "they do things that aren't sanctioned by the Purity laws," a space divided into two: one "where he gets hurt" and the other where he "gives hurt" (67). In the first space, he is the novelty, the object of others' desires and fetishes, the ultimate prize that the club's elite

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clientele has come for:

> [The bouncers] will drag him into the back and strip-search him in front of clients who pay for the privilege of watching. He stands under a spotlight that shines an impersonal cone of light from the ceiling. The rest of the room is darkened. He can see reflections of glasses, red-eyed cigarettes, the glint of ice clinking against glass, shadows shifting. He can hear zippers coming undone, low moans; he can smell the cum when he's beaten into passivity. (64)

In these raw depictions of both glorifying and fetishizing violence, Robinson effectively expands colonial vocabulary and syntax by highlighting a series of cultural binaries interpenetrating one another: the rich and the poor, the permitted and the forbidden, the abuser and the abused, the colonizer and the colonized. The club itself is an in-between space where the unexpected can happen, and it is watched and enjoyed—as are the pages of the short story that the reader turns nervously. For the reader, in fact, becomes an unwilling participant in this violent voyeurism and extractive consumerism;[10] Wil's blood, sweat, and tears are only matched by the moans and ejaculations of his violators, both active and passive, who take pleasure in "the bouncers [who] grab him by his [long] hair and drag him to the exploratory table at the centre of the room" (64).

However, one must remember that this is all a performance, and Wil is a willing participant—ultimately, it is for pleasure, for spectatorship, and for economic reasons.

This is similarly true for the second space in the club which is, in many ways, a stark contrast to the first one: it is Wil's lover's "playroom," where "her bouncers whispered things to her as they pinned her to the table, and he hurt her" (65). Here the hurt is again performed, but it is private, almost innocent: "He kept going until he was shaking so hard he had to stop. That's enough for tonight, she said, breathless, wrapping her arms around him, telling the bouncers to leave when he started to cry. My poor virgin" (65). Wil soon learns that this is "her secret weakness," "it is a cleansing"; and he, in turn, becomes "addicted to her pain" (65). He comes to realize that causing pain "could give pleasure. It could give power" (65). Economically speaking, being the giver of pain allows Wil to maintain the privileged position that he has as an employee of the elite club, enabling him to walk downtown and "no one will mistake him for a terrorist and shoot him" (67). The relationship he shares with "his high priestess" is what gives him pleasure, and power; it allows him to be resilient, adventurous, resourceful, "exuberant"—like his father. And, like his father, Wil "become[s] an example" (67).

The reader is not told who reported Wil's father to the police; nor do we know who reported Wil to the Peace Officers. Their fate suggests that those who resist will not survive; where then, one might ask, is the hope, the wonder, the potential for change in Robinson's short story? In fact, it is everywhere; from the orange slice held up against the sun (first line) to the feeling of ocean spray cool against his skin (last line), Wil's story is all about agency, strength, and resilience: his parents' love for each other, his family's illegal gatherings, both his and his father's breaches of conformity,

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his illicit love affair with a high-end dominatrix. As such, the short story offers readers a unique perspective of what an individual's life might look like, despite a bleak, unforgiving, violent future.

Final Thoughts

In the introduction to *Walking the Clouds: An Anthology of Indigenous Science Fiction*, Grace Dillon asks: "Does [science fiction] have the capacity to envision Native futures, Indigenous hopes, and dreams recovered by rethinking the past in a new framework?" (Dillon 2). At the onset of this essay, I suggested that the presented pieces—whether we want to dub them SF, futurisms, inventions, or wonderworks—all had the potential to present readers with alternative *readings* of impending futures, but also that they might convey *teachings* on how to better anticipate and—hopefully—correct the path on which we are. So that the endings presented in these stories do not, ultimately, become our realities. In other words, how might we consider whether the literature itself must present such alternatives or, rather, if their potential resides in the transfer of the pressure of such questions onto the reader? As receivers of these stories, where does our responsibility lie? Thus, if stories are theory, to receive them without considering the importance of their teachings and their potential for change, and without trying to at least learn from them—without *interacting* with them, to conjure up Maracle's injunction—then, all we do invite is "heartlessness" (Maracle 8). And herein lies, I

believe, a crucial explanation about why many Indigenous writers have been privileging these alternative modes of storytelling: in order to be both ethically and pedagogically challenging, the examples discussed in this essay rely on the audience's sensuous and intellectual experience of and response to the abject, desire, and longing; and the audience's bearing witness to indiscriminate or retributive violence against the land and its inhabitants and, ultimately, on their acceptance of, indifference, or reaction to its different representations. Robinson herself suggests that more and more writers are "exploring identity issues through the genres—we've got a lot of horror and spec fic and mystery and thriller and noir writers coming up—which give you more leeway to be transgressive with your narratives. They might not end happy, but they're going to take you on a ride" (qtd. in McKenzie, n.p.).

Perhaps a final "ride" worth mentioning, to wrap up this essay, is the collective audio piece entitled "Zombie 911," penned by Richard Van Camp. As the title suggests, a woman calls in to 911 as her friend (and ultimately she as well) is attacked and dismembered by zombies. The seven-minute audio clip is a rather harrowing sensory experience to say the least, with the caller frantically telling the operator about the zombie's attack, the operator's attempts to calm her down, assuring her "the police, the fire department and the medics" are on their way. Halfway through, the caller yells repeatedly, "he ripped her apart!," while the zombie can be heard screaming in the background. As the police sirens are heard approaching, the operator reassures the caller, "they've got to shoot him. They're going to shoot him… Whatever you do, do not

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get out of the car." Several shots are fired, followed by silence, as the operator tells the sobbing caller to breathe. Suddenly, there is a final crash and what appears to be the zombie yelling is heard, and the line goes dead. The listener is left to wonder about the outcome—likely, the bullets were of no avail, the zombie tearing into the car to attack the caller and possibly anyone else on the scene afterward. Much like the operator, the listener is in a sense held hostage by the experience—the operator stays on the line in the hopes to calm down the victim, to provide comfort and resolution, just as the listener, empathetically, hopes for a positive outcome.[11] But, of course, there can be none—that is the premise of an impending zombie apocalypse. While Van Camp's audio piece hints at such a conclusion, his short story provides us with the aftermath. Both scenarios offer up a reflection around the question that Risling Baldy asks in her analysis of *The Walking Dead*: "Do you think we can come back from this? Will we be able to move on after we have had to live through and do horrible things? What happens to our humanity?" (Risling Baldy n.p.)[12] Rather, perhaps, what can we do to prevent such things from happening (again)? How can we ensure that in the pursuit of progress, we do not lose our humanity along the way? And what does reading, viewing, or listening to such interventions have to do with this?

Ultimately, I want to advocate that reading and engaging with such materials is about practice and responsibility: to participate in these interventions calls for both intellectual and affective engagement. As teachings, they require of us some kind of

continued agency and carried responsibility: among ourselves but, more importantly, to light that fire within our students, to whom we teach these pieces. As settler scholar Paulette Regan suggests, making use of "disturbing emotions [is] a critical pedagogical tool that can provoke decolonizing, transformative learning" (13). At the same time, they bring about certain challenges, in relation to how the work is received, perceived, and especially, taught, or used in public events—because their very use as pedagogical tools, due to their raw, relentless depiction of sites of violence and loss, is complicated.[13] In other words, these pieces also teach us about (self-)care, among each other and beyond, to think about better, healthier spaces in which we might meet: how might these teachings be generative for thinking about the different kinds of relationships and engagements that are at stake whenever we read, or encounter, or teach, alternative, dystopian, erotic, exploitative, beautiful, unsettling, hinged or traumatic stories? For these kinds of contemporary productions—whatever the genre—on the one hand, require a performative reading practice that looks at interactions and relationality and, on the other hand, speak to an artistic flexibility that continues to develop, adapt, and allow for alternative, strength-based perspective narratives that contribute to the development of new practices for community, public, and individual engagement. They also require an emotional engagement and ultimately serve to unravel the "detached, rational, [and] unembodied" (Sium and Ritskes iv) nature of settler/mainstream narratives that fail to speak to colonial violence and to our complicity in ongoing settler violence. In an effort, as suggested by Regan, to

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"reconnect reason and emotion—head and heart" (12), we can read (view, or listen to) these kinds of interventions as forcing the settler-reader/viewer/listener to confront/be confronted by North America's history of colonialism, assimilation policies, and dire intergenerational consequences, as well as impending environmental disasters and, at times, a blatant disrespect for all living beings. Once again, and as revealed by the works analyzed here, the slippery line between commodification and consumption is clear: if we do not care for our surroundings, our environment, its complex ecosystems, if we do not harness greed and conquest, the delicate network of all living things is doomed; there might not be zombies, but something worse. Thus, I truly believe, it is only through active participation, thoughtful engagement, conjuring up wonder in the (im)possible, and marvelling at the endless opportunities, that we can build better, sustainable relationships, grounded in ethical and responsible allyship—"always stubbornly and doggedly struggle[e] to reclaim and hang on" (Maracle 11).

Notes

[1] Because of the very slipperiness of the genre(s) itself, I use 'SF' here and throughout as indicative of both science fiction and speculative fiction.
[2] It would be impossible to list all the new additions to this corpus but, amongst others: Cherie Dimaline's *The Marrow Thieves*, Stephen Graham Jones' *Mapping the Interior*, Louise Erdrich's *Future Home of the Living God*, Gerald Vizenor's *Treaty Shirts: October 2034*, Daniel Wilson's *Robocalypse*, Daniel Heath Justice's *The Way of Thorn and Thunder*, Gerry William's revised *The Black Ship*, and many more (including many currently being written).
[3] In addition to Dillon's, of note, *mitêwâcimowina: Indigenous Science Fiction and Speculative Storytelling* (2016), *Love Beyond Body, Space, and Time: An LGBT and Two-*

Spirit Sci-Fi Anthology (2016), *Take Us To Your Chief and Other Stories* (2016), and *Love After the End: An Anthology of Two-Spirit and Indigiqueer Speculative Fiction* (2020).

[4] I am aware here that, as noted by Miriam Brown Spiers, adding "the word 'Indigenous' shifts the emphasis from the tribally specific to broader social and literary categories" (2021: xi), a shift that has its limitations, which I discuss further in the essay.

[5] For Lewis, this applies to his concept of "Indigenous future imaginary," another tentative name for the genre, that has also been called "Indigenous Futurism" (Dillon, 2013), "Indian Invention Novel" (Rader, 2011), and "WonderWorks" (Justice, 2017 and 2018).

[6] As evidence of this, and my personal favorite (and as anthologized by Dillon in *Walking the Clouds* (2012)), is Gerald Vizenor's 1978 *Bearheart*.

[7] Mi'gmaq filmmaker Jeff Barnaby's 2019 *Blood Quantum* follows a similar thread: the Indigenous peoples hiding away from the zombie apocalypse, barricaded in the reserve, are mysteriously immune to the infection and seek ways to prevent it from spreading.

[8] As the producers of Barnaby's *Blood Quantum* note, "the dead are coming back to life outside the isolated Mi'gmaq reserve of Red Crow, except for its Indigenous inhabitants who are immune to the zombie plague" (Prospector Films, n.p.). The premise of *Blood Quantum* is interesting for it is similar to Cherie Dimaline's *The Marrow Thieves* (2017), in which Indigenous peoples have remained immune to another plague: the inability to dream. In Dimaline's novel, Indigenous peoples are also being hunted down, although not for their blood, but for their marrow.

[9] Of note, Ortiz's short story was also written way before its publication, anticipating the anxieties that it was to reveal: "Originally began in the sixties before revising for publication in the 1999 collection… ["Men on the Moon"] anticipates [an actual petroleum products company] Kerr-McGee's development into a subsidiary of Anadarko Petroleum and Western Gas Reserves … [and their operating] large uranium mines in the US Southwest in the 1960s and 1970s … [including] the Ambrosia Lake mine in New Mexico on Acoma Pueblo land" (Dillon 86).

[10] I will add here that having used this short story in class, I have had students who chose not to finish reading it for these very reasons; it was too much for some to bear.

[11] In terms of empathy, here, I am reminded of Anishnaabe writer and activist Leanne Betasamosake Simpson's quote on compassion as necessary for resurgence: "Being engaged in the physical, real-world work of resurgence, movement-building and nation-building is the only way to generate new knowledge on how to resurge […] through principled and respectful consensual reciprocity with another living being, in the absence of coercion and hierarchy, and in the presence of compassion" (Simpson 2014: 18).

[12] Risling Baldy specifically uses the example of *The Walking Dead* to illustrate the genocide conducted on Indigenous peoples by white settlers: "California Indians often refer to the Mission System and the Gold Rush as "the end of the world." […] Miners (who were up in Northern California, where I am from) thought it was perfectly fine to

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have "Indian hunting days" or organize militias specifically to kill Indian people. These militias were paid. They were given 25 cents a scalp and $5 a head. In effect, for a long time in California, if you were an Indian person walking around, something or someone might just try to kill you. They were hungry for your scalp and your head. They had no remorse. There was no reasoning with them. And there were more of them then there was of you. (Zombies. But even worse, living, breathing, people Zombies. Zombies who could look at you and talk to you and who were supposed to be human. Keep that in mind. The atrocities of genocide during this period of time, they were not committed by monsters—they were committed by people. By neighbors. By fathers, sons, mothers, and daughters.)" (Risling Baldy, n.p.)

[13] Van Camp shared this audio file with me when I was teaching "On the Wings of this Prayer" in a class on Indigenous Popular Culture. His instructions were specific though, should I choose to play it to my class: "Remember, Sarah: the room has to be pitch black" (Van Camp 2016, n.p.). While tempting, I did not play the file to my class—whether in the dark or not, I was nervous that the sounds and anxiety displayed in the piece might be upsetting for some students.

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

"'In the world we want many worlds to fit:' a Xicanx Land Acknowledgement as Trans-Indigenous Storytelling Praxis"

SHANAE AURORA MARTINEZ

This land was Mexican once
was Indian always
and is.
And will be again. (113)

"El Retorno," *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* by Gloria Anzaldúa (1987)

Introduction

As the popularity of land acknowledgments grows beyond sites of knowledge production, it is necessary to adapt this form of storytelling to the multitude of contexts

that students, colleagues, and community members will navigate throughout their lives. In *theory*, land acknowledgments engage with Indigenous protocols for place-based relationship building, but in *practice*, rote declarations expressing appreciation for unceded territories are rarely followed with the repatriation of lands and resources that is necessary to repair relationships with Indigenous Peoples. The purpose of this essay is to explore the radical potential of land acknowledgements for decolonial worldmaking in the institutional context with which I am most familiar—the neoliberal university.

This essay examines the ways in which Zapatismo models the transformative potential of land acknowledgments to *intervene* in capitalist ways of building relationships to benefit Indigenous futures. My literary analysis examines the storied genealogies that inform Zapatismo to demonstrate how storytelling teaches place-based Indigenous values, which can be applied to other localized contexts in the service of trans-Indigenous decolonization. This method of crafting land acknowledgments from place-based storied genealogies will inform my own Xicanx land acknowledgement as a declaration of solidarity with Indigenous Peoples through our shared revolutionary culture hero, Emiliano Zapata. The pages that follow engage with trans-Indigenous literary methodology and Indigenous storytelling theory to demonstrate how each of us may "learn how to learn" to be good relatives from our respective positionalities without engaging in ethnic fraud. As a Xicanx of Indigenous descent, I am grateful for the mentors who have helped me navigate my own complicated history of colonial displacement and subsequent diaspora. Like Indigenous Peoples of the Americas, Xicanx affirm our long-standing presence on this continent, but at times, have done so by misappropriating Indigenous histories, landscapes, and cultures as our own. While many of us share Indigenous ancestry, we cannot claim to represent the sovereign Indigenous nations from which we have been displaced without their consent. Instead, my Xicanx land acknowledgment demonstrates how displacement informs our storied genealogies and invites us to

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intervene in colonial metanarratives rather than perpetuate Indigenous erasure and disenfranchisement.

Our academic foremother, the late Tejana writer, Gloria Anzaldúa provides the epigraph above and the inspiration for my Xicanx land acknowledgement. Anzaldúa's concrete poem, "El Retorno [The Return]," functions as a storied map of Indigenous space-time in Mesoamerica that invokes Indigenous prophesies of resurgence to undermine the settler colonial borderlands from which she writes. Her shape poem models narrative worldmaking by forming a nebulous allusion to Aztlán, while simultaneously reinforcing Indigenous conceptions of time. The poem refers to *this land* as "Indian always" and succinctly affirms Indigenous Land Back demands by mixing verb tenses and compressing temporalities to narrate an inevitable, decolonized, Indigenous future. While *Borderlands/La Frontera* uses the Chicana Nationalist rhetoric common to Anzaldúa's generation, this poem affirms Indigenous narrative space as the place where worldmaking begins and ends.

Theories and Methodologies

Storytelling

As narratives grounded in Indigenous worldviews, land acknowledgments are a form of *storytelling* where the land itself is an agent and relative, rather than an object. In the introduction to the 2012 reprint of *Storyteller,* Leslie Marmon Silko explains that "[l]ocation or place plays a central role in Pueblo narratives. Stories are more frequently recalled as people are passing a specific geographical feature or the exact location where a story took place," a situation in which the geographical location is what "stirs the imagination" and subsequently fortifies an ongoing place-based Pueblo identity (*Storyteller* xx). The formation of Laguna Pueblo identity is ongoing because, as Silko

informs us in *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit*, storytelling is ongoing at Laguna (53). The emergence of Laguna space-time is embodied during the Winter Solstice throughout the "four-day ritual retelling of the stories about the Migration and how Ka'waik, the Beautiful Lake Place, became our home" (*Storyteller* xx-xxi). This bundle of migration stories serves much the same purpose as a land acknowledgment since it defines Pueblo space by continuously reenacting active and ongoing Pueblo presence in this particular geography.

Throughout her oeuvre, Silko describes storytelling as a dynamic communal act because Pueblo "people perceived themselves in the world as part of an ancient continuous story composed of innumerable bundles of other stories" (*Storyteller* xix). Pueblo stories thus define the relationship between the Laguna Pueblo and Ka'waik by creating a storied archive of knowledge that can be read by looking upon the land and remembering what happened there. As a communal narrative, each tribal member is an active part of maintaining Pueblo *survivance* in their homeland by partaking in narrative worldmaking; "thus the ongoing story or history of the Pueblo people continues endlessly" (*Storyteller* xx). In this anecdote, tribal values are literally embodied in the communal act of retelling a shared narrative in Indigenous space (Ka'waik) and time (Winter Solstice) demonstrating how place-based narratives create a Pueblo-specific conception of time that is always fully populated. Silko's explanation of Pueblo time illuminates temporality in "El Retorno" since it demonstrates how "there are *always all* the times... We can think and speak only in the present, but as we do it is becoming the past, which is always present, and which always contains the future encoded in it" (*Yellow Woman* 137).

Since communal stories often have as many iterations as there are storytellers and storytelling contexts, Silko is careful to dispel any assumptions about a Pueblo metanarrative because a "collective truth resides somewhere within the web of different versions, disputes over minor points, outright contradictions tangled with old feuds, and village rivalries" (*Storyteller* xx). This non-canonical, dynamic approach to

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Pueblo storytelling is why Silko has been canonized in Indigenous Literary Studies; her tribally specific theories of narrative worldmaking are applicable to many diverse Indigenous contexts. This type of place-based storied knowledge is a form of *land literacy* that carries cultural capital for Indigenous forms of relationship building that prioritize *balance* among relatives, both human and non-human. Not only do communal stories tell us who we are, how we came to be in this place, at this time, but also, how we will continue to live, survive, and thrive here in ongoing interrelationships with all our relatives.

Trans-Indigenous

Since Silko informs this analysis of non-Pueblo texts, I employ Chadwick Allen's trans-Indigenous methodology to enable my study of diverse visions for sovereign Indigenous futures in a global context. According to Allen, the trans-Indigenous is a methodology that utilizes Indigenous juxtapositions, which "place diverse texts close together across genre and media, aesthetic systems and worldviews, technologies and practices, tribes and nations, the Indigenous-settler binary, and historical periods and geographical regions" (Allen xviii). The primary texts in this essay represent a range of narrative genres such as poetry, essay, cartography, and manifesto "to develop a version of Indigenous literary studies that locates itself firmly in the specificity of the Indigenous local while remaining always cognizant of the complexity of the relevant Indigenous global" (Allen xix). The subjects of this study are narratives of ongoing Indigenous presence, which fortify Indigenous existence, and fuel Indigenous resistance to settler colonialism and its global adjacent: neoliberal capitalism.

Since 1994, the Zapatistas of the EZLN (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional/Zapatista Army of National Liberation) have been disseminating their vision for a locally informed global Indigenous consciousness to combat neoliberal

capitalism. Since capitalism moves freely across borders, so too must our strategies of resistance. The trans-Indigenous enables the study of ongoing Indigenous presence between local Indigenous contexts and across settler colonial borders. This methodology does not assume comparable equality between texts or contexts but emphasizes the plurality that exists in narrative space-time. After rising up in arms to defend the Mexican people from the exploitative neoliberal politics of the Mexican nation-state, the EZLN received an outpouring of global support. The shifts in their geographical scale is reflected in how they address their audience in *La Primera* versus *La Segunda*. While the First Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle is addressed to the Mexican People/Al pueblo de México (*La Primera*), the Second Declaration includes "The People and Governments of the World/A los pueblos y gobiernos del mundo" (*La Segunda*). Regardless of geographical scale, the Zapatistas consistently specify the Indigenous-local context from which they communicate by signing off:

> Desde las montañas del Sureste mexicano.
> Comité Clandestino Revolucionario Indígena-Comandancia General
> del Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional
> México. Junio de 1994.
> ///
> From the mountains of the Mexican southeast.
> Indigenous Revolutionary Clandestine Committee-General Command
> of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation
> Mexico. June 1994[1].

The Mexican-Maya landbase in the remote mountains of the Mexican Southeast are central to the Zapatistas' revolutionary vision. Just as the story of migration to Ka'waik (Beautiful Lake Place) provides the foundation for Laguna (Lake) Pueblo identity formation, Zapatismo is shaped by the narratives "desde las montañas del Sureste

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mexicano." In both contexts, the land is a powerful relative and archive of the ongoing stories of the people. The prominent position granted *las montañas* is not a stylistic choice, but an allusion to the place-based stories that inform the Zapatista vision for collective liberation.

The Zapatista communiques are part of an ongoing trans-Indigenous story and their poetic repertoire of manifestos is riddled with Maya and Mexican literary references. "The Story of Questions/La Historia de las Preguntas" is an allegory for Zapatista worldmaking through the metaphor of "walking together." This story is one of many *historias* that inform *Zapatismo* from the collection, *Questions and Swords: Folktales of the Zapatista Revolution*. It is worth noting that this text is overtly transnational and trans-Indigenous, containing contributions by Mexican writers and illustrators, and an epilogue by Simon Ortiz (Acoma Pueblo). The stories are told from Subcommandante Marcos's perspective and are nested within narratives of his encounters with the storyteller, Viejo Antonio, during the EZLN's years of clandestine training. Viejo Antonio tells Subcommandante Marcos that this is "the real story" of Zapata, explicitly Indigenizing the legacy of Zapata, as well as the Zapatista army's worldview.

In "The Story of Questions," Night/Votán and Day/I'kal are two deities fused together in one body, immobile, and miserable since they can only turn in circles. In order to go anywhere they must ask one another where they want to go and how they will get there. The act of critically questioning *how* they might remedy the dissatisfaction they feel begins their journey to find collective satisfaction through cooperation. After some trial and error, I'kal and Votán decide they must move "[t]ogether but separately and in agreement," emphasizing Maya values of cooperation, autonomy, and consensus-based government for collective well-being (Marcos 32). Viejo Antonio ends "La Historia de las Preguntas" by explaining:

> This is how the true men and women learned that questions are for walking, not for just standing around and doing nothing. And since then, when true men and women want to walk, they ask questions. When they want to arrive, they take leave. And when they want to leave, they say hello. They are never still. (Marcos 42)

When Marcos asks Viejo Antonio about Zapata he observes, "You've already learned that to know and to walk, you first have to ask," reinforcing the lesson that Zapatista space is made from Maya storytelling (Marcos 45). Like Votán and I'kal, if we seek collective wellbeing, we must first ask the right questions to co-create it.

Finally, Viejo Antonio explains, "The one they call Zapata… is the I'kal and the Votán who came here while they were on their long walk and so they wouldn't scare the good people, they became one… and gave themselves the name of Zapata" (Marcos 46). By fusing the identities of I'kal and Votán into the historical figure of Zapata, Viejo Antonio envelopes Zapata's transnational legacy of rebellion within the Maya-Mexican narrative genealogy based in las montañas of the Mexican Southeast. The same mountains from which each Zapatista communique is dispatched, with the same approach to collective wellbeing: "to walk asking."

Survivance

The Zapatistas' affirmation of their ongoing presence and continued resistance in the mountains of Southeastern Mexico are expressions of *survivance*. According to Gerald Vizenor, "survivance is an active sense of presence, the continuance of [Native] stories, not a mere reaction, or a survivable name. Native survivance stories are renunciations of dominance, tragedy and victimry" (Vizenor 63). The plurality of Native stories in Vizenor's description asserts that stories have kept us alive despite the prevalence of genocidal metanarratives. Survivance dispels *terminal creeds*; those static narratives of regrettable extinction that settlers continue to mythologize while acknowledging extant Indigenous Peoples in the past tense.

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Survivance is the recognition that our present power is informed by the wisdom of our ancestors, which provides the foundation for building a decolonial future. To access such wisdom, the Zapatistas turn to *las montañas* and recall the stories archived in the land that sustains their resistance:

> Our fight continues. The Zapatista flag continues to wave in the mountains of the Mexican Southeast and today we say: We will not surrender!
>
> Facing the mountain we spoke with our dead so that in their word the good path would come along which our gagged face must walk.
>
> The drums sounded and in the voice of the earth our pain spoke and our history spoke our pain and our history spoke.
>
> "For all everything" say our dead. As long as it is not like that, there will be nothing for us. (*La Segunda*)

The decision to continue their fight is made in consultation with the mountains. The drums serve as a conduit for communication with their ancestors who speak through the voice of the earth by reminding them of their stories like "La Historia de las Preguntas," and their histories like the Mexican Revolution, led by the culture hero, Emiliano Zapata. By looking upon the mountains the Zapatistas remember the stories that guide the "good path… which [their] gagged face must walk." They cover their faces to protect their individual identities while simultaneously creating hypervisibility as a united force. Their consultation with the mountains reinforces a communal and intersectional consciousness: "For all everything" say our dead. As long as it is not like that, there will be nothing for us." The hierarchal distribution of resources under

neoliberal capitalism is unacceptable since it only exacerbates inequity, thus, the Zapatistas refuse to surrender until everyone has access to everything. By positioning their movement among the stories archived in the mountains they recall their ongoing history of resistance and affirm their responsibility to continue fighting for collective well-being from their respective positionalities in Southeastern Mexico. The centrality of continued presence and action in *las montañas* make the Zapatista communiques both Indigenous land acknowledgements and survivance stories.

Narrative Interventions

The emergence of land acknowledgments in academic settings is the direct result of growth in Indigenous Studies. As Indigenous scholars tell different stories about their university's history and presence, significantly more students and employees are aware of the Indigenous Peoples on whose lands they live and work. To tell a different story about our relationships to settler institutions is to participate in an *intervening* project, which is one of the "25 Indigenous Projects" outlined by Maori scholar, Linda Tuhiwai Smith in *Decolonizing Methodologies.* According to Smith:

> Intervening takes action research to mean literally the process of being proactive and of becoming involved as an interested worker for change. Intervention-based projects are usually designed around making structural and cultural changes… Intervening is directed then at changing institutions which deal with [Indigenous] peoples and not at changing [Indigenous] peoples to fit the structures. (Smith 147)

Each of Smith's Indigenous projects introduce processes for changing the settler colonial status quo. In research settings where these processes are called methodologies, Smith generously offers academics a guide on how to conduct research that effectively improves Indigenous Peoples' lives by making structural change. Similarly, the Zapatista movement mitigated the destruction of their

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communities wrought by the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and simultaneously, their communiques *intervene* in the metanarratives that glorify global capitalism.

In their "Fourth Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle," the Zapatistas offer an analysis of the hierarchical and alienating neoliberal relationship dynamics that maintain the system of global capitalism. *La Quarta* announces their rededication to rebellious action. The prominence of *worlds* constructed by *words* in the political analysis excerpted below refers to the power of storytelling to create new worlds by finding new ways to relate to one another:

> Brothers and Sisters: Many words walk in the world. Many worlds are made. Many worlds are made for us. There are words and worlds which are lies and injustices. There are words and worlds which are truths and truthful. We make true words. We have been made from true words. *In the world of the powerful there is no space for anyone but themselves and their servants. In the world we want everyone fits. In the world we want many worlds to fit*… Long live the night which becomes a soldier in order not to die in oblivion. In order to live the word dies, its seed germinating forever in the womb of the earth. By being born and living we die. We will always live. Only those who give up their history are consigned to oblivion. Our word, our song and our cry, is so that the most dead will no longer die. So that we may live fighting, we may live singing. Long live the word. Long live Enough is Enough!
>
> We are here. We do not surrender. Zapata is alive, and in spite of everything, the struggle continues.
>
> From the mountains of the Mexican Southeast. (*La Cuarta*; emphasis added)

The body of each declaration revises the Zapatista's historical trajectory and updates followers on their progress, reflections, and future plans to realize *a world where everyone fits*. In the simple phrase, "Brothers and Sisters," a far from simple paradigm shift is enacted through storytelling. *La Cuarta* establishes a horizontal relationship between "Brothers and Sisters," yet remains attentive to heterogeneity ("Many worlds are made"), and global asymmetrical power dynamics between "the powerful… and their servants." *La Quarta* both describes and enacts the interventions necessary to destabilize the metanarratives of neoliberal globalization, "which are lies and injustices." The Zapatistas dispel terminal creeds by asserting their ongoing presence because "Only those who give up their history are consigned to oblivion" and reaffirm their war cry ("¡Ya Basta!/Enough is Enough!") to invoke the survivance narratives ("words") that enable them to continue living, fighting, and singing a new world into being (storytelling). The past is not dead ("Zapata is alive") and continues to inspire the fight for justice ("the struggle continues"), from this specific place ("the mountains of the Mexican Southeast") to siblings in struggle all over the world. By disseminating their vision they plant a seed of possibility for another world, yet to be born from our collective actions.

While acknowledging the land and its stewards is a trans-Indigenous protocol, land acknowledgements need not be a written document nor a public declaration, and often entail a commitment to future action. Sometimes that action includes an offering in the form of a physical gift that represents the good faith of the giver/guest, a spiritual offering like tobacco spread on the land itself, or a verbal expression of respect and good intentions on the part of the guest. In her lecture, "What good is a land acknowledgement?," Cutcha Risling Baldy affirms the need for direct action following a land acknowledgment. The potency of land acknowledgements to intervene in settler colonialism remains latent when they are removed from Indigenous worldviews. However, individual settlers and allies could participate meaningfully in decolonization if they approach land acknowledgements as ongoing stories of which they are a part

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rather than disembodied institutional statements.

As *intervening* projects, land acknowledgements must contribute to structural changes that improve the wellbeing of Indigenous communities and build Indigenous futures. Baldy argues that land acknowledgments should name all of the tribes of that place, use the language and place names of the Indigenous peoples, and always use present tense because the purpose of a land acknowledgement should compel good guests to "really think about what they are doing here." This protocol is dynamic because it acknowledges the personal positionality of the guest in relation to Indigenous stewards and their landbase, thus, it must change as the relationship changes between guests and hosts. Baldy explains they are personal expressions of good faith so,

> land acknowledgments cannot be prescriptive, they can't be formulaic… because what it was supposed to do was inspire people to do the work of what actions will I commit to because of this land acknowledgement. And so every land acknowledgement has to include a very personalized approach to: what does it mean for me that I understand this now? (13:25)

Land acknowledgments are a way to prevent community neglect by reminding us of our complex interrelationships and our subsequent responsibilities in those relationships. As stories of ongoing Indigenous presence, they envision Indigenous futures within specific geopolitical contexts. To make genuine commitments to decolonization the guest would have to familiarize themselves with the local conditions. Baldy asserts this individualized, relationship building work is necessary, otherwise the land acknowledgment doesn't mean anything, and she will often invite audiences to donate to a local organization or cause in real time. In a global capitalist economy, structural change entails the redistribution of resources, thus, land

acknowledgements can compel direct action in the form of mutual aid.

Practice

De La Sexta

The Zapatistas have practiced the direct action necessary to realize decolonization in the neoliberal capitalist era since 1994 because what the Zapatistas "have, in fact, learned is to learn" (*La Sexta*). While each communique centers the Zapatista world by looking outward at how they are located in global networks of storied relationships, the "Sixth Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle" is a pivotal expansion of their narrative scale from national and trans-Indigenous to transnational and global forms of direct action. *La Sexta* begins by positioning the Zapatistas within historical and political relationships up to that point (Gregorian calendar year 2005). "Who We Are" and "How We See The World" offer a brief history of the Zapatista movement from their 20 years of clandestine training, to the 1994 uprising against NAFTA, and their present campaigns for Indigenous sovereignty despite obstruction and retaliation from the Mexican government. *La Sexta* also offers explicit land acknowledgements to co-strugglers in the global community as comrades in the fight against the global class of neoliberal capitalists. Their analysis is succinct: "in short, the capitalism of global neoliberalism is based on exploitation, plunder, contempt and repression of those who refuse. The same as before, but now globalized, worldwide" (*La Sexta*). By characterizing "the world of the powerful" as one constructed according to vertical relationships of extraction with which we are already familiar in local contexts, the Zapatistas make global patterns of inequity accessible to a broad audience.

Establishing horizontal relationships in their vision for global liberation, the Zapatistas strategically articulate narrative interventions in settler colonial discourses that *talk about* or *talk down to*, but rarely *with* Indigenous peoples. By positioning themselves within horizontal relationships they align with Allen's trans-Indigenous methodology, which seeks to decenter settler metanarratives and paternalistic

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worldviews. This approach to grassroots solidarity centers listening to the needs of those most impacted by local struggles, rather than dictating hypotheticals from a distance or paternalistically from above. The following call to action precedes the body of the declaration wherein the Zapatistas detail how they will practice solidarity with co-strugglers rebelling in other locations, both in Mexico and globally:

> This is our simple word which seeks to touch the hearts of humble and simple people like ourselves, but people who are also, like ourselves, dignified and rebel. This is our simple word for recounting what our path has been and where we are now, in order to explain how we see the world and our country, in order to say what we are thinking of doing and how we are thinking of doing it, and in order to invite other persons to walk with us in something very great which is called Mexico and something greater which is called the world. This is our simple word in order to inform all honest and noble hearts what it is we want in Mexico and the world. This is our simple word, because it is our idea to call on those who are like us and to join together with them, everywhere they are living and struggling. (*La Sexta*)

Like previous communiques, the Zapatistas share their visions for another world with rich poetic imagery. Since land acknowledgements are stories about our interrelationships in space and time, the excerpt above invokes both the "word" (narratives/stories) and "walk" (action) we must figure out how to take together like I'kal and Votan in "The Story of Questions."

Historically, hierarchically organized resistance movements have not been sustainable for long-term social transformation because they rely on the same top-down and majoritarian-centered processes they claim to critique. When majoritarian groups within marginalized communities prioritize majority interests, it only creates

further marginalization by demanding sacrifice and silence from those who most need social transformation. This is more than a disservice to our multiply marginalized comrades because such processes actively harm members of our communities and *undermine potential collective action* (Crenshaw 167). The Zapatista approach to liberation prioritizes grassroots, bottom-up worldmaking strategies, which also aligns with Kimberlé Crenshaw's theorization of an intersectional approach to anti-discrimination policy. Both Zapatismo and Crenshaw emphasize the need to alleviate the compounding effects of inequality for the most marginalized within marginalized populations. According to Crenshaw, by addressing the needs of the most marginalized among us, "then others who are singularly disadvantaged would also benefit… placing those who currently are marginalized in the center is the most effective way to resist efforts to compartmentalize experiences and *undermine potential collective action*" (Crenshaw 167; emphasis added). In order to transform the hierarchically organized world in which we live, we must tap into our collective powers of imagination to create a world in which everyone is free from structural violence, specifically the violence wrought by neoliberal global capitalism.

In the final section of *La Sexta*, "How We Are Going To Do It", the Zapatistas lay out a 3-point plan for the World and a 4-point plan for Mexico that bridges their analysis of global capitalism with their intersectional strategies for building change *from below*. To partake in this alliance, "non-electoral organizations and movements which define themselves, *in theory and practice*, as being of the left" (*La Sexta*; emphasis added) must foreground principled action and integrity as follows:

> Not to make agreements from above to be imposed below, but to make accords to go together to listen and to organize outrage. Not to raise movements which are later negotiated behind the backs of those who made them, but to always take into account the opinions of those participating. Not to seek gifts, positions, advantages, public positions, from the Power or those who aspire to it, but to go beyond the election calendar. Not to try to resolve from above the problems of

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> our Nation, but to build FROM BELOW AND FOR BELOW an alternative to neoliberal destruction, an alternative of the left for Mexico. (*La Sexta*)

These conditions for "organizing outrage" underscore community accountability and transparency so that all are in agreement, and no one is prioritized over the collective. Since neoliberal globalization is a hierarchical system imposed from above for power and profit, the Zapatistas envision a global resistance movement from below that is horizontally organized to fight for humanity. This is not an individual effort for personal gain and glory—a pitfall for many in the neoliberal university—but a collective movement for liberation based on Indigenous principles for ethical relationship building.

In the summary that follows, the Zapatistas acknowledge their relationships to others in struggle and offer support in whatever capacity they can afford. They begin generally with the peoples of Latin America who remember the light of resistance led first by Simón Bolivar and later by Che Guevara against Spanish colonization. To Cuba they offer maize to help with their resistance under the blockade imposed by the US and other proponents of neoliberalism. The Zapatistas distinguish themselves as part of Latin America rather than the English-speaking countries of North America. However, they are careful to directly address the people of North America who struggle in solidarity with those in other countries, rather than the corrupt government leaders that represent the US and Canada as global powers. Nothing particularly material is offered since most US and Canadian struggles are better funded given their First World or Global North context.

The Zapatistas offer shoutouts to Indigenous leaders in Latin American countries such as the Mapuche in Chile, Venezuelans defending their sovereignty, and Indigenous peoples in Bolivia and Ecuador for "putting a halt to neoliberal globalization" within their national borders. The Zapatistas acknowledge Uruguay, Brazil, and all the young people in Latin American, but to the piqueteros in Argentina,

the Zapatistas say, "we love you." This expression of love is also an expression of admiration for the piqueteros resistance tactics which peacefully and effectively disrupt "business as usual." This tactic is such an affront to capitalism that it is illegal in parts of the United States. Those who obstruct "business as usual" do so with courage at great personal risk of police violence and other structurally sanctioned forms of repression.

When the Zapatistas turn their attention to Social Europe "and their great movements against the neoliberal wars", they offer culturally sensitive support. For example, they will not send Euros because they are likely to be devalued in "the European Union mess", and they will not send Pozol "because pozol is more our way," and could "hurt your bellies and weaken your struggles" (*La Sexta*). Their consideration for the diverse needs of others is a radical divergence from the paternalistic approaches that often pervade liberal and leftist organizing circles.

Like the caracol which symbolizes Zapatismo in its spiral movement–inward for reflection and outward for action–the Zapatistas are looking for ways to strengthen their movement "de abajo y la izquierda" at home. When turning their attention back to their patria, they are careful not to use any newfound knowledge to dictate what those at home "should do [nor] give them orders / Nor… ask them to vote for a candidate… /Nor… tell them to be like us" (*La Sexta*). Rather, the Zapatistas commit to *asking questions* about "what their lives are like, their struggle, their thoughts about our country and what we should do so [the neoliberals] do not defeat us." This attempt to develop a national program of struggle from below seeks to find consensus about how to

> engage in a struggle with everyone, with indigenous, workers, campesinos, students, teachers, employees, women, children, old ones, men, and with all of those of good heart and who want to struggle so that our Patria called Mexico does not end up being destroyed and sold, and which still exists between the Rio Grande and the Rio Suchiate and which has the Pacific Ocean on one side and the Atlantic on the other. (*La Sexta*)

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This reiteration of the Mexican territory is a land acknowledgment of national scale that declares the geopolitical boundaries in which they will organize resistance and the impacted populations with whom they plan "to exchange with mutual respect, experiences, histories, ideas, [and] dreams" to shape a new political future (*La Sexta*). Central to this effort are the Mexican People "who do not put up with things, who do not surrender, who do not sell out. Who are dignified…" because true power lies with the people united (*La Sexta*).

By declaring their positionality in multiple scales (national/Mexico, regional/ Mexican Southeast, transnational/Lacandon Jungle,[2] trans-Indigenous/pan-Maya,[3] structurally/de abajo, and ideologically/Zapatismo), the Zapatistas model radical transparency. We know who has written this manifesto based on how they define their place in the world and the stories of that place that inform their worldview. We know the purpose of their rebellion, their personal risks, and their demands. We also know the global climate in which this communique intervenes thanks to the Gregorian calendar time stamp (2005) and the geopolitical orientation (las montañas del Sureste Mexicano). This information is necessary for community accountability because they have stated their vision, why it is necessary given their analysis of our global context, and how they plan to achieve liberation according to Zapatista values. If there is any discrepancy between what they say they will do and what they actually do then accountability is not only possible, but necessary.

Decolonial Worldmaking

For those unfamiliar with Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang's seminal article, "Decolonization is not a metaphor," Tuck and Yang posit that decolonization cannot be separated from the repatriation of Indigenous lands. In the vein of "testimony" and "truth-telling," land acknowledgments utilize Indigenous storytelling practices to

create Indigenous worlds that unsettle geopolitical space. By telling stories about our connections to Indigenous lands and peoples, land acknowledgments ought to assert long-standing Indigenous claims to specific geographies and envision their rightful return. Attempts to distract from repatriation are "settler moves to innocence" that only serve to alleviate settler guilt in the short-term but continue to protect the structural foundations of settler colonialism in the long-term (Tuck & Yang 3). Unfortunately, land acknowledgments have been appropriated from Indigenous worldviews to alleviate settler guilt in neoliberal academic institutions that have no intention of returning Indigenous lands or resources. Settler land acknowledgements posture as actions that take responsibility to right past wrongs but are actually rote performances thanking Natives for the land and reinforcing the myth that settler colonialism is a regrettable but permanent condition. *In theory* land acknowledgements prohibit the erasure of Indigenous peoples, but *in practice* settler land acknowledgements are static perversions of an otherwise dynamic worldmaking practice.

Academic research has long been a weapon of colonial exploitation that benefits the settler scholar, their institution, and settler society at the expense of Indigenous peoples. This lack of community accountability persists when settler institutions appropriate land acknowledgments to maintain the settler colonial status quo. As Madeline Whetung and Sarah Wakefield observe, Indigenous knowledge is only valued if it can be passed off as research over which settlers maintain authority, or what they call "knowledge supremacy" (148). According to Whetung and Wakefield, "*that impetus to acquire knowledge… is the exact same impetus for colonizing*, which is to just look outward and grab a bunch of stuff from other places and try to make it legible to yourself, without necessarily having to be a part of it" (150; emphasis added). By accepting land acknowledgements in *theory,* academic institutions preserve their paternalistic knowledge supremacy and protect the neoliberal practice of cultural appropriation through extractive research methodologies *within* the settler institution.

However, as more Indigenous people enter academic institutions, the

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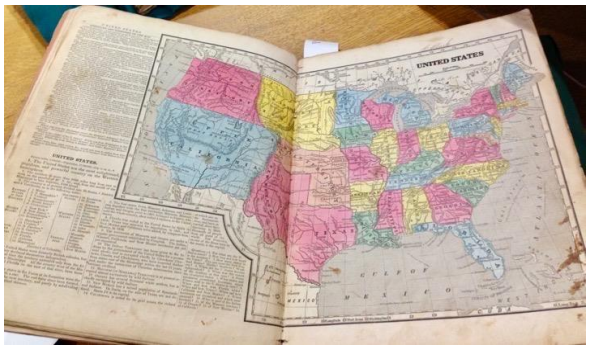
"Indigenous–scholar" relationship is less of a mutually exclusive binary opposition and increasingly, a hybrid identity (Whetung & Wakefield 150). This paradigm shift positions Indigenous researchers as authorities in both their fields of study and protocols for community accountability, and enables Indigenous–Scholar relationships that value respect, cooperation, reciprocity, and research integrity. To enact decolonial change in academia, the theory and practice of land acknowledgements must be brought into alignment, otherwise academic institutions continue to render decolonization a metaphor. Following Tuck and Yang, settler comfort is the inevitable price that must be paid for decolonization; specifically, the material comfort that comes from neoliberal capitalist impositions on Indigenous land, labor, and natural resources.

Praxis

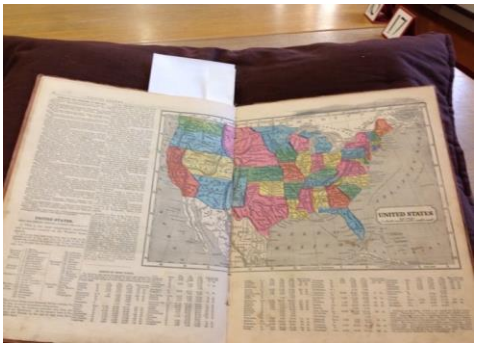
(Re)Mapping

In *Mark My Words: Native Women Mapping Our Nations,* Mishuana Goeman explains that maps, "in their most traditional sense as a representation of authority, have incredible power and have been essential to colonial and imperial projects… as spatial embodiments of knowledge" (16). Rather than accept representations of imperialism as stable, Goeman suggests we see "mapping as a means of discourse that mapped the imperial imaginary" (20). Such an approach "allows us to see that the map is an open one and the ideological and material relationships it produces are still in process" (38). I found evidence of colonial mapping as an open discursive process while examining cartographic representations of the US nation-state after the Mexican-American War ended in 1848. The images below are from two different editions of *Morse's School Geography* textbooks from the Newberry Library's Special Collections. *Morse's School Geography* was a popular textbook to educate settler school children,

and in Goeman's terms, "exert political control by manipulating the language of space into a language of normativity" that visually consolidates empire through Indigenous erasure (18).



Morse's School Geography (1850)



Morse's School Geography (1854)

Only in the 1850 edition do these pedagogical maps of the United States begin to depict its new nation-state boundaries, but state borders were yet to be determined. The 1854 edition presents a form more recognizable to our present context, however, the juxtaposition of these two maps illustrates that this spatial knowledge was still in process. The only indication of Indigenous presence—aside from the extant use of Indigenous language place names—is the rough formation of Oklahoma, labeled "Indian Territory." This is the site to which the Cherokee, Muscogee, Seminole, Chickasaw, Choctaw, and Ho-Chunk nations were forcibly removed from their ancestral homelands by the US federal government during the Trail of Tears. Oklahoma is noticeably larger in 1850 compared to 1854, indicating rapid settler encroachment while abstracting the violence of invasion.

In contrast, the map below by Carl Wheat depicts the colonial imaginary that precedes those in *Morse's School Geography* above. Conflicting colonial perspectives of what is now known as the U.S. Southwest before and after 1848 represent the contentious history of this region. Colonized first by the Spanish, claimed by Mexico, and invaded by the United States, Indigenous peoples are violently erased, "absented and obscured" as "part of the flora and fauna open to settlement" (Goeman 18).

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"1540-1861: Mapping the Transmississippi West" by Carl I. Wheat, *Volume Three: From the Mexican War to the Boundary Surveys 1846-1854* (The Institute of Historical Cartography, 1959)

Since these first three cartographic depictions represent colonial metanarratives, we can deduce which areas were thoroughly "explored" by the detail offered in each map. Prior to 1848, the settler nation-state of Mexico's border extended as far north as Oregon and as far east as Texas. In Wheat's depiction, "Upper California" encompasses current day Nevada, and parts of Arizona, Utah, and Idaho. Comparatively, in *Morse's School Geography* (1850), Upper California has a more distinctive shape, but still encompasses Nevada, Utah, Arizona, part of New Mexico, and possibly Colorado. It is also important to note that California as we know it today was well populated with settlers due to the gold rush in 1849, which contributes to its precise representation in *Morse's* 1854 pedagogical map. Since these three colonial maps triangulate the discourse of mapping into terminal creeds, countermapping is a necessary intervention for decolonization.

(Re)mapping as decolonial discourse according to Goeman, is a way to

"generate new possibilities. The framing of 're' in parenthesis, connotes the fact that in (re)mapping, Native women employ traditional and new tribal stories as a means of continuation or what Gerald Vizenor aptly calls stories of survivance" (3). Goeman and I both rely on the late British geographer, Doreen Massey's conceptualization of spacemaking as a dynamic discursive process. In *For Space,* Massey argues that space is 1) "the product of interrelations"; 2) "constituted through interactions… in which distinct trajectories coexist"; and 3) "always in the process of being made" (Massey 9). When our distinct trajectories co-exist in the same locations, we create a "sphere of influence" where space is made and can even be unmade or remade. In Massey's definition, space is heterogeneous and malleable. The product of our interrelations changes depending on the respective historical, familial, and ideological stories that shape our interactions. When we tell stories that include the whole world, like the Zapatista communiques, we engage in the ongoing process of worldmaking in a diverse and ever-changing present context.

Chicana Trajectories

As a Queer Xicanx from California, who lives on unceded lands, and works in settler institutions, it is imperative that I create a meaningful land acknowledgement from my personal trajectory and subsequent positionality. I began this article with an epigraph by the late Gloria Anzaldúa because her shape poem not only tells the story of colonization and Xicanx displacement, but also prophesizes decolonization. Xicanx participation in Indigenous resurgence is often misguided, which is why I don't teach Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. Instead, I regularly assign her posthumous essay "Border Arte: Nepantla, el lugar de la frontera" so that students—many of whom are Latine—learn about our academic foremother, but also begin to think critically about the ways in which representations of indigeneity are filtered through settler colonial worldviews.

In "Border Arte," Anzaldúa critically reflects on her experience at the 1992 opening day of *Aztec: The World of Monctezuma* exhibit in the Denver Natural History

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Museum. Throughout the essay, Anzaldúa articulates the Xicanx dilemma that many of us grapple with throughout our lives: how do we engage with "cultural 'recovery' and 'recuperation' work" without appropriating Indigenous cultures and perpetuating colonial power dynamics? Anzaldúa notes that the three "madres"—La Malinche, La Llorona, y La Virgen de Guadalupe—are cultural figures that Chicana writers and artists reclaim to express their cultural pride and resist colonial assimilation (51). Unfortunately, by appropriating these cultural figures to "finally [acknowledge] and [accept] our [Native] origins," Anzaldúa observes,

> we've gone to the other extreme, 'becoming,' claiming, and acting as though we're more [Indigenous] than Native Americans themselves—something that Native Americans rightfully resent and thus the source of recent Chicana/Native conflict…Though Chicanas are aware that we aren't 'Indian' and don't live in a Native American culture, and though our roots are [Indigenous], we often do misappropriate and collude with the Anglos' forms of misappropriation. (53)

While I agree with Anzaldúa that her appropriation as a Chicana "differs from the misappropriation by 'outsiders'" (50), unfortunately, the impact of this extractive cultural consumption is the same: Indigenous erasure. This is not ethnic fraud á la Andrea Smith for personal gain, nor is it settler nativism to deflect settler accountability for colonialism as one of the "moves to innocence" identified by Tuck and Yang (10). For Xicanx, our misguided attempts to locate our Indigenous American lineage makes us feel entitled to (re)claim Mexican tribal cultures without tribal consent. Anzaldúa is guilty of claiming Aztec heritage and appropriating Nahuatl, which colludes with the Mexican nation-state's erasure of living Indigenous Peoples on both sides of the border. The nationalist metanarrative of Mexico appropriates Aztec heritage for all Mexicans while denouncing African ancestry and influence, despite the actual history

of mestizaje in Mexico. By ascribing to the metanarrative of the Mexican settler colonial nation-state, Xicanx perpetuate colonialism in one context ostensibly to resist oppression in another.

During the Chicano Movement of the 1960s and 70s, activists intervened in the settler metanarrative that demanded Mexican-American assimilation to the U.S. nation-state by staking a much older claim to the geography. Drawing on Aztec oral stories about their migration south to Tenochititlán (Mexico City), Xicanx claim ancestral lands that straddle the US-Mexico border with the rallying cry, "We didn't cross the border, the border crossed us." Since then, many Xicanx have ascribed to this metanarrative of Aztec ancestry to assert their right to be in the US as displaced descendants of Indigenous Americans. The presence of Uto-Aztecan linguistics in this region affirms Mesoamerican cultural influences, but to use such knowledge to displace current Indigenous peoples cannot in good faith be called decolonization. However, at the National Museum of Mexican Art in Chicago, Xicanx history begins with two maps. The first is featured here, titled "Aztlán, Xicanx Homeland" and outlines Mexican territory before U.S. invasion. It is uncomfortably similar in shape to the Wheat map, but there is less topographical detail and it lays claim to Texas, another contested site ("Remember The Alamo").

[Image overleaf]

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Aztlán, Xicanx Homeland, National Museum of Mexican Art in Chicago (2017)

The second map—which I no longer have access to—outlines the geographical parameters of the Mesoamerican cultural influence and the former landbase of the Aztec Empire. The borders of the Xicanx homeland are drawn to include the US Southwest as a part of Mesoamerica. While it acknowledges Indigenous heritage, it is a homogenizing representation. Indigenous peoples with homelands within the parameters of Aztlán's cultural boundaries have expressed frustration with Xicanx Nationalists whose land claims encroach on *their* long-standing claims to the exact same geography. After waves of invasion that began with the Spanish Crown, continued through the Mexican nation-state, and now exists due to US Imperialism, Xicanx claims to the US Southwest is just another iteration of settler colonialism. As Xicanx, we cannot claim to be allies with our Indigenous relatives if we contribute to their erasure. To be in solidarity with Indigenous Peoples we must build relationships based on respect, reciprocity, and humility. We must be honest about our own complicated positionalities (and privileges) as Xicanx, we must listen to Indigenous

Peoples, and we must use our majoritarian privilege to amplify Indigenous voices, rather than drown them out.

Anzaldúa's legacy is undeniable. By starting important conversations about Chicana Indigeneity, Chicana queerness, and border transgression as resistance, she created a narrative space for Queer Chicana writers and artists to experience belonging that previously did not exist. While "Border Arte" interrogates her own Chicana appropriation of Indigeneity, Anzaldúa still introduces the concept of nepantla, and by doing so, appropriates Nahuatl phonetics and Aztec symbolism to describe a Xicanx transitional space. This analysis will not engage with nepantla directly, but rather the ways in which Anzaldúa invites us to think about space and spacemaking as malleable because she too believes another world is possible. In "Border Arte", she asks, "What does it mean that this exhibit takes place in Denver? / It means that the border itself moves, is mobile" (Anzaldúa 48). Anzaldúa's answer aligns with Massey's definition of space as always in the process of being made, Goeman's assertion that maps are spatial discourses, and the Zapatista's global restructuring of the world to fight neoliberalism.

Since movement is inevitable, we must "learn how to learn" to navigate change with principled action to build a new world that prioritizes collective liberation. At times, the oppressive systems in which we live seem static, permanent, and all consuming, making change seem impossible, and another world inconceivable. For some, it may be difficult to imagine the end of the world as we know it as anything other than total destruction. However, creative mediums, such as art—and more specifically, storytelling—hold the power to transform our perspectives so that we might transcend our preconceived limitations. If we ascribe to a different story, one that does not perpetuate colonialism, but dismantles neoliberal global capitalism, we can bring that new world into being by changing how we relate to one another in micro- and macrocosmic contexts. The European invasion brought about the end of the world for many Indigenous Peoples, so narratives about Indigenous resurgence recall stories

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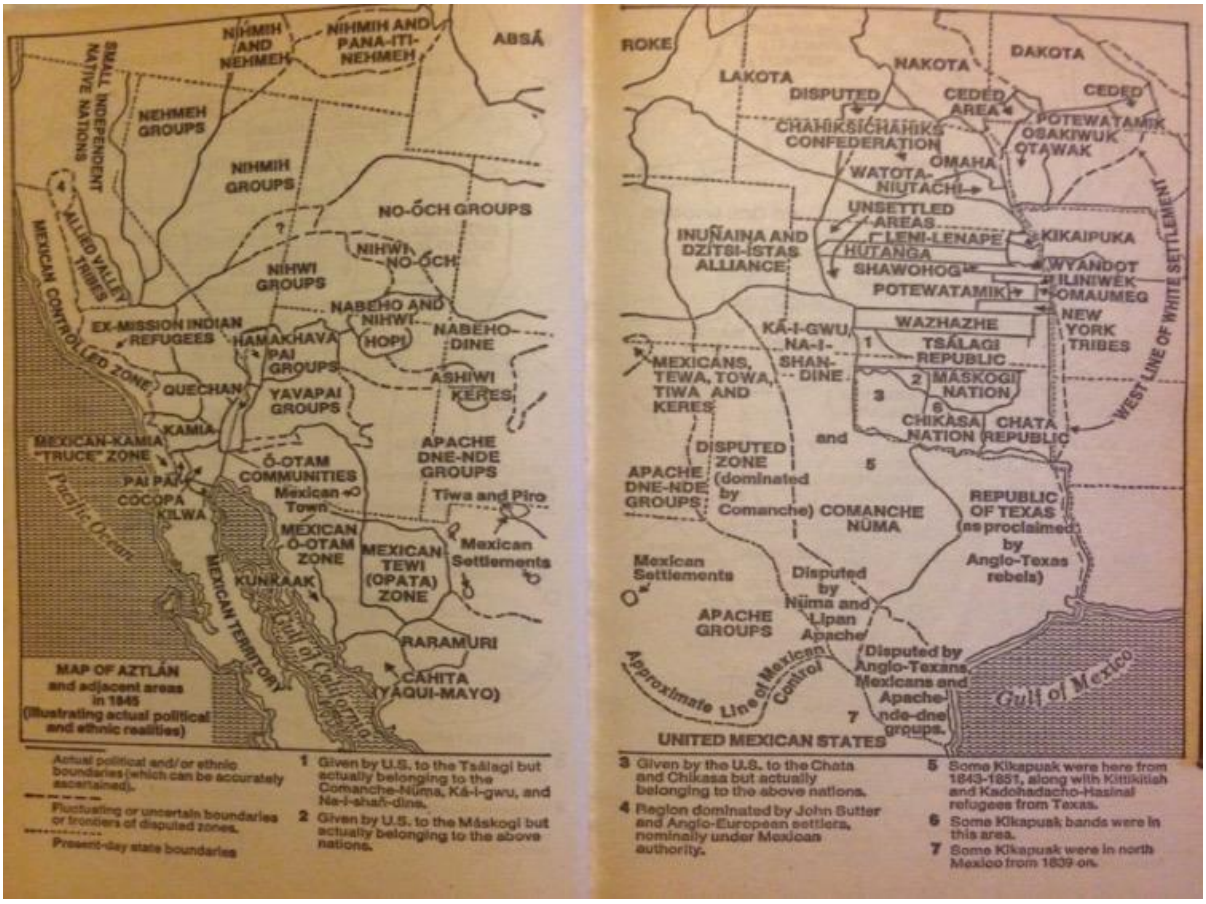
that restore hope and envision our collective healing; these are stories of survivance.

My Xicanx Land Acknowledgment

My Xicanx story is one of displacement and diaspora. As Xicanx we have been ideologically displaced from our Indigenous homelands, while simultaneously still living in the Americas. It is a precarious type of diaspora because we cannot always identify the exact tribal nation we are from, but we are undeniably from here, the here that existed before colonization, the here that still exists. With lineage that predates the US annexation of the Sonoran Desert region, most of my relatives identify as Mexican despite having no direct ties to the Mexican nation-state as it currently exists. This can mean that my ancestors were Mexican when this land was part of the settler colonial nation-state of Mexico and thus carry that identity as a subtle form of resistance to American assimilation. Or, it is also possible that my ancestors were Indigenous and claimed Mexican identity to avoid genocidal policies such as bounty hunting, boarding school kidnappings, and enslavement.

Lying about blood was a common survival strategy that Deborah Miranda illuminates in *Bad Indians,* with her poem, "Lies My Ancestors Told For Me." Miranda expounds, "When a lie saves your life,/that's truth; when a lie saves the lives/of your children, grandchildren/and five generations forward,/that's truth in a form so pure/it can't be anything/but a story" (49). As Miranda observes, a story can contain all the complexities and contradictions of so-called "truths and lies" because a truth or lie is defined by its rhetorical context. My Xicanx story is made of many fragments that contain truths and lies, some I have inherited, and others I have adopted, but all exist in ever shifting contexts that do not deviate from what is now known as the US Southwest/Northern Mexico. Undoubtedly, Indigenous peoples in this region maintain tribal narratives that identify much more precise geographies and as a result, some

Indigenous writers and scholars have attempted to mitigate this intertribal tension over belonging.



"Map of Aztlán,"Aztecas Del Norte: The Chicanos of Aztlán by Jack Forbes (1973)

In *Aztecas del Norte*, the late Jack Forbes (Powhatan-Renapé and Lenape descent) makes the controversial claim that Chicanos are the largest tribe in North America. His "Map of Aztlán," attempts to illustrate the "actual political and ethnic realities" of Aztlán to dispel the metanarrative of cultural hegemony that dominates both imperialist and Xicanx Nationalist depictions of the region. Contrary to Goeman's claim that maps are discourses in process, Massey calls mapping an "after the fact" documentation of the process of spacemaking (5), which renders most maps as

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cartographic representations of terminal creeds. The geopolitics that shape mapped spaces in Massey's characterization are invisible and the result is presented as a static and uncompromising, universal truth. However, the noticeable gaps in Forbes's map actually lends it to Goeman's theory that maps are discourses in process. It is not a terminal creed since it depicts a dynamic world that can be read in many different ways. For example, Forbes outlines Indigenous geographical spaces with clearly defined solid lines to indicate that they are indisputable. The Indigenous cultural regions labeled "disputed zones" are trans-Indigenous geographies shared between Indigenous groups that are demarcated by lines with long dashes to indicate porousness in spatial "truths." Settler nation-state boundaries are marked with short dashes, representing them as the most tenuous land claims by making them appear the most porous. By layering Indigenous, trans-Indigenous, and settler nation-state geographies, Forbes compresses temporalities and makes space for many ancestral worlds to co-exist in his story of Aztlán.

According to Keith Basso in *Wisdom Sits in Places,* "Knowledge of places is… closely linked to knowledge of the self, to grasping one's position in the larger scheme of things" (34). Places are specific geographic locations and one's knowledge of a place defines how one relates to the locale. As Basso explains, Indigenous narratives construct a history of "what happened here" (6) because "the place-maker's main objective is to speak the past into being, to summon it with words and give it dramatic form, to *produce* experience by forging ancestral worlds in which others can participate and readily lose themselves" (32). What Basso describes as "place-making" is storytelling that imbues geographical places with cultural significan'e. Close observation of the "Map of Aztlán" reveals rhetorical gaps in Forbes's map that represent gaps in his own knowledge. First, only the largest tribal groups and those with federal recognition are represented. Then, if we look at California, the tribal

nations are identified by general regions, or their colonization by Spanish Missionaries ("Ex-Mission Indian Refugees"). While more Indigenous Californians are intervening on this metanarrative of erasure, Forbes is representing his own positionality through the information he had available at the time. Moreover, the entire map only covers the U.S. portion of Aztlán, which validates the Xicanx metanarrative, but erases Mexican Indigeneity by centering the US nation-state. According to Goeman, remembering "important connections to land and community is instrumental in mapping a decolonized Native presence," but it is clear from the colonial presence in the "Map of Aztlán" that this is not a story about decolonization (29).

Rather than conform to the metanarrative of imperialist maps, land acknowledgments enable us to share more complex stories about our interrelationships—and our subsequent responsibilities—with places and peoples. Since the "stories that connect Native people to the land and form their relationships to the land and one another are much older than colonial governments," the map that resonates with my own positionality is Leslie Marmon Silko's "Five Hundred Year Map" (Goeman 28).

[Image overleaf]

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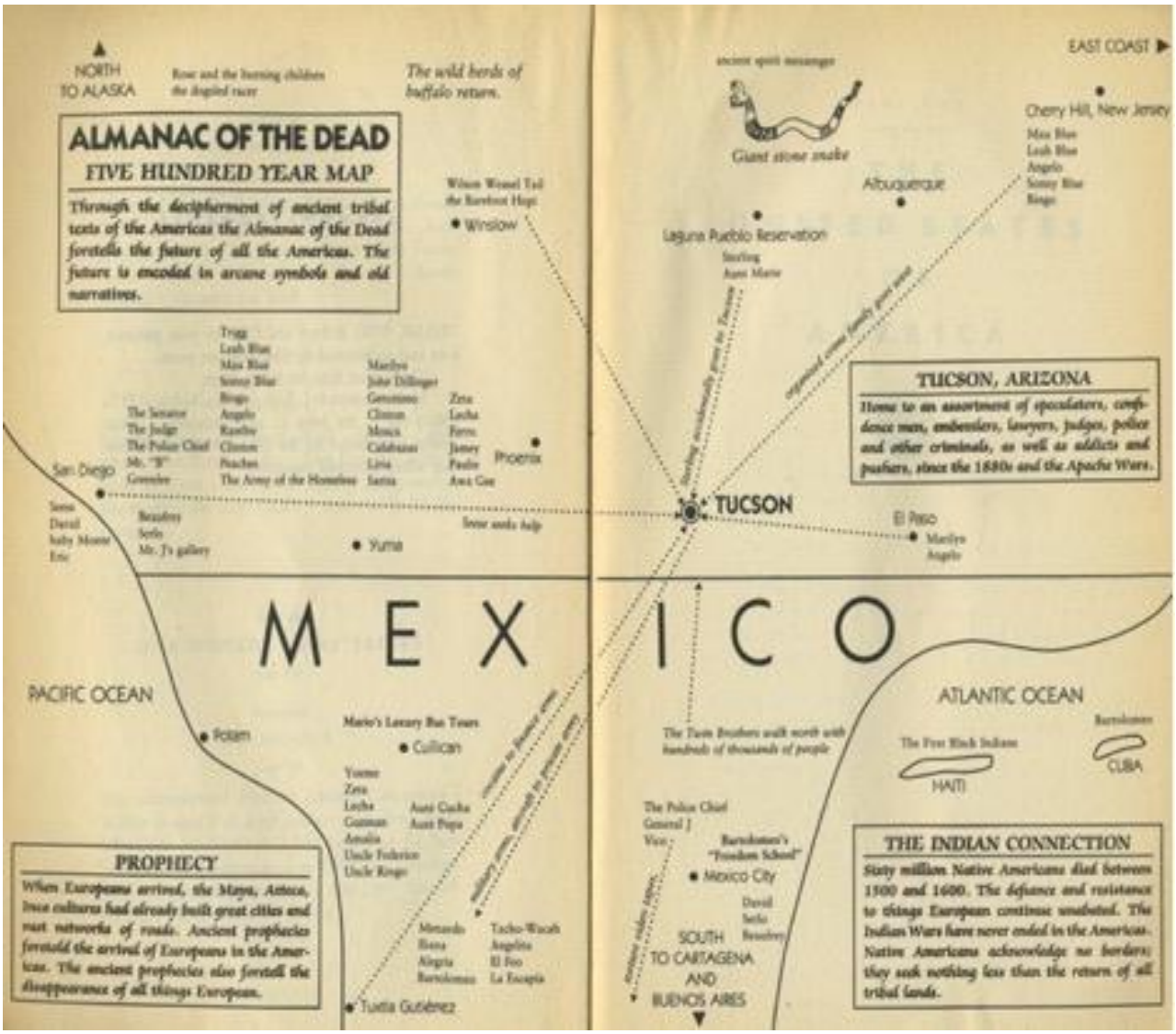

"Five Hundred Year Map," *Almanac of the Dead* by Leslie Marmon Silko (1991)

In the opening pages of *Almanac of the Dead,* Silko's "Five Hundred Year Map" roughly outlines Aztlán, not to validate Xicanx Indigeneity, but to invalidate settler colonialism. The focal point of the map is Tucson, and all borders are removed except the US-Mexico border, which is depicted by a single vector that only acknowledges Mexico and symbolically erases the US, "(re)mapping power relations abused in the global

capital system" (Goeman 158). Silko's personal essays address the arbitrary, yet violent enforcement of the US-Mexico border around Laguna Pueblo despite the metanarrative of a precisely maintained boundary and its distinctive presence on her map represents the partition for the rigid imposition that it is on the area. According to Goeman, "[by] making use of language to create new associations with borders as unreal and history as not yet finished, [Silko] reflects a map without borders. The prophesy referred to… is not a magical happening *but rather the process of language and communal sharing"* (199). The text in the lower right-hand corner of the map shares Silko's decolonial worldview, which is heavily influenced by Pueblo stories that compress time and locate Indigenous futures in old prophetic symbols about the arrival and inevitable disappearance of European worldviews. All that is left is for us to live the story of decolonization that has already been told.

While the "Five Hundred Year Map" is part of a fictional text, it nonetheless narrates the cultural reality of survivance in the region. It depicts a decolonial space that includes non-humancentric relationships, trans-Indigenous alliances, and alliances with descendants of formerly enslaved Africans—all victims of settler colonialism in the Americas. In the "Five Hundred Year Map," "Silko is generating a sense of belonging based on acknowledging the relations around us… [and] relationships are essential" (Goeman 199). *Almanac of the Dead* was published in 1991, three years before the Zapatista uprising in 1994, yet narrates Indigenous resurgence in the neoliberal global capitalist era. One of the narrative threads in this polyvocal text follows twin brothers Tacho and El Feo, as they organize an Indigenous-Maya resistance movement in the state of Chiapas. As their movement spreads north, Indigenous Peoples on both sides of the border begin to organize in solidarity. This uncanny prediction that Maya resistance in Southeastern Mexico will bring about decolonization across the Americas is not lost on Indigenous peoples and informed allies. It took Silko ten years to write her novel, which means she was writing it while the Zapatistas were in the midst of their 20 years of clandestine training in Chiapas. As the quincentennial of European invasion

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approached in 1992, many Indigenous Peoples were reflecting on the past five hundred years of colonization with the prophetic knowledge that this era of destruction will end. These are the place-based narratives that inform this Xicanx land acknowledgement. Like Anzaldúa's shape poem, Silko's map undermines settler borders and literally narrates an inevitable, decolonized, landback future. Acoma Pueblo writer and scholar Simon Ortiz asserts that "[the] oral tradition has been the most reliable method by which Indian culture and community integrity have been maintained" and in the face of perilous circumstances, "[the] continued use of the oral tradition today is evidence that this resistance is ongoing" (Ortiz 9; 122). Since storytelling is precisely how Indigenous peoples resist ethnocide under settler colonialism, I choose to ascribe to the stories that prophesize Indigenous resurgence and decolonization. *Almanac of the Dead* is one such story.

Just like Silko's hero twins, the Zapatistas also embody an ancient prophesy. In *La Quinta,* the Zapatistas include an epigraph from the Popul Vuh—the K'iche' Maya story of creation—that reaffirms their ongoing commitment to survivance: "'We are the avengers of death./Our lineage will never be extinguished as long/as there is light in the morning star.'/–Popul Vuh" (*La Quinta).* For the Maya, the colonial eviction date was set for the year 2012 and in December of that year they released the following communique to announce the birth of a new world:

> To Whom It May Concern:
>
> Did you listen?
> It is the sound of your world crumbling.
> It is the sound of our world resurging.
> The day that was day, was night.

> And night shall be the day that will be day.
>
> Democracy!
>
> Liberty!
>
> Justice!
>
> From the Mountains of Southeastern Mexico.
> For the Clandestine Indigenous Revolutionary Committee – General Command of the EZLN
>
> Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos,
> Mexico, December 2012

There is no doubt that trans-Indigenous prophesies of resurgence empower Indigenous Peoples in resistance. The Zapatistas credit their stories for guiding them in struggle, which includes las montañas and Zapata (*La Quinta)*. By Indigenizing Zapata and his spirit of resistance, the Zapatistas offer Xicanx a shared ancestor so we may stand in solidarity with our Indigenous relatives from our respective positionalities in the North, rather than replicate colonial practices of cultural appropriation. If we accept that land acknowledgements are a form of community literacy that position us within place-based relationships, and relationships define our responsibilities for one another, then Indigenous protocol requires that we state who our people are, where we come from, and what we are doing here. The narratives we believe about our place in the world shape how we embody space, and thus, I am a Queer Xicanx from California and I am of the Sixth/Soy de la Sexta.

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Conclusion

This essay relies on storytelling methodology to intervene on static conceptions of space-time and envision decolonial futures in which Xicanx contribute meaningfully to Indigenous resurgence and decolonization. It posits that the purpose of land acknowledgements is to contribute to the ongoing story about the world of which we are all a part by intervening in the terminal creeds of colonial maps through the trans-Indigenous practice of storytelling as a form of worldmaking. In the neoliberal university where I am located this would require us to confront capitalist ways of constructing relationships. At the public institution where I work, many people have adopted a depoliticized land acknowledgment on their own authority: "Cal Poly is in tiłhini, the Place of the Full Moon. We gratefully acknowledge, respect, and thank yak titʸu titʸu yak tiłhini… in whose homeland we are guests." While the quoted material might seem like a noble effort by well-meaning academics who put this statement in their email signatures, justice-oriented settler land acknowledgement should acknowledge the extractive historical relationship of which they are a part and offer a good faith gesture for righting the past wrongs from which they continue to benefit by living on stolen land. Institutional change starts with individuals who will take up the discomfort of *intervening* on their own power and privilege to change the neoliberal practices that enable universities to extract resources from unceded Indigenous lands, while simultaneously mining decolonial discourse from Indigenous Studies and other historically marginalized disciplines. Land acknowledgements mean nothing without dedicated action to repatriate Indigenous lands to Indigenous Peoples, so I have taken a page from Cutcha Risling Baldy's book and for every land acknowledgment I give, I also ask the audience to take action by donating to support a local grassroots organization or project (most recently: Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary).

Notes

[1] Translations of the Zapatista Communiques are taken from https://enlacezapatista.ezln.org.mx/ and used throughout this essay.
[2] The Lacandon Jungle is also a transnational and trans- Indigenous space, uniting Maya in the region that crosses settler borders of Mexico, Guatemala, and Belize.
[3] "The Zapatistas were and are standing together and behind the Indian peoples of the country. Like now, we were then only a small part of the great history with a face, word, and heart of the nahuatl, paipai, kiliwa, cúcapa, cochimi, kumiai, yuma, seri, chontal, chinanteco, pame, chichimeca, otomí, mazahua, matlazinca, ocuilteco, zapoteco, solteco, chatino, papabuco, mixteco, cuicateco, triqui, amuzgo, mazateco, chocho, izcateco, huave, tlapaneco, totonaca, tepehua, popoluca, mixe, zoque, huasteco, lacandón, maya, chol, tzeltal, tzotzil, tojolabal, mame, teco, ixil, aguacateco, motocintleco, chicomucelteco, kanjobal, jacalteco, quiché, cakchiquel, ketchi, pima, tepehuán, tarahumara, mayo, yaqui, cahita, ópata, cora, huichol, purépecha, and kikapú." (*La Quinta)*

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REVIEW ESSAY

"Story and memory. Memory and story": Manifesting Vacancy in Thomas King's *Indians on Vacation*

Thomas King. *Indians on Vacation*. Harper Collins, 2020. 286 pages. ISBN: 9781443460545.

https://www.harpercollins.ca/9781443460545/indians-on-vacation/

In a 1999 interview, Thomas King observes that "In a number of my books editors have asked me to gloss terms or events so the reader understands what's happening"; he adds that the refusal to explain is strategic: "I wanted people to understand that I think Native history is as common as Jacques Cartier arriving in Canada" ("Border Trickery" 180, 181).[1] I have argued elsewhere that while King creates narrative worlds that demand that the reader cultivate a tolerance for uncertainty, his novels are also full of answers, if readers will do the work of decoding.[2] But whether it is the undefined and

untranslated Cherokee language in *Green Grass, Running Water* (1993) or oblique references to the role of the church in the residential school system in *Truth and Bright Water* (1999) or the mysterious link between the Haudenosaunee Sky Woman origin story and the chemical defoliant GreenSweep in *The Back of the Turtle* (2014), King's fiction is often characterized by a tendency to evoke rather than explain. In this, King manifests in text an epistemological condition that takes for granted that Indigenous history, stories, and knowledge are known – or are important and pervasive enough that they *ought* to be known. The narrative worlds he creates are saturated in forms of awareness – if often allusive and sometimes elusive – that refute the notion that knowledge of these histories, cosmologies, and lifeways is in any way esoteric or specialized. And in case readers feel left out by gaps in exposition or by the destabilizing effect of the worlds he creates, his works sometimes even include apologies for hurt feelings ("'*Sorry, sorry, sorry, sorry*,' says Coyote") (*Green Grass* 469). His recent novel *Indians on Vacation* (2020) is no exception. Indeed, gaps, absences, mysteries, and uncertainty together constitute the novel's organizing principle. The valences of "vacation" – from the state of being free from something (work, for example) to the state of being vacant (the condition of absence) – are woven together in this novel, in which the story of an Indigenous couple traveling on holiday to Prague, furnished with all the expected narrative detours into scenes of sightseeing, dining out, insomnia, and occasional bickering, is suggestively interspersed with vignettes and allusions that situate the novel's travelers within a wider historical context of settler colonial displacements and the enduring legacies of the vacancies they create.

With *Indians on Vacation*, King returns to a motif he first explored in "You're Not the Indian I Had in Mind," an essay he delivered as part of the 2002 Canadian Massey Lectures, in which he develops the concept of the "postcard Indian," a racialized construction defined by homogenizing clichés ("Indians in feathers and leathers, sitting in or around tipis or chasing buffalo on pinto ponies") whose ongoing ubiquity (for sale at a gas station near you) attests to the enduring presence of a centuries-old appetite to consume what he defines variously as the "literary Indian," the "visually Indian," or the Indian of imagination: exotic, noble, stoic, and extinct (34, 43, 35). For King, the "postcard Indian" proffers a narrow, static idea of what constitutes "authenticity" for the "Indian" – a suffocating pre-contact ideal that consigns Indigenous authenticity to the past tense and functions to debilitate contemporary Indigenous peoples, whose nuanced identity (and, indeed, ongoing presence and vitality) it calls into question.

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While postcards do play a meaningful role in *Indians on Vacation*, it is not through the 4x6 reification of the idealized "Indian" archetype that the novel revisits the concept. Instead, *Indians on Vacation* recognizes the postcard Indian as a commodity that manifests across an array of consumer environments, from traveling "Wild West" vaudeville shows to manufactured ceremonies (like a powwow in Aarhus, Denmark) to "Indian-themed" restaurants, all of which, in some way, attest to vacancy. As one of King's protagonists, Mimi Bull Shield, observes, "'World is crazy about Indians'" (48). Whether such commodifications are produced in the absence of Indigenous people, as with the powwow in Denmark, or whether they involve the removal of Indigenous people – often by coercion or force – as with the Wild West shows, or whether they depend upon acts of theft (what Mimi in the novel refers to as "Robbing graves and selling culture"), the principle of evacuation common to all can itself shed light on the interests that might be served by the propagation of the fantasy of the Indian. As King writes in "You're Not the Indian I Had in Mind," the Indian of imagination represents "the only antiquity that North America would ever have" (56). Propagating that fantasy thus serves hegemonic interests by establishing a noble foundation upon which North American settler nations are built and a naturalized teleology that recognizes settler supremacy as the coefficient of modernity. As a relic of a bygone past, the Indian of imagination is a useful lie: in de-authenticating living Indigenous people, it serves to symbolically effect the forms of erasure that motivate state and federal policies of removal, relocation, and assimilation.

Set in the near-present, the novel's action centers on a European vacation: it's 2018 and Cherokee-Greek Blackbird Mavrias (Bird) and Blackfoot Mimi Bull Shield are in Prague as part of a years-long scavenger hunt to discover the whereabouts of the Bull Shield family medicine bundle, missing since the turn of the twentieth century, when Mimi's great uncle Leroy Bull Shield departed with it, never to return, when he was exiled from the Kainai (Blood) Reserve for transgressions against its Indian Agent. Mimi and Bird are following a trail of postcards sent by Leroy – from Paris, Nice, Athens, Amsterdam, and Prague – that serve as the only record of his European journey as an "Indian" curiosity in Captain Trueblood's Wild West Emporium, a punishment devised by the Department of Indian Affairs for Leroy's rebellions against its authority in leaving the reserve without permission and in repeatedly painting the Agent's house brown

with diluted cow shit. Just below the humour of the novel's premise lurks a narrative of colonial dominance and exploitation, in which Leroy's story evokes at once a long history of forced removals – from kidnappings by early European explorers to the U.S. and Canadian states' reservation and residential school systems – and an equally long tradition of treating Indigenous peoples as curiosities, suitable for display in pageants tacitly designed to celebrate the ingenuity and control of the colonizer or, more recently, reducible to a set of fixed (and tired) stereotypes – totem poles, headdresses, bows and arrows – as readily consumed as the pizza on offer at the "Indian-themed pizza parlor" visited by Bird and Mimi in Prague (48).[3]

On one hand, Mimi and Bird's search for the missing Bull Shield medicine bundle is treated with levity, as though the quest itself might be dismissed as a conceit – a flimsy justification for world travel: "Uncle Leroy had sent the family a postcard from Nice, and Mimi thought we might find the Crow bundle in the Picasso Museum in Antibes, which was just up the road" or "As far as Uncle Leroy and the Crow bundle were concerned, Athens was a bust" (73, 111). On the other, the recurring motif of Bird's sudden and bewildering symptoms – debilitating leg cramps, sudden loss of energy, intense vomiting – resulting from autoimmune pancreatitis and diabetes suggests that the search for medicine is neither a narrative device nor, strictly speaking, a metaphor. Bird suffers from IgG4, a disease of the blood in which the body attacks itself, mistaking healthy cells for harmful antigens, destroying them in a confused response to tissue-level trauma. An incurable illness, IgG4 is chronic rather than fatal; in delivering this news, Bird's doctor adds that "We've been seeing it in Asian and American Indian populations" (10). King doesn't always go in for subtlety, and here, the reader is afforded an invitation to recognize in Bird's incurable and persistent illness – which is a constant both in his life and in the novel – a means of suturing together the narrative's staccato references to injuries inflicted by "Indian" policy and the individuals and institutions that have enacted it, as well as the enduring legacies of settler supremacy. In the context of the unpredictable flare-ups of Bird's disease, whose episodes he is often helpless to treat and must simply endure until the symptoms pass, Uncle Leroy's decision to take the Crow bundle with him into exile reminds the reader to acknowledge the crisis that may be masked by playful, parodying narrative gestures, like replacing the historical – and (somewhat) more soberly named – Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show with the slightly absurd fictionalization, Captain Trueblood's Wild West Emporium.

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As he often does, in *Indians on Vacation*, King shifts unpredictably between U.S. and Canadian nomenclature (reserves and reservations; kilometers and miles; residential schools and boarding schools; the Department of Indian Affairs rather than the Bureau; the way the Canadian 1967 Adopt Indian and Métis Program evokes the 1978 Indian Child Welfare Act, a U.S. law resulting from similar practices promoting predatory adoption, etc.), affirming that, as far as "Indian" policy is concerned, the boundary between Canada and the U.S. is next to meaningless, as the methods and policies and programs have so often been almost identical. (As a Canadian living in the U.S., it took me years to come to terms with a joke a colleague once told me, at my expense: "What's the difference between a Canadian and an American? Canadians think there is one.") Consistent with this tendency to destabilize apparent divisions or distinctions, Uncle Leroy's exile as a "Native performe[r]," playing Indian for European consumption, has its precedent in the fate of a famous Indigenous leader and war chief, whose parallel story unfolded in the American plains. After the 1876 culmination of the so-called Indian Wars, which saw the united Oceti Sakowin forces of Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse soundly defeating George Armstrong Custer and his Seventh Cavalry (and by extension, the U.S. War Department) at the notorious 1876 Battle of the Little Bighorn, the U.S. state sought another avenue for battlefield victory, strategizing to limit his influence amongst tribal members on the reservation while also capitalizing on his fame: for four months in 1885, Sitting Bull was coerced into touring the country as part of Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show.[4] Like Uncle Leroy, Sitting Bull had repeatedly embarrassed the state, both as a warrior and as a statesman. As was ultimately the case with Sitting Bull, who was eventually killed in 1890 for acts of resistance – sedition and religious disobedience – Leroy's departure marks his disappearance, with only cryptic postcards to track his movements ("'In Paris. Bundle is with me and safe. Home soon. Leroy.'"), and like the Indigenous children stolen away from their families, either to be sent to residential schools or new adoptive families, (or, indeed, like the Syrian refugees whose devastating search for safety from crisis and persecution also dots the novel), *Indians on Vacation* manifests awareness of the brutalities of state power – dominance, displacement, and deracination – as an endemic constant of settler nations rather than an exception (41).[5]

Dissolving supposed distinctions between Canada and the U.S. forms part the novel's wider epistemological condition, in which associations and explanations are, as I have argued above, either loosely implied or withheld altogether and the reader becomes the connective tissue binding the narrative elements. Mimi tells a story she has heard from her mother, about her uncle Everett, who ran away "with two other boys" from Blue Quills in St. Paul, Alberta, a residential school "almost six hundred kilometers away" from "Standoff," a loose fictionalization of the unincorporated Stand Off on the Kainai (Blood) Reserve (20). To Mimi's explanation that their escape failed ("they had a box of matches with them, but the matches got wet from the fog, and that was that"), Bird replies enigmatically:

> "Chanie Wenjack."
> "Sure," says Mimi, "that's the story everyone knows. Children running away from residential schools. But it's not the only one." (20)

I know the story: I was an undergraduate at Trent University in Peterborough, Ontario, where my Native Studies 100 class was held in the Wenjack Theatre. At some point, I came to learn about Chanie, who, on October 16th, 1966, at the age of 12, ran away from Cecilia Jeffrey School, in Kenora, Ontario. He died of exposure and hunger, and was found on October 23rd – his only possession, a glass jar containing a few dry matches.[6] But "everyone" does *not* know this story; collective knowledge of the inexpressible harm inflicted on children and families by the residential school system is defined by the vacancies that Mimi acknowledges when she affirms the importance of telling the stories. But in creating a double to Chanie's flight – in which both the yawning distance between the school and home is about the same, as is the number of escaped children (Chanie was accompanied part of the way by two other boys) – King educates the reader's imagination, surreptitiously creating the condition of knowledge that Mimi takes for granted. The horrific truth of Chanie Wenjack's experience is that the despair and fear and longing that define the condition of exile – of being compelled to vacate what is known and exist in a state of linguistic, familial, cultural, and environmental banishment – is at once so common as to be a thing "everyone knows" about (Chanie, Everett, Leroy, Sitting Bull, the Syrian refugees at Keleti Station in Budapest: it's all the same story) *and* a matter of public forgetting. In weaving strands and fragments of such stories into his narrative, King creates a textual simulacrum of memory: knowledge flits through *Indians on Vacation* the way remembrances surface and submerge in the mind. Confirming that Everett and the other two boys didn't die, Bird asks, "And that's the end of the story?", and Mimi's

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answer, "Those stories never end," attests to the living legacies of pain – as constitutive as a disease of the blood – that long outlast the dissolution of colonial instruments like the residential school system (21). Her answer also recognizes what I take to be a principle of King's narrative style: his refusal to inhabit the didactic mode, to ensure that the reader is conducted through historical references to defined points of knowledge, is not a form of narrative coyness but rather expresses an expectation that the experience of not knowing will provoke rather than foreclose the questions that lead to stories and, in turn, to memory. As Oz, Bird's breakfast companion at the Prague hotel, enigmatically observes: "'Story and memory. Memory and story. . . . Together they are history'" (261).

It is hard to resist filling in the absences in King's narrative, especially when doing so might be considered to be the job of the reader with the literacy to detect the novel's clues. Like Bird, when Oz takes his leave one morning with "'But there is much to do. . . . And I have promises to keep," I too am "tempted to finish the stanza," supplying the final and famous lines from Robert Frost's "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" (149). But Bird does not finish the stanza; it is for me, the reader, to do that: "And miles to go before I sleep, / And miles to go before I sleep" (15-16). There are plenty of opportunities for the reader to "finish the stanza" in *Indians on Vacation*. I may be tempted to gloss Bernie Bull Shield's apparent failure of memory in her repeated references to the Indian Agent responsible for Leroy's banishment as "Mr. Nelson or Wilson," "Wilson or Nelson" (32, 33). By force of their repetition and inversion, I am compelled to pause and wonder why King might be merging in that individual references to R.N. Wilson (Indian Agent for the Blood Reserve from 1904-1911 and author of the self-published *Our Betrayed Wards* (1921)) and, perhaps, the Nelson Act of 1889, a law that forced the relocation of Anishinaabe peoples of Minnesota to the White Earth Reservation, enabling the expropriation of vacated lands for white settlement. But while responding to narrative lacunae may constitute acts of remembering called for by the narrative's recognition of the reciprocities of story and memory that together make history, a reader may be guided by Bird's refusal to give in to the temptation to *finish* the stanza. In *Indians on Vacation*, what is devastating in Mimi's statement that "Those stories never end" is balanced by the potential tellings, retellings, and rememberings that are possible when stories are not deemed finished.

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Notes

[1] This essay was composed on lands ancestral to the Menominee (Omāēqnomenēwak) and Ho-Chunk (Hoocąk),
in a city named after Oshkosh, a Chief of the Menominee from 1827–1858 whose leadership spanned the years
that saw the formalization of the State's Removal policy and the establishment of Wisconsin's statehood.

[2] See Pascale M. Manning, "The Climate of Indigenous Literature: Thomas King's Anthropocene Realism," *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction*, vol. 65, no. 1, 2024, pp. 33-50.

[3] For a detailed narrative of the kidnappings of Indigenous people by explorers, from Christopher Columbus to Hernán Cortés to Martin Frobisher (etc.), see Olive Dickason's chapter titled "Amerindians in Europe" in *The Myth of the Savage*.

[4] See Bobby Bridger, 257-288 and *passim*, in *Buffalo Bill and Sitting Bull: Inventing the Wild West*.

[5] In *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee: An Indian History of the American West* (1970), Dee Brown famously tells the story of a speech delivered in 1883 by Sitting Bull. It is a matter of historical record that Sitting Bull was transported from the Standing Rock Agency Reservation to Bismark on September 8th; a kind of war trophy, Sitting Bull was there to deliver a speech as part of the celebrations marking the completion of the Northern Pacific Railway. Instead of delivering in Lakota the speech that had been written for him, and in spite of being accompanied by a translator, whose function was to interpret his remarks for an audience dotted with dignitaries, Sitting Bull is said to have declared: "I hate all the white people. . . . You are thieves and liars. You have taken away our land and made us outcasts" (426). While the subversion was concealed in the moment and the audience was none the wiser, the act of resistance formed part of a lifetime of refusal to adhere to conditions dictated by the settler state, including restrictions imposed by the Civilization Regulations of the 1880s, which established the practice of traditional Indigenous medicine and ceremonies as punishable offenses. His murder on December 15th, 1890, just two weeks before the massacre at Wounded Knee (in which the Seventh Cavalry, Custer's former regiment, brutally killed between 150 and 300 Lakota on the grounds that they were practitioners of the Ghost Dance religion), augured the force with which the U.S. state was willing to act to suppress expressions of self-determination and resistance (Brown *passim* 415-439).

[6] See Ian Adams, "The Lonely Death of Chanie Wenjack," *Maclean's*, 1 February, 1967.

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REVIEW ESSAY

"It's About Time!": Reflections on Wes Studi and the Current Zeitgeist of Indigenous Mainstream Cinema

The career trajectory of Cherokee actor Wes Studi doesn't fit the mould of the usual A-list celebrity. Born in Cherokee County in 1947, he exclusively spoke the Cherokee language until he had to go to school aged 5. Even when Studi came home from school speaking the English language, his grandmother would refuse to let him speak it in the house (Te Ao). When he was 17, Studi signed up to fight for the United States in the Vietnam War. His experiences there shaped his politics and the way that he has presented himself to the world ever since. Taking part in the military campaigns that relocated villagers in Vietnam reminded Studi of his own Cherokee history – The Trail of Tears. Post-war, this led to Studi joining the American Indian Movement. He was arrested at the occupation of Wounded Knee in 1973 alongside two other activists-turned-actors – Dennis Banks and Russell Means. This was also a momentous year in Indigenous cinematic history. Native American civil rights activist Sacheen Littlefeather declined Marlon Brando's Oscar for Best Actor in *The Godfather* due to the racist and

inaccurate portrayals of Native Americans in Hollywood.

During the 1970's, few Indigenous actors could be seen on the big screen. Jay Silverheels playing Tonto in *The Lone Ranger* (1949-1957), Chief Dan George known for *Little Big Man* (1970) and *The Outlaw Josey Wales* (1976), and Will Sampson, best known for Chief Bromden in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1975), were the exceptions. These were the only notable Native actors whom Studi had to look up to before his eventual decision to begin acting in his early 30s. Impersonating Native Americans through the act of redfacing was still commonplace when he had his break in a 1984 theatrical adaptation of *Black Elk Speaks*. The star of this production was non-Native David Carradine, in redface. Despite the ongoing harmful practices that took key roles away from Indigenous actors and perpetuated negative stereotypes, Studi was afforded this breakout opportunity by another co-star, Will Sampson, who was tipped in previews as "America's most recognised Indian actor" (Trammell). The 1984 production was staged by the American Indian Theatre Company, and, in the previous year, Sampson had created the American Indian Registry for the Performing Arts (Michener). This had a major impact on the careers of actors such as Studi, providing opportunities that improved representations of Indigeneity at a period in Hollywood when Native actors were still actively excluded.

Powwow Highway (1989) was Studi's Hollywood breakthrough in the late 1980s. He played the minor role of Buff, a Vietnam veteran who seems primarily focused on getting laid. Studi's arrival in Hollywood paralleled another significant milestone for Indigenous mainstream cinema as *Powwow Highway* was the first major release to forefront a cast of Indigenous actors with a narrative focus including themes of survivance, land sovereignty, and set in a contemporary setting as opposed to the Hollywood comfort zone that situates Indigenous existence prior to the 20th century (Cobb). Nor was there a sense of victimry throughout the film, instead using humour as a successful tool to convey the resilient and determined nature of the Indigenous cast and their characters.

A common notion about Indigeneity in mainstream cinema is that interest comes and goes. The early 1990s were certainly a flash-point for Indigenous presence on the big screen. Studi's next role (credited simply as "The Toughest Pawnee") was in one of the most celebrated films in cinematic history – *Dances with Wolves* (1990). Despite seven Academy Awards, *Dances with Wolves* remains heavily criticised and widely mocked

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by Indigenous circles. Protagonist John Dunbar (Kevin Costner) can be associated with the concept of the "white saviour," the Pawnee are portrayed in a terrorising one-dimensional manner, and the film's ending subscribes to the racist trope of the "vanishing race," popularised by 19th-century photographer Edward Curtis. However, in the context of *Dances with Wolves'* place in cinematic history, Studi contends that this was in fact a good time to be a Native actor (HDNET - Dances). Costner's production did provide many Indigenous actors with roles, Lakota and Pawnee languages were used effectively, and the sheer success of the film created a platform for numerous emerging Indigenous actors at the time including Studi, Tantoo Cardinal, and Graeme Greene, who received an Oscar nomination for his performance.

Studi's career continued to gain momentum during the early 1990s, starring in Michael Mann's adaptation of the James Fenimore Cooper novel, *The Last of the Mohicans* (1992). Similar criticism can be levelled at *The Last of the Mohicans* as *Dances with Wolves*: the narrative centres non-Indigenous characters and plot, concludes with the character Chingachgook (Russell Means) identifying as the "last Mohican" which can be considered another allusion to the "vanishing race," and includes yet more depictions of tired cinematic tropes of savagery. Equally, however, Mann's production once again created many roles for Indigenous actors, used various tribal languages (Mohawk, Cherokee, Delaware), and unlike *Dances with Wolves*, Studi's character was given a name. Playing the Huron antagonist, Studi offers a terrifying and nuanced performance as the violent and vengeful Magua.

These preceding roles in significant Hollywood blockbusters led Studi to his first lead role, this time not based in fiction – as the Apache leader Geronimo. Although *Geronimo: An American Legend* (1993) was based loosely upon a historic narrative, the script took many liberties (which is at least acknowledged by the word "legend" in the film's title), focused heavily on the United States army's perspective, and perpetuated many stereotypes. Although in reality Geronimo did spend the latter years of his life imprisoned and dislocated from his Apache homelands, the final scenes depict an imprisoned Geronimo riding on a steam train into the horizon. Hollywood repeatedly persisted with reinforcing the "vanishing race" myth during the early 1990s, as if it was simply a filmic trope, and without recognition of the harm that this continues

to cause Indigenous audiences.

Studi has reflected on his career in many interviews over the years, and in a 2022 discussion with Moana Maniapoto, he acknowledged that he had been cast in many films that continued to recycle the harmful depictions that were prominent throughout 20th- century cinema, particularly in the western genre (Te Ao). *Dances with Wolves*, *The Last of the Mohicans*, and *Geronimo: An American Legend* all rely on a sense of tragedy, portraying Natives as fearful or childlike beings, and locate Indigeneity as a historic notion and not as a multitude of vibrant contemporary cultures. Studi states that when he acted in these types of tragic productions, he aimed to base his characters in a sense of the reality (Te Ao), bringing nuance and humanity into his performances that renders a sense of survivance, the continued presence over absence.

The problematic legacy of these films remain, but Studi's career hasn't solely been clad in the figurative "leathers and feathers." Working with Mann on *The Last of the Mohicans* led to Studi securing a supporting role in the director's subsequent release, *Heat* (1995). Playing Detective Casals, Studi wasn't playing a role where his Indigenous identity was fundamental to the plot. Nor was he cast in an ethnically ambiguous way, which many other Native actors have attested to being a necessity in their search to find roles in a Hollywood that has actively erased Indigeneity from the silver screen for most of the 20th century. This ethnic ambiguity certainly did come into play, however, with another of Studi's roles post-*The Last of the Mohicans* in the filmic adaptation of the popular Japanese video game series, *Street Fighter* (1994), as the original antagonist from the first game – Sagat. Neither of these roles follow Indigenous narratives or have significant Indigenous presence in the writers' rooms or casts, but instead show that Studi and other Native actors had the potential to conduct themselves like others in the film industry – simply as actors and not just specifically Native American actors.

Studi's involvement in significant moments of cinematic history continued when he performed in James Cameron's *Avatar* (2009), which is still the highest grossing film of all-time, fifteen years after its release. Essentially a space western, *Avatar* discusses similar themes of genocidal threat to Indigenous communities, but instead the Native placeholders are the blue skinned fantastical alien humanoids known as the Na'vi. The film's analogy of an Indigenous-Settler encounter isn't subtle. Similar to *Dance with Wolves*, it takes a white saviour to "go Native" and save them, in this instance the John

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Dunbar-type is the character Jake Sully.

The sheer success of *Avatar* underscores a sentiment that cinema-going audiences in the early 21st century still desired narratives that, while sympathetic to colonialised peoples, continue to perpetuate Indigenous victimry. Equally, *Avatar* serves as a critique of the destruction of land for resources and of the continued imperialist actions of the United States government in general, adding to the complex and confused storytelling of the film. Box-office figures aside, *Avatar* continues to receive mixed reception from film critics and academics. *the1491s*, a Native American sketch comedy group that went onto create *Reservation Dogs*, famously mocked and ridiculed *Avatar* in a YouTube parody titled "The Avatars".

Studi's role in the production of *Avatar* was significant. Alongside playing the Omaticaya clan chief Eytukan (who dies onscreen – another trope of Indigenous victimry perpetuated by Hollywood), he helped Paul Frommer in the development of the fictional Na'vi language. His experience and knowledge for this task came from the languages he had learnt for previous roles – Pawnee for *Dances with Wolves*, Wyandot (Huron) for *The Last of the Mohicans*, Apache for *Geronimo: An American Legend*. Cherokee, of course, is also the first language Studi spoke, before English.

The trajectory of Studi's acting career correlates with gradual improvements for the Native American experience in Hollywood. In many Westerns from the period colloquially known as the "Golden Age" from 1930s-1960s, any Natives who were cast in productions were usually extras, uncredited, and attention to detail for costuming and language was less than accurate. One way of combatting this racism at the time was for any Native actors with lines in the film to speak simply in gibberish or deliberately mock the non-Native actor/character unbeknownst to them. One such example is translated by Cree filmmaker Neil Diamond in his documentary *Reel Injun* (2009). In *A Distant Trumpet* (1964), when responding to a calvary officer played by Troy Donahue who threatens death upon him and his community, an uncredited Navajo actor who was playing an Apache chief responds to the officer: 'Just like a snake, you'll be crawling in your own shit' (LorberFilms). Donahue had no idea what the Navajo actor had said to him and continued with his dialogue from the script.

Tewa and Diné filmmaker and academic Beverly R. Singer has noted that tribal languages are an aspect of cultural sovereignty (2). One facet of Studi's career that differs to that of the uncredited Apache chief is that more care was being made by filmmakers in the late 1980s and early 1990s to ensure the authentic use of language. Although Studi was not Pawnee, Huron, or Apache, he and his co-stars took the time to learn these languages. Undoubtedly, any community members or language speakers would have been delighted to hear their language used correctly onscreen after years gibberish spoken by non-Native actors in redface. And even though none of Studi's major Hollywood roles granted him the opportunity to play a Cherokee, he does speak lines of his Native tongue in *The Last of the Mohicans*.

Language revitalisation efforts have only become increasingly prominent across North America in recent years. Communities, schools, and museums are all making positive moves to assure that future generations have the opportunities to connect with their culture through language. Even production companies such as Disney are assisting in these efforts by dubbing many of their films into Indigenous languages, starting in 2021 with *Star Wars: A New Hope* (1977) into Navajo, *Bambie* (1942) into Arapaho, *Moana* (2016) into Māori and Hawaiian, and *Prey* (2022) into Comanche. In late October 2024, following these previous efforts of retrospective dubbing, Disney announced in anticipation of *Moana 2* (2024) that it would be the "first studio in the world to release the original voice cast version and the Indigenous language version [of a film] simultaneously in cinemas across Aotearoa New Zealand" (Hatch). The version titled *Moana 2 Reo Māori* (2024) is scheduled to be released on November 28th, 2024, alongside the English-language version. This marks a positive transition for the mainstream the film industry and its impact on supporting the survival and restoration of Indigenous languages. Although Studi was not involved in any of these projects or their dubbings, his presence in mainstream cinema productions that have depicted Indigenous language accurately is one of many factors that has led to positive actions such as these being taken within the film industry.

In retrospect, it can be argued that Studi's biggest accolade as an actor marked the beginning of a zeitgeist moment for Native American actors and filmmakers. In 2019, Studi received an Academy Honorary Award, an Oscar. Presented by fellow *Hostiles* (2017) actor, Christian Bale, Studi received the Oscar statuette at the Governors Awards on the back of a Lifetime Achievement in Film after starring in over 30 feature

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films and "in recognition of the power and craft he brings to his indelible film portrayals and for his steadfast support of the Native American community" (Studi). He introduced his acceptance speech by stating, "It's about time" (Studi). Since the first Academy Awards in 1929, it took ninety years for an Indigenous Native American actor to win an Oscar. Studi is still the first and only Native recipient to date.

Since Studi's recognition, multiple major mainstream film and television releases with either a significant Indigenous cast, writers' room, or narrative presence have gone on to be widely recognised and praised including *Prey* (2022), *Killers of the Flower Moon* (2023), *Dark Winds* (2022-), *Reservation Dogs* (2021-2023), with Studi starring in the latter. His role as Bucky in *Reservation Dogs* is analogous with his current role in the Indigenous mainstream and the progress that has been made in onscreen depictions of Indigeneity. Playing an elder/uncle figure to the Rez Dogs, Bucky is played as a witty, wise, and humorous person with a particular interest in string theory. He is open and accepting of the younger generation stating pronouns ("Come and Get Your Love" 04:55), helps to break a curse for the Rez Dogs by using the song *Free Fallin'* by Tom Petty as a chant all the while making up with an old friend ("Run" 19:30), and takes the character Cheese on a camping trip with the other uncles to open up about how he feels, and they all end up working on their emotional intelligence together ("Frankfurter Sandwich" 17:00).

This is the guiding elder statesman role that Studi today sees himself performing in the wider industry of Indigenous filmmaking. He hopes that his long and successful career in mainstream cinema can help pave the way for future generations of Native actors, in the same way that the likes of Sampson, Silverheels, and Chief George did for himself (HDNET - Cinema). He has also noted that, at this later stage of his career, Studi hopes to assist in the development of Native American filmmaking and improving the wider representation of Indigeneity whilst forging a new generation of filmmakers who will be as celebrated as Steven Spielberg or James Cameron (Matthews).

Studi's impact on Indigenous mainstream cinema flows from the past to the present and into the future. This review has only been able to focus on a few highlights of an illustrious career. Other major releases that Studi performed in and that have not been

discussed here include *The Doors* (1991), *Deep Rising* (1998), *Mystery Men* (1999), *The New World* (2005), *A Million Ways to Die in the West* (2014), and *Soul* (2020). All of them could be analysed in equal measure for their representations of Indigeneity, or the opportunity afforded to Studi to play a role where his ethnicity doesn't come into play. Another more contemporary role which aligns with the current zeitgeist is his voice-acting part for the character Sunny in the hit Netflix children's series, *Spirit Rangers* (2022-2024).

It is also worth noting and recognising his role in independent cinema, working with the likes of Indigenous directors such as Chris Eyre (Cheyenne/Arapaho) and Steven Paul Judd (Kiowa/Choctaw). He has been able to balance roles throughout his career, marking his presence in the mainstream while affording lesser known and upcoming independent directors with his time and effort. One example of this careful balance can be found when he was simultaneously working on *Avatar* and Kevin Willmott's *The Only Good Indian* in 2009. He has also continued to seek roles with other Indigenous directors, such as working with Sterlin Harjo (Seminole) on the major Emmy-nominated series, *Reservation Dogs*.

Studi is the embodiment of Indigenous survivance. He has maintained a presence for himself in an industry that has previously persisted in sparse and problematic representations of Indigeneity. All the while, he has maintained his credibility and that he is a Cherokee first, American later (Kennedy). His highly deserved recognition and continued hard work in the industry marks a bright future of Indigenous actors and filmmakers alike. It's about time.

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Dances with Wolves. Directed by Kevin Costner, performances by Kevin Costner and Mary McDonnell, Tig Productions, 1990.

The Last of the Mohicans. Directed by Michael Mann, performances by Daniel-Day Lewis and Madeleine Stowe, Morgan Creek Entertainment, 1992.

Geronimo: An American Legend. Directed by Walter Hill, performances by Wes Studi and Jason Patric, Columbia Pictures, 1993.

Street Fighter. Directed by Steven E. de Souza, performances by Jean-Claude Van Damme and Ming-Na Wen, Capcom Entertainment, 1994.

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Heat. Directed by Michael Mann, performances by Al Pacino and Robert De Niro, Warner Bros, 1995.

Avatar. Directed by James Cameron, performances by Sam Worthington and Zoe Saldana, Twentieth Century Fox, 2009.

Reservation Dogs, created by Sterlin Harjo & Taika Waititi, FX Productions, 2021-2023.

Individual TV episodes referenced:

"Come and Get Your Love." *Reservation Dogs,* created by Sterlin Harjo & Taika Waititi, season 1, episode 5, FX Productions, 2021.

"Run." *Reservation Dogs,* created by Sterlin Harjo & Taika Waititi, season 2, episode 2, FX Productions, 2022.

"Frankfurter Sandwich." *Reservation Dogs,* created by Sterlin Harjo & Taika Waititi, season 3, episode 6, FX Productions, 2022.

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REVIEW ESSAY

Heidi Kiiwetinepinesiik Stark, Aimée Craft, and Hōkūlani K. Aikau, editors. *Indigenous Resurgence in an Age of Reconciliation*. University of Toronto Press, 2023. 263pp. ISBN: 978-1-4875-4460-7

https://utorontopress.com/9781487544591/indigenous-resurgence-in-an-age-of-reconciliation/

Ey Sweyal Si:yá:ye. Ts'qwelemót shxwelméxwelh skwix qas te Qwi:qwelstom tel skwix. Te litsel kwa Ts'elxwéyeqw (skwxō:mexw). In upriver Halq'eméylem language, I am saying: Good day, my dear loved ones; my ancestral name is Ts'qwelemót, and I also carry the name Qwi:qwelstom for the Stó:lō People. I am a member of the Sq'ewqéyl First Nation located in Ts'elxwéyeqw (Chilliwack) territory. My father is Bob Hall Sr., the oldest son of Gordon and Blossom Hall. My mother is Donna Kickbush who was a settler and the oldest daughter of Don and Margaret Kickbush. My English name is Wenona Hall, and I am the oldest daughter and the oldest granddaughter. Through my ancestral name, I carry the responsibility of walking on my own two feet and to always speak my truth. Through my gifted name, I carry the responsibility of learning to live in balance, harmony, and to be caring, giving, and kind. My PhD research was focused on Indigenous Governance and my master's thesis was focused on Indigenous

Justice; my current research interests are in Indigenous Resurgence and Processes of Decolonization. I share this introduction of myself so the reader can place me within my territory, know my kinship ties, and hopefully understand me better. My birth order, my family ties, my name-carrying responsibilities, my academic interests, and my ancestry have shaped and do shape how I move in the world and how I come to make sense of and try to understand the impacts of colonization, the necessary processes of decolonization, and, most importantly, transformations and space and place for Indigenous resurgence.

I am currently an Associate Professor in Indigenous Studies at Simon Fraser University (SFU) and, in September 2023, I began chairing the SFU Indigenous Studies Department. Prior to this, for ten years I was a full-time faculty member at the University of the Fraser Valley (UFV) where I was founding chair of their Indigenous Studies program. I am mentioning this because UFV is a teaching-intensive university so, while employed there, I really did not have much time to read, write, and research. My time was completely consumed with teaching five to seven courses a year, chairing a new program which included new course development and numerous committees along with my community work, all while single-parenting three children.
Once I moved to SFU, my teaching load was drastically reduced, my children are now young adults, and time was made available for me to read, write, and research. I quickly devoured a stack of books that had piled up on my desk. This stack included recently published books on Indigenous governance, treaty, Indigenous research methods, Indigenous child welfare, MMIWG, Indigenous Legal Traditions, and Indigenous Justice. I was wonderfully surprised and inspired by all that I read. Many advances in Indigenous Resurgence were evident; as I read, I was revitalized, intrigued, perplexed, and proud. So, when a request came asking if I would be able to write a book review for this current book, I was an avid yes. Not only because of its title—*Indigenous Resurgence in an Age of Reconciliation*—but also because of the editors, Heidi Kiiwetinepinesiik (Turtle Mountain Ojibwe), Aimée Craft (Anishinaabe-Métis), and Hōkūlani K. Aikau (Kanaka), all of whom are Indigenous women.

To say I devoured this textbook would be an understatement. I read the majority of it as I flew from Atlanta, Georgia to Seattle, Washington, and I think this lent to my ability to appreciate the bird's-eye-view this book provides. As a Stó:lō woman working within western institutions within my own territory, I often wonder how much I may be missing.

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As I read through the text, I felt I was being given an opportunity to explore new territories, new ideas, new ways of coming to understand, new terms, and new ways of relating; this book held my mind captive and challenged me in good ways. I could not stop reading and, more importantly, re-reading, as my current understandings were being shifted and re-shaped in very de-colonial ways!

I open with these words as I write knowing we still live under a colonial regime: the Indian Act is still in effect, I still live on a "reserve," Indigenous Peoples are still oppressed with "status card" systems and other colonial trappings of who belongs and who does not, Indigenous Peoples are still grossly over-represented within colonial prisons, and Indigenous children are still grossly over-represented within the colonial child welfare system. We can no longer blame Indigenous Peoples for this current, colonial state of affairs without being racist and furthering white supremacy. These current, colonial states of affair are acts of genocide. I know this is a bold statement, but, thanks to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, we are now in an era of truth-telling. I also know that such bold statements may alienate certain readers. Yet, we cannot fix something if we are not willing to be honest, truthful, and authentic.

This is where this text works decolonizing magic. Whether you are from the original Indigenous Resurgence school of thought, new to this school of thought, or a seasoned or an inchoate Settler Ally just coming to awareness, there is something in this book for you; its accessibility to all is one of its major strengths. This book addresses colonial impediments and the resultant Indigenous issues and struggles. It does so from Indigenous perspective(s) and/or Allied perspectives and, as a result, it is not only intimate and personable, it is also reliable, credible, and valid. It is also current, providing the reader with analyses that address contemporary problems even when discussing "old" or "older" issues and does so in a manner that is careful yet still truthful.

Furthermore, the text provides the reader with an opportunity to learn from decolonized, Indigenous ways of knowing that are rooted in Indigeneity so to promote and demand the reader to think deeply about challenging and unlearning colonial propaganda. This text requires the reader to be brave, to be willing to make important paradigm shifts. To be willing to think about things in a "new" way of thought that

acknowledges Eurocentric mistakes (see O'Bonswawin's chapter on Olympism as one example) and Indigenous genius (as shown throughout the text).

For example, Mishuana Goeman (Tonawanda Band of Seneca) introduces us to Indigenous forms of mapping that reclaim "urban" spaces as Indigenous spaces, and Dian Million (Tanana Athabascan) shows us how the reclamation of landscape re-members "urban" Indigenous Peoples. Hōkūlani K. Aikau (Kanaka) cements these Indigenous reclamations by using the metaphor of removing "invasive species" of plants. Hōkūlani challenges us to think of why non-native plants are framed as always invasive and in need of eradication: she argues that "undergirding this metaphor are racial logics of purity and authenticity that work against Indigenous resurgence" (55). I am sure many of us walk our lands and wonder about these "new" species and how we come to call them "invasive." This chapter had me making one of a few paradigm shifts I was pleased to make.

Gina Starblanket (Cree, Saulteaux, and member of the Star Blanket Cree Nation) and Aimée Craft (Anishinaabe-Métis) challenge our Eurocentric views of "treaties" in Canada and the colonial court system's reliance on the self-serving frozen rights argument, respectively, an argument that somehow ONLY applies to Indigenous Peoples and not Europeans. Gina provides us with an Indigenous perspective of what "treaty" means to Indigenous Peoples and how "treaty-making follows from a deep respect for and appreciation of the value of difference" (84). From Indigenous perspectives, we come to see how "the relational world view expressed in treaties defies the antagonism inherent in settler colonial logics, allowing for a vision of the future based on multiplicity and balance, not hierarchy or domination" (84).

Then there is the chapter written by Sarah Hunt (Kwakwaka'wakw Nation) and Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg). I have two daughters (one I birthed, Jade Victor, and one my sister, Dilah Hall, birthed, Tsandlia Van Ry) both working on their Masters' degrees and all I had to say to them was I am currently reading a chapter that is a dialogue between Sarah Hunt and Leanne Betasamosake Simpson and this book was immediately sold to them. I did not need to say anything more.

The best part is, my daughters will read this chapter and gain an understanding of how

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Robyn Maynard's work on *Policing Black Lives: State Violence in Canada from Slavery to the Present* nourished Leanne (one of their heroes) and made her feel seen and affirmed even though her struggle is different (136). From Leanne and Sarah's conversation, we are encouraged to find ways to deepen the relationship between Black and Indigenous communities (136). At the same time, as academics, my daughters will be made aware of the possibility that, as "issues gain currency within academia, there is a danger in generating theoretical momentum that separates out discourse from the lived realities those discourses seek to represent" (137). This is something they both grapple with in their Masters' research as they aspire to lend voice to the pitfalls of "indigenization" within the K-12 education system.

Juxtaposed to this reality are chapters that have us think critically about reconciliation and the ways in which we can make it work in our (Indigenous) favor. For example, Corey Snelgrove (Settler) and Matthew Wildcat (Ermineskin Cree Nation) suggest we use the vulnerability exposed by uniformed acts of reconciliation by employing political action that works against colonial domination: "colonial power is constantly in need of new strategies to reproduce itself, and the reconciliation project represents a vulnerability that signals opening within colonial power structures" (161). Snelgrove and Wildcat suggest that a "trick of reconciliation is in the ways in which it downplays and depoliticizes non-state actors through a historical narration that replaces the actual history of political struggle with a story of progressive enlightenment" (169). They then cite the Maskwacîs Education Authority and its ability to use political action in an opportune time to not only assert their right to self-determination, but to also deliver immediate and long-term gains for their Nations (169).

Contiguously, Darcy Lindberg's (Nehiyaw) chapter on hunting helps the reader understand that abiding by Neyiyaw hunting protocols and obligations is a means to ensure that hunting is embodied in Indigenous legal traditions. Lindberg shares that abiding by Indigenous protocol, including hunting protocol, ensures that "law remains intertwined with other social institutions such as stories, songs, ceremonies, bundles, artistic renderings, kinship ordering, land/water relationships and elders" (115). He carries his metaphor further by arguing that the colonial legal mentality of "taking only the best meat," as seen in the modified case-brief method, means important pieces of

the puzzle are being overlooked (117).

This text exemplifies the power of "story" as not only a legitimate and reliable means to make sense of our world, but also as a means to ensure our hearts are being educated as well (see, for example, Archibald 2008). Jeff Corntassel (Cherokee) shares his and his daughter's experience attending ceremony for the Witness Blanket and does so in a way that involves the reader's mind, body, and spirit. He shares his conversations with the Blanket's maker, Carry Newman (Kwakwaka'wakw and Stó:lō), who shared his relationship-story of the little child's shoe from Carcross residential school. This layered story telling gives a glimpse into how deeply and profoundly story can challenge and change the colonial regime: "just as with witnessing, stories also shape who we are. They shape our relationships, our forms of governance, and even our legal traditions. Reclaiming our stories…is about land-based resurgence" (144).

Thanks to what I like to call "colonial mayhem," being Indigenous can be a complicated and misunderstood way of being and relating, and perhaps even more so for Métis Peoples. Daniel Voth (Red River Métis) uses story-telling to share the heart of what it means to be Métis. He shares the Original Lords of the Soil story and the Woman Who Jigged on Sunday story; in doing so, he provides both an important gender analysis inherent to Métis identity and an even more important analysis of Métis identity as integral to "historical interconnections to land and women" (Macdougall, as cited in Voth 217). Not surprising, it turns out the Lords of the Soil were actually Ladies of the Soil, that is Indigenous women (sorry for the spoiler alert). Daniel relies almost entirely on women sources for his analysis. Both Métis women (for example, Brenda Macdougall and Kim Anderson) and established Allied-Scholars (for example, Nathalie Kermoal) along with other Indigenous female scholars such as Dawn Martin-Hill, Lina Sunseri, and Lee Maracle are referenced in this work. I mention this because I think re-centering woman's work and our contributions to history, academia, and society, along with the ways in which colonialism has impacted us differently based upon gender, is everybody's work. I am not patting Daniel on the back for doing something he is responsible to do; I am simply taking away excuses for some who chose not to engage in this important work.

Isabel Altamirano-Jiménez (Zapotec) shares the experiences of the Zapotec community of Calpulalpan in Oaxaca, Mexico, in particular, that of the women in

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response to resource extraction. Isabel refers to their resistance as "body landing practices" as she focuses on the concept of body-land (181). Isabel understands body-land as the "ontological relationships between people and territory, which combine with collective histories and experiences to shape Indigenous peoples' present day social practices" (181). She acknowledges that these responses and relationships are not static and will change with the "active and conscious practice of making relatives, of landing relationships in place" (181).

These concepts bring me to yet another strength of this book: its ability to highlight and address important current colonial arguments such as Indigenous feminism and Indigenous masculinities. I describe them as "colonial arguments" because, as far as I have come to understand so far, most, if not all, Indigenous Peoples of Turtle Island respect individual autonomy and hold ALL life in high regard, including a rock. At the very same time, and at first glance what seems to be a complete contradiction, I agree with Dallas Hunt (Cree) that if we "continue to defer or relegate the issues of (toxic) masculinity to an external imposition, a white supremacist outside, then we will fail to account for its wild permutations within our communities" (69). Dallas's chapter and my own contradictory thoughts had me re-thinking and re-shaping my understanding of toxic masculinity (not my understanding of healthy masculinity).

Dallas's chapter is one I had to re-read a few times, not so I could find a way to hang on to my own understandings, but so I could understand his. As an Indigenous woman I have experienced toxic masculinities both personally and professionally. In my own experience, I had blamed both the inter-generational impacts of Residential School and the patriarchal imposition of the Indian Act for these toxic traits. After reading Dallas's chapter, I came to think that maybe in blaming external factors I was actually contradicting my own original understanding of the importance in respecting individual autonomy. This was an important paradigm shift for me. However, I do not think or believe in an "homogenizing view of masculinity," just as there is no homogenizing view of femininity. But I hope this inspires you to read this chapter and think for yourself.

I honestly do not like having favorites as it lends to a competitive worldview that

sustains capitalism and eurocentrism. I do, however, have experiences that move me more than others and reading Billy-Ray Belcourt's chapter on "Red Utopia" did just that. Reading his chapter was an experience I have never had before, and I read a lot! His writing style is…ineffable; it's truly a gift. He had me at "Native joy is a conspiracy" (231). For example, Belcourt explains that it is the "image-making quality and the feeling power of the poem allow us to envision and to feel what we theorize" (239) and he certainly accomplished this with me as a reader. This chapter took me on a unique journey that ebbed and flowed and had me continually engaged. During this journey, I felt validated, I felt seen, I felt inspired, I felt hopeful, I felt real: "to be in the world is to be fleshy and to be fleshy is to be susceptible to a form of social power that occurs at a level the naked eye cannot apprehend" (235). I challenge you to read this chapter and stay within the confines of "the cannibalism of the normative" (236); I do not think you will succeed.

Maybe it's true what the Dixie Chicks said: we aren't ready to make nice. And for good reason. Fact remains, whether we like it or not: we have entered the age of reconciliation and many, albeit mostly settlers, have latched onto this concept in hopes that we can move past the hard work and just be "nice" and move on. This text provides the reader with an opportunity to engage in the hard work, to think Indigenous, to decolonize our landscapes, our minds, bodies, and spirit, to think critically, and to grasp new concepts and new ways of relating. As my Aunty Amy taught me, "there must be a reason our two worlds collided"; maybe we can take the best of both and create a new world order, as George Manuel (1974) intimated, and light that eighth fire (Simpson, 2008). This text from start to finish lights a path in the right direction.

Wenona Hall, Simon Fraser University

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REVIEW ESSAY

Brandy Nālani McDougall. *ʻĀina Hānau/Birth Land*. University of Arizona Press, 2023. 160 pp. ISBN: 9780816548354.

https://uapress.arizona.edu/book/aina-hanau-birth-land

No'u Revilla. *Ask the Brindled*. Milkweed Editions, 2022. 104 pp. ISBN: 9781639550005.

https://milkweed.org/book/ask-the-brindled

'I ka 'ōlelo ke ola, i ka 'ōlelo ka make', says the Hawaiian 'ōlelo no'eau/proverb. 'In words is the power of life, in words is the power of death' (ho'omanawanui 675).

Brandy Nālani McDougall and No'u Revilla are part of a generation of Kanaka 'Ōiwi/Native Hawaiian writers using poetry as a decolonial practice of refusal and relation. Their work traces the everyday violences of settler occupation and colonialism in Hawai'i, from land and water dispossession, to gendered constraints on embodied life and intimacy, to military and capitalist ecocide. McDougall's and Revilla's works also tend to storied relationships between people, places, and environmental elements. Through poetry, they engage with Hawaiian forms of knowledge such as mo'olelo

(hi/stories), mele (songs/poems), and oli (chants), while also playfully, rigorously experimenting with poetic techniques to share multiple perspectives and sensations, and to nourish what Kānaka ʻŌiwi call ea. Often translated as life, breath, and sovereignty, Noelani Goodyear Kaʻōpua describes ea as "an active state of being" grounded in "relationships forged through the process of remembering and caring for wahi pana, storied places" (3-4).

McDougall and Revilla are poets and educators from the island of Maui, and both currently live on Oʻahu and work at the University of Hawaiʻi at Mānoa (McDougall teaches Indigenous studies and Revilla teaches creative writing). *ʻĀina Hānau/Birth Land* is McDougall's second full-length poetry collection, following *The Salt Wind/Ka Makani Paʻakai* (Kuleana ʻŌiwi Press, 2008), and the critical monograph *Finding Meaning: Kaona and Contemporary Hawaiian Literature* (University of Arizona Press, 2016). McDougall is also the Hawaiʻi State Poet Laureate 2023-25. *Ask the Brindled* is Revilla's debut book of poetry, and a winner of the US National Poetry Series. The book follows Revilla's previous chapbook-length collections, *Permission to Make Digging Sounds* (included in the *Effigies III* anthology, Salt Publishing, 2019), and *Say Throne* (Tinfish Press, 2011).

In this review, I read *ʻĀina Hānau* and *Ask the Brindled* in dialogue through Hawaiian geographical approaches that attend to interconnected social and ecological processes running from mountain to sea. Situated perspectives grounded in places, genealogies, and social and environmental relationships are also central to Hawaiian knowledge systems. My readings are shaped by my perspective as a white, non-Kanaka reader based in the UK, where I have been reading Hawaiian poetry and scholarship for around seven years, and writing about relationships between Kanaka ʻŌiwi poetry and decolonial practices of caring for lands and waters. Readers with more embedded and embodied relationships to Hawaiʻi may find many more resonances in and between McDougall's and Revilla's work.

i. mauna

ʻĀina Hānau and *Ask the Brindled* meet at the piko, the centre, the summit. Revilla's opening poem is "Maunakea," the tallest mountain in the Hawaiʻi archipelago and a sacred place "where the sky is so thin, / thinnest of all skins come to stitch / a new story"

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(4). In Hawaiian geographies, Mauna Kea's summit is described as wao akua, the realm of gods and elements. *ʻĀina Hānau* opens with an illustration by Allison Leialoha Milham titled "Wao Akua," which overlays maps of the Hawaiian islands and their waterways with textured drawings and handwritten words to a chant, "Nā ʻAumakua," which signals entry into ceremony or sacred space (Malo 31). As McDougall's poem "'Āina Mauna" shows, the mountain is a place of many moʻolelo (hi/stories) of gods, clouds, plants. It is "piko / between honua and lani, / between wai and kai, / between pō and ao" (8), between earth and sky, fresh- and saltwater, night and day. It is the "kumu" or source of "air and water, of thick / forests crowned with winds and mist" in intricate, interconnected cycles. These cyclical relationships also echo the islands' deep geological and oceanic histories:

> These
> islands are
> and will always be
> the nuʻu of submerged
> mauna rising from,
> and rooted in,
> moana, in
> lipo

As the stanza's form emphasises, Hawaiʻi's volcanic islands emerge in dynamic balance, the nuʻu (summit) in the thin skies of Revilla's poem arising from underwater eruptions in the moana (ocean) and lipo (darkness). ʻŌlelo Hawaiʻi (the Hawaiian language) has five vowels and eight consonants, enabling visual and sonic patterning that can be mobilised for poetic play, as here with "mauna" and "moana." As McDougall writes later in the poem, "Mauna" is "not to be mistaken with Māuna," the lengthening of the vowel with the kahakō (the diacritical mark over the "a") altering the word to mean "waste." For several decades, Kānaka ʻŌiwi have been protecting Mauna Kea from the ongoing construction of astronomical telescopes, most recently the Thirty Meter Telescope (TMT). As settler ally Candace Fujikane writes, the institutions behind the telescopes have consistently tried to represent Mauna Kea and the wao akua as wasteland to justify building the telescopes (94).

Revilla's poem "Maunakea" begins, "Inside me: two seeds. / One planted in my throat, / a dark highway / fingered by akua moonlight. / The other seed raised / in a fist of

bright veins" (3). "Inside me" echoes the line "[i]nside me the dead" in Sāmoan writer Albert Wendt's well-known poem tracing Indigenous, missionary, and colonial inheritances shaping Pacific life and identity. Revilla's imagery brings together erotics, rage, and relation in approaching the mauna. Practices of sustaining a protection movement – "[t]rucks still carry medicine, / folding tables & hot food, / water water / water water" – appear alongside questions that are unanswerable via colonial logics: "Who will taste without swallowing / my grove of lehua?" (3). Drawing on Hawaiian aesthetics, *Asked the Brindled* is abundant with double-and-more meanings and Kanaka ʻŌiwi queer intimacies with gods, rains, and shapeshifting lizard women known as moʻo, while also refusing assumed colonial access to these knowledges, intimacies, and their myriad meanings.

ii. ʻāina

ʻʻO wai kou kupunahine? / ʻO ka ʻāina nō. ʻO ka ʻāina nō" (3). Who is your grandmother? The land, indeed. The land indeed. This refrain in Revilla's poem "Maunakea" is carried from literatures of Kanaka ʻŌiwi resistance to US annexation published in Hawaiian-language newspapers in the 1890s (Nāwahīokalaniʻōpuʻu 4) into the present. *ʻĀina Hānau* and *Ask the Brindled* engage expansively and complexly with ancestry, care, and relation to ʻāina, land, or "that which feeds." In the poem "Real (G)estate," McDougall juxtaposes settler housing laws, land policies, and food systems with the constrained conditions of raising children as a Kanaka ʻŌiwi mother in a context where Hawaiian women's lives and bodies have been subject to dispossession and imposed heteropatriarchy. The poem is set out in two columns with numbered sections, as shown in the following excerpt:

1.
as in not imagined,
fraudulent
or illusory

as in property
consisting of land
and/or buildings

as in carrying
a life
in your womb
as in feeding
that life
from your
body

as in feeding

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as in assets,
an extensive area
of land and money
owned by a person
especially at death

as in possession
of land by virtue
of a legal document

a life from
'āina after
she/he/they
have left
your body

as in deeds
are written
to record and prove
the ownership
of 'āina (22)

Here, colonial notions of land as "property" and "possession" are contrasted with Kanaka 'Ōiwi conceptions of 'āina, that which feeds. In the logics of real (g)estate, these reciprocal relations of nourishment with 'āina are translated into "deeds […] written / to record and prove / the ownership / of 'āina," inserted into settler forms of property and subject to dispossession. The poem traces interlocking policies that make "feeding / a life from / 'āina" impossible, from blood quantum laws that exclude many Kānaka 'Ōiwi from accessing housing and land ownership in the places their ancestors have cared for over generations, to laws of "adverse possession" that allow developers who have stolen land to claim it legally. An economy centred around tourism and militarism inflates rents for those for whom the islands are 'āina hānau (birthplace). McDougall's speaker recounts repeatedly noticing her daughters' 'iewe (placentas) in the freezer amongst the imported food she has to feed them with instead of 'āina. The poem connects food politics to reproductive politics and the practice of kanu, planting or burying the 'iewe in the earth to form a lasting relationship between a child and 'āina. In "Real (G)estate," the speaker is "hoping we have / 'āina someday" (28) to make this process possible. Kanu recurs across *'Āina Hānau*, connecting the planting of 'iewe to kalo (taro), a staple food considered to be the sibling of Kānaka 'Ōiwi, and to iwi, the bones of kūpuna (ancestors) also planted in the 'āina.

In an echo of "Real (G)estate," the collection's stunning extended final poem, "'Āina Hānau," dedicated to McDougall's daughters, also uses columns as a visual structure of juxtaposition and connection. In this poem, McDougall interweaves Hawaiian terms

for housebuilding, birthing, and birth care with critiques of colonial medical models of reproductive health. The poem opens out "many versions" (106) of birthing and caring as decolonial possibility, unfolding with intimate knowledges of island genealogies and processes, "seeds / of cold cloud mist" transforming through "drips and birds," that "flick and clatter" (110-11) in their movement towards the ocean across multiple scales of relation in the islands' "smallness" and "immensity" (138).

Ask the Brindled is "slyly / reproductive," a phrase used by Kanaka ʻŌiwi political leader, scholar, and poet Haunani-Kay Trask to describe her contributions beyond biological reproduction to "reproducing / the rope of resistance" (5) in the Hawaiian sovereignty movement. *Ask the Brindled*'s sly reproductions happen through moʻo. Across the book, Revilla offers eight different definitions of moʻo, including "shapeshifting water protector, lizard, woman, deity," "succession, series, especially a blood line," "story, tradition, legend" (1), "narrow path" (23), and "brindled, of the skin, markings on those who feed and protect'' (55). The number eight is significant here; the Hawaiian term makawalu or "eight eyes" means "approaching a situation or phenomenon from multiple perspectives." In contrast to the consistently present lyrical voice of *ʻĀina Hānau, Ask the Brindled* spills with overheard voices, "hushed tones" (7) of gossip about girls and women who do not fit into normative categories of gender and intimacy, those with tails "duct-taped" under their dresses (12), who shed skins, who "eat one world at a time" (18). Revilla's language is often sharp-edged, playful, swallowed and spat out. In "Eggs," a beautiful woman who does not have any children and is rumoured to be a lizard is lamented by other islanders: "what a waste, what a waste" (7). After reptile eggs and bones are found across the island, the line is repeated at the end of the poem as a knowing, warning, acerbic aside: "Crack a lizard's eggs and you will fall off a cliff. What a waste, what a waste" (7). Other poems give instructions on "How to swallow a colonizer" and perform erasures on entries from the *Hawaiian Dictionary*, challenging readers to "Remember: you are not making a home here" (42). In "Don't have sex with gods," Revilla plays with the proximities of ai (sex), ʻai (food), and ʻāina (land) in ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi to amplify ʻāina's reciprocal potential.

> if ʻāina is that which feeds,
> if aloha ʻāina is love and lover of land,
> then she who feeds is she who fucks.
> ʻĀina will fuck back. (20)

Revilla's shapeshifting speakers refuse to recuperate colonial and gendered violence,

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while also caring for non-linear successions of mo'o and their stories, of intimacies between women, with land and water, where rain and caves and birds are also lovers (Osorio 111).

iii. moana

"Another of our mothers," McDougall writes, is the wa'a (canoe) in which Kānaka 'Ōiwi voyaged on their way to Hawai'i and between other islands, where they "read currents of wind, / ocean" (108). *'Āina Hānau* foregrounds Kanaka Maoli spatial knowledges, which are often oral/narrative, multi-perspectival, and embodied (Louis xviii). In "Water Remembers," McDougall returns the popular tourist destination Waikīkī to an ahupua'a, a Hawaiian land division running from mountain to sea with the resources and relationships needed for sustenance, and contrasts these flows with the rising waters of climate colonialism. A series of poems interspersed throughout the book attempt to navigate to culturally important locations via Google Maps, "search[ing] / the brown canal water / for any part of us / that is still ours" (85). McDougall's poetic geographies interconnect sites of colonial violence and resistance. "Kūpikipiki'ō, O'ahu" begins, "Stand here, on the scarred edge / of this island" (8), where Kānaka 'Ōiwi resisted annexation, where settler wealth and military occupation coagulate. This "scarred edge" relates to other places "bombed and shot by Americans" or with US-supplied weapons and technologies, from Afghanistan to Guåhan, the Marshall Islands to Palestine. In a collaborative poem for the Cancel RIMPAC Coalition (RIMPAC is the Rim of the Pacific Exercise, an international maritime military training event hosted biennially by the US Navy in Hawai'i), McDougall imagines "a world without RIMPAC" where "there is breath / enough—to stand / against" military imperial violence, "to sing so loud / we drown / all submarine sonar" (72). Written in a time of ongoing colonialisms, intensifying climate change, and the Covid-19 pandemic, McDougall's contribution turns poetic expression into a tactic of resistant collectivity, a way of breathing with and caring for ocean places and kin.

As freshwater deities, *Ask the Brindled*'s mo'o gather and vanish around ponds, appear as "a cliff in a girl's body" (12), creating precipitous geographies of Kanaka 'Ōiwi queer femme life. Reaching the ocean towards the end of the book, Revilla imagines "Recovery, Waikīkī" in terms of Kanaka 'Ōiwi resurgence. Written during the pandemic

when the beaches of Waikīkī were briefly quieter, Revilla's speaker, a surfer with a "single fin," speaks back from the ocean:

> before paddling this far out,
> i dug ten thousand eel-sized holes into the groin facing the royal hawaiian.
> i blew maʻi songs inside them.
>
> from ten thousand holes in the season without visitors,
> watch the Kumulipo re-emerge and take back Waikīkī. (69)

These lines allude to the unsuccessful 1895 rebellion against the settler provisional government, in which Kānaka ʻŌiwi fighting to recover the independent Hawaiian Kingdom imported and buried guns in the beaches. Revilla also situates recovery in longer histories and cosmologies of Hawaiian relationships with ʻāina. The Kumulipo is a creation chant tracing interconnected relationships and genealogical lineages of stars, coral, deities, plants, and people. The re-emergence of the Kumulipo – through ten thousand eels, maʻi (genital) songs celebrating pleasure and procreation, even more grains of sand – trembles the foundations of settler infrastructures, the hotel resorts that line the shore and erode sites of connection for those who, in McDougall's words, "have always been / part ocean, part land" (7).

What would it mean for poetry to bring about resurgent, living and liveable relationships with places, lands, waters, and those who care for them? As McDougall writes from the volcanic cliffs and turbulent waters of Oʻahu, "*This is not paradise*," "*real estate*," or "*wasteland* […] This is stolen land and ocean. This is ancestor and descendent" (83). These two poetry collections ripple up the spine (another definition of moʻo), make and refuse, attend to intricacies of mists and rains and ponds and streams, sloughed skin and poi crusts arounds mouths, wire, lava, sewage, seeds. They spiral out abundant ways of knowing, feeling, and relating as grounds of remembering Kanaka ʻŌiwi futures, some shared, some held, some hidden. As mist becomes salt and back again, McDougall reminds us: "Stand here. / Stand here."

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REVIEW

Lillie, Vanessa. *Blood Sisters*. Berkley, 2023. 384 pp. ISBN 9780593550137.

https://www.penguinrandomhouse.ca/books/721055/blood-sisters-by-vanessa-lillie/9780593550137

In a novel that is, at its core, about the pressing issue of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two-Spirit Relatives (MMIWG2S), *Blood Sisters* (2023), by author Vanessa Lillie, a citizen of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma, strikes the impressive balance of conveying the true horrors of the disproportionate violence facing Native American women and offering readers a page-turning mystery-thriller plot, all while resisting the trap of spectacularizing gender-based violence. The result is a text that reads as deeply mindful of the social, cultural, and political stakes of the topic at hand. As such, Lillie produces in *Blood Sisters* a work that is as educational as it is entertaining. *Blood Sisters* will resonate with Indigenous audiences all too familiar with the realities of gender-based violence, who will find themselves touched by Lillie's insightful reflections on seeking justice, healing intergenerational trauma, and the meaning of home. For the broader public just learning about the movement for the missing and murdered, the novel offers a human story that personifies and makes real that which is often abstracted by news headlines or worse, overlooked altogether.

A gripping murder scene laid out in the first pages of the text sets the tone for the fast-paced action to come throughout the novel and introduces readers to protagonist Syd Walker, a Two-Spirit, Cherokee archaeologist working for the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA). A child at the time of this bloody crime that forever shapes the trajectory of her life, Syd attempts to escape her trauma by fleeing her hometown in northeastern Oklahoma and seeking refuge in Narragansett territory in New England. As she establishes her career and builds a new home with a wife and baby-on-the-way, the hundreds of miles of distance and fifteen years separating her from the inciting event fail to rid Syd from unwanted visits by "Ghost Luna," liberate her from the refrain she plays over and over in her mind--"only one bullet"--or free her from the guilt of abandoning her family during their times of need. When the discovery of a skull and the disappearance of her sister, Emma Lou, compel her to return to her hometown, Syd confronts her past only to learn that her haunting experience was only one part of a much larger mystery.

Land emerges as a central thread in the novel that enables Lillie to weave together a story that is as much about loss, displacement, and destruction as it is about belonging, responsibility, and connection. Syd's trauma-induced move to Rhode Island mirrors the Cherokee Nation's forcible removal from their homelands on the Trail of Tears, while her return home calls forth the memory of the Cherokee people's resilience and strength as they created community anew in Indian Territory, which later became the State of Oklahoma. Following the Indian Removal Act, allotment policy further dispossessed the Cherokee Nation from lands promised to them--a historical legacy that continues to reverberate in the contemporary moment through the pressures on Syd's community to sell their land. The environmental devastation discussed in the novel, specifically through mining on Quapaw land and the toxic chat that remains, also speaks to the violence facing Syd's friends and family, as Indigenous peoples have long identified that "what happens to the land happens to the women," as Lillie's epigraph states. Finally, as an archaeologist, Syd looks to the land for answers: our protagonist fearlessly sinks her hands into the land as she digs for truth, and, in her pursuit of justice, dusts the dirt and soil off of the bones of Indigenous women to shine the light of truth on that which was hidden from sight.

Lillie reveals in the epilogue that *Blood Sisters* took inspiration from the true story of two unsolved disappearances, as well as a landscape shaped by drugs and corruption.

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As she deftly navigates this subject material throughout the text, the author calls the reader's attention to the many pitfalls that often characterize MMIWG2S cases. Indigenous scholars have long noted that media coverage of MMIWG2S cases, for instance, places blame on the victim by alleging or emphasizing substance abuse as a contributing factor to the situation. In the case of Syd's missing sister, Emma Lou, Lillie tackles this very issue through Syd's own internal questioning about Emma Lou's sobriety and its potential role in her disappearance. Lillie's strategy in raising such critiques, as readers will discover, encourages us to think about violence systemically and forces us to question our assumptions. "Like all the other Native girls around here," Syd laments after the Oklahoma State Police declined to look into Emma Lou's missing persons case, "Saying they left is a lot easier than accountability" (245).

Much like Syd conceptualizes her role--"I see myself as a midwife to the past for the future. To support the tribes by advocating for what they need to continue traditions that honor their thousands of years of history as they carry this knowledge into the future" (8)--Lillie's publication is a significant vehicle for advocacy for the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two-Spirit Relatives, as well as their families, their communities, and their Indigenous Nations. In telling the story of Syd Walker, Lillie's authorial voice incorporates an often-marginalized Two-Spirit perspective, honors Cherokee cultural elements, and calls forth Indigenous histories to speak to the Indigenous present and fight for a just Indigenous future: "As with justice as is with the earth," Lillie concludes, "there can always be a balance returned. There is healing in the very pursuit" (366). For its critical contributions to the movement for missing and murdered Indigenous relatives, *Blood Sisters* takes its rightful place next to recent literary successes such as Angeline Boulley's *Firekeeper's Daughter* (2021) and Marcie Rendon's *Where They Last Saw Her* (2024), and among such important works as Louise Erdrich's *The Round House* (2012). Readers will also find *Blood Sisters* an enthralling artistic accompaniment to Rebecca Nagle's new non-fiction investigation, *By the Fire We Carry* (2024). *Blood Sisters* brings one of the foremost issues affecting Indian Country today to the public reader, grabbing our attention on the first page and keeping us hanging onto every word through to the end, tornado and all.

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REVIEW

Cherie Dimaline. *Into the Bright Open: A Secret Garden Remix*. Feiwel and Friends, 2023. 274 pages. ISBN: 978-1-250-84265-7

The Remixed Classics series invites "authors from diverse backgrounds to take different literary classics from centuries past and reinterpret then through their own unique cultural lens" (Macmillan). Given the opportunity to reimagine Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden*, Cherie Dimaline explains that using her home community of Penetanguishene, Ontario on Georgian Bay for the setting was a natural decision. She knew that transposing the novel's core elements of love and struggle into a Métis context would work: "We're good at both", she says (275).

Dimaline unearths the better story buried beneath the cultural and temporal trappings (racism, classism, sexism) of Burnett's 1911 novel and pays homage to the story of a young girl coming of age. Dimaline has trimmed Burnett's *The Secret Garden* to its essential scaffolding: neglected children, a buried key, a locked garden, transformation – it's all there. And in a gentle nod to the classic story, she embeds Burnett's title within the body of her own tale, *Into the Bright Open*.

But she also makes the story her own. In her retelling, Dimaline writes about fifteen-year-old Mary Craven, a white girl from a wealthy family who must relocate from

Toronto to Georgian Bay in 1901 to stay with a distant uncle after a family tragedy. Profoundly lonely and socially awkward, Mary struggles to adapt to new customs and cultures. But the people she meets in this new place provide her with the family and community she has always desired, and she rises to the challenges that enable her personal growth and opens herself to a fulfilling and authentic life.

At its heart, Dimaline's novel meditates on the ways that loneliness and neglect shape us. While her Mary is less physically ill than her classic counterpart, she suffers from poor self-regard and often feels disconnected and numb. She retains the prickly oddness of Burnett's character, but in granting her more life experience, Dimaline also offers her a more developed voice. Instead of a thin, sickly 10-year-old named Mary Lennox living in British colonial India in the early 1900s, Dimaline's Mary Craven is an adolescent girl who awakens to her queer sexuality.

Dimaline potently transposes the colonial racism of Burnett's novel to a Canadian context. Her deliberate use of era-specific racial slurs is jarring, as Dimaline undoubtedly meant it to be. Because the racism is so specific, and because the people it is aimed at are central to the story, it feels personal. Dimaline's critique of canon is just as pointed: Sophie, the Métis girl who fleshes out the Dickon role in Dimaline's story, questions the power that Shakespeare wields over the Western canon. In a conversation where Mary aims to convince Sophie why they should stage a production of "Romeo and Juliet", Mary says to her,

> "William Shakespeare wrote [*Romeo and Juliet*], and he is a master."
>
> "Says who?"
>
> Mary threw her arms up and out, indicating the entirety of the world around them.
>
> "Everyone!"
>
> "You put too much stock in men who other men say are good, are right. Why do their words matter and not mine? […] They are what, England's best? This is not England. This is not where English words shape the land" (221).

Through the voice of a young Métis girl, Dimaline creates space for other voices to exercise necessary anticolonial critiques.

At the novel's end, when the girls produce and present their own stage play instead of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, as previously planned, Dimaline is unequivocal in the

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statement she's making about language and power. By referencing canonical texts (and using a canonical children's text as the site of exploration), Dimaline achieves a meta-critique of canon that is both overt and subversive. And by centring her story with a largely female cast, she effectively dismantles the troubling sexism that readers and critics of *The Secret Garden* have long grappled with. Instead of the wealthy landowner's son, Colin, coopting the narrative with his own character arc and with his proselytizing that, from a modern perspective, is difficult to view as anything other than mansplaining, Dimaline's Mary remains central and is even cast as the hero. When Olive is finally freed from her life as an invalid, she says to Mary, "I feel like Rapunzel finally returned from exile." Mary adds, "And the prince saved you!" [in reference to Olive's father's return and intervention]. Olive responds, "No, Mary…You did" (265). Rather than granting credit to the usual hero (powerful, white, male), Dimaline makes sure that the credit is redirected to where it is deserved.

A question commonly asked of reimagined and revisioned classics is whether they need to be read in partnership with the original. *The Secret Garden* was a significant part of both my childhood reading and my early academic work, and this background familiarity did provide a richness to my reading of Dimaline's story and an appreciation for what she achieves with her revisioning. But in both critiquing and paying homage to a long-beloved children's story, she has written a novel that demonstrates a capacity to stand firmly as a classic in its own right.

Dimaline's work features many recognizable counterparts from Burnett's work, though they are uniquely fleshed out characters and not meant as mirrored images: Burnett's Ben Weatherstaff is apparent in a Métis labourer named Jean, Martha Sowerby is discernable in Flora, and Colin Craven, Burnett's mysterious sick-child-in-the-attic, is replaced with Mary's cousin, Olive. The addition of a sinister stepmother (Mary's step-aunt) amplifies the intensity of the story's trajectory and climax, a departure from the meandering and spiritual-philosophical bent of Burnett's novel, which perhaps enhances the accessibility of Dimaline's more plot-driven story for contemporary readers. And while the stepmother, Rebecca, is an almost painfully archetypal 'evil stepmother', her presence provides the catalyst for Mary's blossoming agency. Similarly, though Olive disappears for a little too long in the centre of the story, this gap leaves necessary space for Mary and Sophie to find their way.

Their way leads, like Burnett's characters', to the locked garden at the edge of the woods, which becomes their haven. For, just as the ancient, walled garden next to the Yorkshire moors provides a safe but wild-adjacent backdrop to Burnett's story, Georgian Bay's isolation from urban centres provides the necessary space to explore self-actualization and to learn to resist restrictive social norms. Burnett's Mary comes to life as she discovers the garden in winter and helps nurture it back to life through the seasons. Dimaline places her Mary in the garden in the heady, full-blown growth of June and transposes the concept of healing into a wider, more inclusive context. Ultimately, Mary's transformation is less about time spent in nature and more due to the kindness, love, and support that she receives from the Métis community. Subsequently, her understanding of class and race grows more nuanced through the relationships she has with the people from this community. As well, this place enables Mary to explore and embrace her sexuality. In her Acknowledgement, Dimaline says that she "wanted to write queer characters back into the landscape in this time period" because "they have always been here" (275). She has created a queer-positive coming of age story where the characters experience sexual awakening free from shame. The title, *Into the Bright Open,* appears as a refrain throughout, reaffirming the light and love at the core of this reimagined tale and speaks to the kind of story that can heal its readers.

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REVIEW

Billy-Ray Belcourt. *coexistence*. WW Norton & Company, 2024. 176pp. ISBN: 978-1-324-07594-3.
https://wwnorton.com/books/9781324075943

Following a growing number of publications across, between, and beyond genre, Billy-Ray Belcourt's most recent publication, *coexistence*, is his first full-length publication in short story form. Across the ten stories which make up this new collection, Belcourt creates characters and then revisits some of them from different perspectives. He depicts the loneliness evinced from sexual experiences with men from hook-up and dating apps, the palpability of grief, the beauty of domestic life on and off the reserve, and the many possibilities for life after prison, evoking, over and over again, the desire to care and to be cared for in the face of the impacts of settler colonialism. As expressed by Will in the short story "Young Adults," Belcourt uses the "creative practice" of this collection to illuminate "the ways Indigenous peoples make total conquest impossible" (63).

The early pages of the text set the score for how *coexistence* will confront the insistence and the horror of settler colonialism. They not only allude to what Belcourt names in his essay collection-cum-memoir *A History of My Brief Body* (2020) "the Christianizing project carried out by settlers for decades," (111) but also to the indeterminacy of death: "People don't really expire… People die, but even in death they continue aging in crooked photographs along a wall in someone's house" (2). In the first story, "One Woman's Memories," Belcourt uses grief and memory as a mirror to colonialism. He presents them – yes – as concepts and experiences which can connect people and

moments, but also as concepts and experiences which show the movement from past to present and the absence of a boundary between the two. As written in the third story "Poetry Class," it is possible to hold "a general ambivalence toward linear time [as t]he past, the present—these [a]re contestable categories. We experienc[e] them simultaneously" (35). Thus, like grief and memory, colonialism cannot be relegated to the past.

In the opening story, Louise, a widowed Cree woman living on the reserve in the subarctic whilst her son lives in Edmonton, navigates memories of her past, her relationship with her son, and her late husband, in her life after and amidst loss. This story touches upon familial relationships, their decline and possibilities for their rejuvenation, queer love, and Canada's colonial history. These themes arise as Louise moves through the monotony of her surroundings in and around her reserve: inside her home, at the grocery store, in the town where she does her shopping. As she steers through these physical locations, she reflects on her experience of residential schooling, non-status Indian rules whereby women had to give up their Indian status if they married someone who was not Indigenous, and on the role of Christianity and the cultural genocide of her people.

Whilst the story centres the present and ongoing reality of colonialism in Canada—"what is luck in the face of genocide?" (7)—and, with this, the blurring or breaking of the boundaries between the past and present, it concludes on a hopeful note. Belcourt reminds us that, in the face of ongoing loss and grief, "Sometimes to remember is enough" (11).

The second story in this collection, "Lived Experiences," brings us into the world of Tom, a twenty-something Cree university student from northwest Alberta, whose world is marked by loneliness and love. Between encounters with men from hook-up apps which tiptoe along the boundaries of non-consensuality—"he interprets my glance as consent, unzips his pants and pulls out his dick" (15)—Tom falls in love with his history classmate Will, another Cree man from a different "corner of the boreal forest" in northeast Alberta (23). "Lived Experience" elicits the desire to refuse to "self-explode," in the face of the prospect of love, and to "desire one another in opposition to the way the white gaze makes [Indigenous people] into objects of disdain" (31). It captures the potentiality for Indigiqueer love. How the experience of "relaxing, for the first time, into the publicness of… queer Cree joy," (24) and sex between two Cree queers can be transformative—"I think about a river crashing against the riverbanks, about how euphoric it is to excess your outer limits" (21)—and how all of this can reject loneliness—"we aren't lonely people, at least not today" (23).

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By the third and fourth story of the collection, we can begin to piece together glimpses of Belcourt amongst his writing. Alongside the familiarity of his theoretical, philosophical, and poetic voice, we see "Sex Lives: An Anonymous Chorus" feature—much like *A History of My Brief Body* and his debut poetry collection *This Wound is a World* (2017)—the use of numbered sections to fragment the stories that he puts to paper. But, more than familiar stylistic and form choices, we can see elements of Belcourt's own life and experiences in his writing too. Whether it be characters who live on the west coast but grew up in northern Alberta, doing a second degree at Oxford, stories of queer Cree men, or characters who are poetry professors, he can be found in glimmers right across this collection. I reflect on this as I was reminded, in reading this book and as a creative writer myself, how all writing features a part of ourselves: we are in all of the stories we create or choose to tell. How much of *coexistence* is fiction and how much of it is fictionalised?

It is likely that these musings on writing come from digesting "Poetry Class," which is a story packed full of rumination on the power of poetry—"A poem could destabilize the appearance of the world's immutability. A poem, spun with enough care and power, could architect a small refuge" (35). Alongside some astute assessments of the place of colonisation in or as a vehicle for poetry—"Maybe poetry that requires dispossession isn't poetry after all but propaganda"—it is ultimately words, language, and poetry, and Belcourt's relationship with and to them, which gift insight into the professor-protagonist's relational and emotional world in this story. In the midst of several shifts in his relationship with his partner of twelve years, the protagonist reminds his class, and indeed himself, how "A poem… is at the very least a record of one's survival. It brings about an *I*. It is the process of generation and survival" (47).

The poetry professor protagonist resurfaces in "Literary Festival," which is set in the aftermath of his separation from his partner, S, and which also features some reflections on the form of poetry, as both "a literary activity" and as "the way people creatively resist colonial-capitalist enclosure" (80). This, coupled with the presentation of poetry as personal, political, and necessary to existence, translates the essence of Belcourt's own feelings about poetry, as being something which has the power to "invent" the "future" and to resist "obliterat[ion]" in the "present" (74).

Perhaps the most literal commentary on the horrors of the colonial past of northern Alberta comes in the story titled "Summer Research." As an unnamed queer Cree PhD researcher travels to his parents' new house—a historic home for the nuns who worked at the local residential school—we are confronted with the legacy of colonialism in varying ways. It is through racist interactions with white locals—"I swear I saw him make

a gun and point it at me" (120)—the protagonist's reflections on his queerness—"to be queer in rural Alberta was to be a one-person protest against the normative" (112)—his attempts to get acknowledgment from the church for the abhorrent history of the residential school—"What do you make of the legacy of residential schools?" (122)—and finally, his nightly encounters with the figure of a woman who resembles a nun—"there was a woman dressed in a long black gown standing in the tub, dripping with water" (113)—that the continuing presence of colonialism is illuminated.

There are undertones of horror in this story which give you chills, and which gesture towards the non-figurative nature of the colonial horrors imposed upon Indigenous people across Canada. This story, like others throughout the collection, collapses the divide between past and present. The gowned figure of the nun is not just a figment of the protagonist's imagination, some relic of the past, or some symbol of history appearing in his dreams to haunt him. Wide awake and in the early light of day, he is met by her and what she signifies. Wide awake and in the early light of day, he meets her again, except this time, he can "see her face" (124); he is made to confront the inescapability of time and a history which has not yet ended.

coexistence, in summation, is a book which brings its title to life. The meaning behind it permeates the pages of every story in the collection: each one is dedicated to it. Whether it be the synchronicity of the past and present, grief and love, or "the world's beauty and terror," (18) Belcourt's newest publication shows us that to be "Indigenous in the twenty-first century means that a single hour can be governed simultaneously by joy and sadness" (25): these feelings and experiences of the world "can [and do] coexist" (18).

Whether you are looking to delve into the distinct voice and fragmented, poignant poetics of Belcourt's writing for the first time or to further expand the Indigiqueer section of your bookshelf, the insights that this work provides into the varying possibilities for contemporary Indigiqueer experiences, alone, makes it worth reading. Amongst jarringly beautiful prose and reflections on the co-occurrences of colonisation and reclamation; annihilation and the vividness of loving and of living, Belcourt crafts a work which is saturated with a commitment to perseverance and hopefulness.

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REVIEW

Jacqueline M. Quinless. *Decolonizing Data: Unsettling Conversations about Social Research Methods*. University of Toronto Press, 2022. 172 pp.

https://utorontopress.com/9781487523336/decolonizing-data/

Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, talented Indigenous scholars and creators pushed the boundaries of, started conversations about, and made room in their Indigenous sciences work for western tools and perspectives. Through organizations like the *American Indian Science and Engineering Society*, the *Society for the Advancement of Chicanos and Native Americans in Science*, and the *Association of American Indian Physicians*, Indigenous scientists fuse their unique perspectives with western places and spaces. As an Indigenous data scientist and software engineer, my work relies on community beliefs and goals, and often utilizes western frameworks and technologies. Increasing capacity for the best parts of western science helps strengthen Indigenous sciences in some cases. Going into the future, however, I question the stability of this relationship if it is not reciprocal. How do western sciences intend to make room for Indigenous sciences in return? Jacqueline Quinless in *Decolonizing Data: Unsettling Conversations about Social Research Methods* puts forth a possible answer: relational allyship.

In *Decolonizing Data,* Quinless accurately captures how western researchers in the social sciences, particularly healthcare, can make room in western social science work for Native people and their epistemologies. As a result, non-Native researchers and healthcare workers can improve contemporary health outcomes for Indigenous communities. She unfolds this argument using a variety of key concepts and sets the stage by orienting readers to a historical understanding of colonization through the Introduction and Chapter 1. In Chapter 2, Quinless brings in the idea of decolonization and explains what a self-governing health system may look like, citing Indigenous methodologies and frameworks of health. She elevates the importance of relationships and networks in Chapter 4 by breaking down social capital theory and shows how social capital is an indicator of health in non-western communities. Finally, Quinless closes her arguments by providing readers with tangible solutions through critical decolonial research methods in Chapter 5 and the Conclusion.

Quinless' primary purpose in *Decolonizing Data* is to introduce non-Native people to Indigenous views of wellness and expose how dominant wellness views are detrimental to Indigenous people (54). She argues that due to their western prioritization, dominant wellness views do not capture the correct scope of issues and solutions for Indigenous health concerns. Instead, Western researchers can better support Indigenous communities by expanding their mindsets and knowledge bases. Centering around social science and healthcare, Quinless speaks largely to an audience of non-Native stakeholders who are curious about improving their work through understanding other cultural practices.

Her main argument is that non-Native researchers need to incorporate Indigenous viewpoints to appropriately tailor their healthcare practices and research for Native communities. To clarify, Quinless wants non-Native researchers to become better allies. She expands on the historical impacts of colonization on health, holistic governing systems, social capital theory, and practical research methods. Quinless provides not only a detailed explanation of the subject of her argument, but also the causes of systematic subjugation and the steps needed to move forward (95). Importantly, Quinless' *Decolonizing Data: Unsettling Conversations about Social Research Methods* is especially well suited to impact the healthcare industry since it embodies a unique and specific focus of improving allyship—Quinless is non-Native and directs her writing to those similar to her.

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Quinless is successful in arguing for expanded healthcare viewpoints and treatment for Indigenous communities by non-Native researchers. She does this not just by modeling being an ally, but modeling being a "relational ally" (106). This is clear through her elevation of Indigenous authors and her in-depth historical case study references. The impact is valuable. Quinless' work fills a gap in the broader field of Indigenous health: an accessible starting point for non-Native researchers by a non-Native researcher. To Quinless, "relational allyship" encompasses the "re-searching, re-righting, and remembering of knowledge…building on Indigenous knowledge" and "a practice rooted in Indigenous thinking but also political activism" (107). Being a reciprocal ally means working together to elevate Indigenous viewpoints and perspectives. Quinless models this process herself several times throughout the book; when she mentions an Indigenous methodology and understanding, she is careful to back it up with credit to an Indigenous author and their scholarship.

For example, in discussing Indigenous connection to land as a health indicator, Quinless cites the work of 17 different scholars, including Glen Coulthard (Yellowknives Dene), Gerald Taiaiake Alfred (Kahnawà:ke Mohawk), and Leanne Simpson (Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg). She writes, "Indigenous scholars…are aware that Indigenous peoples know who and what they are and thus can make informed lifestyle choices and healthy decisions" (34). By making the conscious choice to highlight specific Indigenous texts and frameworks, Quinless sets the bar for being a good relational ally. This makes her work effective, as she backs up the practices she advocates for in real time. Her leadership by example solidifies an encouragement for non-Native researchers to incorporate Indigenous perspectives.

Quinless also elevates Native voices in the conversation of allyship. She notes, "Algonquin Anishinaabe-kwe scholar Lynn Gehl's Ally Bill of Responsibilities (n.d.) outlines sixteen responsibilities for settlers where she characterizes ally performance based in having a knowledge of one's own ancestral history and awareness of one's own privilege" (105). By including formative Indigenous perspectives in not only the conversation, but the formation of her arguments around allyships, Quinless positions her points as both effective and representative of their own goals. Her elevation of Native voices therefore strengthens her point that healthcare needs more Indigenous

frameworks.

Readers can also see concrete examples of Quinless modeling relational allyship through her detailed discussions of historical cases. As she writes, relational allyship "creates a place for inclusion, a place where all of us together reject the settler colonial state, along with heteropatriarchy, white supremacy, and neoliberal capitalist systems of oppression" (107). Simply put, to truly be a relational ally, researchers must educate themselves on the settler colonial state and its historical and contemporary effects. Quinless does a comprehensive job of providing non-Native readers with this background, reflecting on her own historical knowledge and strengthening the historical knowledge of the reader. As a result, both Quinless' and the reader's understanding of relational allyship is improved through historical contexts which reflect on present day situations.

One place historicized understanding is apparent is in "Chapter 2: The Impacts of Colonization on Health and Well-being." Quinless spends time explaining the residential school system from a ground level, including its devastating intentions and effects. She connects it to contemporary health disparities, exposing how cultural loss and genocide directly tie to poor physical and mental health today (22). By using relational allyship principles to supply a clear cause for inequity, Quinless strengthens her argument for the usage of Indigenous viewpoints in medicine and healthcare. Providing historical correlations and causes sets a firm foundation for how to move forward—through personal use of relational allyship throughout her writing, Quinless is successful in her main points.

Another place her point is affirmed is in her conversations regarding social capital theory and health indicators. Quinless details ways Canada previously measured well-being and specifically, Indigenous well-being. She points out that "given the diversity of Indigenous communities, many different approaches have been developed to assess the well-being of Indigenous individuals and communities, combining qualitative and quantitative research methods through an integrative research approach" (69). By understanding fully what processes and policies have and have not worked, Quinless gives better recommendations for the future. Recommendations grounded in past experiences and evidence, as relational allyship teaches, create a stronger and better-detailed argument for the inclusion of Indigenous perspectives in classically western social science research.

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Quinless' work is significant: it fills a necessary gap in the broader field of decolonial Indigenous healthcare. Quinless' identity as a non-Native ally allows her to uniquely speak to non-Native researchers and meet them where they are. By relating to them on a personal level, and having the lived experience to adequately address a non-Native reader's needs, Quinless' greatest power in *Decolonizing Data* is her non-Native identity. Although there exists other valuable and powerful work decolonizing social science research, Quinless' writing serves the distinct purpose of increasing good allyship. Rather than address Indigenous scientists or healthcare workers who already have some background knowledge and lived experiences, it targets those who need a place to start. Consequently, it is a book written for those who need it most.

In pondering my original question—how do western sciences intend to make room for Indigenous science in return?—I believe Quinless' *Decolonizing Data: Unsettling Conversations about Social Research Methods* provides an answer. Centering relational allyship and educating non-Native researchers from where they are is the key to creating space in the western sciences for Indigenous viewpoints and improvements. By using historical cases and contemporary Native American authors, Quinless effectively argues for the immediate inclusion of Indigenous values in healthcare that pertain to Indigenous people. She adds an important dimension to the broader conversation through her position as an ally encouraging people like her to also become allies. *Decolonizing Data* is a must-read for every non-Native researcher.

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REVIEW

Lee, A. Robert. *Native North American Authorship: Text, Breath, Modernity*. Peter Lang, 2022. 352 pp. ISBN: 9781636670485.

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In his latest essay-collection, *Native North American Authorship*, A. Robert Lee presents an engaging convocation of contextualized readings of life-writing, novels, short stories, and poetry by modern Native/First Nations authors. Even some of the latest works are within his reach, including Louise Erdrich's pandemic novel *The Sentence* (2021), N. Scott Momaday's latter-day meditation *Earth Keeper* (2020), Gerald Vizenor's historical fiction *Satie on the Seine* (2020), Diane Glancy's verse collection *The Book of Bearings* (2019), U.S. Poet Laureate Joy Harjo's *An American Sunrise* (2019), Tommy Orange's acclaimed debut novel *There There* (2018), the Teebs tetralogy (2016, 2018, 2019, 2019) by queer poet Tommy Pico, and lesbian author Beth Brant's posthumous *A Generous Spirit* (2019), to name a few.

Through charting a widening map of Native North American authorship, Lee aims to "giv[e] nuance to the notion of a Native American Renaissance born of the 1960s" (5). In this respect, this essay-collection reads as a book-length extension of his article "Rethinking the Native American Renaissance: Texts and Contexts" in *The Cambridge*

History of Native American Literature (2020). It also recalls his voice a decade ago in *The Native American Renaissance: Literary Imagination and Achievement* (2013), a collection he co-edited with Alan R. Velie. For Lee, Native "literary-scriptural history" (2) generally dates to the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. The word "scriptural," echoing "Text" from the sub-title of *Native North American Authorship*, narrows down the scope of his discussion to Native literature on written, printed, and even digital pages. Nevertheless, it does not assume orality and textuality as binary oppositions nor ignore the intricate relationship between oral expressions and written texts.

Part I, "Bearings," explores the "literary hinterland" (15) of the Native American Renaissance. Lee acknowledges the power of the spoken word embodied in various tribal oral-performative legacies like stories, myths, chants, and ceremonies. The rich and evident scriptural heritage is also worth recalling, especially the 1920s-40s fiction. Furthermore, a brief recollection of fiction, poetry, and theatre by Momaday's contemporaries on both sides of the U.S.-Canada border celebrates the efflorescence and diversity of modern Native authorship. The contextualization of the Native American Renaissance, for one thing, liberates the phrase from accusations of being a fake and rootless periodization that risks deindividuating canonization of Native literature and, for another, re-situates the literary phenomenon referred to as a "platform through which to view past authorship, literary coming-of-age, or point of departure for the future … beyond the single timeslot, place, gender or typology" (31).

"What, in the wake of the Momaday era, has come since?" (6) This is Lee's overall concern. Modern Native life-writing offers a meaningful start. In contrast to earlier collaborative or "as told to" narratives like *Black Elk Speaks* (1932), modern Native authors are telling life stories by writing independently, imaginatively, and reflexively. "From the outset, and then increasingly, Native self-writing has steered an unusual double-path" (43), observes Lee. Is it a self-story or the voice of a larger Native identity? Is it an individual or tribal experience? To approach these questions, Lee quotes Momaday extensively. Among many such citations are "Every writer is forced to rely, at some point, on the imagination" (qtd. in Lee 39) and Momaday's dictum, "We are what we imagine" (qtd. in Lee 57). According to Lee, it is the force of telling, the art of story-making, visionary memories, authorial awareness, and implied listeners that help Native authors imagine the Native self in the modern world and unwrite the imagined

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or invented Indian through breathing printed words.

Imagination was once a privilege. In "The Morality of Indian Hating," Momaday writes, "The Indian has been long time generalized in the imagination of the white men" (57-58). Targeting Western writers like Wallace Stegner, Elizabeth Cook-Lynn deplores their relentless effort to make "tribal imagination silenced or overwhelmed" (xiii). Now, the imagination within Native writing has already turned the table. Imagination, or the act of imagination, is modern Native authors' breath. "No one grand keypad or stencil prevails throughout this essay-collection" (9), holds Lee, although the word "breath" in the sub-title eventually turns out to be a new metaphor. It works as a new key to Native North American literature that he strives to cut. It lies at the heart of *Native North American Authorship*, the modern texts of Native authors and the modernity of Native texts.

The rich connotation of the metaphor of breath is not elusive for Native people and readers of Native literature. Lee quotes from Linda Hogan's poem "Turtle": "In water/the world is breathing/in the silt" (qtd. in Lee 2). Thomas King's reverence for the Turtle also comes into play, "The world never leaves the Turtle's back" (qtd. in Lee 3). In addition, one of the cover photos of this essay-collection is an image of Turtle mosaic art from Little Earth of United Tribes, a Housing and Urban Development (HUD) subsidized housing complex in urban Minneapolis that accommodates nearly 1,000 residents with 38 different tribal affiliations ("Little Earth"). The "literal breath" of a spectrum of living spirits on the Turtle's back, Lee tries to demonstrate, "elides cannily into Native/First Nations literary breath" (3). The literary breath is a conceit, a central metaphor kept alive and repetitively visited from page to page. It suggests that the sovereignty of imagination, the freedom of motion, the capacity for storytelling, the art of creation, the power of liberation, the instinct for survivance, and the infinity of possibilities, all are in a single breath.

The literary breath is a signature of modern Native authors who tend to embrace a variety of choices, chances, possibilities, and cross-genre practices. The tradition of Native inscription runs from "codices and pictographs, through quill and page-print, to digitalization and global cybernetics" (2). Regarding modern Native authors, they can be reservation-centered, city-raised, world-migrants, enrolled or not, status or non-

status, mixed blood or not, writer-poet-professor-critic-activist or an even more hyphenated role. It is only natural that Native writing has been and shall always be full of imagination and in constant motion. Or, as Lee describes it, modern Native authorship has been "adventuresome: urban and speculative fiction, ventures into new gothic and the postmodern, open-form verse, changing styles of life-writing, newly slanted story-cycle, two-spirit and LBTQI+ gendered texts, reflexive stage performance, and writings that might be called Native international" (3). While loosening all these seams, modern Native authors exhale their literary breaths and create a sense of motion in writing.

Parts II, III, and IV are eye-on-the-page readings of novels (eight chapters), short stories (three chapters), and poetry (five chapters). An extended rewriting of chapter titles discloses the overflowing breath, the relentless motion, and even contradances in Native texts. In full imaginative play, Momaday (Chapter 3) walks words into contemporary plotlines where the main characters living in competing civilizations eventually run to the center of the world. Erdrich's (Chapter 5) earlier and later novels "sustain close weavings of web and house throughout, family, voice, passion, memory, languages" (91) yet still invite chance episodes, dreams, ghosts, or religious visions. As a postindian city-and-military-fostered storier, Vizenor (Chapter 7) fuels his storying with tribal visions and postmodern self-reflexivity. Images, paradoxes, disrupted syntax, and broken or run-on sentences form Glancy's (Chapter 12) unique styling for depicting both continuities and discontinuities of Native experiences and complete her short stories as a luminous whole. Native poetry is no exception. Jim Barnes (Chapter 16) is known as "Oklahoma international, his poetry of sites real and imagined and their peopling one of lasting distinction" (295). The wide range of Hogan's (Chapter 17) "identity" poems negotiate the beyond-all-binary relationship between the self, of Hogan herself, Native women, even of all individuals, and the habitat, the environmental panorama.

A closer and cross reading of chapters further speaks for the kaleidoscopic aesthetic distinctions born out of literary breaths. Take as an example the creatively different ways modern Native authors write about memory. Memory, be it personal, familial, tribal, continental, historical, or more recent, heard or voiceless, recorded or visionary, part or whole, static or in-the-making, tragic or comic, finds its way into the web of written words. Its presence is imagined as shadows and traces in time-past, time-

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present, and time-future. More specifically, James Welch's *Fools Crow* (1986) borders "an act of cultural recovery" (qtd. in Lee 109) where the late-1860s tribal Montana is remembered, re-pictured, seen, and heard. In the fiction of Louis Owens, there stands a "memory theatre" (156), a working key Lee borrowed from Frances Yates. On the stage, death and darkness in memory, memorial irony, dream-vision memories, and forgetting as a paradoxical kind of memory, all jointly perform a complex filtering of remembrance. These distinct narratives of memory "bridge into the yet larger vision of Owens's fiction" (170).

Memory is also imagined to be breathing and in motion by five female poets examined in Chapter 14, "poetry remembrance." For Harjo, memory "was something [that] chose me, that lives in me, and [that] I cannot deny" (qtd. in Lee 246). Her adeptness at animal imagery of life-spirit, horse especially, shows her contemplation on personal and tribal memory, and her contribution to memory-making. Wendy Rose employs bone and body as vigorous imaging of memory in her free verse to understand iconic Native and world history. Glancy summons the disordered or un-chronologically ordered memory that reflects the contrarieties within her life and transposes them to visionary Native heritage. For Lucy Tapahonso, poetry is a "self-enactive ritual of memory" (252) where Hózhó, balance and beauty in the Navajo world, is restored. In poems of family portraitures and of Native themes by Kimberly Blaeser, memory is honored as "live presence" (254) and "remembered continuity" (255). Despite the different literary breaths of memory, varying lines, rhythms, and imagery in their poetry, Lee ties these five female poets together by pointing out their "shared will to remember Native heritage not only for time-past but time-present, the transition into the contemporary and even the future" (257).

The extension of chapter titles and the example of memory in the previous three paragraphs exhibit more essential qualities shared by Native authors: for instance, a build-up of literary breaths, a reverence for stories, and a flair for storytelling. Stories are cornerstones of Native culture. Leslie M. Silko writes in *Ceremony* (1977), "You don't have anything if you don't have the stories" (qtd. in Lee 197). In *The Truth About Stories* (2003), right after pondering Owens's belief in stories and his suicide, King asks, "Do you ever wonder how it is we imagine the world in the way we do, how it is we imagine ourselves, if not through our stories?" (qtd. in Lee 197). Through this rhetorical

question, King stresses the indispensability of stories to Native existence. Yet Lee aims to test the power of stories by posing better-timed questions. Can Native authors write stories or poems about modern Native existence? Following this, Lee posts more of an aesthetic concern, "Could a Native text be modern?" (16). It can be safely assumed that most readers who browse through the present essay-collection will blurt out positive answers.

Given that modern and modernity are catchall terms, probably often abused, even positive answers barely satisfy all, leaving room for discussions about Lee's particular approach to "a growing sense of modernity" (16) in Native texts. David Scott argues that "modernity was not a choice New World slaves could exercise but was itself one of the fundamental *conditions* of choice" (19). This observation also applies to Native people forced on the road to modernity. Pinning down or generalizing complex terms like modern and modernity might result in reductive clarity. Lee, in all likelihood, acts on Emily Dickinson's "tell it slant" (qtd. in Lee 141) by creating the metaphor of breath. That is, modernity is approached as a fundamental condition of Native authors' literary breaths and aesthetic choices in story-writing. As suggested in the sub-title "Text, Breath, Modernity," the metaphor of breath is to bridge the text and modernity.

To further complicate the question – "Could a Native text be modern?" (6) – one inconsistency in this essay-collection should be noted. The last sentence of the epilogue reiterates the sub-title but in the order of "Breath, Text, Modernity" (331). This is inconsistent with every other mention of the sub-title from cover to cover. Be it a total misplacement or a sign of Lee's hesitation and earlier rumination regarding the relationship between "Text" and "Breath," the apparent mistake here, interestingly, draws attention to the complex implication of the sub-title. Is the text arising out of literary breaths? Are there any breaths within texts? How close are those texts to being labeled as modern? How does modernity make its way into Native texts? All may suggest that "Breath" and "Text" complement and reinforce each other in telling modern Native stories. The texts are not simply parading, as put by Sherman Alexie, "a couple of birds and four directions and corn pollen" yet having "nothing to do with the day-to-day lives of Indians" (qtd. in Lee 141). They are anything but "the dead voices of the wordies" (Vizenor 33).

Native experiences, whether in fiction or reality, are consequences of the temporal,

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spatial, and cultural logic of modernity. Native authors imagine the presence of those radical encounters and contact by giving full play to Native cultural vigor and literary creativity. Abundant in stories and poems are depictions of modern reservations, city habitats, mutable identities, new technology, the private ownership of land, the stirred sovereignty, the spreading capitalism, a penchant for violence, the time of clocks, all that "surround" (invoking D'Arcy McNickle's 1936 novel, *The Surrounded*) "the Indian in modernity" (148). Modern Native texts are creative and active, epitomizing Native imagination and literary breaths. A voice, a time, a place, a kind of immediacy, and a sense of motion are imagined. Printed words are breathing. They connect Native people with their ancestors, liberate them from passive ruins of representation, and even bequeath to them a spirit of modern existence in motion, home or abroad.

While exploring modern Native authorship, Lee occupies himself with recurring aesthetic concerns like "compositional skill, symptomatically [sic] rhythm and sense of an ending in fiction, play of image and pattern in poetry, or the layers and folds of voice in life-writing" (9). These concerns give every particularization to Native moments in the modern world and aesthetic distinctions in modern Native texts. Suffice it to say, Lee is not in a hurry to grapple with terms like modernity. Instead, while maintaining an escape and distance from the messy taxonomy, he embraces and exalts Native imagination, intellectual sovereignty, and literary creativity guaranteed by the metaphor of breath. Modern Native authors, he contends, overflow texts with literary breaths to actively imagine the place of modern Native people in the cosmos; then, naturally, they re-imagine the traditional, primitive, uncivilized, and unimaginative images of "Indians" constructed, abstracted, and invented by the discourse of modernity.

The metaphor of breath, particularly close to those within the cultural geographies of North America, is the fruit of Lee's international experiences and years of research. Beyond that, the beauty of the metaphor further lies in its cross-cultural motion. It can arouse in world readers a culture-specific memory that is no less natural or inherent than the image of Turtle for Native people. For instance, a Chinese reader may instantly recall the Monkey King (also known as Sun Wukong), a crystallization of Chinese cultural creativity. Chinese classic *The Journey to the West* describes the transforming power of the Monkey King: "He plucked a hair and blew a mouthful of magic breath

onto it, crying, 'Change!'" (Wu 195). The build-up of the magic breath always leads to a timely change, be it a body division, an item changed in shape or size, or a soul manipulated or healed. The infinite changes help the Monkey King outwit others, set this national classic in motion, and create a permanent presence of him in the soul of the Chinese. Similar cross-cultural resonance might send the metaphor of breath back to its birthplace, the international context. This metaphor shall gain circulation among the world readership of Native North American literature, give world readers a head-start in understanding *Native North American Authorship*, and likely inspire more informed readings such as what Lee offers.

Native North American Authorship: Text, Breath, Modernity goes beyond simply being a book-length revisiting of the Native American Renaissance. The exact words "platform" and "point of departure" (31) Lee uses for re-evaluation provides a certain angle to approach the present essay-collection. The eighteen chapters demonstrate the plurality, diversity, and vitality of modern Native authorship that "in truth has created not some by-way but a full history of literary voice" (320). Additionally, both the main title deconstructed in the epilogue and the sub-title glossed in the introduction point to future discussions, be they the oral-scriptural dynamic, Native literary breath and imagination, the remembered timeline in Native literature, Native literature in "a yet more inclusive Native geography" (329), transgeneric aesthetics and interdisciplinary studies, Native literary modernity and Native modernity in general, theory of survivance and transmotion, and so forth. For example, given that Native literary inscription, "from the outset, has had counterparts, alliances of vision and image in the visual arts" (329), it is no surprise that Lee's contextualized readings here can, in turn, be a literary context and a departure point for exploring artistic breaths that sustain other Native textual or visual expressions.

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